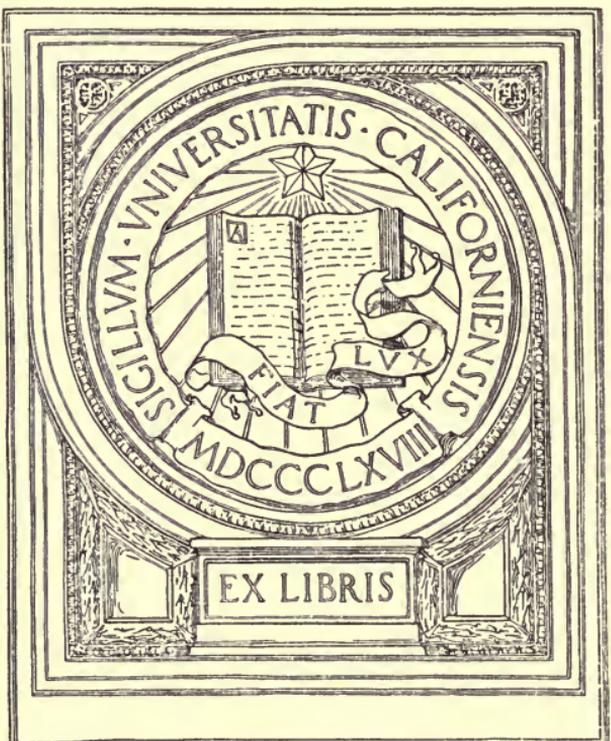




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# SERMONS

Upon the following *SUBJECTS*,

*Viz.*

- |  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
| On hearing the Word :  | On the deceitfulness of the    |
| On receiving it with Meekness :                                | Heart, and GOD's know-         |
| On renouncing gross Immoralities :                             | ledge thereof.                 |
| On the necessity of obeying the Gospel :                       | On the shortness and vanity    |
| On being found in CHRIST :                                     | of Human Life :                |
| On Justification by Faith :                                    | And                            |
| On the nature, principle and extent, of Evangelical Obedience. | On the true value, use and end |
|  | of Life ; together with the    |
|  | conduciveness of Religion to   |
|  | prolong, and make it happy.    |

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By

*JONATHAN MAYHEW, D.D.*

Pastor of the West-Church in BOSTON.

---

“ HE that hath my word, let him speak my word FAITHFULLY :  
“ What is the chaff to the wheat ? saith the LORD. ”

*Propb. JEREMIAH.*

“ WE have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not  
“ walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of GOD  
“ DECEITFULLY. ”

*Saint PAUL.*

---

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TO VNU  
ANNONIAO

W. O. M.  
General Services Administration

TO THE  
 Small, but Honoured and Beloved  
 CHURCH and CONGREGATION, in  
 the *Westerly* Part of BOSTON.

*My Brethren,*



SHOULD, perhaps, have had rather less need than I have at present, to apologize for the inaccuracy of the following Discourses, had they been composed with any

design to make them more public than by preaching them. However, it is, even now, almost needless to ask Your candor towards One, who has so long experienced it; and to ask candor of some Others, would, I know, be in vain. These Discourses, such as they are, were written and preached, with a sincere desire to ferye You in Your most important interest: I mean, to assist You in understanding some of the doctrines, and to excite You to practice all the duties, of the Gospel. With the same view it is; that they are now published. I hope they will not be quite usefess to You;

A 2 or,

or, indeed, to any who shall read them with a christian spirit, instead of doing it in the antichristian, illiberal spirit, of captiousness and party.

THE doctrinal sentiments running thro' them, are such as I have been led into, and confirmed in, by a careful inquiry after truth; especially in the HOLY SCRIPTURES; without a zealous attachment to, or prejudice against, the opinions of Others. However, I pretend not to be exempted from mistakes. There may possibly be errors in these Discourses: If there are, I am very sorry; and as heartily desirous that those who read, may discover and avoid, them. And if some person that is wiser than myself, would point them out to Me, he would make me his debtor; especially if he should do it in the spirit of charity and meekness.

IF there are any considerable, or dangerous errors in [these Discourses, I may venture to say, they are not disguised by any kind of artifice: They do not just peep thro' the mask of studied, equivocal, and ambiguous phrases; nor skulk in the dark, as it were from a consciousness of what they are, and a fear of being detected: They appear in open day-light, with all the naked boldness of truth and innocence. For I have conceived,  
That

That the the end of speaking, especially of preaching, was to express, not to disguise, a man's real sentiments : Tho' I know that I, herein, differ from many of my own Order ! This will be a great ease and advantage to any Person, who shall bring a charge of *heresy* against me ; and undertake to convict me of it, whether privately or publickly. But You are sensible, *My Brethren*, that there is some difference betwixt railing and reasoning ; and, consequently, betwixt a man's being scolded at, and refuted. I wish some other people knew this also ! But I must now declare, once for all, That I will not be, even *religiously* scolded, nor pitied, nor wept and lamented, out of any principles which I believe upon the authority of Scripture, in the exercise of that small share of reason which God has given me : Nor will I postpone this authority, to that of all the good *Fathers* of the Church, even with that of the good *Mothers* added to it !

THE only favour which I have, now, to ask of You, *My Brethren*, and of Others who may happen to read these discourses, is, That you would do it with an open, unprejudiced mind ; and then either reject, or believe and practice, according to the light and conviction, of  
your

your own consciences. Religion is a matter of too great importance to be only slightly thought of : It demands Your first and last attention. And as I hope You are all too sensible of common human frailty, to be uncharitable bigots and party-men in religion ; so I hope You are, on the other hand, too wise to be sceptics : The two extreams, into which men of weak and wicked minds often run ; sometimes, indeed, out of the one, directly into the other, without stopping a moment at the golden medium.

You have a just title, *My Brethren*, to my warmest good wishes, and to my prayers, by virtue of the relation in which I stand towards You : These wishes and prayers are, That You may all “ know “ the truth as it is in JESUS ;” and finally partake of that blessed life, and glorious immortality, brought to light by HIM, thro’ the Gospel. But, in the meantime, I will not forget to wish You all temporal and worldly prosperity ; being, in all respects,

Your sincere Friend,

And, I hope,

Not Unfaithful Servant

In the Work of the Ministry,

J. MAYHEW.

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*BUT* be ye doers of the Word, and not Hearers  
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# S E R M O N I.



## Upon Hearing the Word.



JAMES I. 21, 22.

*LAY* apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.



HIS apostolical exhortation consists of two principal parts.— SERM. I.

The former of which respects the duty of *bearing* the word and gospel of the kingdom, in a way suitable to the importance and grand design of it. “ Lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness ; and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls. ” The latter, respects the necessity of yielding a *practical obedience*



SERM.  
I.

to this heavenly message, in order to its great end being answered upon us ; together with the miserable delusion which those are under, who content themselves with hearing it, without living according to it. “ But be ye doers of the word, “ and not hearers only, deceiving your own “ selves. ”

THIS is the first, general distribution of the subject before us. But it may be useful to give the several things contained in this passage, a more particular consideration in the following order.

- I. OF the Duty of *Hearing* the Word.
- II. OF *Receiving* it with *Meekness*.
- III. OF the necessity of renouncing Vice in all its *grosser Forms*, in order thereto : Or, in the language of the Apostle, of *laying apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness*.
- IV. OF the necessity of *obeying* the Gospel, in order to obtaining the Salvation of it.
- V. OF some *Mistakes* concerning the Terms of Salvation ; and particularly concerning *Salvation by Grace*.

VI. OF

VI. OF *Mistakes* concerning being found in **SERM.**  
**CHRIST**, not having our own *Righteousness*. **I.**

VII. OF *Mistakes* concerning *Justification* by  
*Faith*, as *Faith* is distinguished from, and  
 opposed to, *Evangelical Obedience*.

VIII. OF the *Nature* and *Principle* of *Evangelical*  
*Obedience*.

IX. AND LASTLY. OF the *Extent* of this *Obe-*  
*dience*, together with a brief *Description* of  
 it, as it is found in good Men, who are the  
*Heirs* of *Salvation*.

*FIRST*, I am to represent the obligation  
 lying upon all Christians in general to be *Hearers*  
 of the Word and Gospel of the Kingdom. I  
 say, lying upon *Christians*; because it is to such,  
 that the apostle is here speaking; not to uncon-  
 verted *Jews* or *Gentiles*, but to those of the  
*twelve Tribes scattered abroad*, who were already  
 profelyted to the *Christian Faith*; as appears  
 from the Epistle itself. However it is not meant,  
 that this is the duty of Christians, exclusively of  
 others. Our Saviour having commanded, that  
 the gospel should be preached *for a witness* to all  
 People; all are accordingly required to hearken  
 to it; and those who refuse to do this, are, in  
 the language of scripture, said to *judge themselves*

## On Hearing

SERM. *unworthy of eternal life.* But seeing the apostle  
I. *James* here directs his Discourse to professed  
Christians, I shall confine myself to such.

It is not to be supposed, that when Persons are once become Believers of the Gospel, they need have no farther concern to hear, and to attend to it, from time to time; as tho' this *wisdom of God in a mystery*, were to be learned all at once, and disregarded afterwards. The apostle expresses himself in a manner that presupposes it to be the known, acknowledged duty of Christians in common, to give constant and diligent Heed to *the word which began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed by them that heard him*: For his Exhortation chiefly respects the manner in which this word of Truth ought to be received; the duty of Hearing it *in general*, being rather taken for granted, than directly asserted. And by his using the Expression of *bearing the word*, repeatedly, as he does in the Context, it is at least probable, that he had a special reference to hearing it preached *in Christian Assemblies, at stated Times*, by those whose special *Business and Office* it was to *teach, to reprove, to rebuke, and exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine*. The Apostle, certainly did not design to preclude, or set aside, other means of instruction and edification; such as reading, meditation, and private, social converse; all which, in their places, are very beneficial to those that use them. But  
who

whoever will be at the pains to look into the Chapter, will, if I mistake not, find that St. SERM.  
I.  
*James* had a particular reference to the stated, and divinely instituted method of Christian edification in the Assemblies and Churches of the Saints; wherein one Person, at least, exercised the office of a Teacher; instructing the young and ignorant, stirring up the minds of the more knowing, and inculcating upon all, the practice of Christian piety and virtue.

THIS was one very considerable end, tho' not the only one, proposed in the first institution of Christian Assemblies. And it is, in a great measure, by this means that Christianity has been handed down from age to age, from generation to generation; tho' not with equal purity and advantage in all times and places. And one may venture to assert, that, upon the whole, great good has resulted to the world from this practice; and that Christians cannot, under any pretence whatever, *forsake the assembling of themselves together*, for the mentioned purpose, without being highly culpable. This is a Method of instruction and edification, that is plainly of divine institution, and therefore demands the regard and submission of all Christians, at all times, and in all places, wherein it is practicable. Nor can conforming to this institution, be useless and unprofitable to any, who assemble to hear the word with that *meekness* which the Apostle enjoins: I

SERM. mean, provided the Gospel is preached to them in any tolerable degree of purity and integrity.

I.

To be sure the upholding of these Assemblies must be very advantageous to all that frequent them, if the holy Scriptures are read therein from time to time, in a language that is understood by all. Which, by the way, ought, I suppose, to be one stated and constant part of the religious exercise in these assemblies: Nor is the Omission hereof very consistent with that regard Christians in general profess, for these sacred writings; and which they evidently claim, as being *given by inspiration of God*; and the great rule of our *Faith and Practice*. These Scriptures at least, are “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness, that every man and child of God may be perfect, and throughly furnished unto all good works.” To them we ought surely to give “diligent heed, as unto a light shining in a dark place; they being a sure word of prophecy;” and graciously given us of God, to guide our feet into the paths of truth and peace, until the dawn of a more perfect day, “and the day-star arise in our Hearts.”

NOR can it be reasonably tho't, that the word preached even by fallible men, is altogether useless and unprofitable to them that duly attend upon it. On the contrary, this is very conducive to the good end mentioned; and, as was

in-

intimated before, claims our regard, as an insi-  
 tution of our Saviour, the Head of the Church: SERM.  
I.

Who when he ascended up on high, gave not  
 only Apostles; Prophets and Evangelists; but  
 also "*Pastors and Teachers*, for the perfecting of  
 the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the  
 edifying of His body, 'till we all come in the uni-  
 ty of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the  
 Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the mea-  
 sure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; that  
 we be no more children, tossed to and fro, and  
 carried about with every wind of doctrine."

HOWEVER imperfectly this business of public  
 teaching and exhorting; of expounding the holy  
 Scriptures, and urging the motives to evangelical  
 obedience, may often be performed; yet it is un-  
 questionably subservient to very good ends; and  
 should not be contemned and disregarded by any  
 that call themselves Christ's Disciples. It will be  
 no great compliment upon the *Clergy* (an order  
 of men which I am not much disposed to flatter)  
 to say, that there are many persons in all coun-  
 tries, who are not such proficient in Christian  
 knowledge, as to be quite past receiving any in-  
 struction from them; especially from such of  
 them as "*rightly divide the Word of truth.*"  
 And some of those persons, who presume this to  
 be their own case, may after all be a little mista-  
 ken in themselves; and think as much too highly  
 of their own abilities, as they do too lowly of  
 those

SERM. those of others. To be sure, one shall hardly  
 I. meet with more vain, superficial; empty Creatures,  
 than amongst those who take it upon them to  
 run down that order of men; and to set them at  
 naught, as tho' all their instructions were useless  
 to the world, at best. And the Clergy must be  
 very ignorant indeed, ignorant of the rudiments  
 and first principles of Christianity, were they not  
 able to instruct a multitude of these blustering  
*Sparks*, and foolish, conceited *Scoffers*, who take  
 it upon themselves to run them down. But all  
 comparisons are said to be odious; and, perhaps,  
 there can be none more so than such an one as  
 this——

It is not to be doubted, indeed, but that, a-  
 mongst the *Laiety*, (I use this *term* merely for  
 distinction sake; not by way of reproach and  
 contempt, as it has too often been used by some  
 arrogant *Ecclesiasticks*.) It is not to be doubted,  
 I say, but that amongst the *Laiety* there are ma-  
 ny persons, from whom a great part of the Cler-  
 gy might be glad to be instructed, even in mat-  
 ters that are more peculiarly their own province.  
 But on the other hand, it is to be remembered,  
 that there are great numbers of children and  
 youth; and many persons of adult age, that are  
 either of mean education, or none at all; many  
 poor, labouring people, who have no time for  
 reading and contemplation; and many others so  
 embarrassed with a multiplicity of business, and  
 the

the cares of this life, that they do not in fact apply themselves to the acquisition of Christian science; and I might still add; great numbers of a low capacity, who after all their diligence and pains, can attain to but little knowledge; I say there are great numbers of these different sorts or classes of people; that may surely receive some useful instruction even from the *pulpit*. Allowing the clergy only a common share of natural understanding, ( and it would seem hard to deny them this ) it is very strange if, with the advantage of a learned education, and several, perhaps many, years close application to the study of sacred science; they are not qualified to be teachers of babes; of raw, untaught, undisciplined youth; of those whose lot it is to labour almost incessantly for the *meat that perisheth*; of those who have never given much of their attention to the subject of religion; and of those who are not even capable of attaining to any considerable degree of this knowledge, for a certain reason already hinted at.—So that after we have excepted all those, who have any, even the least pretence to be excepted, on account of their superior capacity and extensive knowledge; there are multitudes in all Christian countries, who ought to be *Hearers of the word* as publicly preached, were it only for the instruction in truth and righteousness, which they may gain by attending upon this institution. And how few  
there

SERM.  
I.

SERM. there are, comparatively speaking, who have any  
 I. right to look upon themselves as *exceptions* in the  
 present case, upon the score of their being *wiser*  
*than their teachers*, I shall not presume to deter-  
 mine.

BUT as to those who are really too great pro-  
 ficients in sacred knowledge, to be capable of be-  
 ing *instructed* in this way; (let their number be  
 greater or less) they should remember that in-  
 struction, most properly so called, is very far from  
 being the whole design of preaching, and of  
 hearing the word. There are other good and  
 important ends to be answered hereby, which are  
 common to all Christians in general; to the wise  
 and learned, as well as to the simple and illiterate.  
 Are not the minds and memories of the more  
 knowing, to be stirred up and refreshed; and  
 their attention to the great doctrines and duties of  
 the gospel, awakened from time to time, as well as  
 the minds of the ignorant to be informed? The  
 preacher, tho' of no distinguished talents whe-  
 ther natural or acquired, may possibly edify the  
 wisest of his auditors, and such as are much wiser  
 than himself; by putting them in mind of what  
 they before knew, and were established in. The  
 Apostles themselves did not always propose, in  
 their preaching and writing, to afford new light  
 and information to their hearers, and those to  
 whom they wrote. "I will not be negligent,  
 " says St. Peter, to put you always in remem-  
 " brance

“ brance of these things, altho’ ye know them, SERM.  
 “ and be established in the present truth. Yea I I.  
 “ think it meet, as long as I am in this taber-  
 “ nacle, to stir you up, by putting you in re-  
 “ membrance. ” Those who conceive that the  
 informing of men’s understandings, either is, or  
 ought to be, the sole end of preaching; and who  
 therefore excuse themselves from hearing, under  
 a notion that they cannot be taught or instructed,  
 are so far from being the wisest of men, ( unless  
 it is in their own vain imaginations ) that they  
 want one to “ teach them even the first princi-  
 ples of the oracles of God ; ” and have much  
 more need of that *milk* which they loath and  
 despise, than of that *strong meat* which their too  
 forward and vitiated appetite so eagerly craves,  
 and hankers after.

MEN that are truly wise, are sensible that they  
 need something besides speculative knowledge,  
 something besides the science of religion, con-  
 sidered as the furniture of the head. They know  
 they are but too apt to let slip many useful and  
 salutary truths, which ought to be always present  
 with them ; and which may be again suggested  
 to them, even by persons that are every way their  
 inferiors. Such Persons also know, that old  
 truths may be set in new and different points of  
 light, so as to come better recommended to their  
 understandings, and to take faster hold of the  
 mind and conscience, than they have done before.

They

SERM. They are aware how apt good impressions on the heart, are to wear out, or at least to grow faint and dim, if not frequently renewed. They know that the spirit of devotion, and the religion of the heart, is a fire which will insensibly languish and go to decay, in the damps and mists and impure vapors of this world, if it be not often supplied with new fuel from heaven, and from that word of God which is sometimes like a fire, to melt and inflame the heart, as well as, at others, like a sword to pierce, or a hammer to break it in pieces. They are sensible how expedient and profitable it is, to have the great proofs of Christianity set before them from time to time ; together with the great motives to holiness of life ; the majesty and perfections of God ; the love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ ; the vanity of this world ; the excellency and happiness of religion ; the glories and terrors of the last day ; the joys of the righteous, and the destruction and misery of the wicked. Wise men do not think it useless, to be frequently reminded of such things : but know the benefit hereof, and that even a weak man may prove a friendly monitor to them in these respects.

It is farther to be observed, that those who are not directly able to instruct others, may yet be a means, in the hand of providence, of suggesting and hinting some things to them, which they never happened to think of before ; and which  
may

may naturally lead them into a long train of useful reflection. And in this sense, God does probably sometimes *ordain praise, even out of the mouths of babes and sucklings.* In fine here, those who really deserve the character of wise men, ( a character to which so many put in their claim, without any colour of right and justice ) know, that it is folly for men to pretend to be wiser than their maker ; or to throw contempt upon any of his institutions, from a vain conceit that they do not need them. They will therefore, as *Solomon* observes, *bear, and increase learning.* The most sure and effectually means of growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*, is to walk in all his ordinances blameless ; of which, hearing the word, is evidently *one.* Nor have any a right to be called the Friends of God and religion, who do not *love the place where he recordeth his name, and where his honor dwelleth ;* the place where he *commandeth the blessing, even life forevermore.*

WERE it only for example-sake, the more knowing part of Christians ought certainly to countenance and encourage the publick religious exercises of the Lord's Day, by attending upon them. Otherwise they will naturally come to be disregarded by that part of mankind who most need such helps and assistances : I mean the *common* people. And thus, *thro' the knowledge of some, whether real or imaginary, the weak Brother*

SERM.  
I.



ther.

SERM. *ther may perish, for whom Christ died.* Whenever it shall come to be generally supposed, that  
 I.  the religious exercises here intended, are designed only for the benefit of the vulgar and illiterate; and when they shall accordingly be neglected by persons of knowledge and capacity, it will soon be looked upon as disreputable for *any* to attend upon them, as being a tacit confession of their ignorance. And so every one, will think himself under a sort of obligation to absent himself from the publick worship of his Maker, and from the place where his word is read and preached; in order to prove to the world that he is a man of *wisdom*. And indeed there are many amongst us who give no other evidence besides this, of their superiority to the bulk of mankind; tho' I cannot at present think it a conclusive argument.

BUT to draw towards a conclusion of this discourse: It is manifestly the duty of all Christians in common to hear the word; particularly, to hear it in the public *assembly of the Saints*, upon the stated times for such religious exercises. It is the duty of the young and old, wise and simple, male and female, bond and free, to come and *sit before God as his People sitteth*, (to use the language of Scripture); and constantly to attend upon the appointed means of instruction and edification. The gospel enjoins this upon all, without making any exception. The far greater part of Christians are not past being taught and  
 instructed

instructed in this way: Some may have their pure, and others, their impure minds, stirred up: Some may be inlightned in their duty: Others may have known duties inculcated upon them to advantage; and ALL may be furthered in the way that leads to eternal life, provided they hear the word with a suitable temper of mind. It is no sufficient excuse for neglecting the publick worship, that the Person who *officiates*, is not one of a distinguished capacity and great learning; or that he is not even *as one that has a pleasant voice, and can play well upon an instrument*. It is better to hear the great doctrines, duties and promises of the gospel, from the mouth of a plain, illiterate man, than not to hear them at all: And the soul may be caught up to Heaven, altho' not wasted thither by music and harmonious sounds.

To conclude, therefore, let me beseech all those who claim the worthy and sacred name of *Christians*, (for with others I am not now concerned) to be *at least* hearers of the word. There are no excuses for neglecting this, cases of *necessity* and *mercy* being excepted, which will not show either the ignorance, or the pride and vanity, of those who make them. And if a man is not so much as a *bearer*, we have surely no reason to think that he is a *doer* of the word, or will be blessed in his deed. Christians ought doubtless to be left at liberty where, and with whom they will assemble for the purpose mentioned:

SERM.  
I.

SERM.

I.

tioned : And should exercise their reason, discretion and conscience in making the choice. But they are absolutely inexcusable if they do not attend the publick worship some where or other ; even tho' there may be no sect, church or denomination of Christians, with which they can intirely fall in. It is one of the chief honours of the present age, that the principles of religion, particularly of religious liberty, are better understood, and more generally espoused, than they have, perhaps been, since the days of the apostles. It were to be wished, that practical Christianity had made progress in the same proportion. But it cannot be denied, that many, together with some vulgar errors and superstitions, have in a manner thrown off even the *form of godliness* ; laying no stress at all upon those outward ordinances and institutions, upon which too great a stress has doubtless been laid heretofore. This seems to be the case not only in other countries ; but in our own. We are manifestly running into an extreme ; at least many amongst us are, under a notion of a more rational religion ; an extreme which, it is to be feared, may in time, leave scarce the outward shew and appearance of Christianity amongst us. Let not us, my Brethren, do any thing which may have a natural tendency to bring our holy religion into disrepute. Remembring that we are *not without law to God, but under the law to Christ* ; let us pay a  
 due

due and sacred regard to all his commands and institutions ; particularly that, respecting the publick worship, and hearing the word. In the language of the Apostle, with whose words I shall close this discourse, “ Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering ; (for he is faithful that promised ) and let us consider one another, to provoke to love and to good works ; *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is ; but exhorting one another ; and so much the more, as we see the day approaching.* ”

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I.

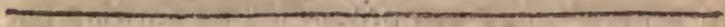
but and acted regard to all his commands and in-  
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 lic worship, and bearing the word. In the lan-  
 guage of the Apostle, with whose words I shall  
 close this discourse, "Let us hold fast the pro-  
 fession of our faith without wavering; (for he  
 is faithful that promitteth) and let us consider  
 how we ought to please to love and to good-  
 works: not forgetting the offering of our-  
 selves together, as the manner of love is; but  
 exhibiting one another, and so much the more,  
 as we see the day approaching."



S E R M O N II.



Upon Receiving the Word with Meekness.



JAMES I. 21, 22.

LAY apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

THE duty of hearing the word, having been briefly shewn in the foregoing discourse; we are now to consider with what temper it ought to be attended upon, and received. "Receive with meekness the ingrafted word, says the apostle; which is able to save your souls." We are more particularly and directly admonished by these words, to hear and receive the Gospel with a humble and teachable temper of mind, as opposed to that

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SERM. that *pride, captiousness, and wrangling* disposition, which are but too commonly found amongst the professors of Christianity. However, I shall take the liberty to consider the words in a greater latitude, as designed to injoin upon us all that care and reverence, that candor and love of truth, that simplicity and docility of mind, which become sinful creatures, when the Gospel is preached to them; and which are futable to the nature and design of this dispensation of the Grace of God to the World. And the admonition may accordingly comprise in it the following particulars:

THAT we hear the word with *care and attention*, in opposition to sloth, listlessness, and a lazy indifference:

WITH *sobriety and due decorum*, in opposition to indecent levity, and rudeness:

WITH *humility*, and a *teachable temper*, in opposition to a spirit of pride, carping and contradiction:

WITH *due caution*, (when it is preached by fallible men) in opposition to a false humility, which disposes many people to swallow down whatever they hear from the *Pulpit*, tho' often very contrary to the doctrine of our Saviour and his Apostles:

WITH

WITH *patience* and *affectionate regard* to the truth, altho' nothing *new* should be said upon the subject treated, in opposition to that vain curiosity and love of novelty, which we see in those that have *itching Ears* : SERM.  
I.

WITH *candour* and *impartiality*, in opposition to all personal prejudice, and to the spirit of party :

WITH *self-application*, in opposition to that common humour of applying what is said to the case of our neighbours :

AND lastly, With a single view, and an hearty desire, to receive christian edification ; and to obtain that which is the great end of the Gospel-revelation, and of our Faith in it, *even the Salvation of our Souls* .

LET me enlarge a little upon the several particulars hinted at above.

I. WE should hear the word with *care* and *attention*, in opposition to sloth, listlessness, and a lazy indifference. Christians ought not, at any time, to be *slothful in business*, but ever *fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*. But there is a peculiar impropriety in withdrawing our attention, and indulging to sloth, when we are assembled to worship God, and to hear his word. The

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coldness and carelessness, with which many Christians sit under the dispensation of this heavenly doctrine, is very surprising, and hardly to be accounted for. The Gospel is not only the word of Him that speaketh from heaven; but it is that wherein we are all particularly interested, and far more so than we are in any thing besides. This is that Gospel which contains the overtures of peace and reconciliation, which God is making to his sinful Creatures; wherein "Life and immortality are brought to light"; which contains all the solid grounds of our hope and expectations of future bliss; and which we ought in reason to look upon as *good news from a far country*; "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance". With what raised attention? with what holy reverence? with what humble gratitude, does it then become us to hear and receive this ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls; and which is spoken to us solely for that end? But alas! were a trifling, unconcerning story told us, from a remote part of the world, by some romantic traveller, many persons would be at least as attentive to it, and some much more so, than they are in our religious assemblies, to those glad tidings which Christ, the true and faithful witness, has brought from Heaven to Earth. Altho' God, who "at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken to the

the world by his Son<sup>2</sup>; yet many to whom this SERM.  
 gospel of the Kingdom is preached, and who II.  
 profess to believe it, pay far less regard to it, than  
 they would to an account of the *Mogul-Empire*;  
 of the wars of *Kouli Kan*; and of many other  
 things, if possible, both less interesting to them,  
 and less considerable in their own nature. They  
 could not doze and slumber more, while the  
 most idle, the most uninteresting tales were tel-  
 ling, than they do, when the Gospel of their  
 Salvation is read or preached to them. Good  
 God! what impiety? what infatuation is this?  
 Is this to pay a due regard to thy overtures of  
 peace and happiness to rebellious mortals! Is  
 this to give proper heed to the Revelation which  
 thou hast made of thy self by thy Son! Is this  
 to hear, and to receive with meekness, the in-  
 grafted word! Is it not rather to stop the ear  
 against the voice of divine love and compassion!  
 Is it not rather to throw manifest open contempt  
 upon thy word, than to pay any honor to it!

SOME of those persons whom I here intend,  
 are so far from hearing the word with a becom-  
 ing attention, that they do not hear it all; but  
 designedly compose themselves to rest in the place  
 of public worship, as tho' they *had not houses to*  
*sleep in*; or rather, as tho' they were determined  
 to show how much they *despise the Church of*  
*God*, and at once to cast contempt both upon  
 God and Man. For this is done by those who

SERM. sit in the seat of the *sleepers*, as well as those  
 II. who sit in that of the *scorners*. And it is prob-  
 able that few would be thus past *bearing*, were  
 they not first *past feeling*, having their consciences  
*seared as with an hot iron*. In short, the inde-  
 cent custom of which I am now speaking, is e-  
 qually an affront to God and man; an equal con-  
 tradiction to all piety, and good manners: Nor  
 will any allow themselves in it, who have not  
 both a *stony heart*, and a *brazen front*.

2. CHRISTIANS ought to hear the word with  
*sobriety* and *due decorum*, in opposition not only  
 to a dull indifference and *oscitancy*; but also in  
 opposition to that indecent levity and rudeness,  
 which we sometimes see in our religious assem-  
 blies. The tidings which the Gospel brings are  
 too interesting to be heard with coldness and care-  
 lessness; too serious, solemn and sacred, to be  
 heard with unholy mirth, and wanton gaiety.  
 The important nature and subject of this message  
 from God to man, evidently demand a devout  
 and reverential, as well as a diligent and fixed  
 attention in the hearer. However some seem to  
 indulge themselves as much in unseasonable, un-  
 seemly levity of mind, as others do in an irreligi-  
 gious lumpishness, and a certain lifeless, spiritless  
 gravity. Nor is the former of these, any more  
 than the latter, a suitable frame and temper with  
 which to receive the ingrafted word. To hear it  
 with

with merriment and laughter, is not surely consistent with that *meek* receiving it, which is enjoined upon us. “To every thing there is a

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season and a time to every purpose under heaven—a time to *weep* as well as a time to laugh.”

Let those who are disposed to be gay and jovial, be so in due time and place; and none but some gloomy, morose devotionists, or the hypocritical pretenders to extraordinary sanctity, will blame them for it. But this, however innocent upon some occasions, is very unbecoming, and even criminal, when we are assembled for the exercises of religion, and to “hear what God the Lord “will say unto us,” respecting things of the greatest importance. When we receive His message in the Gospel, the end of which is the salvation of our souls, we should not only abstain from all external lightness of behaviour, from all those mirthful airs, which might be harmless at other times; but also banish every idle thought, every vain imagination, that would intrude itself upon us so unseasonably. We should abstract ourselves, as much as possible, from all terrestrial things in general; and compose ourselves to sobriety, and holy reverence. It is only such a grave, serious temper and deportment, that is suitable to the majesty of that Presence in which we are; and to the nature of that message which is delivered to us.

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ONE would be almost ready to suspect, from the countenance and air of many persons in our religious assemblies, that they were ashamed to have the least appearance of a serious, devout mind, lest they should be looked upon either as superstitious, or hypocritical: But surely, if there is any such thing as religion, there is a medium betwixt a superstitious, sullen, or affected gravity at the public worship, and that tho'tless levity of behaviour, which is here intended. There is a certain seriousness of mind, and composedness of soul, which corresponds to the nature and design of religion; and which almost unavoidably discovers itself wherever it is, even in the features of the face, and in a person's whole air and deportment. And altho' an affected hypocritical gravity is justly odious to God and man; yet to be really grave, and in earnest in religion, is highly commendable; nor is it proper, or reasonable, to avoid the appearance of this; or to strive against that which is the natural indication of such a temper and frame of heart.

3. WE ought to hear the word with a *humble, teachable* temper, in opposition to a spirit of pride, carping, and contradiction. And this, as has been already observed, is that which the apostle more directly intends by receiving the word with *meekness*. Whenever we go to the place of worship, to hear the Gospel read or preached

preached, it should be with a mind disposed to receive instruction, and an ear open to discipline.

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The oracles of God in general, as well as the writings of *Solomon* in particular, were designed  
 “ to make us know wisdom, to perceive the  
 “ words of understanding, to receive the instruc-  
 “ tion of wisdom, justice, judgment and equity ;  
 “ to give subtlety to the simple, to the young  
 “ man knowledge and discretion.” And with  
 this view, with a humble, meek and teachable  
 temper, we ought always to hear the word of  
 God : not that we may observe something to  
 criticize upon, and cavil at ; not that we may  
 indulge our vanity, with the secret thought how  
 much wiser we are than the *poor Parson*, as he  
 goes along. However many that are far less  
 wise than *David* do not scruple to adopt his  
 Words—“ I have more understanding than all  
 “ my teachers : I understand more than the  
 “ Ancients.”

THIS is a temper of mind, which utterly un-  
 fits persons for receiving any benefit from the  
 preached and ingrafted word : And were it heard  
 forever, with no better, and more tractable a  
 disposition, it would not be the means of saving  
 a single soul. How contrary is such a vain, proud  
 and captious humour, to that meekness with  
 which we are injoined to receive the ingrafted  
 word ? How inconsistent is such a spirit, with that  
 simplicity, and humble desire of improvement,  
 which

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which *St. Peter* recommends in his *first Epistle* ?  
 “ The word of the Lord, says he, endureth for-  
 ever ; and this is the word, which by the Gos-  
 pel is preached to you. Wherefore laying  
 aside all malice, and all guile and hypocrisies,  
 and envies, and evil speakings, as new-born  
 babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that  
 ye may grow thereby.” How contrary is  
 this temper, to that which our Saviour represents  
 as necessary to a due hearing of the Gospel, so as  
 to receive benefit therefrom ? “ Verily, verily, I  
 say unto you, that whosoever shall not receive  
 the Kingdom of God as a little child, shall by  
 no means enter into it. ”

LET none of us give way to a proud, cavilling,  
 and wrangling spirit, when we assemble to hear  
 the word ; but keep our *heart* as well as our *foot*,  
 with all diligence, when we go to the house of  
 God. The meanest person may say something  
 which may be to our *edification* : Nor should we  
 be above receiving *that* from any one, even from  
 the meanest. No one surely will think himself  
 above this, who sincerely desires the salvation of  
 his Soul. Nor are those who hear the word with  
 the opposite temper of vanity and haughtiness,  
 really the better, but rather the worse for it ; and  
 so much the farther from the kingdom of heaven.  
 And it is observable, that this scornful, disdainful,  
 self-flattering humour, is generally found in those,  
 who have very little right to claim any such superi-  
 ority

erity over others—Receive with *meekness*, therefore, the ingrafted word, wherever, and from whomsoever, you hear it: Be willing to be instructed, and admonished of your duty, by any one; and more particularly by those whose special office it is to preach the word; “left (to use the words of the wisest of Men; left) thou mourn at the last; and say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof! And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers; nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me! I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly!”

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HOWEVER, do not imagine, my Brethren, that we are for *lording it over God's heritage*; and would put out *your eyes*, that you may see with *ours*; or rather follow us blindfold. No: it were extravagant pride and insolence in us, to desire this, and false humility in you to comply with such a desire. But this brings me to the next particular mentioned.

4. WHEN we hear the Gospel preached by fallible men, we should do it with due *caution*, in opposition to that excessive meekness, or rather stuped tameness, and unmanly servility, which disposes people to swallow down every thing which they hear from the *Pulpit*, right or wrong. There is a wide difference betwixt that vain, carping and contradictory humour, which I have been

SERM. been speaking of above, and the too easy credulity here intended; betwixt the spirit of cavilling, and pertly finding fault with almost every thing, and the dulness of implicit believing. It is the rational and christian part; to steer betwixt these extremes. Nor is it impracticable to keep the middle way in this case; to be neither too vain and opposite on one hand, nor too credulous and submissive on the other.

As we are Christians, the inspired scriptures are our rule of faith and conduct. Them we should ever read and hear with an implicit faith; submitting ourselves wholly to their guidance and direction, after having exercised our best reason in finding out their true sense and meaning. There is not, upon our own principles, any room left for objecting, or doubting, when we are convinced, that these sacred oracles deliver such or such a doctrine; or require us to do such or such a thing. Because "it is impossible for God to lie;" to teach us falshood for truth; or to injoin upon us the performance of any thing which ought not to be done. But too many teachers, exclusively of those in the well-known church, which gives herself the courteous title of *infallible*, have approached very near to the same insolence and arrogance; putting themselves almost, if not altogether, upon the same footing with *Moses* and the *Prophets*, *Christ* and the *Apostles*. Yea, I wish they had not in effect assumed to them-



themselves an higher seat, and greater authority, than they allow to *Moses* and to *Christ*, as tho' the servant were above his Lord, and the servant greater than his Master. For why else, in the name of God! do they disparage the holy scriptures, by representing them as an insufficient rule of faith, and test of orthodoxy? Why do they practically deny them to be the only standard and touchstone of Christian verity, by cramming us with their *Creeeds*, and such like *trumpery*? Why is all this lumber of Confessions and Formularies, laid upon us? a load which we are not *able to bear*; and, which some others would not perhaps have been, had they not been originally designed for *creatures of burthen*? Why else are we told by many, that besides believing the oracles of God, we must, before we can be orthodox, believe *their* oracles? oracles as uncertain as the old *Delphian*; or any others which the *Pagan Fathers* consulted with gaping stupidity, and sottish amazement? Why else, do many of our *Pulpit-Performers* demand at least as great a deference to be paid to their harrangues and dogma's, as to the sacred writings, given confessedly by inspiration of God? In fine, why else do they not preach Christ Jesus the *Lord*, and themselves only *servants* for Jesus' sake?—But however assuming any of the clergy may be; yet surely those who hear them should not be so excessively tame and servile, as to receive what they advance, without

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without letting it pass thro' their understandings; without seeing it to be conformable either to reason or scripture, or to both. Possibly the word ingrafted by them, may not be word of God, which is able to save the soul; but merely the word of man, and contrary to sound doctrine; and so have a greater tendency to poison and debauch, to mislead and destroy, the soul, than to heal and save it.

NOR is this an incredible supposition, when we reflect what absurd, what inhuman, what blasphemous notions, have, from age to age, been ventilated for the great truths, and most important doctrines of the Gospel, by the ministers of it: Notions, to which we may apply what our Saviour says of false teachers, that they are "wolves in sheep's cloathing;" Notions which worry and perplex the flock of Christ; notions which lead men to destroy the bodies and lives of their neighbours; but have no tendency to benefit their souls; notions which under the fair pretence of exalting the grace, and promoting the honor of God, are really subversive of both. In short, since there is too much reason to think, that some lye in wait to deceive, and wilfully mislead others, for the sake of carrying on their own worldly and ambitious designs; and since the wisest and most upright men, are yet fallible, Christians ought to be cautious and circumspect in their hearing, and not blindly to follow their spiritual guides in any thing. AND

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AND the caution which I am now recommending, is so far from being inconsistent with that *meekness*, with which we ought to receive the ingrafted word; that it is necessarily included in it. From a regard and reverence to the word of God, we are obliged to take heed what we hear and receive from men; lest we should be led astray, either by those who may have an interest in deceiving us; or by those who, thro' common human frailty, may run into error themselves, and endeavour to lead others after them. The very same humility and meekness with which, we ought to receive the truths of God's word, require us to be upon our guard against the errors and delusions of designing or mistaken men; lest, with them, we should *corrupt the word*, by mixing with it what is foreign and heterogeneous and contrary thereto: By which means we may come at length to have another Gospel, so very different from the old, that we cannot apply to it the words of the apostle; that *it is not another*; because it is a system of religion, in the general frame, contexture, and tendency of it, essentially and fundamentally different from that promulgated to the world by Christ and his apostles. And is there not now evidently in the world, another Gospel, in this sense? a Religion, which, tho' it bears the name of *Christian*, does not in reality resemble true primitive Christianity, so much as it does ancient *Paganism*! From whence sprang

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these

SERM. these amazing corruptions, but from incautious  
 II. credulity, and blind submission to the clergy?

BUT to conclude this head: If we would receive the word with due meekness; and with that reverence to the *author and finisher of our faith*, which becomes Christians; we are always to make a wide difference betwixt the scriptures of truth, and the doctrines and explanations of fallible men. That which God has really revealed, cannot mislead us; the words of men may. In reverence to the former, we ought to exercise caution with regard to the latter; and with the noble *Bereans*, to *search the scriptures daily*, whether those things which are preached to us are conformable to them, or not. And though any man should preach to us another doctrine, we ought to reject it with disdain; and this, for the same reason that we ought to receive the word and message of God with meekness and reverence. Yea, "if an Angel from Heaven should preach unto us another Gospel," not I, but the Apostle says, "let him be accursed." Turn not aside upon one hand, to *vain jangling*, and *opposition of science falsely so called*; turn not aside, upon the other hand, to slavish submission, and papal stupidity. Be men; be Christians; be protestants. Use the understandings which God has given you, in seeking his will. Reverence the Revelation which he has favoured you with: Exercise your reason, and the

the liberty you enjoy, in learning the truth, and your Duty from it. Make use of all proper helps in order to gain a right understanding of this revelation ; but submit yourselves blindly to none ; lest they should “ teach for doctrines the commandments of Men.” And if you think I do not now speak to you *the words of truth and soberness, pay no regard to it.* \*

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5. To

\* The following passages, from a Sermon of the excellent Archbishop *Sharpe*, against Creeds, of human composition ; and the vanity and arrogance of those who impose them, is tho't not improper to have a place here.

“ ALL Christians, (says he,) agree that we must be Believers :  
 “ But some, taking Advantage of this, will not allow us to  
 “ have a right Faith, or to be Orthodox Christians, unless  
 “ we come up to all those Notions and Propositions which  
 “ they esteem Articles of Faith. One would think there-  
 “ fore that some Rule ought to be given us, by which we  
 “ might measure the Sufficiency of our Faith, or by which  
 “ we might know when we have believed all that is neces-  
 “ sary ; that so we might not be under the Tyranny of such  
 “ Usurpers upon our Consciences, as would be always im-  
 “ posing on our Faith, till at last they came to make us  
 “ swallow Impossibilities for Divine Revelation. And such  
 “ a Rule, methinks, our Saviour hath here given us. His  
 “ Commission to the Apostles is, *Go into all the World, and*  
 “ *preach the Gospel unto every Creature* ; and he adds, *Who-*  
 “ *soever believeth shall be saved.* Believeth ? believeth what ?  
 “ Why certainly the Gospel that he spoke of before : Who-  
 “ soever believeth the Gospel, and is baptized, shall be  
 “ saved ; that must be his Meaning. It is the Gospel there-  
 “ fore that we must believe ; and to the believing of  
 “ that alone, without any more the Promises of Salvation  
 “ are made. But what is this Gospel ? Why, it is plainly  
 “ that Doctrine which Jesus Christ himself taught, and  
 “ which the Apostles from him preached to the World, and  
 “ which was all in their Times put into Writing, and  
 “ which is all fully contained in those Books that we have

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5. To hear the Word with *meekness*, may moreover comprehend the hearing it with patience, and an affectionate regard, altho' nothing *new* should be offered upon the subject treated of; in contradistinction to that vain curiosity, and idle love of *novelty*, which is to be found in persons who have *itching ears*. The design of Christianity is not so much to please our fancies, and to gratify our curiosity, as better our minds and save our souls: Tho' there is

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“ at this Day in our Hands, which we call the *New-Testament*. This Gospel then is the Rule of our Faith. Every  
 “ Doctrine that is there delivered we must believe: But as  
 “ for any Doctrine that is not there delivered, nor can be deduced from thence, we are not bound to believe that as an  
 “ Article of Faith let it come never so well recommended  
 “ by the Authority of Popes or their Councils, nay, or back'd  
 “ with the Credit of Miracles wrought for the Attestation of  
 “ it. This, I say, is our Rule of Faith: That Rule, which  
 “ OUR CHURCH prescribes to us as well as the Holy Scriptures;  
 “ AND BLESSED BE GOD WE DO SO STRICTLY  
 “ KEEP TO IT. So long as we do so, it is impossible  
 “ but we must be not only a true Church, but also a right  
 “ and a sound Church. We cannot indeed, upon those  
 “ Principles, admit of abundance of Points, which our  
 “ Neighbours lay so much Weight upon, as to make all  
 “ those that deny them to be Infidels and Hereticks. We  
 “ do not believe the Infallibility of the Church, nor the  
 “ Supremacy of the Church of *Rome*, nor Transubstantiation,  
 “ nor Purgatory, nor Invocation of Saints, nor twenty other such Articles, which they make necessary to Salvation. And the Reason is, because we find none of those Things in the Gospel, as it is contained in the Holy  
 “ Scriptures, which we are sure would have been there, if  
 “ God had made it our Duty to have believ'd them. But  
 “ we believe all that the Gospel teacheth, and make use  
 “ likewise of all the Means that are possible to understand  
 “ it in its true Sense: And this we are sure is all that Christ  
 “ hath required of us, as to the Business of Believing.

a great deal therein; which may contribute to the former, as well as every thing needful to the latter. The things of which the Gospel treats, are things *which Angels desire to look into*: Nor is one desire gratified, till new ones arise, there being place and scope given, in this dispensation of the grace of God, for alternate inquiry, and pleasing admiration, 'till time shall be no more. And if we are desirous to hear something *new*, for our improvement as reasonable creatures; if we are desirous hereof, for our edification as Christians; if we want that this glorious light should beam upon us with a fuller ray; if we are desirous to know more of the perfections of the great Father of our spirits; if to understand more of the mystery of our redemption; if we want to be taught more perfectly the way that leads to eternal life, that we may walk therein without deviating; in fine, if we would fain "comprehend with all saints, what is the height and depth, the length and breadth, and would know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God;" if this is our desire, if this our ambition, our ambition is then truly noble and divine. Such a love of *novelty*, such a kind of curiosity, ought certainly to be promoted and countenanced, rather than discouraged: For a man that is truly wise, never thinks he is wise enough; and one truly good, is always sensible that he ought to be better.

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BUT if, on the other hand, you want to hear things that are *new*, merely for the sake of *novelty*; if your desire to know more of God, does not arise from a desire to love him better, and serve him more acceptably; if your desire to know more of your *Redeemer*, is not accompanied with a desire to live more to *Him*, who has died for you; if you want to be more acquainted with Christianity, considered only as a science, or the subject of speculation, not as it is a *doctrine according to Godliness*; in fine, if you want only to have your fancies pleased, and not the salvation of your souls promoted; this surely is a curiosity that is unworthy a Christian. And the hearing of *Novels* and *Romances*, would turn as much to the account of persons of this vain, trifling humour, as all the Sermons that have been, and shall be preached, from the fall of *Adam* to the fall of *Antichrist*: I mean, unless such people should happen to be convinced by them, of the folly and absurdity of hearing merely with this view; and be brought to reflect more seriously upon *the things which belong to their peace*.

THERE are some persons mightily disgusted, if they hear a discourse preached a *second* time; tho' perhaps years after the *first*; and which was so wholly out of their minds, that they would not have known it to be the same, but for one or two sentences, or some one particular word or phrase. Now from what does this disgust arise?

From

From a sincere desire to be edified, as Christians? SERM.  
 or only from an affection for *new* things? from II.  
 trifling curiosity? Is this an indication, that per- ~  
 sons hear the word with a proper temper? Or  
 does it betray an unbecoming levity and capri-  
 ciousness of humour? Or does it proceed from a  
 jealousy that the Preacher does not labour and  
 toil enough for his reward? from a fear that he  
 will not *spend and be spent* soon enough? I am  
 pretty sure it does not usually proceed from any  
 thing that is good and laudable, and which such  
 persons would not be ashamed honestly to confess.

OUR Saviour's discourses often bore a very  
 near resemblance one to the other. The Apostles  
 did not always preach new doctrines; nor yet ex-  
 press the old in different language. Yea, they  
 professedly deliver the *same things* over again;  
 altho' the persons to whom they wrote and prea-  
 ched, *already knew them, and were established in*  
*these truths.* And in fine, when our Lord was  
 instructing his Apostles in their ministerial office,  
 he tells them, that "every scribe which is instruc-  
 "ted unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a  
 "man which is an householder, which bringeth  
 "out of his treasure things *new* and *old.*"

CAN it then be looked upon as blame-worthy,  
 in those who *labour in the word and doctrine,*  
 that they do not always bring forth things that  
 are *new*? The doctrines of the gospel are, in a  
 sense, always new to those who have a proper

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relish for the heavenly *Manna*. Does the same food which we have often satisfied ourselves upon heretofore, disgust us when we are hungry? Do we loath the wine when we are thirsty, because we have often seen it *giving its colour in the glass, and moving itself aright*? You may perhaps think these similitudes too gross. However there is a real and true analogy, betwixt the cravings of the soul, and those of the body: The sincere Christian, far from nauseating the most familiar doctrines of the Gospel, how often soever he has heard them, esteems them as his necessary and daily food, without which, his soul would languish, pine away, and be in a manner famished. It is his *meat* and his *drink* to *bear*, as well as to *do the will of his Father which is in heaven*: Nor is the repetition thereof *in his ear*, more irksome to him, than the continued practice of it *in his life*.

If so be then, we know the grace of God in truth; if we have tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious; if we truly hunger and thirst after righteousness; these old doctrines and commandments, will be ever new and grateful to us. The fruit of that tree of sacred, *unforbidden* knowledge, which God has planted upon earth, will be always sweet to our taste; yea, *sweeter than honey and the honey-comb*. The Gospel in its greatest simplicity, unadorned with the blossoms and flowers of rhetorick, is like the *tree of life*,

men-

mentioned in the *apocalypse*,—a tree which bare  
 “twelve manner of fruit; and the leaves where-  
 “of were for the healing of the nations.” Of  
 this we may freely eat, and live forever.

SERM.

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I am not endeavouring to excuse the lazy and slothful *shepherd*, who takes not due care to feed the *flock* of Christ with knowledge and understanding; to cause it to *lie down in green pastures*, and *lead it beside the still waters*. But yet it is an ill symptom, when people are out of humour, because they are sometimes entertained with an *old discourse*. Nor ought they to expect more of their *Ministers* than their health and strength will allow them to perform. And You know who observed long since, that “much study is a  
 “weariness to the flesh.”

6. THE admonition we are considering, requires us to hear the word with *candor* and *impartiality*, in opposition to personal prejudices, and the spirit of party. The prejudices, and the *bigotry* here intended, have a prodigious and unaccountable influence upon the bulk of mankind; and greatly impede the progress, the salutary tendency, and glorious design of Christianity. Nor can we say with our Saviour upon another occasion, that “from the beginning it was not so.” These things *of old* gave rise to the violent opposition of the *Jews* to our Lord, and his Gospel. His parentage was a great stumbling-block

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II.

to many." Is not this the *Carpenter's son*? The place of his usual abode, was another. "Can any good thing come out of *Nazareth*?" His not being countenanced by the *Pharisees*, the orthodox folks of that day, was a *third objection*. "Have any of the *Pharisees* believed on him?" Thus did personal prejudice, faction and party spirit, reign in the days of our Saviour; and obstruct the progress of his religion; all which things are directly contrary to that meekness and candour, with which we ought to hear the word. The same spirit, the same bigotry discovered itself, more or less, even amongst Christians, during the apostolick age: Of which frequent notice is taken in the new Testament. *St. Paul* in particular speaks of this factious spirit, as a proof of their being *carnal*; and as what prevented their profiting by the word preached. "I have fed you with milk; and not with meat; says he, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it; neither yet now are ye able—For whereas there is among you envying and strife and divisions, are ye not carnal? — For while one saith, I am of *Paul*, and another, I am of *Apollos*, are ye not carnal?" The insisting under particular men, as heads and leaders; and strenuously opposing other teachers at all adventures, was, you see, an error into which Christians fell in very early times: and one quite repugnant to that candor and catholicism, which the Apostles

endeavoured to propagat amongst their converts. SERM.

And this illiberal, pernicious and antichristian. II.

spirit of party has descended from age to age, man-  
 gre all the pains which wise and good men have  
 used to suppress it. Nor would you believe me,  
 if I said there was not a great deal of it to be seen  
 amongst us at this Day. A person under the  
 influence and dominion of this spirit, cannot pos-  
 sibly hear the truth as he ought to do. He will  
 often reject the truth, because it is spoken by a  
 person of another sect or denomination. He will  
 cavil at those things which he wou'd admire and  
 applaud, and get good by, were they delivered  
 by one of his *own side*, his *own party*; by one,  
 against whom he had not conceived a strong pre-  
 judice. Such a Man is also prepared to receive  
 almost any thing for good doctrine, however ab-  
 surd and pernicious, from the mouth of one  
 whom he thinks well of, as being of his own sect;  
 especially if he has a great personal regard and  
 friendship for him.

Now if we would hear the word with due sim-  
 plicity and meekness, it behoves us, as far as  
 possible to devert ourselves of every prejudice.  
 We should lay our minds open to the impressions  
 of truth and reason; not *respecting persons*, nor  
 suffering ourselves to be carried away with blind  
 zeal for a party. Whenever we go to hear, we  
 should do it with a mind prepared to receive  
 whatever may be conformable to reason, and the  
 holy

SERM. II. holy scriptures, without regard to names, persons, and party-differences. And it is to be hoped, that one who hears with this candid, and ingenuous temper, being truly desirous of improvement, will scarce ever be *sent empty away*; or return without benefit. That must be a worse Sermon than ever I have heard, (tho' I will not add, than ever I have preached) from which some good might not accrue to the meek and impartial hearer. The temper which I am now recommending, like the fabled hand of *Midas*, turns every thing into *gold*; even *lead* and *brass*. It has the happy power of making a good use and improvement of almost any thing; not excepting the *wood, hay* and *stubble*, which are the superstructure raised by some unskillful builders, upon the foundation of the gospel; instead of building *gold, silver* and *precious stones*.

7. CHRISTIANS should hear the word, with *self application*; as opposed to the common humour of applying things to their neighbours. The primary and great end of hearing the Gospel, is the improving of *our own* minds in knowledge and virtue; that *our own* souls may be saved thereby. There are, however, some who overlook this end; almost forgetting that they have any souls to be saved; and very carefully observing whatever is applicable to the case of others. When any particular vice is struck at, instead

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instead of asking their own hearts, how far they are chargeable therewith, they immediately fix upon one and other as the persons to whom this belongs; tho' perhaps they are far more guilty themselves. Strange absurdity! that people will so readily see a *mote* in their brother's eye, and yet cannot, or rather will not, perceive the beam that is in their own. "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye". Before we apply things to our neighbours, we should think of our own Sins, which are perhaps, greater; and *take the portion that falleth to us*. How absurd is it for him that commits *sacrilege*, to fix his eye on him that *steals*? for him that commits *adultery*, to keep in view him that offends, comparatively in a *less atrocious* way? for him that *fear-eth not God*, to cast a censorious look on him that *regardeth not man*? When we hear the word preached, our business is at *home*, with our own hearts and consciences; and we shall probably find employment enough *there*, without wandering thus unseasonably abroad. We should behold our own face and moral features, in the intellectual mirror which is held up before us; in order to see our own spots and blemishes, and to wipe away the stains which deform us. We do not hear the word as we ought to do, unless we thus bring it home to our selves; and aim at correct-

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SERM. ing what we find amiss in our tempers and man-  
 II. ners, upon a careful inspection into our own  
 hearts. The contrary humour of applying what  
 is said, to our neighbours, is owing to pride and  
 self-confidence : It proceeds from a spirit of cen-  
 soriousness, uncharity and arrogance ; and so is  
 the very reverse of that meekness and humility,  
 with which we ought to receive the ingrafted  
 word. And indeed what good can we expect  
 from hearing, unless we make the proper appli-  
 cation to our-selves, instead of hearing only *for*  
*others ?*

LASTLY ; and to sum up all in one word :  
 We should hear with a single view to our being  
 edified as Christians ; and that we may, at length  
 receive that which is the great end of the gospel,  
 and of our faith in it, the Salvation of our Souls.  
 Whenever we go to hear, we should seriously re-  
 flect with ourselves what is the grand scope and  
 design of Christianity, that so we may hear with a  
 temper and disposition corresponding thereto.  
 This is the sum of all that has been said above up-  
 on the subject ; the result and conclusion of this  
 whole matter. Now we cannot but know, that  
 this gospel of the kingdom, which is, from time  
 to time, preached to us, is a dispensation of the  
 grace of God to a guilty lost world ; a revelation  
 of his mercy to us by his Son, considered as sinful  
 perishing creatures, justly liable to wrath and de-  
 struction ; a discovery of God's kind intentions  
 towards

towards us in general ; and more particularly, of SERM.  
the method which his infinite wisdom has pitched II.  
upon, and ordained, for our restoration to his ~~~~~  
favour, to true wisdom, holiness and happiness ;  
the end of all being the salvation of our souls.

THIS is the manifest scope and aim of the Christian revelation : And while we keep this in view, we can hardly fail of perceiving how, and with what temper this divine message ought to be received. The nature of the thing will scarce permit one that attends to it, to be at any loss in the present case. While we consider the Majesty of that God who is speaking to us in his word, and our own sinfulness and unworthiness ; while we consider the subject matter of this revelation, and the glorious Dignity of that Person who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven ; while we consider the glory and happiness to which we are called and invited by the gospel, and the destruction threatned to those who obstinately “ reject the counsel of God “ against themselves ;” in fine, while we consider that our immortal souls are at stake, and are either to be saved or lost, according to the reception which we give to this heavenly message ; while we consider these things, we cannot but know, that it becomes us to hear it with diligence, and the greatest care ; with seriousness and gravity ; with all meekness and humility ; with caution and circumspection, with affection and love ; with  
candor,

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II.

candor, fairness and impartiality ; with a desire to inform and better our minds ; and, in fine, with an earnest desire, that the end of it may be answered in the salvation of our souls. This is plainly the manner, this the way, this the temper and disposition, with which we ought to hear and receive the ingrafted word. And if we receive it thus, it will by God's blessing, be effectual to the end and purpose for which it is preached. If not, we shall in the language of scripture, " receive the grace of God in vain."

BUT there is something previously requisite in order to our receiving the word in the manner described, which is, that we renounce all our gross and sensual lusts ; those vicious habits which the light of nature condemns ; which darken and pervert our understandings ; and make us disrelish the pure truths and doctrines, as well as the duties of the gospel. We are to " lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness," before we can receive the ingrafted word in such a manner as is necessary to the salvation of our souls. But of this in the next discourse ; concluding the present with the words of the apostle—" They received  
" not the love of the truth that they might be  
" saved. And for this cause, God shall send  
" them strong delusion, that they should believe  
" a lye ; that they all might be damned, who  
" believed not the truth, but had pleasure in un-  
" righteousness. "

SERMON



S E R M O N III.

The Necessity of renouncing Vice  
in its grosser Forms, in order to  
a due receiving of the Gospel.

JAMES I. 21, 22.

*LAY apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

“IT pleases God, by the foolishness of  
“preaching to save them that believe.”

This is the principal method which He has ordained for promulgating the Gospel amongst all nations ; and handing it down from age to age, ’till the end of the world : The way which he has appointed for bringing back those who, like sheep, have gone astray from him ; that there may be one fold and one shepherd.

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III.

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SERM. It is an undoubted truth, that every one that call-  
 III. leth aright on the name of the Lord, shall be  
 } saved, in whatever age, in whatever region of  
 the world, his lot is cast : “ But (in the language  
 “ of the Apostle) how shall they call on Him,  
 “ on whom they have not believed ? And how  
 “ shall they believe in Him, of whom they have  
 “ not heard ? And how shall they hear without  
 “ a preacher ? — So then, faith cometh by hear-  
 “ ing ; and hearing by the word of God.”  
 This is that word, that ingrafted word, which is  
*able to save our souls ; and which, laying apart*  
*all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, we*  
*should receive with meekness.*

I HAVE already taken occasion from this pas-  
 sage of scripture, to show the indispensable duty  
 lying upon all Christians in general to be *bearers*  
 of the word.

I HAVE moreover shown, with what *meekness*  
 the gospel ought to be heard and received by all,  
 from a consideration of the nature and design  
 of it ; it being the doctrine of our salvation by  
 Jesus Christ ; the word brought from heaven to  
 earth, to be *ingrafted* into our hearts, that we  
 might have our *fruit unto holiness* ; and the end,  
 everlasting life.

I now proceed as was proposed in the *third*  
 place,

THIRDLY,

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III.



*THIRDLY*, To show the necessity of *abandoning* our gross and sensual lusts, those vices and evil habits which even the light of nature condemns, in order to our receiving the Gospel with due meekness ; and in such a manner as is requisite in order to our salvation. This is the natural import and connexion of the apostles words—*Lay apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness ; AND receive with meekness, &c.* [“ All filthiness.”] The word denotes the more fordid and brutal vices ; particularly those sins which in the language of scripture, go under the name of *uncleanness* ; and *fleshly lusts*, which are said to *war against the soul*. [“ Superfluity of “ naughtiness.” ] The *redundance* and *abounding* of iniquity ; the *gross, palpable* violations of the law of nature ; those *flagrant* and *enormous* sins, for which we could have *no cloke*, no excuse, altho’ Christ had never come, and spoken to the world. The renouncing of these heinous immoralities, is, I suppose, what the Apostle intends by *laying apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness*. And this we are admonished to do, in order to our receiving the word with meekness ; it being impossible for men wholly under the dominion of sensual lusts, to give that cordial reception to the Gospel, which is here intended ; and which is necessary in order to its answering the design of it, in the salvation of their souls.

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BUT according to this interpretation, some will perhaps ask, “ whether we do not make the Apostle guilty of this absurdity and inconsistency ; *namely*, of supposing, that vicious men must become virtuous and holy, in order to their receiving the gospel ; whereas this is the very end which the Gospel aims at ? How can we attain to holiness but by the gospel ? by receiving the word ? And yet, according to the above interpretation, we cannot receive the word, till we are actually become holy ? or ’til we have *laid apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness* ; which amounts to the same thing ? Here is a manifest circle.”

I ANSWER, That the Apostle, by *laying apart all filthiness*, &c. cannot be here supposed to mean any thing more than a *partial* reformation of mind and manners ; such a one as does not come up to our idea of evangelical holiness ; but which is, at the same time, a step towards it ; as it prepares and qualifies a person for receiving the word as he ought to do ; as it renders him a proper subject for the gospel to work upon. And if we understand him thus, it will wholly remove all appearance of inconsistency. For certainly we may suppose a vicious man reformed in some considerable measure ; and yet destitute of that true principle of piety and holiness, which it is the design of the Gospel to beget in us. But in order to set this matter in as clear a light

as I can, I would premise two or three things SERM.  
 more particularly, as follows.

III.

I. THERE is a real and manifest difference betwixt a person, who is only free from those gross pollutions of the world; from that great depravity of mind and manners, intended by a *superfluity of naughtiness*, and a thorough Christian; one who is already made meet for, and entitled to eternal life. If it may be said of the former, that he is “not far from the kingdom of God;” the latter is actually in it, and a loyal subject of it. If one of them is not intirely under the dominion of sin; the other is a *servant of righteousness*. If one is in some measure delivered from the habits and practice of vice; the other has the positive principles and habits of virtue. If one has in part, “put off the old man with his deeds, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts”; the other has “put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. If one is not wholly subjected to the devil, “the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience”; the other has a divine nature implanted in him, being “renewed in the spirit of his mind”. In fine, there is plainly a distinction to be made, betwixt one who has only so much sense of religion and virtue, as to make him abstain from those heinous immoralities which the light of nature condemns; and one who is,

SERM. in the sense of scripture, a righteous good man,  
 III. “ bringing forth good things out of the good  
 } treasure of his heart. ”

2. THE Gospel is the great means which God has appointed for the raising of men to that new, spiritual and divine life, which constitutes the *Christian character*. It is especially in this dispensation of grace, that we have the things that “ pertain to godliness ”. Hereby, and herein, are given to us “ great and precious promises, that by them we may be made partakers of a divine nature, having [ before ] escaped the corruptions that are in the world thro’ lust. ”

3. THAT the Gospel may have this happy effect upon us, it is necessary that it should be heartily embraced ; that it should be *received in meekness*. If it is not received at all, it can have no such influence upon us ; nor indeed can it, unless it is received with that temper of mind, which our Saviour and the Apostles always recommend to us.

THESE things being premised, whoever attends to the thing, will easily see that a person who runs to every *excess of riot and debauchery* ; one who *commits iniquity with greediness* ; and lays no restraints upon himself ; that has no *fear of God before his eyes* ; nor any awakened sense  
 of

of religion ; that such a person, I say, is not in SERM.  
 a *present capacity* for receiving the Gospel, III.  
 in the manner it is necessary it should be received, }  
 in order to its being to him “ the power of God  
 unto salvation ”. There is a certain preparation,  
 or previous qualification for entertaining this hea-  
 venly doctrine, of which he is destitute. Persons  
 who are all immersed in sensuality and vice ; those  
 in whose mortal bodies sin reigns triumphant ;  
 and whose very “ mind and conscience is defiled,”  
 must be reformed in *some degree*, and brought to  
 more sober reflection, before they either will, or  
 can in the nature of the thing, give such a meek  
 and cordial reception to the ingrafted word, as is  
 requisite in order to their being saved by it.

THERE is a strong antipathy in a man who is  
 under the government of pride and sensual lusts,  
 to the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel : So  
 that he cannot in a moment, bring himself to a  
 proper temper of mind to receive it, tho’ he were  
 desirous of it. He has that *carnal mind* which is  
*enmity against God* ; which is not *subject to his*  
*laws*, neither indeed *can be* : So that they who  
 are thus *in the flesh*, are not in an immediate ca-  
 pacity to *please God*, by receiving his word with  
 meekness ; much less, by the exercise of those  
 virtues and graces which good men are the sub-  
 jects of. They whose great concern it is, “ to  
 make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts  
 thereof ” ; they that do not “ hunger and thirst

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after righteousness"; they that have no concern for the salvation of their souls; but give full scope to their vicious inclinations; these persons, continuing such, cannot, by any means, be supposed to be in a condition for receiving the word; they cannot receive it with that seriousness, with that humility and meekness, with that love to the truth, with that hearty desire of improvement, with which it is to be received by all, in order to it's grand design being answered upon them. No; 'til their consciences are alarmed; 'til they see in some measure the folly and danger of sin, 'til they find some inclination to turn from it to God, that they may obtain his favour, and life eternal, they will not truly *receive* the Gospel into their hearts; tho' they may hear it with their ears from day to day.

VICE, when indulged to a great degree, puts a strong, tho' sometimes an unperceived, unsuspected, bias upon the human mind; so that some persons who imagine they hear with all due candor, impartiality and meekness, are very far from it in reality; hearing with great prejudice, and a secret disgust, which prevents it's taking root in their hearts, and producing the good fruits of righteousness. Any one that pleases, may see that this is a sentiment which runs thro' the scriptures, and which often occurs in the new-testament more particularly. Thus our Saviour says, that " he that doeth evil, hateth the light,

light, and will not come to the light, lest his deeds which are evil should be reprov'd". According-ly he applies to the vicious and hardened Jews of his time, the emphatical words of the prophet — "In them, says he, is fulfilled the prophecy of *Isaiab*, which saith, *By hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand; and seeing, ye shall see, and shall not perceive. For this people's heart is waxed gross; and their ears are dull of hearing; and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears; and should understand with their heart; and should be converted, and I should heal them.*" Conformably hereto the Apostle speaks of some, to whom the gospel is hid; and tells us *who* they are. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world has blinded the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel — should shine unto them." So in the well-known parable of the sower, the *good seed* is represented as taking effect, and producing fruit to purpose, only when it fell upon *good ground*, adapted and prepared to receive it; *i. e.* according to our Lord's own explanation, the word sown takes effect only in those who receive it into an *honest and good heart*. There is a degree of integrity, honesty and uprightnes, previously necessary, in order to a cordial and effectual receiving of the gospel, according to our Saviour's doctrine.

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III.

SERM. doctrine. Those who are destitute of this, being  
 III. wholly sunk into vice and voluptuousness, will  
 not hear to purpose. Those who have that temper which our Saviour expresses by an *honest and good heart*, he elsewhere styles *his sheep*; antecedently to their actually believing in him; and assures us that they will *hear his voice and follow him*. And in conformity to this principle, we are to understand those words of our Lord, which so often occur in his discourses.—“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” Let those hear, who have in them the principles of recovery; those who are not so lost to all sense of religion and virtue, as to be past it.

It is not much to be wondered at, if resolved hardened transgressors; if those who commit iniquity with greediness, rolling it as a sweet morsel under their tongue; if those who are given up to all *filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness*; it is not to be wondered at, if such abandoned sinners often hear the gospel of the kingdom, without receiving any considerable benefit from it. They are not at present, proper matter for it to work upon. Tho' they hear the truth, and the doctrines of salvation, they cannot receive it in the love of it, *having pleasure only in unrighteousness*. They are stupified with the poisonous draught, which they have taken. And the word is no sooner heard perhaps, than it is forgotten, and snatched away from them, as it were by some evil, malicious spirit; snatched away,

away, like the *seed* which fell by the *way side*. SERM.

The mind, that is carnalized, and depraved to the degree that is here intended, is moreover a very unfit habitation for the Holy Spirit of God; without whose blessed influences, the seed sown in our hearts, does never take root and bring forth fruit. In the language of the book of *Wisdom*,  
“ Froward thoughts separate from God—[And]  
“ Into a malicious soul wisdom shall not enter;  
“ nor dwell in the body that is subject unto sin:  
“ For the Holy Spirit of discipline will flee deceit; and remove from thoughts that are without understanding; and will not abide when  
“ unrighteousness cometh in.” That pure divine truth, which we do not love; that Spirit of grace and discipline, which we quench and grieve, by the habitual indulgence of our sensual appetites, cannot but be unwelcome guests to our souls, thus debased and imbruted. This “superfluity  
“ of naughtiness, and the spirit that worketh in  
“ the children of disobedience;” throw a thick veil over the human mind; and unite in darkening and blinding it. They extinguish every divine ray, ere it can pierce the gloom; and put out that candle of the Lord, which was originally lighted up in our hearts to guide us to Him. They destroy our natural sense and feeling of moral and religious truths; and especially all the mental faculties, however bright before. They hebetate and blunt all the noble powers of the  
foul;

SERM. soul ; and render it unsusceptible of good im-  
 III. pressions. They destroy all relish of intellectual  
 and spiritual enjoyments ; and take away the  
 heart from God ; from his word and institutions ;  
 and even from those things which the light of  
 nature strongly recommends to the love and  
 practice of all men, who have not thus abused  
 and perverted their minds. And when the light  
 that is in us, is thus turned into darkness, thro'  
 long, invetrate habits of sinning against the light,  
 “ how great is that darkness !”

Is it very strange, if such abandoned sinners  
 do not receive with *meekness* the ingrafted word ?  
 Is it to be wondered at, if persons so intirely un-  
 der the dominion of fleshly lusts, and the God of  
 this world ; persons thus lost to all sense of virtue  
 and religion ; should have their minds blinded to  
 such a degree, that the Gospel is hid from them ;  
 not being able to shine thro' such a thick, gross  
 and impure *medium*, into their hearts, “ to give  
 them the light of the knowledge of the glory of  
 God, in the face of Jesus Christ ?” No surely ;  
 if they do not admit, but exclude this heavenly  
 light, it is what might be expected. For it seems  
 necessary in the nature of the thing, that men  
 should be awakened to some sense of religion ;  
 that they should be brought to sober reflection ;  
 and devest themselves, in some measure, of the  
 grosser habits of sin and vice, previously to the  
 word's being ingrafted into their hearts so effec-  
 tually

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tually, as to transform them into the divine likeness; and cause them to bring forth fruit unto God. The light of reason must be permitted to shine into our hearts, before the light of revelation can be cordially received; the voice of natural conscience must be heard, and listened to, before the voice of God in his word will be duly regarded: We cannot be *christians* in temper and conduct, without being first *sober* and *moral* in our lives, without first *laying apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness*, and abstaining from gross vice and dissoluteness. This is a necessary preparation for, and the first step towards, our becoming *Christians* in reality; and being “holy in all manner of conversation and godliness.”

It is not only those which are peculiarly termed *sensual lusts*, that stupify the consciences of men, and indispose them for receiving the truth in the love of it. All other kinds of gross immoral indulgence, have a similar tendency to render the heart callous; and insensible to the impressions of evangelical truth and righteousness. All kinds of vice in general, are contrary to that religion, which is *pure and undefiled before God*. So that those who give the reins to any known and heinous sin; those who *sell themselves to do any kind of iniquity*, cannot relish *the truth as it is in Jesus*. Both the doctrines and duties of Christianity, must needs be disgustful to their depraved and vitiated taste: And it is at least morally,

SERM. morally, if not naturally impossible, that they  
 III. should receive the Gospel into their hearts, 'till  
 such time as they renounce all gross immoralities ;  
 'till they come to be tho'tful and serious ; and are  
 heartily desirous to know " the things that be-  
 long to their peace."

No man can sincerely and cordially embrace the gospel, while he remains hardened in sin ; and is unconcerned about his salvation. The receiving of it with meekness, presupposes that a person's conscience is awakened ; that he is sensible of his sins ; that he is sorry for them, willing to forsake them, and to become the servant of God and righteousness. 'Tis preposterously absurd to think that any one can properly receive the ingrafted word ; or " believe to the saving of his soul," before he is brought to such a temper of mind ; or while he perseveres in his transgressions, with a seared conscience, having no *fear of God before their Eyes.*

It will be objected, perhaps, that the professed design of Christianity, is to reform a vicious, degenerate world : And if so, the most corrupt and abandoned men, cannot be supposed to be got beyond the reach of it ; since God undoubtedly accommodates all means to the ends proposed in them. Whereas in what has been said above, the Gospel is supposed to be suted and accommodated only to the state of those who are the *least corrupted and depraved* ; while those who are the  
 most

*most* abandoned, and who consequently *most need* to be reclaimed from the error of their ways, are not in a capacity of receiving it in such a manner as is necessary to that end. If only those who have already put away *all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness*, can receive the word with *meekness*, so as to be saved by it; the Gospel must be quite useless to a great, if not the greatest part of mankind; and it is to no purpose to preach it to them.

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I ANSWER, that to say a man is not in a *present* temper and disposition to give that humble and meek reception to the gospel, which is necessary in order to his being saved by it at last; is quite a different thing from saying, that he can receive *no good* at all from it; and that it must prove a *useless, dead letter to him*. These things are very distinct; nor does the latter follow from the former, by natural deduction and inference. For altho' some persons, by reason of their great wickedness, and hardness of heart, are not in an immediate and present capacity to embrace the Gospel of Christ, with that sincerity and humility, which is necessary before the design of it can be fully answered upon them; yet by hearing it from time to time, they may, with the ordinary blessing of God, and that grace of His, which always accompanies the word preached, be awakened out of their fatal slumber; and in the language of scripture, *pricked in their hearts*, so as to be *seriously*

SERM. riously inquisitive, *what they shall do to be saved?*

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In other words, the gospel may take hold of their hearts to such a degree, as to convince them of the folly and danger of going on in their transgressions; and make them heartily solicitous to *fly from the wrath to come*; and to obtain eternal life. And when persons are thus stopped in their mad career; brought to think upon their ways; and made seriously inquisitive about their salvation; then it is, that they have the temper of mind with which the Gospel ought to be received, tho' they had it not before.

WHAT I intend, is this, That altho' no man who is grossly vicious and immoral; that is secure and unconcerned; that sins with an *high hand*; boldly transgressing the laws of God, and violating the law of his mind; that tho' no such person, I say, is now in a temper of mind for receiving the gospel as it must needs be received, before the full design of it can be answered upon him; yet he may possibly hear it so as to bring him to that temper. In which respect, the Word preached may be beneficial to the worst of men, as well as to the less abandoned: For surely it is so to all whom it rouses from their lethargy in sin, to sober thoughtfulness and reflection; producing some reformation in them, tho' at present very imperfect. Our Saviour pronounces *blessed*, not only those who are already *filled with righteousness*; but also those who *hunger and thirst after*

it; because they are in a hopeful and probable way to be filled. By such, the gospel will be received in a manner suitable to the design of it: They are prepared to have it actually *ingrafted* into their hearts; and it is to be hoped, that He *who has* thus, by his word and spirit, *begun a good work in them, will perfect it unto the day of Christ.*

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THUS is the gospel calculated for the good of all. Those who are not depraved to a great degree, will of course receive it, and be truly good and virtuous by it. And even the more vicious and abandoned part of mankind, may be awakened and influenced by it to such a degree as shall make them desirous of relinquishing their former sins, and *turning their feet into God's testimonies*; that so they may obtain the pardon and salvation offered to sinners in it. And those who are brought to this temper of mind, will then of course receive the spiritual and incorruptable seed into their hearts, as into *good ground*, into a soil prepared for, and adapted to it. In consequence of which they will "bring forth fruit, some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold."

BUT alas! it was never supposed that the gospel, however *sufficient*, would prove *effectual* in the event, for the reformation and salvation of all those to whom it is preached. Many of those to whom it was preached of old, as it is to us now,

SERM. it did not profit, not being mixed with faith in  
 III. them that heard it. There are some in every  
 age, so resolutely set and determined in the ways  
 of folly and vice, given over to such *filthiness*, to  
 such a *superfluity of naughtiness*, that they will  
 not give any heed or credit to this divine mes-  
 sage. "This is the condemnation, that light is  
 " come into the world; and many love dark-  
 " ness better than light, because their deeds are  
 " so evil." Our Saviour had occasion to tell  
 many, to whom he himself preached, that they  
 " would not come unto him that they might  
 " have life." And when he commanded his  
 Apostles to "go into all the world, and preach  
 " the gospel to every creature;" he intimated to  
 them, that they should bear these glad tidings *in*  
*vain*, and to no purpose, as to many. For he  
 then told them what should be the portion of  
 those who *believed not*, as well as of those who  
 believed, and gave heed to their doctrine. The  
 gospel is published amongst all nations, not up-  
 on a presumption that all who hear it, will meek-  
 ly receive it, and be saved: But it is preached  
 for a *witness*, for a testimony to all; and they are  
 all left to regard, or disregard it, as they think  
 proper; a day being appointed of God, in which  
 he will judge the world in righteousness. Some  
 have those ingenuous principles remaining in  
 them, which render them fit subjects for the gos-  
 pel to operate upon; and these being Christ's  
*sheep,*

*sheep*, and given to him of the Father, will, accordingly hear his voice, and receive his gospel with *meekness*; and he will give unto them eternal life. Others being *incurable*, and *past recovery*; ( I mean in that way and method which the wisdom of God has fixed upon for the reclaiming and saving of sinners ) they will accordingly stop their ears against this joyful sound; and close their eyes against the heavenly light; they will not heartily embrace the Gospel; and so will at length receive the end of their wickedness, and incredulity, as others will *the end of their faith*.

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THUS were the Apostles, tho' they preached the gospel of peace to *all indifferently*, " the favour of life unto life " only to *some*; being to *others*, " the favour of death unto death " : And thus it will probably be, from generation to generation, to the end of the world : Only we have great reason to conclude, from the oracles of God, that a glorious state of things will hereafter take place upon earth, and be of *long continuance*; a state, wherein the unrighteous, and unbelieving shall bear but a very small and inconsiderable proportion to the true servants of God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. — *Life and death, blessing, and cursing, are*, from one age to another, set before All in general; " and whether they like is given to them ". Nor will the perfections of God, be less conspicuous in the perdition of ungodly men; who obey not the truth, but obey

SERM. unrighteousness; than in the salvation of those,  
 III. who having laid apart all filthiness and superfluity  
 of naughtiness, receive with meekness the ingrafted word; and bring forth the fruits thereof with patience.

LET me conclude this discourse, with a few short reflections.

I. THIS subject suggests to us the wisdom of applying ourselves to the concerns of religion, and another world, in youth, before the habits of sin and vice, are become strong and inveterate. Persons usually wax worse and worse, 'til such time as they begin to reform and grow better: The farther we proceed in the paths of iniquity, by so much more difficult will it be for us to retreat; to receive the gospel of the kingdom into our hearts; and to become Christ's true disciples; his loyal subjects. Such is the deceitfulness of sin, that it steals upon us unawares, and hardens us by insensible degrees; 'til in process of time, it takes a deep and full possession of us, so that it is as easy for "the *Æthiopian* to change his skin, or the *Leopard* his spots," as for us, thus accustomed to do evil, to learn to do well. So that those who do not in early life, remember their Creator, and receive the Gospel of their Redeemer with meekness; may come at length to receive it with mockery and derision; "crucifying

to themselves the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame :” To whom there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.” And thus the gospel which was *ordained unto life*, proves only *the savour of death unto death.*

But,

2. LET us not conclude that we are true Christians, and intitled to the salvation of the gospel, merely because we are not flagrantly immoral and vicious in our lives. For altho’ we may, in the sense of the Apostle, have *laid apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness*; we may yet fall short of that *holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.* The gospel has not answered it’s design upon us, ’til we have so received the *truth* into our hearts, as to be *sanctified* by it; ’til we are “transformed by the renewing of our minds, and the washing of the Holy Ghost,” into the image of God and of our Saviour. This is the great end proposed in the gospel; in order whereunto, it is to be meekly hearkened to from time to time; it must be *ingrafted* into our hearts; and incorporated; if I may so express it, with our very souls and natures — But I shall have occasion to speak more upon this point hereafter, in another discourse.

3. SUFFER me to warn all who allow themselves in any vicious practices, especially in such sins as the light of their own consciences con-

SERM. demns, immediately to renounce them; that so  
 III. they may be in a capacity for duly receiving the  
 doctrines of the gospel; and may bring forth the  
 fruits of righteousness unto life eternal. Give  
 heed to the divine admonition in my text; and  
*lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness*: for then, and not 'til then, will you receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls. Do not endeavour, I beseech you, to stifle the convictions of your own minds and consciences, which may perhaps tell some of you, that you are *particularly concerned* in this counsel. If your own hearts condemn you, as habitual transgressors of God's commandments, remember that "He is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things;" and that He "now commandeth all men every where to repent, for that he hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world in righteousness." We are apt to be partial to ourselves; to make too favourable allowances; to make the best of every thing, on our own side. But if, notwithstanding this natural propensity to think and judge favourably of ourselves, our own hearts still misgive and condemn us; how much more surely will that God condemn us, who is greater than our hearts? Who is no respecter of persons? and whose judgment is always according to truth?

BE assured, that while you are knowingly and habitually guilty of any immoral practices, you

are

are not only out of the kingdom of God, but SERM.  
*far from it*; so far that you are not even in a III.  
 capacity, at present, to receive that gospel, which is }  
 designed to bring you into it; and to make you  
 the heirs of salvation. Let us therefore lay our  
 hands upon our hearts, and ask ourselves as in  
 the presence of God, who will judge us another  
 day, whether we have *laid apart all filthiness and*  
*superfluity of naughtiness*? Or whether we live in  
 known, wilful Sin? Is there no kind of profane-  
 ness or dissoluteness; no kind of falshood or un-  
 righteousness; no sin against God, our neighbour  
 or ourselves, evidently contrary to the light and  
 law of nature, which we indulge ourselves in?  
 What answer do your consciences make? *Guilty,*  
*or not guilty*? If you are not guilty, it may be  
 rationally concluded, either that you have already  
*received the ingrafted word* into your hearts, or  
 that you will soon do so; and gradually “*cleanse*  
*yourself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit;*  
*perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*” There is a  
 good foundation laid, when persons are become  
 sober and moral in their lives; tho’ they may  
 still fall short of that religion which is *pure and un-*  
*defiled before God and the Father.* But if you  
 still live in *filthiness*, and the *superfluity of naugh-*  
*tiness*; you come short, not only of the *Christian*  
*character*, but even *that* of a sober, virtuous  
*Pagan.* Nor is it to be wondered at, if persons  
 of this flagitious character, who daily sin against

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the light of natural conscience, should continue inimical in their hearts, to the doctrines of the gospel; 'til, having filled up the measure of their iniquities, they receive the due reward of their deeds. However, the case even of such profligate sinners, (if there are any such amongst us) is not quite desperate; tho' the longer they persevere in their evil courses, abusing the goodness and patience of God, which is designed to lead them to repentance; the less ground there will be to hope for their reformation. "Wherefore as  
" the Holy Ghost saith, to day, if ye will hear  
" his voice, harden not your hearts; as in the  
" day of provocation—when your fathers temp-  
" ted me—Wherefore I was grieved with that  
" generation; and said, they do always err in  
" their heart; and they have not known my  
" ways. So I swear in my wrath, they shall  
" not enter into my rest. Take heed, brethren,  
" lest there be in any of you an evil heart of un-  
" belief in departing from the living God. But  
" exhort one another daily while it is called, To  
" Day; lest any of you be *hardened thro' the*  
" *deceitfulness of sin.*"

Heb. 3. 7.

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SERMON



S E R M O N IV.

Upon the Necessity of yielding a *practical* Obedience to the Gospel, in order to obtaining the Salvation proposed in it.

JAMES I. 21, 22.

*LAY* apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

**I**T is unquestionably the duty of all Christians to be *bearers* of the word read and preached in the assemblies of the saints; this being a divine institution: As was shown in the *first* discourse upon this subject.

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IN the *next*, the duty of *receiving* the word with *meekness* was more particularly considered, and enforced.

It

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IT was shown in the *last* discourse, That in order to our receiving the word in a suitable manner, so that the design of it may be answered upon us, it is necessary that we *lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness*; or in other words, that we renounce vice and immorality in all its *grosser forms*. It is not possible for those who are regardless even of *natural* religion; and who are given over to work all uncleanness with greediness; it is not possible for such abandoned sinners, continuing such, to receive the *revealed* word of God with a proper temper of mind. They are not in a present capacity for giving a due reception to the Gospel of Christ. There is somewhat previously requisite, or preparatory, thereto; which is, that they relinquish their brutal lusts, and all gross immoralities; and are heartily desirous of being taught the way that leads to eternal life: Then, and not before, are persons capable of giving that cordial and meek reception to the ingrafted word, which is required in order to the salvation of their souls.

THIS is a short view of the subject, so far as it has been treated already: And the next thing in course, according to the method proposed, is to show,

*FOURTHLY*, The necessity of *obeying* the Gospel, in order to our receiving the salvation of it. The apostle tells us, that *the ingrafted word is able*

able to save our souls : But immediately subjoins, SERM.

“ But be ye *doers* of the word, and not *bearers* IV.

“ *only*, deceiving your own selves.” q. d. “ God having revealed to you the way of life and salvation, it behoves you carefully to hearken to this revelation, and meekly to receive it. But I warn you against so fatal an error as this, that barely hearing the Gospel of the kingdom, without obeying it, will intitle you to that salvation which is revealed to sinners therein. You will grossly and fatally delude your selves, if you expect salvation upon any other terms, than those of conforming your tempers and manners to the rules of life contained in this revelation, which you hear, and profess to receive. ”

It will be apparent to every one who carefully looks into this Epistle, that St. *James*, the author of it, designedly combates some libertine notions of Christianity, which began in those early times, to creep into the church ; which notions whenever, and wherever they prevail, must in a great measure, frustrate the design of the Gospel ; which is to make men truly good and virtuous here, in order to their being happy hereafter.

It is indeed strange that all men, even upon the most slight and cursory view of Christianity, as it is delivered to us in the *new testament*, should not immediately see that it is a *doctrine according to Godliness*, not a *doctrine of licentiousness* ; that the great aim of it, is to make us fear and love God,

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God, and work righteousness ; that it promises eternal life only to the pure in heart, and holy in all manner of conversation ; and that it is so far from giving wicked men, continuing such, any hopes of pardon and salvation, that it assures them of the contrary, in the most plain, strong and emphatical terms. It is very strange that every one should not at once see that this is the real truth of the case ; without attempting to evade the matter by any kind of distinctions or refinements. But alas ! so devoted are some men to their lusts, and at the same so loth to renounce all the hopes of a blessed immortality, that they will endeavour to make a life of sin and disobedience, no insuperable obstruction or bar, in the way of their salvation ; speaking peace to themselves while they are walking in the paths of destruction, and the most certain, inevitable ruin. Thus it is that some persons in every age and country, since the Gospel has been promulgated to the world, have been *deceiving their own selves* ; by imagining, that the being *doers of the word*, was not really necessary in order to the obtaining of God's favour, and future blessedness.

Now I am to show in general in this discourse, the indispensable necessity of obeying the Gospel in order to our being intitled to the salvation of it : leaving some of the most common mistakes and errors concerning this important point, to be *more particularly* considered and refuted hereafter.

And

And that all such notions in general, are vain and delusory ; that the Gospel must be obeyed, as well as heard and received ; and that no incorrigible sinner shall inherit the kingdom of God ; appears, in the *first* place,

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FROM a general view of Christianity, as containing *precepts* and *commandments*, given for the regulating of our *conduct*, as well as *principles* and *doctrines*, for the regulating of our *faith*.

Whoever looks into the new testament, will find *there* a system of religion, which consists partly of doctrinal truths to be assented to, and partly of commands, prescribing to us what is to be done ; the former being usually called the *Credenda*, the latter, the *Agenda* of religion. It is not more plain and evident, that Christianity contains certain principles that are to be believed ; principles respecting the nature and moral government of God ; the person and offices of our Saviour Jesus Christ ; a future existence ; the resurrection of the body ; a judgment to come ; and a state of rewards and punishments to succeed ; ( this is not more evident, I say ) than that the same religion contains a great variety of precepts, injunctions and prohibitions, delivered to us as to creatures that have *a part to act* ; precepts respecting our behaviour towards God, towards our Redeemer, towards our neighbour ; and some that more immediately respect the government of ourselves. In other words, it is not less certain and obvious, that

SERM. that the gospel considers us as active moral Creatures, whose hearts and manners are to be formed and regulated by the laws therein contained; than that it considers us as intellectual Creatures, who ought to receive and embrace the truths that are therein revealed to our understandings. It being evident then, from the most cursory view of Christianity, that it is not only a rule of *faith*, but of *practice* also; it is as certain, that we are obliged to *obey* it, considered in the latter of these respects, as that we are bound to *believe* it, considered in the former. No one can show, that we are more strongly obligated to believe what God has revealed, than we are to do what he has required. He is doubtless as just in his commands, as he is true and faithful in his words and promises: Nor can his Authority be more properly called in question in one case, than his veracity in the other. From hence it appears, that we are no less bound to be *doers of the word*, than we are to be *hearers and believers* of it. All the laws which God has given us, were given that they might be observed; not that they might be broken. And indeed if they may be disregarded with impunity; I see not why it is necessary, that we should even be believers. For it is to be remembered, that tho' this is one of God's commandments, *that we believe in him whom he hath sent*; yet it is not *more truly one of them*, than this, that we *love Him, and love our neighbour*.

And

And why that command, by which *faith* is in-  
 SERM. joined upon us, may not be dispensed with, and  
 IV. set aside as being of no consequence ; as well as  
 some other commandments of the Gospel, no one  
 can assign a reason. So that if we may be saved  
 without *doing the word*, I am bold to assert we  
 may be saved without *believing* or *receiving*  
 it. God requires the latter no more plainly and  
 peremptorily than he does the other. And as  
 soon as any one will show how we may be intitled  
 to salvation, without obedience ; I will show, at  
 least by similar, if not by the same Arguments,  
 how we may be intitled thereto, without believ-  
 ing one syllable of the Christian revelation, with  
 whatever evidence of its truth it may come to us.

WE may consider, the matter in a differ-  
 ent point of light, which will bring us to the same  
 conclusion at last.—We are the professed *disciples*  
 of Christ, acknowledging him for our *teacher, mas-  
 ter* and *lord*. We are therefore to consider what  
 sort of *teacher* he was ; what he undertook to  
 instruct men in ; order to know whether  
 we really come up to the character of his dis-  
 ciples, or fall short of it. There have been differ-  
 ent kinds of teachers in the world ; and still are.  
 Some instruct in one art or science, some in  
 another. Now our Saviour, Jesus Christ, came  
 into the world, as a teacher of true religion.  
 He came to make known to us many divine  
 truths ; those things that belong to our peace ;  
 and

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and to instruct us how to serve God in this World, in order to our being happy in his favour in the world to come. Here his teachings and instructions all terminate, as to the end of them. Now a *disciple* of any one, is he that learns of him that science, art or business, of which he is the professed teacher. He that does so, is truly and properly a disciple; otherwise he is only a nominal one. A person, in ancient times, would not have been deemed a disciple of *Socrates*, while he lived after the principles and maxims of *Epicurus*, altho' he frequented the school of the former, and not of the latter. Let him have called himself by what name he would, others would reckon him a disciple either of one or of the other, according to the principles which he embibed, and the maxims of living, which he embraced and followed. How then, does *he* come up to the character of Christ's disciple, who does not learn of him, that temper and behaviour, that art of holy and virtuous living, which Christ came to teach; and which is indeed the same thing with that practical obedience to the word, the necessity of which I am now endeavouring to show? Those who live and act according to other rules and maxims, than those of our divine master, Jesus Christ, cannot, with truth and propriety, be styled his disciples and followers, any more than an *Epicurean* Voluptuary could be called a disciple of *Socrates* or *Plato*.

INDEED

INDEED if the whole, or principal design of SERM.  
our Saviour, in taking upon himself the character IV.  
and office of a teacher, had been *to give us a*   
*Creed*; or to instruct us in certain religious notions  
and principles, without referring them to prac-  
tice; we might, in that case, be called his dis-  
ciples, if we embraced those principles, however  
flagitious we might be in our lives and manners.  
But when we reflect, that the lesson which Christ  
came to teach us, respects the regulation of our  
hearts, tempers and behaviour; that the great  
aim of all his instructions, is to reclaim men from  
their evil and vicious courses; and to bring them  
to a resemblance of the divine purity, goodness  
and holiness, in order to their being happy here-  
after; when we reflect, I say, that Christ's doc-  
trines and instructions all terminate in this point,  
it is manifest that those who call themselves his  
disciples, without departing from iniquity, and  
living as he has taught them to live, compliment  
themselves with a name, which does not belong  
to them; and have no reason to expect any  
good will finally accrue to them from his media-  
tion. They are destitute of the main, the most  
essential characteristic, of Christians; which is a  
temper and behaviour corresponding to the  
maxims and precepts of Christ's religion; and to  
that example which he has left us, *that we might*  
*follow his steps.*

AGREABLY to what is here said, we often find

SERM. Our Saviour reproving the inconsistency and absurdity of those, who, while they acknowledge him for their Lord, do not walk according to his injunctions. “ Why call ye me, *Lord, Lord*, says he, and *do not* the things which I say.” q. d. “ With what propriety, with what modesty, can you own such a relation to me, as that of disciples to a master and Lord, while you do not demean yourselves answerably thereto? While you give no heed to my words and counsels; but set them at naught? Either live according to these rules which I teach and prescribe; or cease to mock me, and to delude yourselves, by calling me your Lord! ”

AT another time, when our Saviour was speaking of himself as one divinely authorised to draw disciples and followers after him; and accordingly invited people to *come unto him*, and to *learn of him*; this was not so much, that they might be instructed in certain speculative truths, as that they might learn the art of governing their tempers, and living well. “ Come unto me, says he,—take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” We here see, that tho’ by coming to Christ, is intended receiving him in the character of a divine teacher; yet this is in order to a farther end; which is, submitting to be directed by him in the way to happiness. There is no *coming*, or *going* to Christ, to any good purpose

pose, without *taking his yoke* upon us, and learn-  
 of him to be *meek and lowly in heart.*

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UPON the whole then, Christianity appears to be a practical science; the art of living piously and virtuously. The drift and scope of our great master's doctrine and preaching, was to make us abandon our sins and lusts of every kind; and to form us to a resemblance of himself, who is *the image of the invisible God*. Those who do not learn of him to be sincerely good, learn nothing to purpose; and *know nothing as they ought to know it*. We cannot be called his true disciples and followers, without putting on that temper and behaviour, which his laws and example recommend to us, or rather injoin upon us. And if we are not *really* his disciples, but are so in *name* only, certainly we cannot hope for salvation by him. So that considering the matter in this light, it is evidently necessary that we *obey* the word, as well as hear and believe. And we do but *deceive our own selves*, if we expect to be saved upon any casier terms.

BUT for the farther confirmation of the point before us, let me produce two or three passages of scripture, wherein the end of Christ's coming into the world, and of the gospel dispensation, is more explicitly declared. Our Saviour tells us, that he came "to call sinners to repentance." *St. Paul* says, that he "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify

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unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." The same apostle tells us, that the grace of God has appeared unto us, "teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in the world." *St. John* tells us, that whoso committeth sin, is of the Devil; and that "for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil." And we know, that our Lord was called *Jesus*, because he was to "save his people from their sins." From these and such-like passages of scripture, the necessity of departing from iniquity, and of obeying the gospel, is manifest. Surely that cannot be looked upon as unnecessary, which is thus declared to be one great end of our Lord's manifestation in the flesh. But how is this declared end of the gospel, and the grace of God appearing therein, answered upon us, if we persevere in our evil ways, instead of being led to repentance? If we indulge to ungodliness and worldly lusts, instead of denying them? If we are zealous of bad works, instead of good? If the works of the Devil are practised by us, instead of being destroyed in us? If we remain under the dominion and power of sin, instead of being made free from it, and becoming the servants of righteousness? Can any one imagine that the true intent and design of Christ's gospel is answered upon them, before they "cease to do evil, and learn to do well?"

Certainly

Certainly no vicious, unrighteous man, is what the Gospel is intended to make him : No person of this character, has complied with the true and declared design of this dispensation of the grace of God. And if not, is it not manifestly absurd to suppose that such a one, can be intitled to the salvation revealed therein ? Why may not a vicious *Heathen*, who never heard of the gospel, be intitled to the blessings of it, as well as a vicious *Christian*, on whom it has had no effect ? and who is as wicked, perhaps, if not more wicked, than he would have been, if this grace had never appeared to him ? Will not a professed Christian, who has not really complied with the great design of the gospel, any more than a *Pagan*, be as certainly condemned hereafter, as if he had been a *Pagan* himself ? It does not appear from scripture, that any good shall finally result to those who hear the gospel, but in proportion as they are made really better by it ; having fallen in, and concurred with the design of God's grace revealed to us therein.

WE may consider this matter still in another light ; which will farther evince the necessity of obeying the word. The Gospel informs us, that in order to our salvation, it is necessary that we should be *born again ; born of God ; born of the spirit ;* that we *put off the old man with his deeds ;* that we *put on the new man ;* that we *walk in the spirit,* and *bring forth the fruits of the spirit ;*

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and the like. Now I would ask, what is the meaning of all these phrases? What is the true import, and real amount of them? Is it not manifestly, this, that sinners must, by the gospel, and the co-operation of the spirit and grace of God therewith, be turned from sin to righteousness? that their hearts which were before corrupt, and estranged from God, must be purified, and turned to him? And that, in consequence hereof they “walk in all his commandments and ordinances blameless?” This is manifestly that *new birth*, or *regeneration*; that *putting off the old man with his deeds*, and *putting on the new man*, of which the scriptures speak: And the thing is in itself very plain and intelligible, how great a *mystery* soever, either the ancient or modern *Nichodemus's* and *masters in Israel*, have made of it. If therefore, it is necessary that a man be born again, in order to his salvation; and if this is the proper notion of regeneration; then certainly it is necessary to obey the gospel, in order to that end. For such a change of heart and manners, as is denoted by the terms *born again*, and *born of the spirit*, implies and involves in it, the obedience here intended.

I AM sensible, that some persons have invented another sort of *regeneration*, which leaves the subject of it much as it found him,—“to every good work reprobate;” and which a man may *experience*, without being really any better than he

he was before ; any more like to God ; any more observant of his laws. Yea, I wish there was not reason to say, that *that* which many have taken to be their *regeneration*, and a being *filled with the spirit*, might be more properly called a *Possession*; leaving them much worse than it found them; less careful to “order their conversation aright;” less just, sober, humble and charitable, than they were in what they called their carnal, unregenerate, unconverted state. According to this Notion of regeneration, I acknowledge that a person may be born again, and yet not become a *doer of the word*. But the scriptures know of no regeneration, besides that which consists in a real change of heart and manners, from sin and unrighteousness to holiness; a regeneration, from which obedience to the laws of Christianity is inseparable; and with which, habitual sinning is absolutely inconsistent. “Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” So that while we keep to *this idea* of regeneration, to say that it is necessary we should be born again, is, in effect to say neither more nor less than this, that it is necessary we should become holy in heart and conversation, by God’s assistance and grace; which is the same thing, in other words, with being *doers of the word*, or yielding a practical obedience to the gospel of Christ. It is, therefore, to be hoped that none who assert

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the necessity of the former, will call in question the necessity of the latter.

It may be added here, that the *repentance* of sinners is always supposed in the new testament, to be an indispensable condition of, and a meet qualification for, their receiving pardon and eternal life. But what is the proper notion or idea of evangelical repentance? of that repentance, without which sinners cannot be saved? Is it only a *flashy*, superficial sorrow for sin? such a sorrow and contrition, as is consistent with persevering therein? Surely no. It involves in it a turning from sin, to God and righteousness. It is the active principle of a new life; a life of holiness, and obedience to the divine commandments. The repentance which falls short of this; which leaves the heart unsubdued to God; the repentance which leaves a sinner as it found him; and is not accompanied with a reformation of mind and manners; is not that *repentance unto life*, which is intended in the gospel: It is a vain, ineffectual sorrow; and scarce better than that "sorrow of the world which worketh death." Now if this is the proper notion of repentance; or if repentance implies in it, a forsaking of our past sins, and entering upon a new course of life; and if such repentance is necessary in order to salvation; then certainly the *bearing* of the word, without *doing* it, cannot intitle us to eternal life. Evangelical repentance is, in short, gospel-obedience in its root and

and *principle*; and wherever it is, it will bring forth the *fruits* that are *meet* for it. So that to assert the necessity of repentance, and yet to suppose we may be saved without obedience and righteousness, is a manifest absurdity and contradiction.

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BUT let us consider a little more particularly, to whom it is that the gospel itself promises eternal life; and whether these promises are not evidently restrained and confined to obedient Christians; to the *doers* of the word. Now the Apostle tells us, that Christ, "being made perfect became the author of eternal salvation to *all them that obey him.*" Is there not here a plain limitation of that salvation of which Christ is the author, to those who do his commandments? Does not the form of expression used, manifestly imply, that such as do not practically conform to the laws of Christ, as well as believe and trust in him, shall not finally share in that redemption which he has wrought out? Again, our Saviour says, that the *righteous* "shall go away into life eternal;" and that the *righteous* shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Is the same ever said in scripture, of the wicked and disobedient? Or of all men in common without any discriminating mark? Again, our Lord likens those who hear his sayings, and *do them*, to "a wise man that built his house upon a rock," which would not fall. But does he make use of the

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same similitude, when he speaks of those who hear his sayings, and *do them not*? Thus He tells us, that they which “do the will of his Father which is in heaven,” shall enter into the kingdom of heaven hereafter. Is the same ever said of those who persevere in their disobedience to God’s will? So we are told, that “to them who by patient continuing in well-doing, seek for glory, honor, and immortality, God will render eternal life.” Is the same promise made, in any part of the Gospel, to those that persevere in doing evil? In short, nothing can be more apparent, than that the scripture-promises of salvation, are uniformly restrained and limited to such as obey the gospel; to such as having *received the word with meekness* “into good and honest hearts,” bring forth the fruits of righteousness with patience.

BUT, that no doubt may be left upon the minds of any, with reference to so important a point, I shall now show that all incorrigible sinners in general, are so far from having any title to the salvation of the gospel, that they are excluded herefrom, and sentenced to future woe and misery, by the most express and positive declarations of the Gospel itself. Thus the apostle tells us, that “to them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, God will render indignation and wrath; tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil:”

That

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That “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness :”

And that “the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty Angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that *obey not the Gospel* of our Lord Jesus Christ ; who shall be punished with an everlasting destruction.”—Hear the exhortation and admonition of the same Apostle in another

of his epistles. “Know ye not, says he, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God ? Be not deceived ; neither fornicators, nor whoremongers, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, &c. shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

Has not our Saviour plainly told us to the same purpose, that the wicked “shall go away into everlasting punishment ?” Has he not told us, that in the judgment of the great day, he will say even to many who have *eaten and drank in his presence*, “Depart from me, I know you not, all ye that work iniquity ?” And not to multiply passages of scripture in so plain a case, only

call to mind the solemn words of our Saviour, in his last message to the Churches, in the *Revelation* of *St. John*, towards the end—“I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end—He that overcometh shall inherit all things.—But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and forcerers, and idolaters, and all

liars,

SERM. liars, shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death—Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life ; and may enter in thro' the gates into the city : For without are dogs, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lye. I Jesus have sent mine Angel to testify these things in the Churches. ”

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You now see what the plain, express, repeated declarations of the Gospel are ; how they limit the salvation revealed in it, to them that obey the truth ; how they cut off from all hope of eternal life, and consign over to future punishment, all the irreclaimable workers of iniquity. God, who has the sole right of ordaining and fixing the terms upon which his sinful creatures shall be received into favour again ; and enjoy the blessings of his presence in the kingdom of Heaven : God himself, I say, has declared, that the hardened, irreclaimable transgressor shall never *enter into his rest* ; and that only the pure in heart shall see him, and be happy in the enjoyment of him. Nor are we to conceive of these terms as *arbitrarily* fixed, by him whose will none can resist, whose hand none can stay, and who is not accountable to any one for his proceedings. No : We are to conceive of them as terms that are fit and reasonable to be imposed by the all-wise, and all-good, as well as all powerful

ful Sovereign of the world. It would have been SERM.  
 inconsistent with his infinite wisdom, and perfect IV.  
 goodness and holiness, to have accepted sinners }  
 to his favour, and promised eternal life to them,  
 but upon condition of their returning to Him,  
 and keeping his commandments.

AND if we duly attend to the thing, we shall see that such a temper and practice as the Gospel requires of us, is necessary not only as a *condition*, but as a *qualification* for future happiness. Altho' this world is much better adapted to the depraved taste and temper of wicked men, than the kingdom of heaven; yet they cannot be happy even here. God has constituted us in such a manner; He has given us such a nature, that vice is an irreconcilable enemy to our happiness; and virtue alone, friendly to it. "The way of transgressors is hard:" and "the wicked are like the troubled sea which cannot rest." Thus it is in this present state; and thus it must needs be, in any other. A foundation must be laid for happiness, in the purity and moral rectitude of our minds. Were a wicked man to be this day translated to heaven; with all his lusts and unholy passions about him, there is nothing there which would correspond to his taste and relish, so as to make him truly blessed in the enjoyment. Could the society of just men made perfect? could the fellowship of holy angels, be delightful to an impure, brutish creature? What fellowship hath light with darkness? And what concord hath  
 Christ

SERM. Christ with Belial, or the sons of Belial? What  
 IV. happiness can one who is every way unlike to  
 God, and whose carnal mind is enmity against  
 him, have in being in his glorious presence? or  
 how is such a one capable of enjoying him? Wicked  
 men, instead of expecting any felicity from the  
 presence and vision of God, might adopt the language  
 of the apostate angels, "Farthest from him is best." \*

If then we are not even in a capacity for enjoying the happiness which the Gospel reveals, in the kingdom and presence of God, while we retain our lusts and vices, how vain and absurd is it to imagine we can be intitled to it? We must obey the gospel, and have our tempers conformed to the holy maxims and precepts of Christianity, before we are capable subjects of that felicity which is brought to light thereby. And certainly it is unreasonable to suppose that God would promise this future, heavenly bliss to any, except those who have the qualifications necessary to a participation in it. *That heaven* which God has already prepared for good men, and which is revealed to us in his word, is every way unsuitable for all besides the good. So that wicked men must either not go to heaven at all, or they must have *another* prepared on purpose for them; and one more accommodated to their genius and inclinations: Tho' when they came together there, they

\* *Paradise Lost.*

they would soon turn their new heaven into a SERM.  
 real hell; and the place of their expected bliss, IV.  
 would prove only the place of their torment. For   
 wherever the wicked are; in whatever region, in  
 whatever world, they cannot but be miserable in  
 a greater or less degree. So the God of nature,  
 so the all-wise governor of the world, has ordain-  
 ed; and *His counsel shall stand*—

UPON laying together the several things that  
 have been said above, I think it plainly appears,  
 that obedience to the gospel is not only a thing  
 that is *fitting, reasonable, and very proper*, for  
 those that *believe*; (as some would represent it)  
 but that it is absolutely and indispensably *necessary*,  
 in order to our obtaining eternal life; necessary,  
 both as the condition upon which God offers sal-  
 vation to us, and as the qualification for future  
 glory and happiness. This is so clearly, so often,  
 so emphatically declared in the holy scriptures,  
 that one need not scruple to say, that whosoever  
 is not a *doer of the word*, as well as a *bearer*, has  
 no more ground to expect salvation by Christ,  
 than the fallen *angels*; altho' he took not upon  
 him *their* nature, but the seed of *Abraham*. It  
 is to impress this important truth upon our minds  
 the more effectually, that our blessed Saviour has, in  
 some of his discourses, introduced wicked *believers*,  
 as making their several excuses, and pleas for mercy  
 in the day of judgment; all which he rejects as in-  
 sufficient and vain. In these representations of the  
 last

SERM. last day, we see the formalists in religion, I mean  
 IV. those *who hold the truth in unrighteousness*,  
 standing before their righteous Judge; we hear them saying, "We have eaten and drank in thy presence; and in thy name cast out devils; and thou hast taught in our streets;" and pleading, upon this foundation, for admittance into the kingdom of heaven. And at the same time we hear this just, and merciful Saviour of men, answering, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity!" So that this matter is represented to us in the strongest light possible. And can any, after this, hope for mercy in the day of Judgment, tho' they indulge themselves at present in impiety and vice? They cannot, without making Christ a liar, and his Gospel a fable!—

WHEREFORE to conclude: As we desire to have a part in the resurrection of the just; as we have any dread of falling under the condemnation of the wicked; as we have any regard to the words of our Redeemer, to the will of our maker, to the honor of our religion, to the salvation of our souls; let us hearken to the Admonition in the text, "Be ye doers of the word; and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." Let us apply ourselves in earnest to the regulating of our tempers and manners; in which attempt we cannot but prove successful, since it is God that worketh in us and with us. It is not more sure that there is an heaven, than it is, that they who obey

obey not the gospel, shall never enter into it. SREM.  
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It is not more certain that there is an hell, than that all the impenitent workers of iniquity shall suffer the pains of it. And amongst all the Wicked, none will be subjected to sorer punishment, than the hypocritical professors of religion, who pretend to know God, but in works deny him; who call Christ their Lord and master, but disobey his commandments. To such, the ingrafted word is so far from being, in the event, the power of God unto salvation; that it is in some sort, *the ministration of death*, as the apostle terms *the Law*; binding them over to a heavier, and more inevitable punishment.

Do you really desire the salvation of your souls? Would you be indeed heirs of that glorious inheritance which Christ has purchased for sinners? Surely you do. Why then, my brethren, be at the pains to comply with those terms on which it is offered to you. Give up your pride and covetousness; give up your malice and envy, give up all your worldly lusts. "If your right hand offend you, cut it off; if your right eye offend you, pluck it out. For it is better to enter into life thus, than having two hands and two eyes to be cast into hell fire, where the worm dieth not. The Gospel itself cannot give life to you, unless it is ingrafted into your hearts; so that your tempers and manners are formed to a resemblance of the divine author of it. Let your  
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faith purify your hearts, and work by love. Do your duty to God, love and obey your Redeemer; do unto all men as you would that they should do unto you; be sober and temperate in all things, as those that strive for the mastery: And "hope unto the end for the grace that shall be brought unto you, at the revelation of Jesus Christ, as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts."—I cannot close this discourse better than with the words immediately following my text—"If any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But who-so looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."



SERMON V.

Of some Mistakes concerning the  
Terms of Salvation; and particu-  
larly concerning Salvation *by Grace.*

JAMES I. 21, 22.

*LAY* apart all filthiness and superfluity of naught-  
iness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted  
word, which is able to save your souls. But be  
ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, de-  
ceiving your own selves.

**I**N the foregoing discourse it was shown in  
general, that obedience to the Gospel is in-  
dispensably necessary in order to our obtain-  
ing the salvation revealed to us therein; con-  
formable to the scope of the apostle in the latter  
branch of the text: "But be ye *doers*, of the  
*Word*, and not *hearers only*, deceiving your own  
selves." But because *St. James* here speaks of  
those who only hear the word, and do it not, as  
*deceiving themselves* to their own destruction; I

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SERM. propose to consider some of the common mistakes  
 V. and delusions which Christians fall into, respect-  
 ing this important point ; and to show the vanity  
 and absurdity of them, lest any of us should be  
 carried away with the error of the wicked ; and  
 a deceived heart should turn us aside.

MANKIND are liable to many errors and de-  
 lusions, even tho' they take pains to be rightly  
 informed. They are still more liable to err, in  
 those cases where they are not cautious and wary,  
 but almost indifferent whether they are deceived or  
 not. But most of all are they in danger of falling  
 into mistakes, when they have a secret prejudice  
 against the truth ; and are more disposed to em-  
 brace the wrong side of a question than the right,  
 by reason of some wrong byass upon their minds.  
 For men are not only liable to be imposed upon  
 and deceived by others ; but in some cases, they  
 impose upon, and *deceive their own selves*. And  
 hence it is that we are as frequently cautioned  
 against self-deception in scripture, as we are ad-  
 monished to take heed that we are not deceived  
 by others. This caution is never more necessary,  
 than when we are inquiring into the terms of ac-  
 ceptance and salvation, proposed to us in the  
 Gospel ; whether we consider the importance of  
 forming a right judgment in this matter, or the  
 natural propensity and inclination which there is  
 in us, to make those terms as easy and agreeable  
 to ourselves as possible.

ALL men would be happy hereafter; but SERM.  
with as little difficulty to themselves as may be; V.  
as little self-denial; as little labour; as little  
care to work out their salvation. This I doubt  
not, is the true source of many licentious, li-  
bertine doctrines, tending to reconcile a vicious  
immoral life, with the hopes of God's favour, and  
future blessedness; altho' nothing can be more  
repugnant to sober reason, and the whole current  
of the Christian revelation: Vicious men are loth  
to give up their beloved lusts, and to live that  
pious and holy life which the gospel enjoins upon  
us. And therefore they perswade themselves to  
believe that there is no such absolute necessity of  
it as some pretend; and endeavour to evade the  
force of all those arguments which are brought to  
evince it. However wicked they are, they are  
not willing to think themselves such persons as the  
Gospel excludes from that life and immortality,  
which are brought to light thereby. Hence it  
comes to pass, that the scriptures, however plain-  
ly and peremptorily they speak as to this point,  
are often tortur'd and wrested; and made, whe-  
ther they will or no, to favour men's lusts, and  
ill-grounded hopes. The mere sound of a word  
or phrase, shall often carry more conviction in it,  
in the apprehension of men who would fain be  
happy without being good, than in the whole cur-  
rent of revelation: And drowning men, we  
know, will catch at straws. For example; how  
greedily

SERM. V. greedily do many persons of licentious practices lay hold on such expressions as these; that we are "saved by grace;" that we are "justified by faith without the deeds of the law;" that we must be "found in Christ not having our own righteousness;" and the like? Many vicious persons think they find great ground of peace, consolation and hope, in such-like expressions; and conclude from them, that the gospel-covenant of grace in Christ Jesus, is of such a nature, as not to require repentance and new obedience as the indispensable condition of salvation; but such as will admit of the salvation of habitual sinners, provided they believe in Christ, and rely wholly upon his righteousness. This, in general, I suppose, is the error which *St. James* aims at refuting more particularly in the second chapter of his epistle. An error which very early appeared in the church; and in the support of which, *St. Paul's* doctrine had been alledged. And if there is any such thing as a fundamental error of the judgment, this is doubtless one. It is a mistake concerning the *general nature* of that covenant of grace and mercy, which is established in Christ, for the restoration and salvation of sinners. It is moreover an error of such a sort, as naturally tends to confirm men in their wicked courses; since, according to this notion, it is needless for them to forsake those courses; and to obey the commandments of Christ, in order to their future

liberty.

H hap-

happinefs. So that perfons who are fallen into this delufion may fin, as it were, upon principle; at leaft they may fin, without hazarding their falvation, according to their own notion of the terms on which it is offered.

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BUT before I proceed particularly to lay open the vanity and abfurdity of this notion, I would premife one thing in order to prevent mif-conffruftion; efppecially to guard againft the charge of cenforioufnefs and uncharity. And that is, that how much foever any man may be miftaken in opinion concerning the terms of falvation; yet if he is practically in the right, there is no doubt but he will be accepted of God, who confiders our frame, and knows our weaknefs. Poffibly many perfons, according to whose principles obedience to the Gofpel is not neceffary, may yet be as truly *doers* of the word, as thofe whose fentiments concerning this matter, are more conformable to reafon and fcripture. And it is certain that fuch perfons fhall not be excluded from falvation, merely on account of their erroneous opinion. It is infinitely difhonourable to the all-good and perfect Governor of the world, to imagine that he has fufpended the eternal falvation of men upon any niceties of fpeculation: Or that any one who honeftly aims at finding the truth, and at doing the will of his Maker, fhall be finally difcarded becaufe he fell into fome erroneous opinions. He whose heart is right with

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God;

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God; he who seeks his will in his word, with an unbiassed mind; and he who conscientiously obeys the gospel, can be guilty of no error for which an infinitely good and merciful Being will condemn him.

I ADD, that altho' such a sincere inquirer after the truth, should embrace opinions which give countenance to vice and libertinism, in a natural and fair construction; yea, altho' the same principles, should, by being acted upon, prove the destruction of other persons; yet surely he, whose practice is not influenced by them; but is conformable to the stricter maxims of piety and virtue laid down in the Gospel, will reap the fruits of righteousness in the end. And altho' most men are not so good as their principles oblige them to be; yet it is certain that some men are better: Which I take to be the case of many, who place the whole of religion in faith, and dependance upon the righteousness of Christ: For many such, doubtless live soberly and righteously and godly in the world.

INDEED if persons fall into such errors as are, in their own nature, inconsistent with Christian piety and virtue; these errors must needs be fatal; because we are assured that no unrighteous person shall inherit the kingdom of God. Or if persons fall into other errors, of a less malignant Nature; but which do in fact make them easy in their sins, and regardless of their behaviour; even such

such errors must be fatal in their *consequence*; tho' not necessarily so, considered in themselves. How inconsiderable any error may be in itself; if the effect of it is either the making a man vicious, or keeping him so, to him it is and must be fatal in the event: Tho' to others it may not prove so; because it may not have the same effect upon them. Nor, indeed, is there any speculative error, however great, which can exclude a good and upright man, who obeys the laws of Christianity, from the kingdom of heaven: Tho' it may probably prove, in some degree, prejudicial to his virtue; retard him in his progress towards Christian perfection; and so prevent his obtaining so bright a crown of glory, at the end of his race, as he might otherwise have done. Accordingly we read of some that build *wood, hay, stubble*, i. e. false, absurd, and hurtful doctrines, upon the basis of Christianity, who yet shall be saved at last, tho' "so as by fire."

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THESE considerations should, on the one hand, keep us from being censorious towards our fellow Christians; and from dealing out our *anathema's* against those that are in error. On the other hand, they should make us sincerely inquisitive after the truth ourselves, and zealous in the defence of it. It is, by no means, an indifferent thing, whether people have just conceptions of Christianity or not; tho' all parties have perhaps laid too much stress upon their own peculiar sentiments;

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timents ; and been wanting in candor and forbearance towards others. The more justly people conceive of the doctrines of the Gospel, the more likely they are, humanly speaking, to live as becomes their profession. Mistaken notions of religion, especially such as evidently disannul the obligations to obedience, rendering the commandments of God of none effect, should certainly be opposed and refuted ; altho' they should not be absolutely inconsistent with a good life, and evangelical righteousness. If we ought to " contend earnestly for the *faith* once delivered to the saints ;" we ought certainly to contend with as much earnestness at least for that practical piety and virtue, without which no one can be a saint ; and which is, in fact, the end of all faith.

It is not very strange if those, whose principles allow them to live wickedly, should *allow themselves* in it : Especially when we consider how many there are, who allow themselves to do so, contrary to their principles.—There are great numbers of persons in the Christian world who, altho' they acknowledge the necessity of obedience to the gospel, yet practically deny it, led away by their own lusts and enticed. What then can be naturally expected of those, who imagine they have a dispensation for sinning ? and that good works are of little or no account in the christian religion ! It is rather to be wonder'd at, that any of these deluded persons should be good, (as it is

to be hoped they are) than that so many of them should be wicked, as there is reason to fear. For it is very unusual for men to be better than their own principles oblige them to be: tho' it is very common for them to be much worse than they can be, in consistancy with them.

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THE delusions to which I had a particular reference above, may all be reduced to one grand, capital error; which is this, That the merits of Christ's obedience and sufferings, may be so applied or imputed to sinners, as to be available to their justification and salvation, altho' they are destitute of all personal inherent goodness. This grand mistake is variously modified; it puts on different forms and appearances; and scripture-terms and phrases are brought to support it. When it is cloathed in scripture language, it is expressed thus; that we are *saved by grace*; that we must be *found in Christ not having on our own righteousness, which is of the law*; that we are *justified by faith without the deeds of the law, &c.* These are the phrases which, I suppose, have been the most commonly abused and perverted to serve so bad a purpose, as that of making men believe they may be in a state of favour with God, while they live in disobedience to his commandments. They all amount to much the same thing, both in their natural and true sense as they are used by the sacred writers, and in the opinion of those who wrest and pervert them.

SERM. them. However I shall consider them distinctly ;  
 V. and endeavour to rescue them from the false, ab-  
 surd glosses which have been put upon them,  
 greatly to the prejudice of pure and undefiled religion. And I hope it will sufficiently appear, that those who use these phrases in order to disparage good works, and evangelical obedience ; or in order to show that we may be justified and saved without being *doers of the word*, deceive *their own selves*, and delude those who believe them. For they cannot possibly be tho't to favour so licentious an opinion, 'til they are misunderstood.

It is only the first of them, viz. That we are *saved by grace*, that will be considered in this discourse. Now that we are really saved by grace, no one who believes the scriptures will deny ; this being not only a doctrine of scripture, but expressed in the the very words of scripture. But those who imagine that, because we are saved by grace, obedience to the gospel is not necessary, as the condition on our part, in order to salvation, draw a conclusion which is very unnatural. If these things are reconcileable one with the other ; if it *may* be true that we are saved by grace, and yet true that we cannot be saved without obedience : then certainly the supposed necessity of obedience, does not at all militate against the doctrine of our salvation by grace. For if there be no real repugnancy betwixt these principles, they

they may be both equally true; nor can the  
falshood of one be inferred from the truth of the  
other.

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My business here therefore, is, to show that  
there is no inconsistency betwixt these doctrines;  
that tho' we are saved by grace, yet we are saved  
in the way of obedience, and consequently, that  
it is a perversion and abuse of the scripture doc-  
trine of grace, to infer from it, that obedience to  
Christ's Commandments, is not the gospel con-  
dition of our acceptance with God, and obtaining  
eternal life by him.

Now, that to be saved by grace, in the sense  
of scripture, does not imply that we are saved  
without, or independently of, obedience and per-  
sonal righteousness, is very evident in general  
from hence, That *that* grace of God which has  
appeared unto us, teaches us, not that we may  
hope for salvation while we continue in sin; but  
that *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we  
should live soberly, righteously and godly in the  
world; looking, in consequence of our living thus,  
for the blessed hope.* If even the grace of God  
which is revealed to us, teaches us that we are  
to turn from our sins to God; it must be an  
absurd inference, that we need not turn from sin  
to God, because this grace is revealed to us, and  
we are saved thereby. This is, in effect to say,  
that because God in the gospel of his grace, has  
taught us that we must deny our worldly lusts,  
and

SERM. and serve him, therefore we need not do so ; but  
 V. may obtain his favour without ! St. *Paul* has ex-  
 pressly caution'd us against such an abuse of the  
 doctrine of God's grace. " Sin shall not have  
 dominion over you, says he, for ye are not un-  
 der the law, but under grace. What then ! shall  
 we sin, because we are not under the law, but  
 under grace ? God forbid." \* The apostle, in  
 this passage, not only represents our being under a  
 dispensation of grace, as consistent with the ne-  
 cessity of our forsaking every sinful practice ; but  
 he represents this as an additional obligation laid  
 upon us to do so. He draws his argument for  
 obedience and righteousness of life, from this  
 very consideration, that we are under a gracious  
 dispensation. " Sin shall not have dominion over  
 you ; for ye are not under the law, but under  
 grace." Those must therefore reason very pre-  
 posterously, in a manner quite contrary to the  
 apostle, who would go about to prove from the  
 gracious nature of that covenant which we are  
 under, that obedience is needless ; or that we may  
 continue in sin, because we are saved by grace.  
 They draw an inference the very reverse of his,  
 from the same principles. His inference is, that  
 because we are under grace, therefore we *may not*  
 continue in sin : Their's, that we *may* continue  
 in sin, because we are under such a dispensation.  
 And now whether St. *Paul* is in the right, or  
 those who contradict him, judge ye.

\* *Romans*  
 6. 14, 15.

but

THIS

THIS is, I think, sufficient to show in *general*, SERM.  
 that all those misunderstand the scripture doctrine V.  
 of our salvation by grace, who infer from it, that  
 our salvation is not suspended upon our obedience  
 to God's commandments. But let us be a little  
 more *particular* in considering the several signi-  
 fications of the term *grace*, in the new testament;  
 that so we may see whether either of them mili-  
 tates against the supposed necessity of obedience  
 and good works.

AND let us begin with the primary and most  
 general notion hereof; which is *favour*; or some  
 act of *goodness*, *generosity* or *bounty*, as distin-  
 guished from those acts which come within the  
 known laws of common equity and justice. In  
 conformity to this first and most general sense of  
 the term, when it is said that we are saved by  
 grace, the meaning is, that we do not merit sal-  
 vation; that we cannot demand it upon the foot-  
 ing of natural justice; but it flows from another  
 fountain, even from the abounding goodness and  
 mercy of God. It proceeds wholly from his un-  
 deserved favour; and is to be acknowledged as  
*his gift*, not claimed "as *our due*. And that our  
 salvation is of grace in this sense, I as firmly be-  
 lieve, and am as ready to assert, if not so able to  
 prove, as any other person whatever. Our sal-  
 vation took its rise in the mere bounty and good-  
 ness of God. And the same over-flowing good-  
 ness, in which it had it's origin, is conspicuous in  
 every

SERM. every part of it, 'til it is, or rather shall be, completed and perfected in the regions of immortal blifs. But does it follow from hence, that this salvation does not accrue to us in the way of obedience to Christ's commandments? May it not be true, that God requires this obedience of us, as what is indispensably necessary in order to our salvation; and yet be true, at the same time, that He manifests his favour, and great goodness to us herein? Certainly our obedience, however necessary it may be, is not so valuable and meritorious, as to be an adequate consideration for the salvation and eternal happiness of our souls: So far from this, that we ought to look upon ourselves as *unprofitable servants*, even tho' we had done all those things that are required of us. How then could it ever enter into the heart of man to imagine, that if obedience to the gospel is necessary in order to our salvation, then it could not be true that we are saved by grace; as if such obedience excluded grace; and left no room for the exercise of it? Those persons must set a very undue and disproportionate value upon our imperfect obedience, who imagine it leaves no place for the manifestation of divine grace or favour in our salvation; and that whatever God is pleased to confer upon us in consequence hereof, is only the paying of a debt, or rendering the labourer the reward, to which he has intitled himself, on the footing of common equity.

THE reasoning of some persons upon this point are very strange and unaccountable ; and, I think quite inconsistent. For one while they tell us, that our obedience, and best good works, are only as *filthy rags* ; so very mean and contemptible, that they cannot be truly acceptable to God, or fit to be rewarded by him : Yea, that they are attended with so much sin and imperfection, that they must be odious to him ; and rather need a pardon, than entitle us to a reward. But, in the next, if not the same breath, we are told, that these *filthy* and *abominable* good works, if supposed necessary and conducive to our salvation, would subvert the doctrine of our being saved by grace : Which is to say in other words, that imperfect and sinful as they are, they are yet so valuable, so excellent, so meritorious, that they leave no room for God to exercise grace in our salvation ! But if our works of righteousness are all so imperfect, not to say so *filthy*, as they are sometimes represented to be, one would think there was no danger of excluding divine grace, by saying that obedience to the Gospel is made the condition of our salvation. Tho' obedience is required in order to our salvation, it cannot be tho't meritorious of it. The truth lies betwixt the two extremes mentioned above. Our obedience and good works are really acceptable to God in some degree ; otherwise he would not have required us to perform them, and promised to reward them ; as he

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has most certainly done. But yet they are not so valuable in their own nature, as to merit eternal life for those who perform them. God is infinitely gracious, in accepting this imperfect obedience thro' Christ, and in bestowing eternal life upon the subjects of it. This is therefore a reward, not of merit on our side, but of grace on God's part. How unjustly then, are those who hold the necessity of personal righteousness; and believe that God will graciously reward our obedience, thro' Christ, charged with maintaining the doctrine of merit, in opposition to grace? This is but too common a slander, made use of by captious uncharitable men, to bring a reproach upon those whom they dislike.—

It is readily acknowledged, that the most perfect man does not work out a righteousness, strictly legal. Salvation therefore cannot be obtained, but upon the footing of grace or favour. Yea, I may add, that altho' our obedience were perfect, it would still be favour and bounty in God, to bestow eternal life upon us in consequence of it. We might indeed, upon this supposition, claim an exemption from punishment and misery, according to the immutable laws of right and equity. But to assert that the most perfect righteousness and obedience of a creature, would, in it's own nature, on account of it's inherent worth, and independently of any promise of God, intitle that creature to endless happiness, is to assert  
more

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more than any man can prove. It would evidently be grace in God to confer endless immeasurable bliss, upon a creature, who had in no instance violated his laws. The reward would be more, infinitely more, than adequate to the service performed. Who can presume to say, that the holiest angel in heaven, has by his obedience, strictly speaking, merited everlasting happiness? or, that it is not grace in God, to confer this upon any creature whatever? If God makes a creature happy during his obedience, it is the utmost that justice requires. Such a creature might, without receiving any wrong or injury, be deprived of his existence and happiness together, after persevering in his obedience for any given time. The Author of his being, is not that I know of, absolutely obliged to preserve him forever, because the creature has not swerved from his duty. And if God is not bound in justice to make such a creature eternally happy, it must be grace in him to do it; for betwixt justice and grace, there is in this case no medium. Certainly then, it is grace in God to bestow endless happiness upon those who have violated his laws, however penitent and reformed they are. And this, I hope, is sufficient to show, that altho' we cannot be saved, without obedience to the Gospel; and altho' this is, properly speaking, the condition upon which pardon and eternal life are offered to us; yet it may be still equally true, that

SERM. we are saved by grace, as that signifies favour  
 V. and unmerited goodness in the Creator and Lord  
 of all.

It will come to the same thing at last, if by grace we understand more particularly the gospel dispensation. The term is often used thus in scripture; and indeed this is the most common sense of it. And the Gospel is called grace, by a usual figure, in respect of the subject of it; because it is a declaration and manifestation of God's grace or favour towards sinners. Hence we read of *the Gospel of the grace of God*. And this dispensation of mercy, is sometimes styled grace more especially in contradistinction from the *Mosaic*, or *Legal* dispensation. So it is said, that "the *Law* was given by *Moses*; but *Grace*, — came by *Jesus Christ*. And in general, wherever law and grace are opposed to each other in the new testament, grace means the Gospel, the good news of pardon and eternal life, brought from heaven to earth by the Son of God, and preached to the world by his apostles.

Now if we understand the term in this appropriate sense, when we are said to be saved by grace, the meaning will be, that we are saved by the Gospel, or in the way which the Gospel reveals to us; which is a declaration of God's favour and mercy to sinful creatures; a declaration of his gracious purpose to forgive and save transgressors, upon certain terms therein marked out; and

and which does not insist upon perfect Obedience, SERM.  
 as the Law of MOSES seems, according to the V.  
 letter of it, to have done. For, says St. Paul,   
 “ *Moses* describeth the righteousnes which is of  
 “ the Law, that the Man which doth those  
 “ things, shall live by them.” \* And the same \* *Rom. 10.*  
 Apostle tells us, that the language of that sever- 5.  
 er dispensation is this, “ Cursed is every one  
 “ that continueth not in all things which are  
 “ written in the law to do them.” † † *Gal. 3.*  
 10.

IT may be here asked again, how our be-  
 ing saved by grace, in this sense, militates against  
 the supposed necessity of repentance from dead  
 works, and sincerely obeying that Gospel, by  
 which we are to be saved? What tho’ we are not,  
 neither can be, saved upon the footing of mere  
 law, whether the law of *Moses*, or the law of  
 nature? What tho’ we are saved by, or in the  
 way of, a new and merciful covenant established  
 in Christ Jesus? a covenant of Grace, wherein  
 provision is made for the restoration of sinners to  
 the divine favour? Will it follow from hence,  
 that we are saved without any kind or degree of  
 obedience? It is not inconsistent even with a  
 covenant of grace, that it should propose to us  
 certain terms and conditions for our acceptance, in  
 order to our obtaining the blessings thereof. And  
 tho’ we should suppose, that the terms on which  
 the gospel offers salvation to us, are those of faith  
 and new obedience, would this make it cease to

SERM. be a covenant of grace? Surely, the covenant  
 V. may be very gracious, tho' it promises pardon  
 and eternal life, only to penitent, obedient be-  
 lievers.

IN short, to be saved by grace, meaning here-  
 by the gospel of God's grace, is to be saved in  
 that way, in that method, which the gospel  
 opens, provides for us, and prescribes to us. To  
 know particularly what that way is, we must  
 look into the gospel itself: And if we do so, we  
 shall find that it is so far from being inconsistent  
 with the supposition, that obedience to the pre-  
 cepts of it is necessary; that this is the very thing  
 which it makes necessary; the great, or rather  
 the only, condition upon which it offers salvation  
 to us. For in this dispensation of the grace of  
 God, it is, that we are assured, that Christ is be-  
 come the author of eternal salvation to all them  
 that obey him; and that those who obey not the  
 truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall fall under  
 condemnation hereafter. Since, therefore, to be  
 saved by grace, is to be saved in the way which  
 the gospel reveals to us; and since the gospel  
 itself expressly requires repentance and sincere  
 obedience in order to our salvation; it is a very  
 absurd inference, that because we are saved in  
 this method of grace, therefore we are not saved  
 in the way of obedience; which is indeed the on-  
 ly way that the gospel knows of: Unless by be-  
 ing saved in the way of obedience, you mean  
 obedience

obedience that is perfect and strictly legal ; for if that is what is intended hereby, it is certain that no one is saved in that way, no one having performed such obedience. But it will not follow, that because perfect obedience is not necessary in order to our salvation, therefore no obedience at all is necessary to that end : Nor are we chargeable with turning the gospel of God's grace into a covenant of works, in representing all the blessings of it as confined to those who, " having believed in God, are careful to maintain good works."

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To proceed, the term grace is sometimes used to express a heavenly, divine principle in the hearts of those who are born again. I am not certain, indeed, that the scripture ever uses the term in this sense ; tho' this being now common with theological and practical writers, we will take the propriety of it for granted. And if we are saved by grace in this sense, it is the very thing which I would prove, viz. that we are saved by holiness, righteousness, and evangelical obedience ; not without it. For what do we mean by this divine principle, this grace in the hearts of the regenerate, but a principle of goodness, or holiness ? a principle, which makes us resemble God, and prompts us to live in obedience to his commandments ? To be saved by grace, understanding thereby a principle of real sanctity in the heart, and such a one as is always productive of good fruits

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fruits in the life, is so far from being repugnant to the supposed necessity of evangelical obedience, that it is the very same doctrine, only expressed in different words. For when it is said, that obeying the gospel is necessary in order to our salvation, or that we are saved by such obedience; nothing more is intended, than that it is necessary we should be possessed of such a gracious principle as was spoken of above; a principle of righteousness, which manifests itself in a good conversation; and that whosoever is endowed therewith, has the promise of eternal life. So that they who assert we are saved by grace, in this sense of the term, are so far from contradicting those who maintain the necessity of obedience, and the efficacy of it, that they assert the same thing themselves.

It will make no material difference, as to the point now before us, if by grace we understand, not a principle of goodness and holiness in the heart, but those influences and operations of the spirit of God upon the heart, by which that good principle is produced therein. This, if I mistake not, is what people often mean by the term grace. Let us therefore understand it thus, for the present; and consider whether our being saved by grace, militates against the other supposition, viz. that we are saved in the way of obedience to Christ's commandments. And now, understanding the term thus, when it is said we are saved by  
 grace,

grace, the meaning must be, That God saves us SERM.  
by begetting or producing in us, a principle of V.  
holiness and righteousness; and that we could }  
not be saved, did He not thus give his holy  
spirit to renew and sanctify us: Or this may be  
expressed more in the phrase of scripture, thus,  
That God saves us by "working in us both to  
will and to do of his good pleasure": Or thus,  
that He "saves us by the washing of regenera-  
tion, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost:"  
Or, "thro' sanctification of the spirit unto o-  
bedience." Very well: it is readily acknowl-  
ged, that it is by the operations of the spirit of  
God upon our hearts, that we attain to true holi-  
ness; and that we cannot be saved without his  
blessed influences, in turning us from sin to righte-  
ousness. But what does this make against the  
supposed necessity of obedience? The being saved  
by grace in this sense, pre-supposes the necessity  
of holiness, of personal purity, and sanctity of  
heart and manners. For the grace of God, or  
the gracious influences of his Spirit, in turning us  
from unrighteousness to obedience, would not be  
necessary in order to our salvation, where not  
obedience itself necessary to that end. The necessi-  
ty of the former, arises only from the necessity of  
the latter. For if you suppose that righteousness  
and obedience, are not necessary to the end men-  
tioned, and that we may be saved without them;  
certainly that grace of God, by which we are  
made

SERM. made righteous, is unnecessary also. The grace  
 V. of God, meaning thereby the gracious influences  
 of his Spirit, contributes to our salvation, only as  
 it produces in us that holiness which is the con-  
 dition of our being saved, and by which we are  
 made meet for the kingdom of Heaven. So that  
 to say, we are saved by grace, in this sense of the  
 term; is in effect to say, that we are saved by  
 that divine and heavenly principle which is  
 wrought in us by the good Spirit of God, co-  
 operating with the gospel of his Son; and that  
 we could not be saved, unless we were thus *crea-  
 ted anew in Christ Jesus unto good works*. And  
 this, surely, is very consistent with the supposi-  
 tion that we are saved in the way of obedience to  
 the Gospel, or by our being *doers of the word*.

THOSE mentioned are the most usual senses of  
 the term grace: Nor can I readily think of any  
 other or different meaning, that can be affixed  
 thereto, when we are said to be saved thereby.  
 The sense of the proposition, must be either (1)  
 in general, that we are saved by the favour and  
 bounty of God to us, in opposition to the doc-  
 trine of merit; or (2) that we are saved by the  
 Gospel of Christ, as contradistinguished from the  
 law of *Moses*; or (3) that we are saved by being  
 truly holy; by what some call a principle of  
 Grace in the heart; or (*lastly*) by God's produ-  
 cing such a principle in us, by the gracious influ-  
 ences of his Spirit; which comes to the same  
 thing,

thing, with respect to the point now in hand. SERM.  
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And the doctrine of our being saved by grace, in any, or in all of these senses, does not militate in the least degree against the doctrine of our being saved by obedience to the Gospel; and of our obtaining, in this way an interest in God's peculiar love here, together with an inheritance hereafter in the kingdom of heaven. The necessity of obedience is rather established, than overthrown and refuted, by the scripture doctrine of our salvation by Grace.

To conclude this discourse, therefore, let us take heed, while we acknowledge our salvation to be of grace, that we do not pervert this doctrine to the encouraging of licentiousness, either in ourselves or others. To the honor of God, and the gospel of his Son, we are bound to confess, that we are saved by Grace. But surely it is not to his glory, nor to the honor of the Christian revelation, to imagine that we are saved by grace in any such sense, as would render obedience to our Saviour's commandments unnecessary. On the contrary, it would be highly dishonourable to both, to conceive thus. Such an imagination does, in effect, devest God of his holiness, and all his moral perfections. It is to represent him as giving men a dispensation for indulging their lusts, by an express revelation from heaven. For, in truth, what else is it, to assert that the gospel

SEPM. pel is a dispensation of grace, in such a sense, that  
 V. even those who live and dye in their sins, are not  
 excluded by the terms of it, from the hope of immortal happiness? And that the gates of heaven are set open to all those who believe, whether they work righteousness or work iniquity? If this is not to represent God as being indifferent to virtue and vice; if it is not to abuse his grace, and turn it into lasciviousness; if it is not to make Christ the minister of sin, rather than the Saviour of men from it; it will be impossible to say what is really so; yea, that any thing can be so. Nor can there be a greater dishonor done to Christianity, than is done to it by those who represent it in this light.

SUPPOSE one of the wiser sort of *Pagans*, who had as yet never heard any thing concerning the gospel of Christ, should have an account given thereof to this purpose; “ That it was a very  
 “ *gracious* dispensation, inasmuch as it did not  
 “ require in its professors, sincere piety, and the  
 “ practice of virtue, as absolutely necessary to  
 “ their being happy after death; but only re-  
 “ commended these things as being decent, and a  
 “ proper way of expressing our gratitude to God;  
 “ and that the most vicious men, provided they  
 “ hear and believe this revelation, trusting intirely  
 “ to the righteousness and obedience of Him whose  
 “ name it bears, should certainly obtain eternal  
 “ life: ” What would such an intelligent *Pagan*  
 naturally

naturally conclude? Certainly that this preacher of *free Grace* was beside himself; or, which is still worse, that he was a very abandoned man, and not only vicious himself, but desirous to corrupt others by his licentious doctrine. He would not believe that the religion, of which such an account was given him, was really a revelation from heaven; but would very naturally and justly conclude it was the invention of some wicked man, or, at best the dream of a weak one. But yet I am bold to say, that this is, and must be, the account given of Christianity, by all those who deny the necessity of obedience thereto, and of personal righteousness; and who infer from the doctrine of our being saved by grace, that we may be saved without goodness. Take heed therefore, my Brethren, lest any man deceive you, and lest you deceive your own selves, with vain empty words, and false hopes. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only." And rest assured, that *That* doctrine which teaches that men may obtain salvation, without *ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well*; without yielding a sincere obedience to the laws of Christianity; (that *That* doctrine, I say) is not so properly called a DOCTRINE OF GRACE, as it is, a DOCTRINE OF DEVILS.

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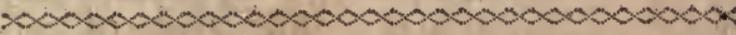




S E R M O N VI.



Of Mistakes concerning being found  
in Christ, not having our own  
Righteousness, &c.



JAMES I. 21, 22.

*LAY* apart all filthiness and superfluity of  
naughtiness, and receive with meekness the  
ingrafted word, which is able to save your  
souls. But be ye doers of the word, and  
not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

**A**MONGST other Things, the necessity  
of our being doers of the word,  
and not hearers only, in order to  
our obtaining the salvation revealed in  
the gospel, has been distinctly shown from  
this passage of scripture. But because St.  
*James* here speaks as if there was at least  
some danger of our deluding ourselves  
with

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VI.

with an imagination, that obeying the gospel is not really necessary to the mentioned end, in the preceeding discourse I entered upon a consideration of those mistakes respecting this important point, into which many Christians have fallen, even from the early days of Christianity; and to which the Apostle refers in some parts of this epistle. The errors and delusions which I here intend, respect the general scheme of our salvation by Christ, and the nature of that covenant of grace, which is established in and by Him. Which errors and delusions, have, I suppose, chiefly proceeded from a misconstruction of certain expressions in the writings of *St. Paul*: And indeed *St. Peter* observed long since, that in the epistles of this his beloved Brother, there were "some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest—unto their own destruction."

THE expressions which seem at least as likely to be thus wrested by the *unlearned* and *unstable*, as any other in those epistles, are such as these; That we are "saved by grace;" That we must be "found in Christ, not having our own righteousness;" and "that we are justified by faith, without the deeds of the law." For from these, and such-like expressions, some

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some have in fact imagined, that personal righteousness, inherent holiness, or obedience to the Gospel, (call it which you please) is not really necessary in order to our acceptance with God, and to our obtaining the salvation revealed to us, and purchased for us, by Christ: And it is to be feared, that many, from age to age, have thus deceived themselves to their own destruction. These scripture expressions which have been perverted, so as to render the commandments of God of none effect, and to annul the obligations to evangelical obedience, terminate nearly in the same point at last. However it was proposed to consider them distinctly; and to show how far they are from countenancing any such licentious doctrines as have been grounded upon them. The former of them, viz. that we are "saved by grace," was considered in the last discourse.

LET us now proceed to a consideration of the second, respecting our being *found in Christ, &c.* The passage at large stands thus in the epistle.\* "But what things were gain to me, these I counted loss for Christ; yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered

\**Philipp. 3.*  
7, — 10.

SERM. "the loss of all things, and do count  
 VI. "them but dung, that I may win Christ:  
 "And be found in him, not having mine  
 "own righteousness, which is of the  
 "Law, but that which is thro' the faith  
 "of Christ, the righteousness which is of  
 "God by faith: That I may know him,  
 "and the power of his resurrection, and  
 "the fellowship of his sufferings, being  
 "made conformable to his death."

THIS passage having been made great use of, in order to show, that our own personal righteousness is of little or no account in the sight of God; and that the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us, and received by faith, is the sole ground of our acceptance with Him, I shall consider it the more carefully and distinctly. I will give some short and general account of St. Paul's design here: And then point out more particularly, both what that righteousness is which he here disclaims and renounces, and what that is which he builds his hopes upon, and glories in. From whence, I doubt not, it will appear, that he is so far from contradicting any thing which has been said upon this subject, concerning the necessity of obedience to the Gospel, that he, in effect, asserts the same thing himself.

Now

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Now it is to be remembred, and particularly observed, for the right understanding of this passage, that *St. Paul* was, both by birth and religion, a *Jew*: He had been educated in the principles and practices of the *Pharisees*, as he himself informs us. He had been so zealous in this way, as to become, very early, a bitter enemy to the name and religion of Christ; and thus he continued to be, 'til he was miraculously converted to the Christian faith, in his journey to *Damascus*. And the passage quoted above, represents to us in general, how entirely his sentiments concerning religion, and the way of acceptance with God, were changed from what they had formerly been:—how contemptibly he now tho't of many things, in which, while he was a *Pharisee*, he gloried in, and depended upon, as a sufficient and acceptable righteousness:—how highly he now accounted of Christ, whose name he was wont to blaspheme; and whose disciples he had persecuted:—how sollicitous he was to attain to that righteousness which the gospel prescribes, and to that Salvation which is therein revealed to sinful Men. This is the general design and scope of the passage we are considering. And surely a person newly converted from *Judaism* to *Christianity*,

SERM. VI. from a persecuting *Pharisee* to a disciple of *Jesus*, may well be supposed to undervalue all his former attainments in religion, and to renounce all dependance upon them for salvation, without being supposed to undervalue that obedience which the gospel requires, or to renounce all dependence thereupon in the grand affair of his acceptance with God, and obtaining eternal Life. My meaning is, that it does not follow from the Apostle's disclaiming, and depreciating the former righteousness, that he must disclaim and depreciate the latter also. For tho' one may be really worthless and insignificant, the other may be truly valuable, and acceptable in the sight of God. The righteousness of a *Pharisee*, may be contemptible, and yet the obedience of a Christian be of great price, and great efficacy with God. Unless it can be shown that the Apostle here renounces some other righteousness than a *Pharisaical* one, as that is opposed to the obedience and good works of a sincere Christian, this passage is not to the purpose of those who alledge it in order to prove, that a Christian's obedience is not that which entitles him to the salvation which Christ has wrought out, and which is revealed to us in his gospel.

LET us, therefore, as was proposed, SERM. VI.  
 inquire a little more particularly, what  
 righteousness that is, which St. Paul re-  
 nounces? whether it is only the righte-  
 ousness of a *Pharisee*, or the obedience  
 and good works of a Christian? And for  
 the resolving of this point, let us go to  
 the preceding context, where he gives  
 us an account of what, as a *Jew* and a  
*Pharisee*, he had formerly valued himself  
 upon.

IN opposition to the unconverted *Jews*,  
 who relied upon their external privileges,  
 upon their circumcision, and other ritual  
 observances, he says—*We are the circumci-*  
*sion, which worship God in the spirit, and re-*  
*joice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in*  
*the flesh, ver. 3.* As if he had said, “The  
*Jews* vaunt of their being circumcised :  
 But we Christians, altho’ we may not  
 have externally received that rite, are yet  
 the true spiritual seed of *Abraham*, being  
 circumcised in heart, which is the thing  
 signified by that outward sign. We are  
 more truly the circumcision, according  
 to the spiritual meaning of the law, than  
 they who glory only in the visible sym-  
 bole of internal purity : For we serve God  
 in spirit and in truth ; and glory in our  
 relation to Jesus Christ, who is the end  
 of the law ; having no dependence on

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those carnal ordinances, and weak and beggarly elements, which they who are still zealous of the law, value themselves upon." *Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any man thinketh he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more.* ver. 4. q. d. "Think not that I speak with contempt of these fleshly ordinances, from a principle of envy; or because I could not glory in the observation of them as well as others, if I judged this was any just ground of confidence. No; If such things might justly be trusted in; if any man whatever can, with reason, place his dependence upon things of this nature, I am bold to say that I myself can do it with as much justice and propriety, as any other person; yea with more than the greater part of those that do so." The Apostle proceeds to explain himself in the next words—*Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin; an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law; a Pharisee.*" ver. 5. q. d. "You may judge by what follows, with how much more justice I could glory in Jewish privileges, and legal, ceremonious observances, than most other persons, did I value myself upon them. For I was circumcised exactly on the eighth day, according to the very letter of the law; which

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which is more than every Jew can boast. I descended directly from the loins of *Israel*; and am one of the tribe of *Benjamin*, who was so peculiarly beloved of our common Father: I am not a proselyte, nor the son of a proselyte, but a natural born *Jew*, a branch sprung up from the original stock of the *Hebrews*: And I was moreover one of that sect, which is of the greatest note and reputation amongst the *Jews*, the sect of the *Pharisees*." The Apostle proceeds with the catalogue of his privileges, &c. *Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.* ver. 6. q. d. "Nor was I one of the cold, lifeless professors of the *Jewish* religion: So far from it, that I distinguished myself by my zeal for it; yea, so warm and sanguine was I in the cause, that I exerted myself to the utmost, to beat down all that did, or seemed to oppose it; and accordingly became a violent persecutor of the church of Christ. And, to sum up all in one word, I was so strict an observer of the law of *Moses*, according to the common way of interpreting it, that no person, however critical and zealous, could blame me, or tax me with deviating from the righteousness of it."

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Now these are the things which St. Paul asserts, gave him greater ground of confidence, and glorying in the flesh, than most of his countrymen, who still adhered to the law in opposition to the gospel, could pretend to: Upon which, however, he renounces all dependence for righteousness, and acceptance with God. But it will be proper to inquire more particularly into the Apostle's meaning, in the last words quoted above, where he says that he had been *blameless, touching the righteousness that is in the law*; this being, as I apprehend, a point of considerable importance. By this, then, I think he must intend one or the other of the three things following: Either,

1. THAT he had been, in the most strict and proper sense, perfect and sinless: Or,

2. THAT he had been blameless and perfect in a lower and less proper sense; as other good men under the law were said to be, notwithstanding some deviations from their duty: Or,

3. THAT he had been blameless with relation to the ceremonial part of the law; which it seems, the Jews of that corrupt, degenerate age, generally esteemed the most excellent, and chiefly gloried in.

THE

THE righteousness which the apostle SERM.  
VI here intends, whatever it be, he certainly disclaims as an insufficient ground of trust and dependence, in the next words: ~

—*But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.* The connection plainly shows, that he contemned and despised all his former righteousness, in comparison of that which is of God by faith.

— Now we may be very certain that the Apostle is not to be understood in the first sense mentioned: He does not mean, that he had perfectly kept the whole law of MOSES, in its greatest extent and latitude. For (1) it is generally acknowledged by Christians, that that law comprehends the law of nature, as well as the law of ceremonies, and carnal ordinances: In which latitude, our Saviour himself expounds it. (2) St. *Paul* himself says expressly, in his epistle to the *Romans*, that all, *Jews* as well as *Gentiles*, have sinned; that all the world is become guilty before God; and that every mouth must be stopped. In which places he cannot be supposed to speak exclusively of himself. (3) We divers times find him lamenting the sins which he had committed, while he was in his *Jewish* state; particularly that of persecuting the church  
of

SERM. of Christ. (4) If he had been perfect in  
 VI. this sense, he could not have undervalued  
 such a righteousness, or needed any other.  
 For a perfect righteousness is undoubtedly  
 sufficient for any man : And the language  
 of the law itself is, " That the man that  
 doth these things, shall live in them." From these considerations, not to mention  
 any more, it is evident that St. Paul, by  
 his having been *blameless touching the right-  
 eousness which is in the law*, could not in-  
 tend that he had perfectly obeyed the law  
 in its utmost latitude and rigor.

IT remains, therefore, that he is to be  
 understood either in the second or third  
 sense mentioned : i. e. That he had been  
 blameless and perfect, as other good men  
 under the law, were said to be, not-  
 withstanding some deviations from it :  
 Or that he had, with the greatest punctu-  
 ality, observed the ritual part of it, as  
 contradistinguished from the moral. Let  
 us consider, which of these things he in-  
 tends. And that he is to be understood  
 in the last mentioned sense, will, I think,  
 appear very probable at least, from the  
 following considerations.

I. IT does not appear from St. Paul's  
 story, as we have it in the new testament,  
 that he was really a good man; antecede-  
 ntly to his conversion to the faith of  
 Christ ;

Christ; or that he had any righteousness besides that which was proper to his sect, as a *Pharisee*. And how much this righteousness consisted in outward formalities, and ceremonious usages; how little of good morality went into the composition of a *Pharisee's* righteousness; how far it fell short of that sincere piety and undissembled virtue, which was essential to a righteous character, even under the law of *Moses*, no one can be ignorant, who has read the *gospels* with due attention. That which our Saviour terms, *The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees*, did not include in it real sanctity of heart and manners; such as good men under the law were the subjects of. If it had; he would not surely have told us, that except our righteousness exceeds it, we cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven: For it will not, I presume, be doubted but that all truly pious and holy men, whether under the legal or evangelical dispensation, shall not actually be admitted into that kingdom hereafter. How does it appear, that the Apostle was a better man than those of his sect generally were; who, as is plain from our Saviour's account of them, were not only imperfect, as the best men are in this world; but destitute of that righteousness which is attainable; and of

which

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which many good men under the law were actually the subjects? It is not very easy to reconcile the supposition of *Saul's* being a good man, with the known fact of his being so bitter a persecutor of the church; and his continuing to breath out threatenings and slaughter against it, for so long a time together. To desire to do the will of God, is essential to the character of a good man: And our Saviour had said, That "if any man would do his will, he should know of his doctrine whether it were of God, or whether he spake of himself." Can it easily be supposed, then, that *Saul*, had he been really a good and upright man, could have been, for so long a time, under a mistake in this matter; and been so outrageously zealous as he was, to extirpate the religion of Christ? I will not absolutely deny the possibility of this; but yet think it is very improbable. Besides, *St. Paul* seems, in some of his epistles, to attribute his becoming a good man, to his becoming a disciple of Christ; particularly where he says, that it was "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, that had made him free from the law of sin and death." Now if his conversion from sin to God, was contemporary with his conversion from *Judaism* to *Christianity*; (which is probable from

from the account he gives of himself) it follows, that by the righteousness which is in the law, he must mean only that external, *pharisaical* righteousness before-mentioned; not that internal and sanctity, of which good men were the subjects under the *mosaic* dispensation.

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IT will perhaps be objected; that St. *Paul* declares he verily tho't with himself that he ought to do those things which he did, contrary to the name of Jesus of *Nazareth*; that he had lived, before his becoming a Christian, in all good conscience towards God: And that this supposes him to have been a righteous man, in the qualified sense of scripture, antecedently to his conversion to the faith of Christ. However this seems not to be conclusive and satisfactory: For there are doubtless many wicked men who act conscientiously, especially in the business of persecution, when their heads are heated with religious, party-disputes, and their hearts burn with a false zeal. Men may act conscientiously, for the time, in things of this nature, and indeed in almost all others; and yet not be truly good and virtuous. When our Saviour tells his disciples that "the time would come, when whosoever killed them, would think that he did God service;" I suppose none imagine

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imagine that he means good and virtuous men would do thus, merely because they are supposed to act conscientiously towards God, thinking they do service to him. No; The obvious sense is, that men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, would be so infatuated, so blinded with bigotry, and enmity against the gospel, that they would persecute even to death, the preachers and professors of it, not only without pity and remorse, but even with a firm persuasion that they were discharging their duty to God; i. e. with a good conscience towards Him. It is not therefore implied in what the Apostle says of himself, that he had been a truly righteous, good man. It does not necessarily, or naturally, amount to any thing more than this, all circumstances being considered; viz. That he had been zealous in the religion he professed; a conscientious observer of the law, as interpreted by the *Pharisees*; and that when he was embruing his hands in the blood of the innocent, he was so far from doing what he knew to be sinful, that he followed the dictates of a mistaken conscience. All which is rather an evidence, that the light within him was then darkness, and that he was depraved to great degree, than that he was really the pious man,

man, and *strict moralist*, which some suppose him to have been.

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2. THAT the Apostle is not to be understood as asserting that he had been a careful observer of the moral part of the law, appears from hence. He is here arguing against the *Jews*; and evidently speaks of the righteousness which is in the law, according to the notions and interpretations thereof, which generally prevailed amongst them: He reasons with them, or rather against them, upon their own principles, in order to confute them the more effectually. And is it not manifest from the new testament, that the righteousness which the *Jews* of this time, especially the *Pharisees*, laid the greatest stress upon, and chiefly gloried in, was a mere ceremonious, or ritual righteousness? a righteousness, which had little or no concern with their hearts and morals? This was evidently the case. And it is much the most natural supposition, that St. *Paul* here uses these terms, [the righteousness which is in the Law] in the *jerish* sense of them; intending such a righteousness thereby, as these words would have signified in the mouth of a common *Pharisee*. It was not directly to his purpose, to use them in any higher, or more exalted sense.

3. THIS

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3. THIS is farther evident, “ Because he speaks of such a righteousness as was reckoned matter of *confidence in the flesh*; which is his way of describing the positive part of the *Mosaic law*, which was of a carnal nature, related to, and affected the flesh; whereas the moral righteousness therein required was not *fleshly*; nor is it, that I remember, ever spoken of as such.” \*

4. THE particular things which the Apostle enumerates in this passage, as giving him greater reason of confidence and boasting, than many others could pretend to, are all relative to the *Jews*, and the *mosaic œconomy*;—his lineal descent from *Abraham*, *circumcision*, &c. He does not so much as hint at any particular branch of true moral righteousness, which he could justly lay claim to, unless his persecuting zeal can be looked upon as such. Now if the Apostle had really intended to represent himself as a pious, virtuous man, antecedently to his becoming a Christian, can it be supposed that he would have instanced only in his *Jewish* privileges, and things

\* Vid. Mr. Peirce's notes in *Lec.* How much, or how little, I have been beholden to this learned Commentator, in other parts of this discourse, where I have not expressly mentioned him, may be easily seen by those who think it worth while. —

things of a ceremonious, external nature? **SERM.**  
 Is it not much more natural to suppose, **VI.**  
 that he would, in this case, have instan-  
 ced in the great and important precepts  
 of the moral Law, which he had care-  
 fully observed? He certainly knew, at  
 the time of his writing this epistle, what-  
 ever he did before, that the keeping of  
 these latter commandments, was much  
 more commendable, and acceptable in the  
 sight of God, than the things of which  
 he speaks; but yet wholly omits them.  
 This is, I think, a plain demonstration,  
 that by his having been blameless touch-  
 ing the righteousness which is in the law,  
 he means no more, than that he had kept  
 the ceremonial law with the utmost pre-  
 cision and exactness; so as to stand, in  
 that respect, at least upon an equal foot-  
 ing with any of his countrymen.

5. IF by the righteousness that is in  
 the law, the Apostle had intended the  
 moral purity and good works required  
 thereby; it is not supposeable that he  
 would have spoken of it, in the verses  
 immediately following, in such strong  
 terms of contempt as he does; saying  
 that he counted it *loss* and *dung*. Indeed  
 he often speaks, in other places, of the  
 most compleat righteousness of the best  
 men, as imperfect; as attended with  
 some faults and failings; and therefore

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insufficient to justify them before God, according to the rigor of law : But this is a very different thing, from styling such a righteousness *loss* and *dung* : Nor do the scriptures any where authorise our speaking of the moral virtues of good men in such contemptuous language. This is inconsistent with the whole spirit, and the constant language of scripture ; wherein the moral virtues of good men are always mentioned with honor, and the highest epithets of commendation. But if we suppose the Apostle intends only those *Jewish* privileges, and that ceremonious righteousness, wherein the *Pharisees* chiefly trusted, without any reference to the *weightier matters of the law* ; it will be easy to account for his speaking of such a righteousness in the manner he does. This righteousness, not containing in it any thing truly good, but consisting merely in the *form of godliness* without the *power*, might be fitly enough compared to *dung*, or to *filthy rags* ; and renounced as a worthless thing. But to speak in such reproachful language of the moral virtues, which consist summarily in the love of God and man, and an imitation of the divine perfections ; is, in itself so absurd, and approaches so near to profanity and blas-

blasphemy, that I cannot think so wise and good a man as St. *Paul* could ever be guilty of it. He always speaks in quite a different strain concerning obedience to the moral part of the law ; tho', as was said before, he asserts that no man has so exactly and perfectly obeyed the law, as to be justified thereby ; and therefore admonishes us to rely upon the grace of God in Christ Jesus, as revealed in the Gospel, for acceptance with him.

FOR the several reasons mentioned, I think we may conclude, with a good degree of certainty, that when the Apostle declares he had been "blameless touching the righteousness that is in the law", his meaning is not, that he had been sinless ; nor even that he had been a strict observer of the moral part of the law, so far as is consistent with common human frailty : But only, that he had been righteous in the *pharisaical* sense of the word ; that he was possessed of the righteousness which that sect trusted in ; which gave them confidence in the flesh ; and which consisted almost wholly in certain external privileges, and ceremonious usages ; as appears fully from the new-testament, particularly from the following passages—"The *Pharisees* and all the Jews except they wash their hands eat

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SERM. not—And many other things there be,  
 VI. which they have received to hold ; as  
 the washing of cups and pots, and brazen  
 vessels and tables”— “ Woe unto you,  
 Scribes and *Pharisees*, hypocrites ; for ye  
 tythe the mint and anise and cummin, and  
 neglect the weightier matters of the law”  
 —“ Ye make clean the out-side of the  
 cup and the platter ; but within are full  
 of extortion and excess—Ye are like un-  
 to whited sepulchres, which indeed ap-  
 pear beautiful outward ; but are within  
 full of dead mens bones and all unclean-  
 ness : Even so ye appear righteous unto  
 men ; but within ye are full of hypocrisy  
 and iniquity”—“ Ye make void the law  
 of God thro’ your traditions.”—These  
 passages give you a true Idea of the reli-  
 gion chiefly in vogue, in the days of our  
 Saviour and his Apostles ; I mean a-  
 mongst the *Jews*, especially the sect of  
 the *Pharisees*, that *strait sect*, to which  
 St. *Paul* says he belonged. And this is  
 manifestly the righteousness which this  
 Apostle intends in the passage we are  
 considering ; which he calls *the righteous-  
 ness that is in the law* ; and *his own righte-  
 ousness*. This is that righteousness which  
 he once depended upon, accounting it  
*gain* to him ; and which he afterwards  
 renounced, accounting it no better than

loss and dung, in comparison of the righteousness which is of God by Faith. Nor can there well be a greater perversion of his meaning, and true design, than to represent him as speaking in this manner concerning that real holiness and moral goodness, by which men are made like to the blessed God himself.

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LET me make one short reflection here before I proceed any further. Since it is plain that the Apostle, by his own righteousness, which he renounces in such strong terms of contempt, means only his Jewish priviledges, and an external pharisaical righteousness; this shows the absurdity of applying what is here said to the virtues and good works of Christians; of those Persons who live under the Gospel-dispensation, and practically conform themselves to it. Such persons, are often told, that they must have no dependence upon their own righteousness, their virtues and good works; that this righteousness, is no better than dung, &c. And all this loose, irrational kind of talk, is pretended to be grounded upon, and supported by, the doctrine of St. Paul; particularly in the passage now under consideration. Whereas it is very manifest, that this great Apostle had not the least reference to the good works of Christians; nor even to

SERM. VI. the moral duties required by the law of *Moses*; but only to that superficial, ceremonious righteousness, in which the *Pharisees* were wont to trust and to glory; a righteousness altogether different from, and inferior to, that which is intended by those, who so zealously warn us not to have any dependence upon our obedience to Christ's commandments; so totally different from it, that no argument can be drawn from one to the other. And how well soever those may mean, who apply what the Apostle says concerning his own righteousness, while he was a persecuting *Pharisee*, to evangelical obedience; it is demonstrable that they grossly wrest his meaning; and instil very false and pernicious notions of religion into the minds of Christians.

BUT to proceed: Having seen what the apostle here intends by his *own righteousness*, the righteousness which is *in, or of, the law*; and which he disclaims as being of little or no value; let us now inquire what it is which he opposes thereto; and in which he trusts and triumphs.

Now he tells us, that he despised his own former righteousness; and accounted it as loss and dung, for [or in comparison of] *the excellency of the knowledge of Christ*.

Christ Jesus his Lord :—that he might win Christ, and be found in him—having the righteousness which is thro' the faith of Christ ; the righteousness which is of God by faith ; that he might know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death—The several things here mentioned, the Apostle opposes to his former righteousness, while he was a Pharisee. Let us consider them distinctly, that we may see, whether they do not comprise in them obedience to the gospel ? and consequently, whether the Apostle does not rather oppose his own righteousness, which was of the law, to evangelical purity and holiness, than to the righteousness of Christ imputed ?

THE first thing he mentions is, the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. By which knowledge, if he directly intends nothing more than a general speculative knowledge of Christ, and the gospel-dispensation ; yet this will make nothing against the worth and importance of evangelical obedience. But if, as it is most probable, he means what some call a practical experimental knowledge of Christ ; or such a knowledge as is productive of obedience to his commandments ; then this is not only no objection

SERM. VI. jection against, but a direct confirmation of, what has been said upon this point. For the Apostle's sense will then be, that he contemned his former, *pharisaical* righteousness, as worthless, in comparison of that real purity and sanctity, of which those are the subjects, who truly know Christ. And in this complex sense, the knowledge of Christ is often to be understood in the new testament: *i. e.* it comprehends both a speculative knowledge of him, and a frame of mind, and an external behaviour, conformable thereto. Thus it is said, *Hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a Lyar and the truth is not in him.* So it is said to be *life eternal*, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. This must mean, to know God, and his only begotten Son, so as to love and serve them, in the manner the gospel requires us to do. For surely it is not *life eternal* to know God, if in works we deny him.

THE Apostle adds—*That I may win Christ* †. His meaning is, that he might have

†. "St. Paul here carries on a very handfom and agreable allegory, in which all the metaphors are taken from traders or merchants"—"He seems here to consider Christ, as the most important and valuable thing, which he was therefore solicitous to secure to himself."——Mr. Peirce.

have Christ for his Saviour; that he might be interested in the redemption wrought out by him, in conformity to that method, and to those terms of acceptance with God, which the gospel reveals. The expression here used is so general and indeterminate, that no argument can be drawn from hence, either for or against, what I am now more particularly endeavouring to show.

THE Apostle subjoins—*and be found in him.* The phrase [being in Christ] is used in a twofold sense in the new testament. Sometimes it intends no more than an outward profession of his name and religion; or being a member of his visible Church, which is his body. At other times it means being in him as his true disciples and followers; and interested, by faith and sincere obedience, in that salvation which he has purchased for all such. Thus the Apostle *John* explains it; “He that keepeth his commandments, dwelleth in him.” And *St. Paul* himself; [*Rom. 8. 1.*] “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ *Jesus*, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.” Agreeably hereto, it is said in the *apocalypse*, that blessed are the dead which die in the Lord—; for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow.

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SERM. *low them.*" From these several passages  
 VI. it appears, that to be *in Christ*, in the  
 most eminent and important sense of the  
 Phrase, is to be interested in the redemption  
 and salvation which he has wrought  
 out, by *keeping his commandments* ; by  
*walking after the spirit* ; or by doing those  
 good works, which are said to *follow* the  
 righteous into another world, when they  
 depart out of this.

Now when the apostle expresses his  
 ardent desire, that he might be found *in  
 Christ* ; it seems most natural to under-  
 stand him in this latter sense, i. e. as  
 wishing to be found and acknowledged  
 at last, as one of Christ's faithful servants ;  
 one of those, to whom the great and pre-  
 cious promises of the gospel are made.  
 We can scarce suppose that he would ex-  
 press so great a sollicitude as he here does,  
 to be found in Christ, only by an out-  
 ward and formal profession of his religi-  
 on ; or by faith alone, as it is opposed to  
 evangelical obedience. To be found in  
 Christ in this sense only, he certainly knew  
 would avail him nothing at the last day.  
 And if we understand him in the other,  
 as we ought undoubtedly to do ; surely  
 there is nothing here which looks like  
 disparaging, or undervaluing, the virtues  
 and good works of Christians ; or which  
 intimates

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intimates that the Apostle disclaimed all trust and dependence upon his living in obedience to Christ's laws. His words imply the direct contrary: *viz.* that he earnestly desired to be a faithful and obedient servant of Christ, as the only way of obtaining salvation by him.

THE Apostle goes on — *Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law; but that which is thro' the faith of Christ; the righteousness of God by faith.* What he means by his own righteousness, which was of the law; has been particularly shown above; *viz.* his Jewish privileges, and his strict adherence to the ceremonial part of the law, according to the custom of the *Pharisees*. So that the inquiry now is only, what St. Paul intends by the righteousness which is *thro' the faith of Christ*, the righteousness which is *of God by faith*; and which he opposes to that righteousness of the law, on which he had formerly relied.

Now by this he may possibly mean, that real holiness of heart and manners, which is the genuine effect of faith, of faith in Christ, and in God thro' him. Agreeable to this interpretation, we read of faith that *worketh by love, that overcometh the world*, and the like. And evangelical righteousness, or that holiness, the

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the root and principle of which is faith ; as it might be properly enough termed the righteousness which is thro' the faith of Christ, or the righteousness of God by faith ; so it might, with equal propriety, be opposed to *Jewish* priviledges, and an external, *pharisaical* conformity to the law of *Moses*. And this righteousness might be said to be *of God*, in contradistinction to the other, either because it is that righteousness, which He has prescribed and required, and promised to accept ; or because it is attained by grace and help derived from Him. And if we understand the Apostle thus, as many do, not without some appearance of reason ; this passage will surely make directly against those, whose practice it is to speak contemptuously of *Christian* obedience ; and to represent it as being of no efficacy towards procuring Acceptance with God, and eternal life. Nor does this interpretation render the obedience and atonement of Christ needless ; for it is only thro' him, that our imperfect righteousness is accepted and rewarded.

However, there is another interpretation, which seems rather more agreeable to the doctrine and language of *St. Paul* in other places ; and which is, I think, to be preferred accordingly. By *righteousness* here, I understand

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understand not any holiness or good works of men ; any obedience which Christians perform ; but pardoning mercy, acceptance and justification, with God ; as the same word is sometimes used. † Of such pardoning mercy, or justification unto life, we become the objects, by faith in Christ, or by the gospel of Christ, in opposition to the law. For it is else-where said, that *by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified ; because all have sinned.* God has graciously ordained another way, in which transgressors may be accepted and justified of him ; viz. thro' faith in his Son, who is the propitiation for Sin. And the mercy of God thus revealed to sinners in the Gospel, is here called *His righteousness thro' faith.* And God's accepting sinners in this way, is what the Apostle else-where expresses by his \* *imputing*

† In this sense, the Apostle Paul in particular, seems evidently to use this term, *Rom. 3. 21, — 26.* *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets ; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, &c.*

\* I cannot but just observe here, that the scripture teaches no such doctrine, as that of God's *imputing the perfect righteousness of Christ to sinners for justification.* If we have recourse to *Romans 4th,* where the *imputation of righteousness* is mentioned ; and which is, I think, the principal passage, on which the Advocates for this doctrine build, it is very evident that the *imputing of righteousness* is opposed to the *marking of iniquity*; and signifies

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putting righteousness without works ; and his counting faith for righteousness. But then it is to be particularly observed, that tho' faith is here, and in other places, opposed to the works and righteousness of the *Mosaic* law, properly so called ; yet it is not opposed to evangelical obedience, as if it was by believing in Christ, exclusively of submitting to his will and commandments, that we are accepted with God, and intitled to eternal life. For throughout the new testament, when the blessings of pardon, acceptance with God, and eternal life, are annexed to faith

signifies the same thing precisely, with *forgiving iniquity ; covering sin ; or not imputing sin*. For thus it is that *David* is there introduced as *describing* the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, " Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered : blessed is that man unto whom the Lord will not impute sin." I would not be understood to mean, that it is not in consideration of Christ's becoming *obedient unto death*, that those who believe, are pardon'd, accepted, and treated of God as tho' they were righteous : For this is evidently the doctrine of the Gospel ; and is, I suppose, what is intended when it is said, That " by the obedience of One, many shall be made righteous." (*Rom. 5. 19.*) Possibly some who speak of Christ's righteousness as being *imputed* to us, may intend no more hereby than what is expressed above :—with whom I have the happiness to agree, except as to the propriety of this way of *expressing* the matter. This, I humbly conceive, is a misapplication of the scripture phrase, *imputing righteousness* ; and almost unavoidably leads many people into a misapprehension of the scripture-doctrine of our pardon and acceptance with God, thro' what our Redeemer has done and suffered for us.

faith ; faith either means the gospel-dispensation in general, as opposed to the *mosaic*, or else it is to be taken in a complex sense, and intends both believing the gospel, and an hearty submission and obedience thereto. Nor can it be otherwise understood, without making the scripture contradict itself ; as will appear more particularly in the two following discourses, concerning *justification by faith*.

UPON the whole, the sense of the Apostle here, where he expresses his desire to be *found in Christ, not having his own righteousness ; but that which is thro' the faith of Christ ; the righteousness of God by faith ;* may be taken in the following paraphrase : *q. d.* “ It was, and still is, my great concern to be found a true disciple of Jesus Christ ; interested in the mercy of God thro' him, and intitled to the salvation purchased by him :—Not depending upon my privileges as a *Jew* ; nor desiring to appear in that legal ceremonious righteousness, of which I once tho't so highly ; but relying wholly upon the pardoning mercy and goodness of God ; which He has now clearly revealed and promised to those who believe in his Son, and obey his Gospel, whether they be *Jews or Gentiles.*” This I take to be the true sense and spirit of St. Paul's words.

And

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SERM. And if it is, it is perfectly consistent with  
 VI. all that has been said in the preceeding  
 discourses, concerning the necessity of e-  
 vangelical holiness.

BUT the Apostle goes on—*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection,* ver. 10. the former part. It is needless to add any thing here, concerning what the Apostle means by *knowing* Christ ; this being no more, in effect, than a repetition of what he had said before, concerning the *excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord*. But what does he intend by *knowing the Power of Christ's resurrection* ? This may be explained by such passages as these : That Christ was *raised for our Justification* ; that God has *begotten us unto a lively hope by his resurrection from the dead* ; and, that *every one that hath this hope, purifieth himself, &c.* The resurrection of Christ is the great argument, by which the truth of the gospel is established :—that gospel, which is the basis of all our hopes ; the charter of all our privileges as Christians ; of our pardon, and title to eternal life. And the resurrection of Christ being considered in this light ; and in connexion with his subsequent exaltation to glory, *to appear in the presence of God for us* ; has a natural tendency to quicken us in running the race of piety and

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and virtue set before us ; to raise us from the death of sin, to newness of life ; and to exalt our tho'ts, to those things that are above, *where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.* Sentiments of this kind frequently occur in the new testament. And when the apostle expresses his desire to know the power of Christ's resurrection, the obvious sense thereof is, that he might experience the full and proper efficacy of this great doctrine upon his own heart, in the confirmation of his faith in the divine promises ; in the elevation of his hopes above this world, and fixing them on things unseen and eternal ; and so in inspiring him with zeal and fortitude and patience in doing the will of his risen and ascended master :—So that this is no evidence of the Apostle's making little or no account of personal righteousness and holiness ; but an evident proof of the contrary.

ST. Paul subjoins—*And the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death.* The sense in general, may be this : The Apostle, we know, lived in times of great trial and persecution, being *in jeopardy every hour, and dying daily.* And his desire was, that, in all his sufferings and tribulations, he might suffer after the manner that Christ did, in the same

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glorious

SERM. VI. glorious cause of truth and righteousness, and with the like patience and resolution; that so he might have a sort of communion and fellowship and participation with him in his sufferings, and even in death, as well as in life, be conformed to his divine Master. A passage in his epistles to *Timothy* may, perhaps, illustrate his meaning here—"Therefore, says he, I endure all things for the Elects sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying; if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign, with him." Agreeably hereto, he tells the *Colossians*, \* "That he now rejoiced in his sufferings for them, and filled up what was behind of the afflictions of Christ, in his own flesh."—

\* Chap. 1.  
ver. 24.

BUT those words, *being made conformable to his death*, will bear another construction. The Apostle's meaning may be, that he might *die unto sin*. Which interpretation is countenanced by some other passages of scripture; particularly *Rom. Chap. 6 ver. 4*, and onwards. And because this passage may possibly be the best comment, both upon these words, and those preceding, concerning the *power of Christ's resurrection*, I shall beg leave to give it at large—"Therefore we are

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are buried with him by baptism into death ; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death : we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection : Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead, is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him : Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more ; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once : but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin ; but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof."

THUS I have endeavoured to explain this passage of Scripture, wherein the Apostle, renouncing his own righteousness which was of the law, as insufficient to justify him, and give him a title to eternal life, betakes himself to the pardoning mercy and grace of God, revealed in

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the Gospel of his Son, thro' faith. And I think it appears that those who apply it to the controversy amongst Christians at this day, concerning faith and works, as if it favoured the *modern notion* of justification thro' the perfect righteousness of Christ, imputed to us, and received by faith alone, intirely mistake the scope, and true spirit of the passage. It relates to an old dispute betwixt the unchristianized *Jews*, who boasted of their privileges, and depended upon an external, ceremonious righteousness; and the disciples of Christ, who asserted the insufficiency of such a righteousness, and the necessity of having recourse to the pardoning mercy of God, as revealed to Sinners thro' his Son. And that which the apostle here expresses so ardent a desire after, is neither more nor less than this, that he might be, both in faith and practice, a Christian, in order to his being intitled to the divine acceptance, and life eternal. It is a gross perverting of scripture, to interpret this passage, as if the Apostle had been speaking of *faith* and *works* of *righteousness*, in the *modern* sense of those terms, opposing one of them to the other; and representing the former, exclusively of the latter, as what intitles us to the Salvation purchased by Christ.

Christ. Nothing could well be more remote from his true design ; or more inconsistent with the general tenor of scripture. It may be added, that giving this turn to the passage has a natural and direct tendency to make Christians less cautious and circumspect, less careful to live up to their profession, than they ought to be.

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ALAS ! could sorrow enter the mansions of the blessed, how would it affect this holy Apostle to see his doctrine abused to the encouraging of Vice and licentiousness, to the destruction of those souls, for which Christ died ! We cannot be ignorant how solicitous he was, while he was fulfilling the ministry which he had received of the Lord, that Christians should adorn their lives with a conversation becoming their high calling of God in Christ Jesus ; and how much he was grieved when he saw any contradict their profession by their behaviour. In this very epistle, yea in this very chapter, a part of which we have been considering, he has left us a proof hereof. “ Many walk, says he, of whom I have told you oft, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their

SERM. shame ; who mind earthly things." Nor  
 VI. was he less careful to live piously and  
 virtuously himself, lest he should fall  
 short of salvation at last, than he was to  
 inculcate the practice of religion upon o-  
 thers. Both his manner of preaching,  
 and his manner of living, with the great  
 motive of it, may be judged of by the  
 following passage in his first epistle to the  
*Corinthians*—" Know ye not that they  
 which run in a race, run all ; but one  
 receiveth the prize : So run that ye may  
 obtain. And every one that striveth for  
 the mastery, is temperate in all things.  
 Now they do it to obtain a corruptible  
 crown, but we an incorruptible. I there-  
 fore so run, not as uncertainly ; so fight  
 I, not as one that beateth the air : But I  
 keep under my body, and bring it into  
 subjection, lest that by any means when  
 I have preached to others, I myself  
 should be a cast-away." This, surely, is  
 not the language of One, who thought  
 his Salvation secured by faith in the righ-  
 teousness of Another, without holiness,  
 and perseverance therein to the end. But  
 it is the language of One, who looked  
 upon his future well-being, as suspended  
 on the condition of his being righteous  
 himself, and continuing patient in well-  
 doing.

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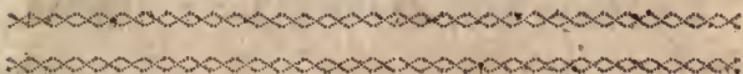
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IF it should be objected, that this doctrine leads men to *trust to their own righteousness*; I answer it is very reasonable they should do so, in one sense; and the holy scriptures sufficiently warrant it. God has assured us, on one hand, that the *unrighteous shall not inherit His kingdom*; and on the other, that the *righteous shall shine forth as the Sun in the kingdom of their Father*. Certainly then good men may so far trust to their own righteousness, as to believe it will be available with a gracious God, thro' the Mediator; so as to procure eternal life for them. Thus far to trust thereto, is not to be *self-righteous*, in the bad sense of the term; nor to put a greater value upon our sincere obedience, that God himself is pleased to put upon it in his Word. And thus far it is evident St. Paul himself trusted to his own righteousness, *which was of the Gospel*, when he said, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; Hence forward there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day."

INDEED, since we cannot be *profitable unto God*, it is manifest that we cannot *merit* any good from him. This is impossible, not only for such imperfect sin-

SERM. VI. ful creatures as we are ; but for those of the highest and most perfect order. The very notion of *merit* with regard to God, is a gross absurdity and contradiction. It proceeds from a foolish imagination, that the services of his creatures are, some way or other, really beneficial and advantageous to him. If we conceive thus, it is very natural then to think, that we may make Him our debtor ; and merit something of him in return. But, to use the words of St. *Paul*, “ Who hath first given unto him ; and it shall be recompenced to him again ? For of him, and thro’ him, and to him are all things.” Whenever we come to have just conceptions of God, and of ourselves, and of the relation in which we stand towards Him ; when we consider Him as a Being absolutely independent and self-sufficient, whose goodness alone prompted him to give us existence at first ; and who governs us, not for his own sake, but only that we may be happy in loving him, and doing his will ; these sentiments will effectually root out all that pride and vanity of heart, from whence the notion of *merit* springs. We shall then be fully sensible, that we are with relation to Him, *unprofitable servants*, even tho’ we should *do all those things that are required of us ;* and

and consequently, that we are indebted **SERM.**  
to his goodness, bounty, and free grace, **VI.**  
for all the happiness we receive from   
Him, whether in this world or another.



**SERMON**



S E R M O N VII.

Of Justification by Faith.

JAMES I. 21, 22.

*LAY* apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

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**N**OTWITHSTANDING the holy scriptures assure us, that all the impenitent workers of iniquity shall be condemned in the judgment of the great Day; notwithstanding they so plainly teach us, that only the pure in heart shall see God; notwithstanding we are so frequently admonished to be doers of the word; and not to hope for the favour of God, either here or hereafter, without forsaking our sins, and working righteousness;

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teousness ; notwithstanding all these Things, I say, it is very hard to convince some people, that they cannot be accepted of God thro' Christ, upon other and easier terms than such expressions seem, at first view, to imply in them.

IN the two last discourses, I considered, and endeavoured to refute, two mistaken notions respecting this important point ; which notions are grounded upon a misconstruction of those expressions of scripture, that we are *saved by grace* ; and, that we must be *found in Christ, not having our own righteousness*.—

THERE is another scripture-expression, which has not been less abused, to serve the cause of licentiousness, than either of the former. The expression I intend, is that which occurs divers times in the epistles of St. Paul ; viz. That we are *justified by faith*. This seems to have been the *sheet-anchor*, with many : And therefore I shall examine the *weight* of it the more carefully, in this and the ensuing, discourse : not doubting but it will appear too light for their purpose. The doctrine of the gospel undoubtedly is, that we are *justified by faith* ; but it is a great mistake to infer from hence, that we are accepted to the divine favour, and entitled to eternal life, without unfeigned repentance,

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repentance, and new obedience. Whatever notions we may entertain of *justification*; it is still evident that every unreformed Sinner, every one who hears the word, and does it not, is the object of God's wrath; and cannot become an heir of eternal life, but by being *made free from sin, and having his fruit unto holiness*. People may amuse themselves with *terms and distinctions*, as long as they please; and ascribe their justification to whatever they will: But after all, the scripture is plain, that every wicked man is out of his Maker's favour; and must continue so, till he ceases to do evil, and learns to do well.

BUT in order to my speaking with as little ambiguity as may be, upon the point before us; and to prevent misconstruction; I would premise a few things concerning the nature of justification. A short account hereof, will open the way for what is to follow, concerning the manner in which, and the terms upon which, we are justified before God.

THAT which is intended by justification in the new testament, may be better understood by a brief description, than by any formal definition of the thing.

Now evangelical justification may be considered with relation to the Author of it; who is almighty God. For, says the apostle,

apostle, "It is God that justifieth." And SERM.  
VII.  
 if we consider it under the notion of an \* *act* of God ; it is an act of his mercy,

\* Tho' we sometimes speak of justification as an *act* of God ; yet it can hardly be conceived of as any thing really distinct from his written word, or the gracious promises and declarations of the gospel. The terms upon which we are accepted to favour, pardoned and justified, are already laid down in the holy Scriptures : So that those who comply therewith, are justified of course, upon such compliance. These terms are stable and fixed ; so that every one who comes up thereto, is intitled to the mercy revealed ; those who do not, are still under condemnation. There is nothing arbitrary, or capricious, in the justification of one, and the condemnation of another. But God justifies one, and condemns another, by, and in his word ; according as men do, or do not comply with his will there made known. No one is under condemnation, but whom the word and law of God condemns ; no one is justified, but whom the Gospel justifies. We do not, surely, imagine that there is any sentence of absolution, or justification, formally pronounced in heaven, when a man is justified ; tho' we sometimes express ourselves after this manner. No : God's sentence of absolution, or justification, is in his revealed word ; not any thing distinct from, or independent of, what he has there declared ; but this is the very thing itself. There is no *act* of justification to be conceived of, either as prior, or subsequent to, or different from, the gospel-declarations of mercy. In them it is that we have our pardon and justification. God is to be considered as speaking to us in his word ; and as pronouncing the sentence which *that* pronounces, whether of pardon and life, or condemnation and death : Which sentence will be ratified, be put into execution, and will fully take effect, in the judgment of the great day. To say a man is justified, or that he is under condemnation, expresses the relation in which he stands to God's word and law : The former means, that he is One, to whom the gracious promises of the gospel belong ; the latter, that he is One, against whom a curse is denounced. It would probably have prevented a great deal of confusion, and unintelligible rant, upon the subject of justification, had it always been considered in this light ; as being only the sentence which God passes on a man, in, and by his word ; instead of being considered as a divine *act*, intirely distinct from, and independent of, it.

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cy, grace and favour, in contradistinction from his justice : For, says the same Apostle *Paul*, we are “justified freely by his grace.” The truth, and the ground, of which assertion will appear, if we consider justification with regard to the subject of it ; or who it is that is justified ; *viz.* a transgressor of the law of God, or a sinner : For says *St. Paul*, “ God justifieth the ungodly.” All having sinned, justification must necessarily be of grace, entirely unmerited. God justifies no person under the notion of his being innocent, or perfectly righteous, whether *inherently* or *imputatively*. Nor would the justification of such a one, be an act of grace ; it would be only an act of justice.

IF we consider evangelical justification, with relation to the great Mediator ; it is his purchase, the fruit and effect of his Death. In other words, He, by what he has done and suffered for us, has laid the foundation for our being justified ; according to God’s appointment, and the œconomy of the gospel. Accordingly it said, that we are justified by the grace of God, *thro’ the redemption that is in Christ, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, &c.*

LET us for the further illustration of the scripture notion of justification, consider what benefits are implied therein; and what privileges accrue to the subjects of it. Now that which is primarily intended hereby is, pardon, impunity, or exemption from the punishment due to sin, according to the law of God. That this is the first and most proper notion of evangelical justification, appears from the account and description which the apostle gives of it, *Rom. 4. 5*, — “To him that —believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness: Even as *David* also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works; saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man unto whom the Lord will not impute sin.” From this passage it is obvious, that to *justify*, to *impute righteousness* without works, to *forgive iniquity*, to *cover sin*, and *not to impute sin*, are expressions nearly synonymous, signifying in general the very same thing, viz. the remission of the penalty denounced against the violators of God’s law: So that justification is primarily, and most properly opposed to the marking and punishing of iniquity.

HOWEVER

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HOWEVER this is not the whole of what is implied in evangelical justification. It is not a mere negative ; but involves in it, positive blessings, and glorious privileges. For example ; he that is justified, becomes, at the same time, an object of God's peculiar love ; and, from a state of enmity, comes into a state of peace and reconciliation with Him. Thus the apostle tells us, that " being justified — we have *peace* with God, thro' our Lord Jesus Christ." And the person thus justified is, according to the gracious promises and declarations of the gospel, entitled both to God's peculiar care and guardianship in this world, and to glory in the other. He is accounted innocent and righteous, when absolved from his sins, in his Justification ; and acquires thereby a right to happiness, as tho' he had never transgressed. There is not only *no condemnation belonging to him* \* ; but he has, by virtue of God's gracious promise, *a right to the tree of life ; and to enter in thro' the gates into the city.* †

\* Rom. 8. 1.

† Rev. 22.

14.

THIS, in brief, is the scripture notion and idea of justification. Perhaps the term may be sometimes used in the new testament, in a more lax, vague, and indeterminate sense, so as to be applicable, as holiness is, to the whole collective body of

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of professed Christians. But whether it is ever thus used, or not, is not material to the point in hand. For we are now speaking only of such a justification, as implies in it the forgiveness of sins, the special favour and friendship of Heaven, and a sure title to eternal happiness ; and consequently such a one, as is peculiar to some, not common to all, who profess the religion of the Gospel.

AND the question now before us is, How this justification accrues to us ? What terms and conditions those are, upon which it is offered, and granted, to sinners ? Whether we are, in this sense, justified only by faith, or believing, as faith is distinguished from repentance, and newness of life ? Or by faith, considered in a larger sense, and as virtually comprehending such repentance, and new obedience. It is acknowledged upon all hands, that many even of those who hear the glad tidings of the gospel, and have taken upon themselves the Christian name and character, are not the subjects of this justification. Many of them are, doubtless, as truly under condemnation, and as much the heirs of wrath, as if God had never revealed pardon and mercy to a sinful world. To what, then, is this distinction owing ? In general it

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must

SERM. must be owing to this, that some com-  
 VII. ply with the terms, on which their justifi-  
 cation is suspended, while others reject  
 them : for the terms are the same to all.  
 God does not act the part of a Sovereign  
 here, in justifying one man, and leaving  
 another under condemnation. Tho' we  
 have no right to prescribe rules of con-  
 duct to Him ; he has prescribed them to  
 Himself ; and according to them he in-  
 variably dispenses the blessings of the new  
 covenant, without *respect of persons*—  
 Now that God has suspended the justifi-  
 cation of sinners, not upon faith only, in  
 the restrained sense, mentioned above ;  
 but upon faith, considered as comprehen-  
 sive of repentance from dead works, and  
 of evangelical obedience \* ; I shall en-  
 deavour to make manifest by several ar-  
 guments.

BUT

\* When evangelical obedience is said to be necessary in or-  
 der to evangelical justification ; the meaning is not, that we  
 must actually perform a great number of good works, such as  
 the gospel requires, before we can be justified. True repen-  
 tance includes in it the principle of obedience ; so that every  
 sincere penitent, is a good man, in the qualified sense of scrip-  
 ture, even before he *brings forth fruits meet for repentance* :  
 And he is no sooner such, than he is pardoned and justified.  
 It is not imagined, that after his heart is really turned from  
 sin to God, his justification is still suspended upon his making  
 this manifest by his good works ; or by a course of external o-  
 bedience to the laws of Christ : Which notion involves those  
 who embrace it, in many difficulties. Perhaps a person who  
believes the gospel, and is become a sincere convert in his  
heart,

BUT there is a vulgar prejudice, which I would beg leave briefly to obviate, here. Those who assert the necessity of evangelical obedience in order to justification,  
 N 2 are

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heart, being *created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works*, may be taken out of the world before he has scope and opportunity given him, to exercise the good principle he is possessed of, in an obedient life. Shall we say then, that such a man is not justified, because he has performed no works of gospel obedience? By no means. His repentance, and inward submission to the terms of the gospel, virtually contain all the good works which the gospel requires. In the sight of God, who knoweth the hearts of men, he had complied with the terms of mercy and salvation, according to their true intent and meaning, altho' this was not manifested by his outward conduct. His willing and obedient heart, placed him in the class of those, to whom the gospel offers mercy and salvation, tho' he died before he had time, out of this *good treasure, to bring forth good things*. And altho' he had lived ever so long after his being thus renewed in the spirit of his mind; yet it is evident that he would have been justified from that very time; and antecedently to his doing good works in the sense of the gospel. The promises being made to such a *temper*, it is unreasonable to suppose that his justification would have been suspended upon the actual performance of those works of righteousness, which naturally flow therefrom, whenever there is opportunity for it. Besides; if the actual performance of good works, is necessary to justification; it may reasonably be inquired, how many good works are necessary to that end? and how long a Man must live, after he is inwardly converted to God, in order to yield such an outward obedience to his commandments, without which he cannot be justified? These questions, for the substance of them, have often been asked; but never answered to the satisfaction of impartial, unprejudiced men. They are, indeed, unanswerable; and the bare proposing of them, is sufficient to show, that They go upon a wrong hypothesis, who suppose that any acts of external obedience are the ground of our justification, or necessary in order thereto. That obedience to the gospel, to which the promises of forgiveness and eternal life are made, is an hearty belief, and inward submission to the terms, of it; such

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are often accused of holding, that good works are meritorious ; and accordingly they are ranked with the *Roman Catholics* in this respect. Than which conduct of their adversaries, there cannot well be any thing more invidious, disingenuous and abusive. We constantly disclaim the doctrine of merit. We assert that Christ, by what he has done and suffered, has procured mercy, justification, and eternal life for us : Altho' we think that we cannot be justified, according to the tenor of the new covenant, but by faith in, and submission to, our blessed Redeemer. And even after we have obeyed the gospel, we account it great grace in God to accept us, and to bestow eternal Life upon us. Is this to teach that obedience and good works merit justification ! Let us see how easily this charge might be retorted upon those that bring it. Faith, or believing, is as much *our act*, something

a submission thereto, as will, whenever there is opportunity and scope for it, be accompanied with a corresponding obedience of life. And this is all the obedience, for the necessity of which, in order to justification, I argue in this, and the following discourse. Possibly some, who ascribe our justification to faith alone, may comprehend under the term faith, all that godly sorrow, and internal submission to the terms of the gospel, which others intend when they assert the necessity of obedience, and deny the sufficiency of faith to justify. In this case, there is indeed a contradiction in words, but the real sense of the parties is the same.

thing done by us, as the loving of God or our neighbour. Yea, it is expressly called a *Work*, by our Saviour himself. † Now when they assert that faith is necessary to justification, and that this alone justifies, they attribute as much merit to faith, as we ascribe to obedience in general. Their faith is put into; and holds; the same place in this affair of justification, with our obedience to the gospel. How meritorious with them, is that single act of obedience, *believing in Him whom God hath sent!* No; they will doubtless tell us, that they do not consider faith as what merits justification; but only suppose, that, according to the gospel covenant of grace, the justification which Christ has purchased, is annexed to believing; that they are justified upon account of what He has done and suffered, not upon account of the inherent worth and merit of faith. Very well: This sufficiently vindicates them from the imputation of making that one act, *believing*, meritorious of justification and eternal life. And in the same way do we clear ourselves of the charge of making *obedience* to the gospel, meritorious. It is only substituting the word obedience in the room of faith, thus: “ We

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† John 6.  
28, 29.

SERM. “ rits justification ; but only suppose, that,  
 VII. “ according to the gospel covenant of  
 “ grace, the justification which Christ has  
 “ purchased, is annexed to obeying him.  
 “ We are justified upon account of what  
 “ He has done and suffered for us ; not  
 “ upon account of the inherent worth  
 “ and merit of our obedience. ”

PUTTING the matter in this light, and thus turning the tables, does, I think, show, that we are as far from making obedience in general, meritorious, as they who tax us therewith, are from making their faith so. For to that faith, to that one act of obedience, they ascribe all the efficacy in the matter of justification, which we ascribe to faith and obedience conjunctly. And altho', in some of them, the bringing of such an invidious charge against their brethren, may be charitably imputed to ignorance ; yet, in others, it is but too evident that it proceeds from something else.——

HAVING thus premised what seemed to be needful, I proceed now more directly to what was intended ; *namely*, to show, That justification, in that sense of the term, which has been explained above, accrues to sinners, not by faith considered exclusively of, and in distinction from, repentance and evangelicall obedience ;

ence ; but by faith, considered in a larger sense, and as really comprehending such repentance and obedience in it. In the prosecution of which design, I shall do these two things :

*First*, Give some general account of those passages of scripture, where faith, may seem, at first view, to be opposed to obedience ; and to be made, exclusively of it, the term or condition of justification, on our part : And I shall show that there is no real *necessity* of putting such a construction upon them, they being fairly capable of another. And

*Secondly*, I shall show positively, by various arguments, that they *cannot possibly* be understood in such a sense, in any tolerable *consistency* with the general doctrine of the new testament : And consequently, that when we are said to be justified by faith, faith is not opposed to evangelical obedience ; but is considered as including it, and the great principle of it.

*First*, I am to give some general account of those passages of scripture, where faith may seem, at first view, to be opposed to obedience ; and to be made, exclusively of it, the term or condition of justification, on our part : And to show, that there is no real *necessity* of putting

SERM. VII. such a construction upon them, they being fairly capable of another. It will not be expected that I should consider all the passages here referred to: I shall therefore select only a few of the principal of them; those upon which the greatest stress has been laid; which are in the epistles of *St. Paul*. And if a fair and natural account can be given of them, without recurring to the *solifidian* doctrine, this will be a clue to the understanding of all others, either exactly parallel, or similar, to them.

WE may begin with that of the Apostle in his epistle to the *Romans*: *Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.* [Chap. 3. ver. 28.] Are not faith and obedience here distinguished from each other? And is not justification expressly attributed to the former, exclusively of the latter? I answer, that by *the law* is often intended the *jewish* dispensation, the law of *Moses*; and by *faith*, the dispensation of Grace by Jesus Christ. And if we understand the terms thus in this place, the supposed difficulty intirely vanishes. For then the meaning of the apostle will be no more than this, That a man is justified by the gospel, or in the method of the gospel, even without observing the law of *Moses*, and whether

whether he be *Jew* or *Gentile*. The *Jews* cannot be justified by *the law*, which they have violated; but must have recourse to Christ, who is the end thereof for justification: And the *Gentiles* may, in this way, attain to justification altogether without the law. So that both of them are upon one and the same footing, with relation to the divine acceptance. It is the gospel of God's grace alone, which can justify either of them; and in this method, one may be justified as well as the other. Now as *the law*, and *faith*, meaning thereby the *mosaic*, and the *evangelical dispensation*, are frequently opposed the one to the other in this manner, this interpretation is not unnatural; and indeed it is favoured by what immediately follows,—*Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also. Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision thro' faith.*

THE preceding context also favours this interpretation. The Apostle had been showing at large, that the *Gentiles* had transgressed the law of nature; and the *Jews*, the revealed law of God, the law given by *Moses*. From whence he concludes, [*ver. 19 and 20*] that all the world, *Jews* as well as *Gentiles*, were become

SERM. VII. become *guilty before God*; and so could not plead a legal righteousness for justification. In the three following verses St. Paul speaks of that gracious provision, which God had made in the gospel, for all sinners in common, whether under the *mosaic law*, or the law of nature; *for there is no difference*. By faith, by the gospel, or submission thereto, all sinners may attain to justification. The three next verses contain a more particular account of the method in which this justification accrues to sinners; *viz. by the grace of God, thro' the redemption that is in Christ; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, &c.* In the next verse St. Paul triumphs over the boasting, self-righteous *Jews*, whose dependence, for justification, was not upon the Mercy of God in Christ, but upon their legal works,—*Where is boasting then, says he? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.* As if he had said, what becomes then of that glorying; to which the *Jews* are so much addicted? It is entirely precluded; and the very foundation of it destroyed. How is this done? by the law of *Moses*? No: but all boasting is effectually excluded by the law of faith; by the evangelical method of justification; which supposes that the subjects of it are trans-

transgressors ; and which must therefore be of grace. The words which I proposed to explain, immediately follow ; and they are an inference drawn from what had been said above ; or rather the sum of it, expressed in a few words—

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*Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. As if he had said, Since therefore the Jews have sinned as well as the Gentiles ; since every mouth must be stopped ; and all men be condemned, by law ; and since God has revealed a gracious method of acceptance with him by Christ, making no difference betwixt Jews and Gentiles ; since these things are so, we may be assured, that how much soever the Jews may boast of their own righteousness, which is of the law, and despise the Gentiles ; yet they neither are, nor can be justified, by their obedience to the law of Moses, (it being imperfect) but must have recourse to the law of faith, to the Gospel of God's grace in Christ Jesus : And in this way, the Gentiles may attain to justification as well as they ; even tho' they do not observe the law of Moses, nor have any thing to do with it.*

Now supposing this to be the true, as it is not an unnatural, interpretation of the passage ; it makes nothing in favour of

SERM. of the doctrine of justification by faith,  
 VII. in the *modern sense* of the term *faith*; or  
 as faith is opposed to evangelical obedience. The amount of it is only this, that justification cannot come by the law of *Moses*; but only by a compliance with the gospel; by believing it, and heartily submitting to it.

BUT it has been observed, that the apostle here speaks of the *deeds OF LAW*, without the *article*: From whence some have argued, that he does not mean particularly the *mosaic* dispensation; but law in general, law absolutely taken: And it so, it is said, that faith is here opposed no less to evangelical works, than to the deeds of the *Jewish* law: And consequently, that believing justifies us, exclusively of obedience of any kind.

Now tho' the *Article* is both used and omitted in the new-testament, in such a manner, that no stress can be laid upon a criticism of this sort; yet I will not contend about that point here. We will, if you please, take it for granted, that, by *law*, the Apostle intends not particularly the *mosaic* dispensation; but law in the most absolute, unlimited sense. Let us see to what his words will amount upon this supposition. And I think they will come nearly to the same thing, as to the par-

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particular point now before us. For then St. Paul's sense will be this : That all men having transgressed the law they were respectively under ; the *Jews*, the revealed law of God, and the *Gentiles*, the law of nature ; it is impossible that any should attain to justification in a way strictly legal. For in order to justification by the *deeds of law*, of any law whatever, it is necessary that those deeds should be exactly conformable to that law. And no mans deeds having been thus conformable to law, it is impossible that either *Jew* or *Gentile*, that any man whatever, should be justified in that way. It is necessary that grace and mercy intervene, in order to the justification of a transgressor. But tho' we are not justified by the deeds of law, in the sense above expressed ; it does not follow that we are justified by faith or believing *only*, as faith is distinguished from repentance and newness of life. Nor is there any necessity of supposing that the apostle here uses the term faith in that restrained sense. Altho' we should suppose that faith is here used as comprehensive of evangelical obedience, when we are said to be justified thereby ; this would not be inconsistent with what is immediately added,——  
without the deeds of law. There is no contradiction

SERM. VII. tradition in saying that we are justified by faith, including subjection and obedience to Christ in our idea of faith; and saying, at the same time, that we are not justified by the *deeds of law*: For the latter is only saying, in other words, that we are not justified by a perfect righteousness; or by works exactly conformable to law. In short, tho' faith is here opposed to the *deeds of law*, it is not opposed to repentance, and evangelical holiness; but only to such a righteousness as would justify a man in the eye and sense of law; and so be inconsistent with grace in the Law-giver.

WHETHER, therefore, the Apostle is speaking only of the law of *Moses*, or of law in the most unlimited, absolute sense; it comes exactly to the same thing, as to the point now in question. Upon neither of the suppositions is there any need of understanding him as opposing faith, to the obedience of faith, or to gospel holiness; but only to the deeds of law, in *that sense* wherein he uses these terms: Which sense is manifestly this, *viz.* works exactly corresponding to the demands of law, whether that of *Moses*, or that of *nature*. In this sense, it is indeed evident, that no man is justified by the deeds of law; because, as the apostle observes, *all*  
*have*

have sinned. But it may be still true that we are justified by our obedience to the gospel of Christ.

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BUT I will go one step further here, by way of concession ; and allow, for the present, that the Apostle opposes faith, not only to a *legal righteousness*, but even to all *external acts of evangelical obedience*. And even this supposition will not militate in the least degree, against any thing I have said ; or favour the common *solifidian* doctrine. Acts of external obedience, or good works, most properly so called, are such as proceed from an obedient and good heart ; from a righteous principle within. It is the *good tree* only, that bringeth forth *good fruit* ; and it is only a *good man*, out of the *good treasure in his heart*, that bringeth forth *good things*. An holy principle within, is considered in scripture as *prior* to good works ; the latter being the exertions and operations of the former. And, as was said in the former part of this discourse, a man is justified in the sense of the gospel, and in the sight of God, *as soon* as he is possessed of this good principle ; and, therefore, *antecedently* to his doing any of those good works, which flow from it : Yea, he is justified, tho' he should not live to perform any good works at all. So that it  
may

SERM. may be allowed, consistently enough with  
 VII. what has been said; that the apostle here  
 opposes faith, to all *external acts* of obedience in general ; whether of obedience to law, or to the gospel. But yet it will not follow, that he opposes it to a principle of goodness and holiness in the heart ; the necessity of which principle, in order to our justification in the sight of God, is all that I am arguing for. Tho' this principle, wherever it is, will be actually, and always, productive of an obedient life, provided there is time and scope given for it to exert itself. So that none can be possessed thereof, excepting those, whose external conduct is agreeable to the precepts of Christianity.—According to this last explanation of the apostle's words, faith is considered as *virtually* and *radically*, containing evangelical obedience ; not as something distinct from it : And therefore St. Paul does not here teach the doctrine of justification by faith, *in the modern sense* ; but the contrary.

IT appears, if I mistake not, from what has been said above, that there is no *necessity* of understanding the apostle, in this place as opposing faith to obedience, in the way that many interpret him ; or as asserting that we are justified  
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by faith exclusively of obedience. His SERM. words will fairly admit of a different VII. sense ; which is sufficient to my present purpose.

THE next passage I shall consider, wherein faith and obedience may seem to be opposed to each other, is *Rom. 9. 31, &c.*—*But Israel which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness ? Wherefore ? Because they sought it not by faith ; but as it were by the works of the law.* This passage coincides so nearly, in sense and design, with that which we have been considering, that the less needs to be said upon it. By *Israel's following after the law of righteousness*, is intended the *Jews* endeavouring to work out, or to perform, such a righteousness, as would, of itself and in its own nature, be sufficient to justify them in the sight of God. They hoped to be justified merely by a strict adherence to, and observation of the law of *Moses*. However, in the language of the apostle, they did not attain to the law of righteousness : *i. e.* they did not attain to that justification unto life, which they were in pursuit of ; but failed in the attempt. *Wherefore ?* How does it come to pass, that they did not attain to justification ? This question the apostle answers in the

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next words. It was because they sought to be justified in an improper manner; in a way wherein it is impossible that any should be justified; neglecting that method which God had pointed out. It was *because they sought it, not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law*: or, by *works of law*; (for the *article* is here omitted.) The plain meaning is, that the generality of the *Jews* of this corrupt age, had rejected the *Messiah*, instead of submitting to him, and seeking justification and eternal life, by him: They imagined, that they were to be justified merely by obedience to law; and that they stood in no need of the grace of the gospel. For which reason, they did not attain to justification; it being impossible that justification should come by law, unless where there is a *perfect* conformity thereto. It is manifest, that law, not tempered and relaxed by grace, must condemn all those that fall short of the perfection required by it. So that the *Jews*, whose sole dependence was upon their own legal righteousness, could not, in the nature of the thing, be justified in this way. Whereas *the Gentiles* (as the apostle observes in the preceding verse) *which followed not after righteousness, attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith*: i. e. The  
Gentiles,

*Gentiles*, who did not pretend to work out such a righteousness as would entitle them to justification in the eye of law ; obtained justification notwithstanding ; *viz.* that, justification which God has revealed in the gospel, thro' faith.

THERE is surely no necessity of supposing that faith and evangelical obedience are here opposed to each other ; as if righteousness, or *justification*, came by the former, and not by the latter. Faith is only opposed to an imaginary, legal righteousness ; such a one as the *Jews* trusted to, despising and rejecting the grace of the gospel. And this passage will receive farther illustration from another, in the 10th Chap. of the same epistle, ver. 3 and 4. The apostle says, that the *Jews*, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ, says he, is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. The sense is :—Altho' the *mosaic* dispensation was never designed for a law, in the exact observation of which, the *Jews* were to be accepted and justified of God ; but had a typical reference to the *Messiah*, thro' whom, in a way of grace, justification comes ; yet the *Jews* being ignorant of

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this method of justification thro' grace, which God has ordained for sinners; having perverted the law, which had a *shadow of good things to come*, from its original meaning and true design; and vainly attempting to work out such a righteousness as would render the intervening of grace needless; such a one, as might give them a title to justification upon the footing of mere law; the *Jews* having thus mistaken the matter, have not submitted to, but opposed, that method of justification which God has ordained and revealed, thro' faith. For Christ is typified and prefigured in the law itself, as the end of it, for justification, to all those who believe in, and subject themselves to, Him.—Is there any necessity of supposing that the apostle here opposes believing in Christ, to obeying his gospel? It is plain, that he opposes believing, only to the conduct of the *Jews*, who went about *to establish their own righteousness*; i. e. who expected to be justified upon the footing of mere law; not being sensible that they fell so short of the righteousness required therein, as to stand in need of the grace of the Gospel; and who, therefore, rejected the promised Saviour. This passage is, I think, exactly parallel to that, considered above.

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And in both of them, the term *faith* is used in a complex sense, for believing in Christ, and sincerely obeying his gospel; not in the restrained sense of some *modern* divines; as if our justification were suspended on the former, exclusively of the latter: For which notion there is no foundation in the new-testament.

ANOTHER passage of scripture, where faith and obedience may seem to be opposed one to the other, is *Eph. 2. 8, 9.* *For by grace are ye saved thro' faith; (and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God) not of works, lest any man should boast.* Those words [and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God] are incidental in the apostle's discourse; and the sense of them has been much controverted. And since it is not necessary that the meaning of them should be ascertained, in order to a resolution of the particular point now before us, I shall pass them over at present, and consider the passage independently of them. *By grace are ye saved thro' faith—not of works, lest any man should boast.* “Does not the apostle (as some argue) here plainly oppose gospel faith, and gospel obedience to each other? Does he not ascribe our justification wholly to the former; and deny that the latter is any cause or ground thereof? Is it not upon

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this foundation that he says, our salvation is of grace? And does he not intimate, that if works, or obedience, came in here, there would be some cause of *boasting*? Whereas, if we are justified solely by faith, or believing, there will be no room left for men to glory: All boasting will then be excluded." To this I answer,

1<sup>st</sup>. THAT the apostle is not here speaking particularly concerning our justification; but concerning our salvation in general: "By grace are ye *saved*."

2<sup>dly</sup>. EVEN those who assert the doctrine of justification by faith only, in opposition to evangelical obedience, generally hold the necessity of works, or obedience, in order to salvation: (a distinction, the vanity of which will be shown in the next discourse) So that this passage either proves nothing to their purpose; or it proves too much; and more than they are willing to allow, viz. that we are not only justified, but saved, without works.

3<sup>dly</sup>. IF it had been the apostle's intention to exclude every thing done by man, from being any occasion, ground or condition, of his Acceptance with God; (that so all cause of boasting might be taken away) he must then have excluded

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cluded faith also : For believing is our own act ; and expressly called a *work*, by our Saviour, as has been observed before. Whereas St. *Paul* says, on the contrary, that we are *saved by grace thro' faith*. I would, if possible, express what I here intend, so as not to be misunderstood. It is said by some, that if our justification and acceptance with God, depended upon our obeying the Gospel ; upon any thing we do, be it what it will ; then we should be justified, not by grace, but by *works* ; and consequently there would be room left for *boasting*, which is not to be allowed. Well then, believing in Christ is our own act ; it is our work, tho' not done without the divine Assistance. Even this, must therefore be excluded, according to the present argument, lest some ground of boasting should remain. Faith is as much excluded, by the present argument, from having any hand in our justification, as obedience in any other respect. For whether our justification depend upon *one* act of obedience, *viz.* believing ; or whether it depends upon *many*, there is still cause of boasting, if this way of reasoning be just. We may therefore conclude, that this method of arguing is not good ; because it proves too much ; and even makes the apostle

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contradict himself ; for, tho' he disallows of boasting, yet he asserts that our salvation is connected with something which we do.—

4thly. ALL occasion of boasting seems to be taken away, if we exclude works from being any meritorious cause of our justification and salvation ; even tho' they are not excluded from being the condition of it. If we acknowledge our obedience is very imperfect, so that we cannot be justified upon the footing of mere law ; if we acknowledge, that we cannot claim Salvation as our due, by virtue of any works of righteousness which we have done ; if we acknowledge ourselves indebted for it to the grace of God in Jesus Christ ; this, surely, leaves no room for boasting ; tho' we may still very consistently hold, that our justification is suspended upon our hearty submission to Christ, and sincere obedience to his commandments. The asserting of this is not contradicting what the apostle says, that we are not saved by *works* ; but perfectly consistent therewith. He intends no more, than that we are not saved upon the footing of mere law ; by such works as would exclude grace ; and leave room for boasting. And his meaning, I humbly conceive, might be expressed thus,

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more at large. "Take heed, that ye do not exalt yourselves, or over-rate your own works, to the dishonoring and subverting of the grace of God : For it is by His grace and free bounty, that you are saved ; not in the way of obedience to law, considered as a covenant of works ; but in the way of faith, which is revealed thro' Christ, to the transgressors of Law. You are not saved by works, or by a legal obedience ; or on account of the intrinsick value and merit of any thing you do. You have not obeyed any law of works so perfectly, that salvation becomes your due. And of this I admonish you, lest any man should proudly boast ; or think more highly of himself and his works than he ought to do, to the dishonor of divine grace."

THIS appears to me to be the true sense of the Apostle. And if it is, the passage does not favour the doctrine of justification by faith alone, in the *modern sense* of the terms ; But is perfectly consistent with the contrary scheme ; wherein obedience to the gospel is supposed necessary in order to our acceptance with God. There is a wide difference betwixt saying, that we are justified and saved by works, merely upon the footing of law ; (which is what the Apostle denies) and saying, that

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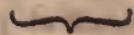
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that we are justified and saved, by believing in, and submitting to Him that was *the End of the law for righteousness*; and who has redeemed us from the curse thereof: (Which is what he denies not.) The former is, indeed, to subvert the grace of the gospel, and to leave room for boasting; the latter does neither; but duly exalts the grace of God; and leads us to *think soberly of ourselves, as we ought to think.*

It is hoped, that what has been said upon these several passages of scripture, may serve in some measure for the illustration of others, which speak of our being justified by faith, and not by works. Tho' I do not pretend, as yet, to have proved any thing more, than that these passages do not establish the doctrine which they are commonly alledged in support of. And this, certainly, they do not; because they fairly admit of another construction, than that which is put upon them. If I have shown, that there is no *necessity* of supposing, that the sacred writers intended, in these passages, which speak of faith and works, to oppose faith to evangelical obedience; this was all that I proposed to do, at present. In my next discourse, I shall show, that they cannot possibly be understood thus,  
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in any tolerable consistency with the general doctrine of Scripture; and consequently, that when we are said to be justified by *Faith*; the term *faith* is used in such a latitude, as to involve in it that obedience to the gospel, the necessity of which was to be made evident.

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S E R M O N VIII.

Of Justification by Faith.

JAMES I. 21, 22.

*LAY* apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

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IT is a very obvious inference from this passage of Scripture, That in order to the Salvation of our Souls, it is necessary we should be *doers of the word*, as well as *hearers* and believers of it ; and that they who expect to be saved upon any other terms, delude, and impose upon, themselves. However, there is great reason to fear, that many persons do actually thus *deceive their own selves*, in a matter of the last importance ; fondly imagining, from what

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the scripture says concerning our being *saved by grace*; being *found in Christ, not having our own righteousness*; and being *justified by faith*; that obedience to the gospel, is not an indispensable condition of our obtaining eternal life. I have therefore, in several discourses, been endeavouring to *undeceive* those, who may have thus *deceived themselves*; and to guard others against the like fatal delusion.

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IN my last discourse, I entered upon a consideration of those passages of scripture, wherein our justification with God, is said to be *by faith*; by faith *without works*; *without the deeds of law*, and the like. From whence many have concluded, that obedience to the Gospel was not necessary in order to our being justified; but that faith alone, (in the *modern* restrained sense of the term, as it is distinguished from repentance and newness of life) is available thereto. It has been shown that there is no *necessity* of understanding the passages intended, in this sense; and that a fair and intelligible account may be given of them, without having recourse to the modern *solifidian* doctrine. There is no need of supposing, that when the apostles oppose faith and works to each other, asserting that we

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are justified by the former exclusively of the latter, they intended to oppose faith, to repentance and evangelical obedience. No more *may* be intended by these expressions, than that we are not justified upon the footing of mere law; but by the grace of God revealed in the Gospel.

BUT I proceed now, as was proposed in the SECOND Place, to show, That the passages of scripture, which speak of our being *justified by faith without the deeds of law, &c. cannot possibly mean*, That we are justified by faith, as distinguished from repentance and new obedience, in any tolerable consistency with the general doctrine of scripture: And that it is absolutely necessary to understand the term faith, in such passages, in a larger sense; as comprehending repentance and evangelical obedience in it; not as contradistinguished therefrom.

To make which point evident, I must just remind you of what was said, in the foregoing discourse, concerning the scripture-notion of justification, and the blessings and privileges included in it, as it respects us, sinful creatures. Justification, as was there premised, involves in it, the remission of sins, the acceptance of our persons to the favour and friendship of God, and a title to eternal life in the  
kingdom

kingdom of heaven. This is the idea which the holy scriptures give us of justification. † And I desire that this may be kept in mind ; otherwise the ensuing discourse will not be fully understood.

Now, That *faith*, when we are said to be justified thereby, *without the deeds of law, &c.* cannot mean faith, exclusively of repentance and obedience ; but *must* intend faith, considered as the principle of evangelical holiness, and as virtually comprehending it, will appear from the following considerations.

I. WHATSOEVER is necessary in order to the forgiveness of sins, is also necessary in order to justification ; because the pardon of sin is a principal part of our justification. It is a manifest repugnancy to say, that we can be justified without that which is necessary to our forgiveness, if forgiveness is included in the idea of justification. This would be, in effect, to say, that we are justified without, and independently of, that upon which our justification is suspended. Since justification before God, involves in it the passing by our offences, we cannot, certainly, become the subjects of it, till we have complied with those terms, on which God has expressly made our forgiveness with him to depend.

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† Vid.  
Serm. 7.  
page 172,  
173, 174.

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And if we look into the new-testament, we shall find, that God has suspended our forgiveness with him, upon our forgiving those that have injured us. "If ye forgive men their trespasses, says our Saviour, your heavenly Father will also forgive your trespasses : But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses." Since then, the forgiving of our neighbour is necessary to our forgiveness ; it must be equally necessary in order to our justification ; unless any will say, that we may be justified without being forgiven : i. e. in effect, be pardoned without being pardoned. For it really comes to this, if pardon is included in justification, and an essential part of it. \*

Now since, at least, *that one* christian duty of forgiving an offending brother, is requisite in order to our being forgiven ourselves ; and, consequently, in order to our being justified ; how can the faith, by which we are said to be justified, be opposed to christian obedience ? or understood exclusively of it ? Is it not a manifest

\* That justification comprises in it the pardon of sin, was shown in the preceding discourse : Nor will this be denied by those who are the most likely to deny the general doctrine here advanced ; since justification is thus defined in the *Assembly's Catechism*, "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, &c.

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nifest contradiction to say, that we are justified by faith alone, in the *modern* sense, by faith as distinguished from obedience ; and yet to say, that our forgiveness with God ( a primary and principal branch of our justification ) is suspended on the condition of forgiving our neighbour his trespasses ? There cannot well be a greater solecism, or repugnancy. We are therefore reduced to this necessity ; to this dilemma : We must either deny, that our forgiveness is suspended upon our forgiving others ; ( tho' our Saviour has expressly asserted it ) or else we must acknowledge, that the faith, by which we are justified, involves obedience in it, instead of being opposed thereto. The alternative is unavoidable ; there is no medium in this case, if pardon is an essential part of justification ; which is now taken for granted.

THIS is sufficient to show in general, that the vulgar notion of justification by faith alone, cannot be true. It is at least necessary, that we add to our faith, *that one* virtue of forgiving others their trespasses. And here I may ask, Whether, since this one is required, in order to our being pardoned and justified, it is not reasonable to suppose, that all other christian virtues are necessary to the same

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end? What ground is there to imagine, that this one duty is made necessary, and that others, of equal importance, are unnecessary? Our Saviour's particularly mentioning and requiring this, does not exclude others; but it may be naturally inferred, that all other evangelical graces and virtues are necessary likewise: Especially since no good reason can be assigned, why our pardon and justification should be suspended upon this, rather than upon many other duties of Christianity; such as the love or fear of God, love and gratitude to our Saviour, and justice towards man. Indeed if there is such a natural and necessary connection betwixt the several graces and virtues of Christianity, as some suppose; if he that is destitute of one, must needs be destitute of all; and if he that is possessed of one, must also be the subject of all; it follows, that they are all equally necessary to pardon and justification, or equally unnecessary: So that the requiring of any one, is, in effect, the requiring of all; and if there is any one, which is not necessary, no other can be necessary. This is, indeed, only an argument *ad hominem*. And because I am not certain, that there is really any such necessary concatenation or connexion, betwixt the various graces  
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and virtues of Christianity, I shall not insist upon it. But,

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2dly, THAT faith cannot be opposed to evangelical obedience, when we are said to be justified thereby, appears from the scripture-doctrine of *repentance*. It will not, I suppose, be denied, that pardon, or the forgiveness of sins, is suspended on our repentance. But because those, with whom I am concerned, can deny almost any thing, I shall prove this point before I deduce the consequence intended. The few passages following may suffice—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."—"I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; but that the wicked forsake his way and live"—"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."—"That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name."—"Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."—"Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ."—"He that covereth his Sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them,

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shall find mercy." — "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." — These passages abundantly show, that our forgiveness, pardon, or acceptance to the divine favour, depends upon our repenting of our sins ; that every true penitent shall obtain mercy ; and that all impenitent transgressors shall finally be condemned.

Now if repentance is really necessary in order to our obtaining pardon, it must be equally necessary in order to our being justified : Since, as has more than once been observed, our pardon is involved in our justification, and is an essential and principal part of it. It is impossible we should be justified without that repentance, which is necessary to the pardon of our sins : for this were to suppose, that justification is something distinct from, and prior to, our forgiveness. Repentance, then, being necessary in order to our being pardoned ; and therefore necessary in order to our being justified ; let us briefly consider the scripture notion of repentance ; and what is implied in it. Now it is manifest, that by repentance, the scripture intends, a turning from sin to God, accompanied with humiliation and sorrow for having offended Him. It

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is a principle of holiness and universal obedience ; the beginning of a new life, devoted to God and his Service. Evangelical repentance, therefore, comprises in it, evangelical obedience ; So that if the former be necessary in order to pardon, and justification unto life, the latter must be so too. To say, that repentance is necessary, and yet to say that the forsaking of our sins, and entering upon a course of obedience to God's commandments, (in which repentance consists) is unnecessary, is a plain contradiction.

FROM these premises, the conclusion is very obvious to those who will, without prejudice, attend to it ; viz. That we are not justified by faith alone, exclusively of evangelical obedience ; but by faith, considered as the beginning, and the great principle of it. Is there not a very manifest repugnancy betwixt these two propositions ?—Repentance, which involves in it a turning from sin to God, is necessary in order to our forgiveness and justification :—But yet faith alone, as distinguished from repentance and new obedience, justifies us. He must have a head peculiarly turned for making subtle distinctions, that will undertake to reconcile them. They are contradictory ; and since the former of these propositions has  
P 3 been

SERM. been proved true, the latter must, of  
VIII course, be false.

THE reasoning under this head, may perhaps seem intricate and abstruse to some. But the argument, if I mistake not, is strictly conclusive. The sum of it is this—Pardon being an essential part of our justification; and repentance being necessary in order to pardon, repentance must also be necessary in order to justification. And since repentance involves evangelical obedience in it, and is, indeed, the beginning of it; such obedience must also be necessary in order to our being justified. And therefore, when the scriptures speak of our being justified by *faith*, *faith* cannot be opposed to *obedience*, in the *modern* way of interpretation; but must comprehend it. So that those passages of scripture, so much insisted upon by the *Solifidians*, are not only capable of a different sense from that which they put upon them; but there is an absolute *necessity* of interpreting them otherwise. Indeed if the pardon of sin is not an essential part of our justification; or if repentance is not necessary in order to pardon; or, lastly, if repentance does not involve in it a turning *from dead works, to serve the living God*; then the argument used above, is inconclusive; and  
faith

faith alone may justify. But if those propositions are true, as they evidently are, the *modern* notion of justification by faith alone, must be both false and futile: And the advocates for it, amuse themselves with the mere sound of words.

3dly, **WHATSOEVER** is necessary, in order to our being at peace with God, and becoming the objects of his peculiar love and complacency, is necessary in order to our justification. But in order to our being at peace with God, and becoming the objects of his special love and complacency, it is necessary that we forsake our Sins, and obey the Gospel: This is therefore necessary in order to our justification. The two propositions from whence this conclusion is drawn, I shall briefly prove.

**THE former** of them is, That whatsoever is necessary in order to our being at peace with God, and becoming the objects of his peculiar love and complacency, is necessary in order to our justification: The proof of which is short and easy. It is in our justification, that we commence the objects of the divine love, as expressed in the proposition; neither before we are justified, nor afterwards; but at the same instant. And indeed our being thus reconciled to, and at peace with, our Maker, is not any thing really

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distinct from our being justified ; but one of the blessings or privileges implied therein. So that our becoming the objects of God's special love, is not only cotemporary with our justification ; but the former is involved in the latter, inseparable from it, and an essential part of that compound idea. It is a contradiction to suppose a man justified, without supposing him beloved of God ; or *vice versâ*, beloved of God, and yet not justified. The ideas are coincident, and mutually imply each other ; So that whosoever is justified, is at peace with God, and the object of his complacency ; and whosoever is thus at peace with God, is justified of him. Now these ideas ( or these things ) being thus coincident, thus inseparable, and thus mutually inferring and implying each other, it is a contradiction to suppose that any thing should be requisite in order to one, which is not equally requisite in order to the other. To suppose that our being beloved of God, depends upon one condition, and our being justified, on another condition ; is to suppose these things distinct, and separable from each other ; which they are not, according to the scripture account of them. We are therefore, if we adhere to this account, obliged to own, that

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that whatsoever God has required of us in order to conciliate his special love and friendship, is equally required in order to our being justified of him. Certainly more cannot be necessary in order to the former, than is necessary in order to the latter: For if more were necessary, it would follow, that we might be justified without, and antecedently to our being in a state of favour and friendship with God; which were a manifest repugnancy.

THE *other* proposition to be proved, is, That, in order to our becoming the objects of God's special love, it is necessary, that we forsake our sins, and obey the gospel: The proof of which is still more plain and direct. For *there is no peace, saith God, to the wicked.* He has said, that he is *angry with the wicked every day; and that if they turn not he will whet his sword*—No one, in short, can look into his bible, without finding *the wrath of God there revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; against all impenitent and unreformed Sinners.* So far are persons of this character from being the objects of God's special love and complacency! The doctrine of scripture, from *Genesis* to the *Revelation* of *St. John*, is, that so long as men perse-

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SERM. vere in their evil ways, they are at en-  
 VIII. mity with God, and abhorred of him ;  
 that they cannot be reconciled to Him,  
 or He to them, without *turning their feet*  
*into his testimonies.* This is what the  
 scripture, thro'out, represents to us as in-  
 dispensably necessary, in order to our be-  
 ing at peace with our offended Maker ;  
 and to our being beloved of him as his  
 servants and children.

THE conclusion follows of course, *viz.*  
 that we cannot be justified without, or  
 antecedently to, our thus turning unto  
 God, and doing the will of our Father  
 which is in Heaven. Because, as was  
 said before, whatsoever is requisite in or-  
 der to the former, must, in the nature of  
 the thing, be equally necessary in order  
 to the latter. Whenever the scripture  
 speaks of our being justified by *faith*,  
 there is, therefore, a necessity of under-  
 standing the term *faith*, in a complex sense ;  
 not as it is contradistinguished from re-  
 pentance and obedience, but in such a  
 latitude as to include them. For other-  
 wise there will be an irreconcilable con-  
 tradiction betwixt those passages of Scrip-  
 ture, and many others : I now mean,  
 more particularly, such as make the for-  
 saking of our sins, and the keeping of  
 God's commandments, necessary in or-  
 der

der to our becoming the objects of his paternal love and favour. If this is necessary, it is absurd, and even a plain contradiction to imagine, that we can be justified by *faith only*; understanding faith in the modern restrained sense; and as it is opposed to gospel-obedience.

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4thly, WHATSOEVER is necessary, according to the terms laid down in the gospel, in order to our having a *title* to eternal life in the kingdom of heaven, is necessary in order to our being justified in this world. But in order to our having such a title, it is necessary, that we repent of our sins, and obey the gospel: This is, therefore, necessary in order to our justification.

THE former proposition is, that whatever the gospel makes necessary in order to our having a *title* to eternal life hereafter, is necessary in order to our justification here. The truth of which, can, I think, admit of no dispute; it being evident from the account already given of justification, and the blessings and privileges implied in it. A title to eternal Life is involved in the scripture-idea of justification; and is an essential part of it. We can neither be justified without this title; nor have this title without being justified; they mutually infer and imply each other,

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ther, and are inseparable. So that it is a contradiction to suppose, that we are justified antecedently to our having a title to salvation ; or upon any other, or lower terms, than those to which the promise of future blessedness is made. As soon as a man is justified, or rather in his justification, this title is given to him ; and not before. While we keep to the true idea of justification, as it involves in it the promise of future glory, and a right, thro' grace, to the Heavenly inheritance ; we cannot even make the supposition of our being justified on other terms than those, on which eternal life is offered to us, without perceiving the self-repugnancy of it. The ideas of justification, and of the title here intended, tho' different in some respects, are yet so far coincident, and have such a connexion and mutual dependence, that we may easily see, that whatever God requires of us in order to our being entitled to Heaven and happiness, must also be required in order to our justification. For otherwise we might be justified without having the title mentioned ; *i. e.* justified without something, which is implied in the very notion of justification ; which is a contradiction.

THE *other* proposition is, That in order to our having a title to eternal life,  
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it is necessary that we repent of our sins, and obey the gospel. And agreeably hereto it is said, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have *right* to the tree of life.” There are no promises of future glory and happiness, made in the scriptures, to impenitent, persevering transgressors. They are all made to those who confess and forsake their sins. The gospel is so far from giving any title to future glory, to the impenitent workers of iniquity, that it expressly condemns them, and cuts them off from it. “Know ye not, says the apostle, that the the *unrighteous* shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators,” &c. It is said, that God will render to them that “obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath; even upon every soul of man that doth evil.” It is not, surely possible, that the same gospel, which speaks thus to, and of, the wicked and disobedient, condemning them to future woe and punishment, should, at the same time, entitle them, by it’s promises, to life everlasting—Now since nothing is required of us, in order to our being entitled to eternal life, but what is equally required in order to our being justified; (as was shown above) and

SERM. and since, in order to our being entitled  
 VIII. to eternal life, it is necessary that we re-  
 pent of our sins and obey the gospel, (as  
 we have just now seen) it undoubtedly  
 follows, that repentance and evangelical  
 obedience are necessary in order to our  
 being justified. And hence it is farther  
 evident, that when we are said to be jus-  
 tified by *faith*, *faith* is not, in such pas-  
 sages of scripture, contradistinguished from  
 repentance and new obedience; but must,  
 of necessity, be considered as comprising  
 them in it.

5thly, THE main point to be established,  
 will be still more evident from a cursory  
 view of St. *James's* doctrine in this epistle:  
 One main design of which appears plain-  
 ly to be, the rescuing of St. *Paul's* doc-  
 trine of justification, from the abuses and  
 false glosses which began, even then, to  
 be put upon it by licentious men. Or,  
 at least, St. *James* designed to guard the  
 Church in succeeding times, against such  
 abuses and corruptions in this respect, as  
 he saw likely to creep into it, and which  
 have, since, actually overspread and dis-  
 honoured a considerable part of it. For  
 that this apostle professedly opposes the  
 doctrine of justification by faith only, in  
 the *modern* sense of the term, is as evident  
 as words can make any thing to be. And  
 all

all the attempts that have been made to reconcile St. *James's* doctrine, to the fond conceits of those who are for exalting faith, at the expence of holiness and good works, are equally futile and unnatural.

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IT is more especially in the second chapter of this epistle, that the apostle explodes and refutes these foolish and pernicious conceits. At the tenth verse he tells us, That "Whosoever shall keep the whole law," (meaning the *law of liberty*, as it is called ver. 12, and which is no other than the gospel-rule of life and manners) and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." The plain meaning of which is, that whosoever shall habitually transgress any one known precept of the gospel, is not in a state of favour with God; but as certainly lies under condemnation, as if he violated them all. The apostle then admonishes us to live and act in all respects, as becomes those who are hereafter to be judged according to this law—"So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." Now if we are to be judged by this law, it is certain that we shall be either justified or condemned by it, according as we have, or have not, yielded a sincere and universal obedience to the precepts  
of

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of it. This is necessarily implied in our being judged by it. From whence it is an obvious inference, that we cannot *now* be justified by this law of liberty, [the gospel] without obeying it. This law will be the same, in itself, in the day of judgment, that it is at present: And all who will be condemned by it, in that day, are equally condemned by it now. It cannot now justify the same persons, whom it will condemn, when it shall be put into execution by the judge of quick and dead. Or will any one say, that we may now be justified by the law of liberty, on account of our *faith*; and yet be condemned by it hereafter, on account of our *disobedience*? This seems to be too absurd for any one to assert or suppose. But were it supposeable, yet *That* justification, which does not exempt us from future condemnation; *That* which we may be the subjects of here, and yet be sentenced to woe and misery hereafter for our sins, is a thing of but little value or importance to us; Our great concern is, to know and to do that, which will entitle us to the approbation of our Judge, in the great day of his appearing. Even the law of liberty will not then justify us, unless we have sincerely obeyed it: And this being the case, it is manifest, as was said

said before, that it cannot justify us now, if we disobey it ; that law being still the same. And all the *Solifidians* in the world might be defied to answer this single argument, were there no others.

BUT the apostle proceeds (ver. 14.) more particularly to consider the influence of *faith* and *works* ; and from thence to the end of the chapter, professedly combats this notion, that a man is justified by the *former*, independently of the *latter* — “What doth it profit, my brethren, tho’ a man say he hath faith, and have not works ? can faith save\* him ?” As if he had said : Of what significancy or advantage is it, for a man to talk and boast of his faith, if his faith is not accompanied with obedience ? Can faith entitle *Him* to the favour of God, and eternal life, who does not obey the commandments of Christ, as well as believe in him ? Vain, absurd imagination ! He goes on : “ If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food ; and one of you say unto them, Depart in  
Q peace,

\* “ Can faith *save* him ?” Some who assert the sufficiency of faith to *justify* ; still allow that it is not sufficient to *save* : But the Apostle makes no such idle distinction. The scope of his argument requires, that by *saving*, he should here mean *justifying* ; and accordingly he substitutes the latter term in the room of the former, in the following verses.

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peace, be you warmed, and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead being alone." *q. d.* If you give your necessitous brethren only good words, instead of relieving their wants; of what significancy is this? It is rather to mock and insult them, than to do them any real kindness. And faith is just as insignificant as those good words, if it is not attended with charity and righteousness. Being thus alone, it is a dead useless thing; and can no more justify or save the subjects of it, than fair soft words can feed and cloath those, who are perishing with hunger and cold. — "Yea a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works." As if he had said: Yea, one might reason after this manner with you; You pretend to have faith; and perhaps you really have: But I have works, which demonstrate that I have faith. Whereas you cannot make it appear, even that you have any faith, unless your behaviour bears witness for you. Shew me, if you can, that you have any faith, without works: This is impossible; but I will make it evident that

that I am a believer, by my good life. So that faith is not only insufficient to justify and save a man ; but no man can even prove that he is possessed of it, without works. SERM.  
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THE apostle proceeds : “ Thou believest that there is one God ; thou dost well : the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead.” *q. d.* Thou wilt tell me, perhaps, that thou believest in the One true God. Be it so : Thus far it is well : But you cannot reasonably think that you are hereby justified ; for even the apostate angels believe, and yet justly tremble ; being *reserved in chains under darkness, to the judgment of the great day* ; To which condemnation you also stand exposed, notwithstanding your faith, while you persevere in your sins. O vain, foolish man ! wilt thou not at length be sensible, that faith without obedience, is a dead useless thing, of no profit or advantage ? St. James goes on to illustrate and confirm his doctrine by the example of *Abraham*. “ Was not *Abraham* our father justified by Works, when he had offered *Isaac* his son upon the Altar ? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect.” *q. d.* You may be convin-

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ced by the story of *Abraham*, that a man must *obey* as well as *believe*, in order to his being justified: For was not he, our common father, and the father of the faithful, justified, in effect, by works; when he submitted to the command and authority of God, in preparing to sacrifice his son? Seest thou not how his faith was exercised, and exerted itself in works of obedience, receiving thence all its value and efficacy? And that it would have been imperfect, dead and useless, had it not been accompanied with an obedient heart. “And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, *Abraham* believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God.” *q. d.* And thus was the scripture verified, which tells us, that *Abraham* was a religious believer in God; and this his pious and obedient faith, procured him the divine approbation; it being, thro’ grace, reckoned to him and accepted of God, as righteousness. So that he was high in the divine favour; and obtained that glorious testimony, that he was God’s Friend: Which character he could never have obtained, had he not added works to his faith. “Ye see then, says the Apostle, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.” *q. d.* Ye may

may be assured therefore, that it is by o-  
bedience to God's commands, that a man  
is justified in his sight ; and not, as some  
may vainly imagine, only by believing.

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THE apostle having observed, that *Rahab* as well as *Abraham*, was justified by works ; closes this subject with the following similitude. " As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." As if he had said : So far is it from being true, that faith alone is sufficient to justify us, and that our obedience is not also necessary to that end ; so far is this from being the truth of the case, that obedience gives to faith all its worth and value and efficacy. In short works are to faith, that which the spirit is to the body. As the body, being deprived of the spirit which should inform and animate it, becomes a mere carcase, a dead lump of matter, void of all vigor and energy, and unable to perform any of the proper vital functions ; so faith, being separated from works, or not attended with them, is a dead, useless thing ; and as unable to justify the subjects of it, as a breathless corps is to perform the actions of a living man.

THUS I have briefly laid before you the doctrine of St. *James*, concerning justification. And it is manifest that he

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opposes, directly and professedly opposes, and not only opposes, but refutes, the notion of justification by faith alone; or faith considered independently of obedience. Tell me, then, do not those persons sow discord betwixt brethren, who interpret *St. Paul* as teaching the contrary doctrine of justification by faith, abstractly considered, and in contradistinction from works? They certainly make as wide a breach betwixt these two apostles, as happened heretofore betwixt the latter of them, and *Barnabas*. And this they do without any necessity. Because what *St. Paul* says concerning justification *by faith without the deeds of law*, admits of a fair and easy interpretation, in perfect consistency with *St. James's* doctrine as explained above: Whereas *St. James's* doctrine here, cannot, by all the subtlety of man, be naturally and fairly explained in any tolerable consistency with *St. Paul's*, provided the design of *St. Paul* was to oppose faith to evangelical obedience; and to teach, that justification comes by the former, exclusively of the latter.

THERE are several ways, in which *St. Paul's* doctrine may be made to harmonize with *St. James's*, without putting any unnatural force upon the words of either. For example; (1.) When *St. Paul*

Paul says, that we are justified by *faith*, *faith* may be understood *objectively*; as if he had said, we are justified by the *gospel*; and not by the law of *Moses*? And this interpretation is much countenanced by the scope of some passages, where he treats of justification. (2)

Whenever faith is to be understood *subjectively*, (as it certainly *must* be in many places) it is no unnatural construction, to understand the term as comprehensive of the *whole christian temper*, and that obedience which the gospel requires of us.— If it should be said, that this cannot be St. Paul's meaning, because he opposes faith to *works*, and to the *deeds of law*; since faith really includes them, according to this interpretation: Tho' this is the principal difficulty, it admits of a very easy solution. For by works, and the deeds of law, in these places, may be meant, either the ceremonial and ritual observances of the *mosaic law*; as if the apostle had said, "A man is justified by believing and obeying the gospel; not by those legal observances, to which the *Jews* are so disposed to trust:" Or by works and the deeds of law, may be understood a perfect righteousness, which would exclude grace, and which no one ever performed; as if he had said, "We

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are justified by a sincere, tho' imperfect obedience to the gospel, thro' the mercy of God in Christ Jesus; not by our works, considered as strictly conformable to law; in which sense it is impossible that any *transgressor* of the law should be justified—Now in either of these ways, the distinction which *St. Paul* makes betwixt faith and works, when he opposes the one to the other, is sufficiently preserved: And either of these interpretations will perfectly harmonize with *St. James's* doctrine, That a man is not justified by faith, exclusively of that obedience to the laws of Christ, which ought to accompany it; and without which it is dead.

THE Attempts made to reconcile *St. James* and *St. Paul*, on the contrary hypothesis, (*viz.* that *St. Paul* teaches the doctrine of justification by faith alone, or faith in contradistinction from evangelical obedience) have hitherto been to little purpose: unless it is to show the perplexing streights, to which the advocates for that hypothesis are driven; and how unable they are to support it, without using unnatural violence with the scriptures. Let me give a specimen of these attempts, in order to support and verify this assertion.

SOME have supposed that *St. Paul* and  
St.

St. *James* speak of two *kinds* of faith ; the former, of a true, evangelical and operative faith, the latter of a dead, historical, and notional faith, quite different therefrom : That the first kind justifies without, and independently of, works ; but that the latter does not. In answer to which, I shall make one or two short remarks.

IT is evident that St. *James* intended no such distinction ; because he speaks of faith at large, in the most general and unlimited sense. “ Can faith save him. ” — “ What doth it profit ” — “ Faith without works is dead. ” — “ A man is justified — not by faith only. ” He does not say, that this or that *particular kind* of faith cannot *save*, cannot *profit*, cannot *justify*, without works : But the sense is plainly this, that *No kind* of faith whatever, can save, profit or justify, without works ; or of itself alone. Moreover,

THE apostle is here speaking of such a faith as *Abraham*, and *Rahab* were the subjects of : The *former* of whom, at least, it is to be presumed, had as good a faith as any one can pretend to, since he is called the *father of the faithful*. And yet the apostle denies that either of these persons was justified by faith alone ; He asserts that they were justified by works — “ Was not *Abraham* our father justified by

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SERM. by works"—“ Likewise also was not *Ra-*  
 VIII. *hab* justified by works.”—Now if *Abraham*  
 himself, the goodness, and evangelical  
 nature of whose faith, is not disputed by  
 any, was not justified by faith, consider-  
 ed in contradistinction from, and in op-  
 position to, works ; certainly no other  
 believer can be thus justified by faith a-  
 lone. But,

LET us, for the present, take it for gran-  
 ted, that *St. James* is not speaking of a true  
 evangelical faith, when he says, that faith  
 cannot save, profit or justify, without  
 works ; but speaking of such an idle, his-  
 torical and inoperative faith, as is pre-  
 tended by some : And let us then see what  
 his doctrine will amount to. And I think  
 it will be manifestly this, according to the  
 present hypothesis ; viz ; That tho’ an  
*idle, historical, inoperative* faith, cannot  
 justify without works ; yet *such a faith*  
 might save, profit and justify, with works :  
 (for this is plainly implied.) But there is  
 another *peculiar* kind of faith, a truly e-  
 vangelical, a living and working faith,  
 which justifies without works, and ex-  
 clusively of them ! And again : when the  
 apostle says, (ver. 24.) “ Ye see then  
 how that by works a man is justified, and  
 not by faith *only*” ; according to the pre-  
 sent hypothesis, the sense (or rather the  
 non-

nonsense) of the assertion must be this ; SERM.  
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That a man is justified, not *only* by a dead, inoperative, and idle faith, a faith that worketh not ; not *only* by such a faith ; but by such a faith in *conjunction* with good works ! Now let me ask any sober man, Whether such *stuff* as this, is worthy the pen of an inspired apostle ? And whether this method of reconciling St. *Paul* and St. *James*, is not to pervert and wrest the plain meaning of the latter ; and make him speak right-down *Nonsense* ?

ANOTHER way of reconciling St. *James* to St. *Paul*, (or rather of making him contradict himself) is this : It is said, that he is not here speaking of what is necessary to our justification in the sight of God ; but of what is necessary to the justification of our *faith* ; necessary to the making it *evident* to others, that we have *true* faith. It is said, that tho' faith, exclusively of obedience or works, justifies us before God ; yet we cannot exhibit a proof and evidence of our faith to others, without works : And that accordingly, by being justified, the Apostle here means, justified to the world, and in the sight of all men, as true sincere christians.

LET us briefly examine this pretended solution of the difficulty.

And

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And it is to be observed,

THAT this is quite an arbitrary interpretation ; altogether unwarranted, and unnatural. The *justifying of a man's faith* is, in itself, an uncouth, ridiculous expression : And those make much too bold with the apostle, who apply that to *faith*, which he says of *men*, of *persons*. The principal, if not the only thing alledged in support of this interpretation, is, that St. *James* speaks, in ver. 18. of *shewing our faith by works*. Upon this slender foundation it is, that some men have interpreted all that he says in this passage concerning the necessity of obedience and works to justification, of the need of works in order to *shew* that we have faith. Whereas it is evident, that what the apostle says in *that* verse, is merely incidental ; something quite distinct from his main argument, and general design. Having before shown, that faith without works, was unable to save ; that it was a dead, useles, unprofitable thing ; he then tells those with whom he is arguing, (as it were in a parenthesis) that faith was so far from justifying them, that they could not even make it *manifest* that they had any faith at all, but by their works. He tells them, that one *might*, were it needful, reason with them thus : But he lets this  
mat-

matter drop, with a bare mention ; and then returns to his main argument ; which he pursues to the end of the chapter.

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BUT that the apostle does not intend the justifying of our faith, or making it *appear* to the world, that we have faith ; is demonstrable from ver. 24.—“ Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and *not by faith only.*” According to these goodly interpreters of scripture, the sense must be this—“ Ye see then how that a man’s faith is justified, or made *evident* to the world, by good works, and *not only* by faith.” Or thus, “ Faith is made to *appear*, *not only* by faith itself ; but partly by faith and partly by works.” Which, besides the Nonsense of it, directly militates even against that part of the passage, (ver. 18) which they think warrants this interpretation. For there it is supposed, that faith cannot be *shewn at all*, by faith itself ; but *only* by works. And indeed, had St. *James* talked at the rate which they would make him, to support their favourite system, One might be apt to question, not only his inspiration, but even the soundness of his understanding.

IT is farther to be observed, that St. *James* is speaking in this passage, concerning what is necessary to *salvation* :—  
(“ Can

SERM. VIII. (“ Can faith save him ?”) It is therefore much more natural to understand him as treating here, of our justification in the sight of God, on whom alone our salvation depends, than of our justification in the sight of men. We may be saved hereafter, altho’ men should think and speak evil of us, and condemn us : Or we may perish, tho’ we should *appear righteous unto men*. But in order to our salvation hereafter, it is indispensably necessary that we should be justified of God in this world : For it is only those, “ whom He first justifies, that He afterwards glorifies.” We may therefore fairly conclude, that this is the justification here discoursed of.

AGAIN : That the apostle is treating of justification in the sight of God, appears from what he says concerning *Abraham*. When he “ believed God,” and when “ faith wrought with his works,” “ it was \* imputed to him for righteousness.” By whom was it imputed ? Certainly by that God, in whom he trusted.

\* It will be observed, that the particular question here is not, *What it was that was imputed to Abraham for righteousness ?* whether it were his faith only, as distinguished from his obedience ; or both of them conjunctly ; or, as some suppose, the perfect righteousness of Christ ? But the point is, whether the acceptance of *Abraham’s* person to the divine favour, and his justification in the sight of God, is not implied in that phrase ?

trusted and whom he obeyed ; as appears from *Gen. 15. 6.* the place here referred to,—*He believed in the LORD, and HE counted it to him for righteousness.* Now we know, that for God to *impute righteousness* to a man, and to *justify* him, are phrases that are equivalent in scripture. So that there can be no reasonable doubt, but that it is justification in God's sight, that is meant here, and throughout this passage. Nor was *Abraham* only called *the friend of God* by men, on account of his obedience : but it was his obedient faith which *made him so*. It is therefore evident, that *St. James* is not treating of justification before men.

AND indeed it is, even at first view, a very strange unnatural supposition, that the apostle should labour so much, *only* to prove that a man cannot *appear* just and righteous in the sight of men, merely by his faith, which is *invisible* ; or without living righteously. This is both self-evident, so as to need no formal proof ; and, at the same time, a matter, comparatively speaking, of but little importance. Tho' this is plainly the main scope and drift of this whole passage, unless it is our justification in the sight of God, that is intended in it. And this consideration alone, is, I think, sufficient to evince,

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evince, that it is of a higher, and far more important justification, than one in the eyes of men, that St. *James* is discoursing. The zeal and warmth which he discovers in the course of his argument; the solemnity and pathos of his expressions; in short, the whole air of this passage, is a demonstration that the apostle is treating on a subject no less interesting, than that of our justification with God, and the salvation of our souls. And the other supposition, that he is speaking only of what is necessary to make our faith *apparent*, that so we may be justified in the opinion and *sight of men*, is as inconsistent with good *Criticism*, as it is with *sound Theology*.

THUS I have given you a *specimen* of the methods taken to make these two apostles harmonize; taken, I mean, by those who will have it, that St. *Paul* taught the doctrine of justification by *faith*, as contradistinguished from *evangelical obedience*. The two methods which I have mentioned, are all that I have met with, which seem to claim any notice. And how insufficient, how unnatural, even these solutions are, it is presumed need not be made more apparent than it is already. Both the solutions are founded upon arbitrary suppositions; and such as

are

are demonstrably false. And they are also mutually repugnant to each other; so that if either of them were true, the other must necessarily be false: Tho', if I mistake not, some persons, that they might the more effectually put *heresy* out of countenance, have gravely adopted them both, and maintained them together.

BUT, as has been observed before, it is easy to reconcile all that St. *Paul* has said concerning justification by faith, with the doctrine, that evangelical obedience is required in order to our being justified: (Which last is certainly the doctrine of St. *James*.) How this may be done, has been shown before.—But if it is supposed, that St. *Paul* ever taught the doctrine of justification by faith alone, in contradistinction from obedience, the only question is not, How he can be reconciled with St. *James*? Another question which naturally arises, is, How he can be reconciled with *himself*? In all his epistles, he asserts that impenitent, unreformed sinners, lye under wrath and condemnation. He therefore testified to them repentance towards God, as well as faith towards our Lord *Jesus Christ*, in order to their getting out of this state of condemnation; to their being reconciled to God, and entitled to eternal life. “ Despisest thou the riches of

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“ his

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† Rom. 2.  
4. 5.

“ his goodness, forbearance and long-  
 “ suffering, says he ; not knowing that  
 “ the goodness of God leadeth thee to  
 “ repentance ; but after thy hard and  
 “ impenitent heart, treasurest up unto  
 “ thy self wrath against the day of  
 “ wrath ?” † Is it not here supposed, that  
 such obdurate transgressors are under con-  
 demnation ? that they are continually ag-  
 gravating their guilt and ruin ? and that  
 their repentance and reformation are in-  
 dispensably necessary in order to their ob-  
 taining the favour and mercy of God ?  
 Certainly it is. How then can it be sup-  
 posed that this same apostle in the same  
 epistle, should teach, that faith alone, as  
 distinguished from repentance and new  
 obedience, is sufficient to justify us ; and  
 that it actually does so ? or if he had  
 taught this latter doctrine, who could re-  
 concile it with the other ? and vindicate  
 him against the imputation of *self-contradiction* ?  
 The doctrines are diametrically  
 repugnant to each other : And whoever  
 shall undertake to show on one hand, that  
 repentance and new obedience, are ne-  
 cessary to our obtaining the favour and  
 mercy of God ; and yet, on the other  
 hand, that we are justified by faith exclu-  
 sively of repentance and new obedience,  
 will, I am perswaded, only *darken counsel*  
*by words without knowledge.* I

I INTENDED to have brought divers other arguments to show the falshood of this too common doctrine, that we are justified by faith alone, as faith is opposed to gospel-obedience. But the time will not allow of it. This is, in short, a doctrine quite repugnant to that preached by our blessed Saviour and his apostles; a doctrine, full of absurdity, and fruitful of mischief; a doctrine, contrary to the general scheme and genius of the gospel; a doctrine, altogether irrational; and not less pernicious in its practical tendency, than it is absurd in speculation.

BUT as I am now concerned with those who make great use of *distinctions*; I must beg leave to take notice of one or two of *these*, before I conclude.

IT is said, that tho' one essential property of a justifying faith, is, that it is operative; and that no faith can justify, besides that which is productive of good works, and is manifested by them; yet faith does not justify *because* it is operative, and productive of good works; but upon another account; *viz.* because believing is a *going out of ourselves*; and is the *hand by which we lay hold upon the perfect righteousness of Christ*. This, if I mistake not, is generally said by those who assert the doctrine of justification by faith, in opposition

SERM. position to obedience. And I shall make  
 VIII. a few remarks upon this *curious* distinction; because it tends rather to puzzle the *ignorant*, than to edify *any*; and may probably be a means of *beguiling unstable souls to their destruction*.

I. IF that which is intended by this distinction, were only this, that we are not justified on account of the inherent merit of our obedience, so as to exclude the mercy and grace of God, by which we are justified thro' a Mediator; this is unquestionably true; and a thing of great importance to be considered by all Christians. But then it is to be observed, that this is at least as applicable to our faith, as it is to our works. For faith is no more meritorious of our justification and salvation, than our works are: To be sure it is not, if that be the true notion of faith, which some have advanced, *viz.* that it is a renouncing all desert and merit in ourselves, and relying wholly and absolutely upon the righteousness and merit of Another—But this is not the true design of the distinction: for were this all that they intend, there would be no controversy. They intend, that faith justifies us in some sense in which obedience does not justify us; otherwise even they themselves, would see what others do; I mean, that this distinction

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inction has really nothing in it. For

2. IF that faith which justifies us, includes in it a principle of obedience, as one essential property of it, (as they generally assert) then it is most futile and absurd to *oppose* faith and obedience, in the manner they do, one to the other; as tho' the former justified us independently of the latter. For what is this, in effect, but to oppose a thing to itself; to that which is essential to the very being of it? It is as if we should oppose the sun to the light and warmth of it; or the great *Father of lights*, to his essential attributes: It is as if it were said, that tho' God made the worlds; yet they were not produced by his power, wisdom and goodness; but exclusively of them!

3. BUT the futility of this distinction, and the falshood of what is intended by it; is still further evident from the passage in *St. James*, which was considered above. For it appears from thence, not only, that we cannot be justified by a faith that is without obedience; but also that it is obedience which gives to faith all it's life, efficacy and perfection. Without this, any faith, all faith is vain, dead, and unprofitable; utterly insufficient to justify and save the subjects of it. It is this principle of obedience that is, as it

SERM. were the soul and spirit of faith ; the  
 VIII. very, the only thing, by which we can  
 be justified. So widely do those mistake  
 the matter, and differ from St. *James*, who  
 assert, that tho' a justifying faith is always  
 productive of obedience ; yet it is not  
 this operative quality, which gives vir-  
 tue and efficacy to it ; but that a true faith  
 justifies, exclusively of the obedience im-  
 plied in it. The Apostle more than inti-  
 mates, that if faith considered independ-  
 ently of obedience, could justify us, the  
*Devils* themselves might be justified as  
 well as we!—But these men, it seems, will  
 not allow that *that*, upon which the a-  
 postle lays, in a manner, the *whole* stress  
 of our justification, should have any stress  
*at all* laid upon it in this affair. Even  
 while they allow, that the quality which  
 essentially distinguishes a justifying faith  
 from any other, is its being operative ;  
 yet it must not be allowed, that faith justi-  
 fies upon account of this distinguishing  
 quality, lest it should follow that we are  
 justified *by works* ! This ( tho' we should  
 not be uncharitable ) looks too much as  
 if these men were determined to say *any*  
*thing* ; and even plainly to contradict  
*themselves*, rather than not contradict the  
 apostle when he says, that “ a man is  
 justified by works, and not by faith only.”

4. If no faith can justify, (as is confessed) besides that which involves in it a principle of obedience, then faith must justify us, considered as including this principle in it; and not independently of it. This consequence is incontestibly true; tho' it seems not to be generally attended to: and if it were, there would be no room left for controversy about faith and works.—Let me illustrate what I here intend—If this quality is essential to a true, justifying faith; *viz.* that it is operative, and productive of good works; and if the faith which has this property, certainly justifies the subject of it; it follows that faith justifies, only considered as having that property; *i. e.* on account of the obedience involved in the idea of it. For otherwise, why may not some *other kind* of faith justify, tho' destitute of this property, as well as that to which obedience is essential? If this quality of faith is of no consideration in the affair of our justification; or if faith does not justify us, *because* it includes obedience; it will be impossible to assign a reason, why another faith which has all the qualities of a true one, excepting this of being operative, should not justify as well as that which has this also. In short, to say, that *that*, and *that* only, is a justifying faith,

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faith, which has this property, is, in effect, to say, that this property is what renders it available to our justification; and that we are justified by faith, *only* considered as a principle of obedience. So that those who say obedience is essential to a justifying faith; and yet that faith justifies us, considered in contradistinction from obedience, do not only make a *needless, trifling* distinction; but plainly contradict themselves in it. What would you think of a person who should tell you that *wings* were essential to a *bird*; that all the creatures which had them, could *fly*; but that none could *fly* without them; and yet tell you, in the same breath, that these inhabitants of the air did not fly *by virtue* of their wings, but quite *independently* of them? Or what would you think of one, who should tell you, that *obedience* to our earthly sovereign, was essential to *loyalty*; that all his loyal subjects were entitled to his *protection*; but that none could be entitled thereto, without *loyalty*; and yet tell you that *loyalty* did not entitle you to your sovereign's protection, considered as comprising obedience in it; but considered *abstractly*, and even in *contradistinction* from obedience? It will not be proper, perhaps to speak out what you would think of such *subtile Distinguishers* as these—

But

But whatever you would think of *them* ; the same you must think of those, who tell us that a principle of obedience is essential to a *true faith* ; that all who have true faith are *justified* ; but that those who have it not, are not *justified* ; and yet tell us, that a true faith does not *justify*, considered as comprehensive of *obedience* ; but as distinguished from, and opposed to it. And this is really the amount of all the *gibberish* which you read or hear, concerning being justified “ *Fide solá* ”, but not “ *Fide solitariá* ! ” — “ *By faith alone* ” but not “ *by faith that is alone* ! ” —

5. AND lastly here, If we consider faith abstractly, or independently of holiness and obedience, what can we see in it, which should give it this preheminance above every thing besides ? above sincere repentance for our sins ? above righteousness and charity to our neighbour ? above gratitude to our Redeemer ? above the love and reverence of our Maker ? Does faith, abstractly considered, seem to have any such prerogative, that it should justify us rather than any, or all, of these graces and virtues ? Indeed if we consider faith as a principle of universal obedience ; as containing in it all the divine and social virtues ; and as being the source and sum of them ; if we consider it in this  
light,

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light, there will be no difficulty in accounting for the highest things that are said of it in the new testament. But if we consider faith in contradistinction from these virtues; and from all obedience to God's commandments, no intelligible and rational account can be given of it; why it should have that preheminance? why it should justify? why it should be *imputed for righteousness*? But all this will be *darkness* and *mystery*; which, tho' accounted by some, the chief glory of the gospel, seems to me to be no real part of it's glory. The christian revelation is glorious in respect of the great *light* which it affords us; but not, surely, on account of what is still left *obscure* in it! Otherwise the apostle might more properly have congratulated those who still *sat in darkness*, than those who were, by this dispensation, *called out of it into marvellous light*. — But not to digress: When faith is spoken of in scripture in the primary and restrained sense, or as it is contradistinguished from true piety and virtue, other things are plainly preferred to it. Even the apostle *Paul* himself, who is tho't by some to exalt faith so much, as to render every thing else inconsiderable in comparison of it; even this same apostle undervalues faith when

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when put in competition with the moral virtues. "Tho' I have ALL FAITH, says he, and have not charity, I am NOTHING." And again, "Now abideſt faith, hope, charity, theſe three; but the GREATEST of theſe is CHARITY." And this is that *more excellent* way, which he ſhews unto us, after exhorting us to "covet earneſtly the *beſt gifts*." Thus St. Paul, the great champion for juſtification by faith, undervalues faith when conſidered in diſtinction from, and in compariſon of, virtue and obedience: Which plainly ſhows, that when he ſpeaks of our being juſtified by faith, he cannot mean faith, as diſtinguiſhed from charity, and other chriſtian virtues; but as including them.—As to the preheminance which ſome give to faith, in the affair of juſtification, on account of its being *the hand that lays hold* on the righteousneſs of Chriſt, and a *going out of ourſelves*; theſe things, I confeſs, are beyond my comprehension: Only it were to be wiſhed, that ſome people would not go out of their *ſenſes*, as well as out of *themſelves*; and both amuſe *themſelves*, and peſter *others*, with unmeaning phraſes, and mere Jargon.

HAVING thus conſidered this notable *diſtinction*, (that tho' true faith includes a prin-

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principle of obedience ; yet it does not justify us considered as containing that principle, but exclusively of it, and as opposed to it ; ) I shall just mention another, which is equally *edifying* ; and which has, indeed, been already hinted at in this discourse. The distinction I mean, is this, That tho' faith alone justifies us in this world, and *intitles* us to salvation in the world to come ; yet obedience to the gospel is necessary in order to our being justified at Christ's tribunal hereafter, and so, in order to our being actually saved at last.

Now if what is here said were indeed true, it would scarce be worth while to give ourselves much concern about the terms of justification *here* ; whether we are *now* justified by faith alone, or not ? This cannot be a very interesting and important question, provided it is certain that we must *both* believe in Christ and obey Him, in order to our being *finally* justified and saved by Him, when he shall come to judge the world in righteousness. The grand interesting point, is, What the gospel requires of us in order to our being acquitted in that great day of retribution ; and to our " going away into life eternal " ? Which point being once resolved, the other is but of very little importance.

tance. It is rather a matter of curious SERM.  
speculation for men of leisure, than of VIII.  
serious concernment to the souls of Chris-  
tians. So that there is either no founda-  
tion for this distinction ; or, if there is,  
those who make it might be much better  
employed in inculcating that piety and  
virtue, which is acknowledged necessary  
to salvation ; than in eternally insisting  
upon the doctrine of justification *here* by  
faith *only* ; as if there could be no chris-  
tianity, no religion, without it !

BUT when this distinction comes to be  
examined, there is really nothing in it : it  
is wholly without foundation ; and the  
thing intended by it, is demonstrably false.  
We are not justified here, and entitled to  
salvation, on one condition ; and justified  
and actually saved hereafter, on another ;  
but on the same. That which the gos-  
pel has made necessary in order to our  
being acquitted and saved in the day of  
judgment, it has made equally necessary  
in order to our being justified now, and  
entitled to salvation. For (as has been  
observed already in this discourse) the  
gospel is the rule, by which those who  
are under the dispensation of it, are to be  
judged hereafter. So that we shall then  
be either acquitted or condemned, ac-  
cording as we have, or have not, com-  
plied.

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plied with the terms of it according to their true intent and meaning, whatever those terms are. And these terms being the same now that they will be hereafter, without the least variation, it undeniably follows, that such persons as will be condemned by the gospel then, must be equally condemned by it now; and that such as will then be justified by it, and no others, can be justified by it at present, or intitled to the salvation of it. Betwixt the justification and condemnation of the gospel, there is no medium. Whom it does not justify, it condemns; whom it condemns not, it justifies. Nor does length, or distance of time, make any alteration in this case. We cannot be justified only by believing, at present, unless we may be justified only by believing, hereafter; provided the terms of the gospel, like the author of it, are "the same yesterday, to day and forever." So that what these men take for an important *theological distinction*, turns out (like some of St. *Athanasius's*) to be no better than a palpable *contradiction*. For there cannot well be a more glaring repugnancy than to say, that the same gospel which will condemn men for their disobedience in the day of judgment, does not also condemn men equally for their disobe-

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bedience now ; but justifies them *solely* on account of their faith.

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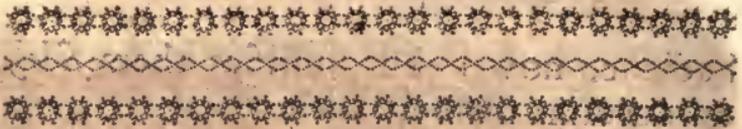
So much for the pretended \* “ *Article of a standing, or a falling Church* ” ! It is really surprising that such a doctrine should ever be believed by *any* : It is still more wonderful, that it should ever be embraced by any *worthy, good* men : But what is most astonishing of all, is, that such an irrational, unscriptural doctrine ; a doctrine of so pernicious a tendency with regard to the lives and manners of men, should be *insisted* upon with peculiar *warmth* and *zeal*, as a most important and fundamental article of the Christian Faith !

\* It is humbly hoped that those worthy *Clergymen*, who have acquired so great reputation for *learning*, as well as *orthodoxy*, by often quoting, in their Sermons, *Luther's*— “ *Articulus stantis vel cadentis Ecclesie*, ” will not envy *Another* the inconsiderable honor of *translating* it.

.XI

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SERMON



S E R M O N IX.

Of the Nature and Principle of  
Evangelical Obedience.

JAMES I. 21, 22.

*LAY* apart all filthiness and superfluity of  
naughtiness, and receive with meekness the  
ingrafted word, which is able to save your  
souls. But be ye doers of the word, and  
not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

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IX.

**H**AVING, in several preceeding  
discourses, shewn the indispen-  
sable necessity of our being *do-*  
*ers of the word* as well as *hearers*, in or-  
der to the *salvation of our souls*, which is  
the great end of the Christian revelation;  
having also pointed out to you some of  
those many ways, in which persons may  
be in danger of *deceiving their own selves*

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in

in a matter of so great importance ; and given you an antidote against the poison of those errors, which are but too rife in the Christian world ; I proceed now to the next thing propos'd when I enter'd upon this subject : Which was,

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EIGHTHLY, To explain more distinctly the *nature* and *principle* of Evangelical obedience. And here, *first*, I shall consider the *nature* of this obedience, so as to distinguish it from the obedience of a mere *Moralist*, and of a *Theist* ; and also from that of good men, who lived under the *Jewish* dispensation. And, *secondly*, I shall consider the *principle* from which this obedience flows.

IT is to be observed in general, that all obedience, properly speaking, consists in the observation of some law or rule. The apostle tells us, that " where there is no law, there is no *transgression* : " It is equally true, that where there is no law, there can be no *obedience* ; all obedience consisting in conformity to some law, or rule of conduct, as all *transgression* consists in a deviation therefrom. And *Christian*, or *Evangelical* obedience, is nothing either more or less, than the conforming of our practice to the laws and commandments of CHRIST, who is constituted the Lord and King and Judge of

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the

SERM. the world ; to whom *all power in heaven*  
 IX. *and in earth is given*, that all men should  
 honor Him in like manner as they honor  
 the Father.

If you ask *where* you are to look for the laws of this “ King of Kings, and Lord of Lords ? ” I answer, Neither into the volumes of nature, nor into your own hearts ; tho’ there are laws written there, corresponding to them ; and *written as with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond*. You are not to look for them in the Statute-books, and other law-books in the country, where you happen to live ; or in any of the *civil* establishments of religion. Nor are you to look for them in the tomes of theological writers, or the decrees of Popes and Councils ; where they are too often *made void* by vain traditions. No! you are to look for them only in the gospel of Christ ; they being no other than the precepts and rules of conduct, which are found there ; and which were promulgated, either immediately by Christ himself ; or mediately, by his inspired apostles, the chief ministers of his kingdom, whom He authoritatively sent forth to declare his will, *even as the Father had sent Him*. \* These laws of Christ, our anointed Sovereign, and whose right it is to reign over us, are contained in their native integrity

\* John 20.

21.

tegrity and perfection, only in the holy SERM.  
IX. scriptures; more particularly of the *new testament*. This alone is the law-book of *Christians*, as such; tho' as *men*, and members of civil *society*, we have other laws to observe. It is only in conformity to the commandments of Christ, as they are contained in these *sacred records*, that christian obedience consists. And it is a manifest *solecism* to call any other obedience *christian*, or *evangelical*, besides that, of which the laws of Christ, or the gospel, is the *measure* and *standard*.

THO' these laws are *many*, as they respect our hearts, and external conduct; as they prescribe to us our duty towards God, and our Saviour; towards our neighbour and ourselves; yet they are sometimes considered as *one*: Not only as one *system* or body of laws; but as *one law*; the *law of liberty*, by which we are to be *judged*; and against which, whosoever presumptuously and habitually *offends*, tho' but in *one point*, is *guilty of all*: i. e. He so far violates the *whole*, and that authority by which the *whole* is enjoined, that he is *condemned as a transgressor*, even by this *law of liberty*; and therefore cannot be justified and saved by it—But this is not the place for considering the *extent* of christian obedience—I shall therefore

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only just observe here, that as on one hand, it is certain the continued and wilful violation of the christian law, in any respect, is inconsistent with that obedience which is necessary to salvation; so on the other hand, it is equally certain, that a *perfect* conformity thereto, is not so indispensably required, that whosoever falls short of it, must finally be condemned. For to suppose this, were plainly to turn the *law of liberty* into a legal *dispensation*, from which it essentially differs. And were this the case, it would be as impossible, that justification and life should come by the *gospel of Christ*, as that it should come by the law of *Moses*—But

HAVING observed in *general*, that christian obedience consists in conforming our tempers and behaviour to the laws of Christ; it may be proper, for the better understanding of what is here intended, to show more *particularly*, how this obedience is distinguished from any other.

AND it certainly differs very widely from obedience to the law of nature, or the moral law; especially in that narrow, partial sense and acceptation of this law, which confines *morality* to men's behaviour towards each other in civil and social life; and to the private virtues of temperance, and the like, without any regard

gard to *Deity*, and a *moral Governor*. The SERM.  
IX. ancient pagan Moralists generally considered morality only in this light. When they teach that the law of reason, or the law of nature, is to be followed and observed, (on many branches of which, they treat with great propriety) they usually mean no more, than that men are bound to practice justice, benevolence, sobriety, and the other virtues of private and social life, as being, in their own nature, convenient, fitting and decent. This is a notion of virtue and obedience, which falls vastly short of the Christian idea; not only because Christians are under obligation to practice other duties besides those which nature dictates; but also because christianity ultimately resolves all duties into the will of God, considered as the all-wise, good, and righteous Lawgiver, and the moral Ruler of the world. "There is one Lawgiver, says St. James, who is able to save and to destroy." And "He that said, do not commit adultery, said also, do not kill." Our obedience is, "doing the will of our Father which is in heaven." Whatever duty we are bound to practice, it is considered as enjoined upon us by the authority of almighty God. All our good and virtuous actions, are considered as a tribute which we owe to Him; as a sacrifice

SERM. *crifice* offered to Him; and with which  
 IX. He is \* *well pleased*. And, on the other  
 hand, whenever we transgress our duty,  
 this is considered as transgressing the law  
 of God: against *Him*, *Him* only do we  
 sin. For the divine will and authority,  
 does, as it were, involve and swallow up  
 all other obligations; even the laws of  
 nature and reason, as they are sometimes  
 called, being the laws of Him who is  
 Lord of nature, and the Fountain of  
 all reason.

\* Heb. 13.  
 16.

BUT what has now been said, only  
 distinguishes the obedience of Christians  
 from such virtue as a mere *Atheist* may,  
 in some degree, be the subject of. For a  
 man may be, in some measure, just, bene-  
 ficent, temperate, &c. from an internal  
 sense of the reasonableness and fitness and  
 advantage of being so; altho' he is so far  
 from obeying and honouring God there-  
 in, that he does not even believe his  
 existence. Our modern *Theists* profess  
 to go much farther than this; tho' their  
 obedience, if they really practised, agree-  
 ably to their principles, (which they sel-  
 dom do) would fall much below that of  
 Christians, who act up to their profession.  
 The *Theists* profess to reverence God as  
 the moral governor of the universe, whose  
 will and laws are to be read in men's  
 hearts,

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hearts, and in the volumes of visible nature. And the dictates of nature and reason, it is said, ought to be obeyed, not merely considered as in themselves fit to be observed; but also because they must be supposed conformable to the will of the *Deity*; and to have all the force of laws enacted by *Him*: So that it may be concluded, men will be rewarded or punished by *Him*, as they obey or disobey these laws. I speak now only of the more sober and rational part of modern *Theists*. There are others of them, who while they profess to believe in God, deride all this as mere *superstition* and *enthusiasm*; † and with whom it is nothing but the *inherent* amiableness of virtue, that claims regard; virtue not being rewarded, nor vice punished, as such, by a moral *Governor* and *Lord*; tho' it is owned they have a tendency, in the very nature of things, to render the subjects of them happy and miserable, respectively. Whether these nominal *Theists*, are not really *Atheists* at the bottom, or, at best *Epicureans*, which comes much to the same thing at last, I will not pretend to determine. Only it is evident, there is but very little difference betwixt saying, that there is no God at all; and saying, that there is none who is to be re-

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garded

† *Characteristicks*, passim.

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garded and revered, as the righteous governor of the world; none, who rewards and punishes men for their actions. \*

† Rom. 2.  
14.

BUT as to the more sober and religious *Theists*, who consider the natural laws of virtue, as the laws of God; and who not having, or not acknowledging any *revealed* law, yet “do † by nature the things contained in it,” in some measure; even *Their* obedience falls far short of the Christian standard. Christian obedience differs from *Their*’s, not only as Christians make a revealed law the rule of their obedience; and *They*, only the light of nature; (which would not, of itself, be sufficient to constitute a very essential difference, provided the *matter* of these laws were exactly the same.) But it differs in divers other respects. The catalogue of Christian duties and virtues is considerably longer than the *Theist*’s. Every duty of natural religion, is indeed a duty of christianity; of revealed religion. But the gospel moreover enjoins upon us divers things, which are not contained in the law of nature; and are no part of it. And the obedience paid to these different laws, *viz.* of mere nature, and of Christianity, must differ as much, at least, as the laws themselves differ.

BESIDES :

\* Such Persons are justly said by the wise Roman, “*Verba posuisse Deum, re sustulisse* :” Or to that effect.

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BESIDES: Whoever duly attends to the Christian doctrine of a *Mediator*, will find, not only that various duties result from, and are enjoined upon us in consequence of, that supernatural interposition of providence; but also that our obedience in general is put upon a different footing thereby, having, in the whole of it, a reference to this great dispensation of divine grace to a sinful world. All the precepts of the gospel, tho' they are truly the *laws of God*; yet they are not to be considered *only in that light*; but as his laws promulgated by His only begotten Son, who has redeemed us, and whose *servants and subjects* we more immediately are. Agreeably whereto it is said, that we are "not without law to God; *but under the law to Christ.*" \* God has subjected us to the rule and authority of His Son, in consequence of his undertaking and executing the mediatorial office. In our Saviour's own words, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man:" i. e. because he became incarnate. And in the language of the Apostle *Paul*, He "took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men;— and became obedient unto death, even the

\* 1 Cor. 9.  
21.

SERM. IX. the death of the cross: *Wherefore* God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." † &c. Now it is as invested with this royal power and dignity; as being the *King whom God hath set upon his holy hill of Zion*, that Christ gives laws to men; not merely as a prophet, or divine messenger. He is "made Head over all things to the church": and we are put under his authority, in a sense wherein we cannot be said to be under that of any other messenger or minister of Heaven, whether human or angelical. From which considerations it is manifest, that our obedience is more *immediately* due to the *Son*, than to the *Father*; it being more *immediately* by *His* authority, that the various duties of the gospel are enjoined upon us; and to him, that we are more *immediately* accountable for our conduct.

ALLOWING for the present, ( what is far from being true, *viz.*) that the laws of christianity are, in all respects the same with the laws and religion of nature, and only a republication of it; yet, surely, we could not be said to pay a proper obedience to them, without considering them as being the laws of Christ, our Redeemer and Sovereign. And this is what  
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constitutes one essential difference betwixt christian obedience, and any other. In order to a person's obeying as a Christian ought to do, it is not only necessary that he performs the duties *peculiar* to Christianity; but also that he performs all others, which may be *common* to this and other religions, in obedience to Christ, as his Lord and Master and final Judge: *doing all things whatsoever he does in word or deed, in the name of the Lord Jesus.* \*

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HOWEVER, Christians do not (at least they ought not to) set aside the supreme authority and dominion of God, the FATHER Almighty: or, by attempting to divide, really destroy, the *Monarchy* of the universe; which is still in HIM alone; the mediatorial authority of Christ, being derived from HIM, and subordinate to HIS. Tho' our obedience as Christians, is due more *immediately* to our Lord Jesus Christ; (as was said before) yet it is *ultimately* referred to *His Father, and our Father, to His God and our God*; § who "is greater than ALL;" † and who has conferred this dignity and authority on the Son. And of this important truth, *viz.* that all the homage and obedience which we pay to the Son, should thus be referred to, and terminate in, the *Father*; of this important truth, I say, the apostle admonishes

\* Col. 3.

17.

§ Job. 20.  
17.

† Job. 10.  
29, & Ch.  
14. 28.

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† *Philip.*  
2. 11.

monishes us, when he tells us, that God *highly exalted* his Son, that every tongue might confess him to be Lord, “to the glory of God, the FATHER.” †

So that Christians ought not, surely, to pay any such obedience or homage to the Son, as has a tendency to eclipse the glory of God the Father; who is without Rival or Competitor. The Dominion and Sovereignty of the universe is necessarily *one*, and in ONE;—the *only* living and true GOD, who delegates such measures of power and authority to other Beings, as seemeth good in his sight; but “will not give his [peculiar] glory to another.” † Our blessed Saviour does indeed assert the rights and prerogatives of *his own* crown; but never usurped those of His *Father's*: On the contrary, He constantly and uniformly tells us, that his authority was *given* to him of the Father; and is exercised in subordination to His will; not independently of it. He claims no authority, besides what he claims by virtue of the *Father's* grant, and the commission which he received from *Him*.

† *Isa.* 42.  
8.

WHAT is said above, seemed needful to prevent mis-construction; to suggest the true ground of that obedience which we owe to our blessed Lord; and to show the perfect consistency of paying it, with  
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the *Unity*, and the *supreme* glory and dominion of God, the FATHER : The not sufficiently preserving of which *Unity* and *Supremacy* amongst Christians, has long been just matter of reproach to them ; and a great stumbling-block both to *Jews* and *Mahometans*.\* — But to return,

As christian obedience is distinguished from that of mere *Theists*, by our making a written *revelation* the rule of it ; by the *peculiar* duties of the gospel ; and by our paying all our obedience more *immediately* to Jesus Christ, as our Redeemer, Lord and Judge ; so it is still farther distinguished therefrom, by the *motives* from which it is performed.

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\* With the metaphysical abstract nature, or essence of the Deity, I am not bold enough to meddle. Disquisitions of this kind, and denunciations of God's vengeance against those who do not affect to be *wise*, or are not willing to believe, *above what is written*, are left to the unaccountable Temerity of the *Athenians*. I can, for my own part, freely acquiesce in St. Paul's doctrine, in the most obvious sense of his words, *viz.* That " tho' there be that are called Gods, whether in heaven or in earth ; (as there be gods many, and lords many) but [yet] to us there is but ONE GOD, the FATHER—and One Lord, Jesus Christ."—1 Cor. 8, 4. —" There is ONE GOD, and One Mediator betwixt GOD and men, the Man Christ Jesus"—1 Tim. 2, 5. Who the *only true GOD* is, we may farther learn from our Saviour's prayer, *John* 17. begin. " These things spake Jesus ; and lift up his eyes to heaven, and said, FATHER, glorify thy Son—This is life eternal that they might know THEE, the ONLY TRUE GOD, and Jesus Christ, whom THOU hast sent."

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THE obedience of a mere *Theist* may be excited by a contemplation of the divine goodness, and other attributes, as manifested in the creation of the world; and in that providence which sustains and governs all things. But a Christian's obedience is moreover, excited, I might perhaps say, more especially excited, by a contemplation of God's perfections, as manifested in our redemption: And we are *constrained by the love of Christ*, who "died for all," when all were dead. The *Theist* may do acts of charity to his neighbours considered as his fellow-creatures, the creatures of God. But a Christian moreover considers the relation in which all men stand to Christ, who so loved them, as to give his life "a ransom for all:" And if he gives ought to a disciple, it is *in the name* of a disciple that he does it, and *because he belongs to Christ*. The *Theist* may be sober and temperate because this is reasonable, and conducive to health. But the Christian moreover, considers himself as "the habitation of God thro' the spirit;" and will not *defile the temple of God*, lest God should *destroy* him. The *Theist's* virtue and obedience may be excited by some general confused notions of a future state of retribution. But a Christian lives under the habitual expectation of a resurrection, and

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a future judgment ; when all they that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and come forth, *they that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation.* The *Theist* may obey, because he imagines his virtue (notwithstanding all it's defects) so valuable in itself, that it will fully and sufficiently recommend him to the approbation of his Creator. But the Christian obeys, because this will be acceptable to God thro' his Redeemer, and be rewarded for *his sake*. In fine, the obedience of a Christian, in all its parts and branches, receives a peculiar tincture and complexion from his profession ; and is animated by the faith of the Son of God, who has redeemed us by his blood ; and made us kings and priests unto God, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to Him by Jesus Christ. †—These things are sufficient to show the wide difference which there is betwixt the obedience of a Christian, and that of a mere *Theist*, even supposing the latter of them to live up to his principles.

† 1 Pet. 2  
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BUT it may be inquired, How christian obedience differs from that of good men under the law of *Moses*, before the coming of Christ in the flesh ? The resolution of which inquiry, depends very much upon

SERM. on another question, *viz.* How far the  
 IX. mediatorial scheme of our redemption and  
 salvation, was opened to *Their* understand-  
 ings, during that preparatory dispensation? If we suppose this scheme to have been as clearly revealed to *them* in general, as it seems to have been to some of the *Pa- triarchs* before the law, and to some good men after, and under, it, the difference will not be so great as some may perhaps imagine. For it will then consist chiefly in these two things :

1st. IN the externals, the modes and ri-  
 tuals of religion ; which, to be sure, were very different under the *Mosaic*, and the *evangelical* dispensation ; the morality of the law and of the gospel being still the same. And

2dly. WHEREAS WE believe and trust in a Redeemer already come ; and are hereby excited to obey : *They* believed in the same Saviour, as promised, and looked for ; and were, by this expectation, of a Deliverer, stimulated to the service of God.

WE are told expressly, that the *gospel* was preached to *Abraham*, who rejoiced to see the day of *Christ* approaching. And he, together with others both before, and after the *Mosaic* œconomy took place, were justified in the same way, and up-

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on the same footing of grace, that we are now; *Abraham* being the father of the faithful in all succeeding generations. And the Author to the *Hebrews*, having enumerated divers of these ancient worthies, tell us, that "these all died in faith, not having received the promises; (i. e. the fulfilment of them) but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them; and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth." \* And of *Moses*, it is said afterwards, that he esteemed the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures in *Egypt*; having respect unto the recompence of the reward. † Now according to these, and such-like representations in the new-testament, one would think that, excepting the two particulars mentioned, there could be no considerable difference betwixt the obedience of good men before, and after, the coming of Christ.

BUT whether this knowledge of a Saviour to come, were common to all good men, under the *law*, or not, there is some ground of doubt. For tho' one great end of the law was, that it might shadow forth good things to come; that it might at once admonish those who were under it, of their need of a spiritual deliverer and Re-

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deemer, and lead them to *expect* such a One; yet it is manifest that the generality of the *Jews*, for sometime before our Lord's nativity, had no notion of this spiritual meaning, and typical reference of the law; and therefore interpreted all the prophecies concerning the *Messiah*, of a *temporal* Prince and Saviour. And whether some truly pious and virtuous men, were not carried away with this prevailing error, I will not pretend to determine—Nor can we fully and thoroughly discriminate betwixt the obedience of good *Jews*, and good *Christians*, unless we knew more exactly than we do, what the ideas and sentiments of the *former* generally were, respecting the promised Saviour.

To conclude this head, concerning the *nature* of christian obedience—This obedience is not only *that* which, for the matter of it, is agreeable to the precepts of the gospel; but *that* which is performed with a due regard to Christ, as our great Prophet, Priest and King; *the Captain of our Salvation*; the *author and finisher of our faith*: *That* obedience, which has the gospel revelation for its basis and rule; and which is performed from views and motives proper and peculiar to this dispensation of divine grace. However right and reasonable men's actions are, considered  
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in themselves; however corresponding to the *law of liberty*; yet there is not, in strict propriety, any thing of christian obedience therein, any farther than they are done with reference to the gospel of Christ. This is the *characteristick* of the obedience we are considering: hereby it is distinguished from any other. And this will be farther evident from a consideration of the grand *principle* of this obedience, which was the *second* thing proposed in the beginning of this discourse, and to which I now proceed.

THE great *principle* of christian obedience, is *christian faith*; faith in Christ, and in God thro' him. I add—*in God thro' him*; because the faith of Christians does not terminate in Christ as the *ultimate*, (tho' he is the *immediate*) object of it: but it is extended, thro' him, to the *one God and Father of all*. And to beget in men that belief and trust in God, which is here intended, was one grand design of the mediatorial undertaking. Christ came into the world in his Father's name, as sent and commissioned by Him, to declare and reveal Him. And in His name he spake to the world concerning God, and His kingdom. All he taught, did and suffered, referred ultimately to the Father; the end thereof being to

SERM. *bring us to God.* A passage in the apostle-  
 IX. *Peter* will both illustrate and confirm the  
 thing here intended; where, speaking of  
 our Saviour, he says, that he "was fore-  
 "ordained before the foundation of the  
 "world; but was manifest in these last  
 "times for us, who *by him do believe in God*  
 "that raised him from the dead, and gave  
 "him glory, that our *faith and hope might*  
 "be in God." † From hence, and from many  
 † 1 Pet. other passages of scripture, it is evident  
 1. 20, 21. that christian faith is not merely a belief  
 in Christ, or relying upon him for salva-  
 tion; but rather a belief and hope in *God*  
 thro' him; a belief that *He* is what Christ  
 has declared him to be; that *He* is that  
 righteous, that good and gracious Being,  
 which the gospel represents him to be;  
 that He is *reconciling the world unto himself*,  
 by such means, and upon such terms, as  
 are therein mentioned: A belief, that  
 Christ is "the way, the truth and the  
 life; that no man can come unto the Fa-  
 ther, but by him;" or that sinners can  
 obtain eternal life in that method, and  
 that alone, which he has opened and re-  
 vealed. †

† Act 4. 12.

THIS is the proper notion of christian  
 faith: And, indeed, to suppose that faith  
 terminates in Christ, as the *ultimate* ob-  
 ject of it, is inconsistent with his being a

*Mediator*

*Mediator* at all. We lose the very idea of SERM.  
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a *Mediator* upon this supposition. If Christ is really “the Mediator betwixt God and Man;” he is to be believed on as such; and our faith must terminate, as was observed before, in *that God*, betwixt Whom and us, he *mediates*.—And having premised thus much concerning the nature of christian faith in general; (which is much mistaken by many) I am now to show, that this is the great *principle* of christian obedience. I do not mean, that all who thus believe in Christ, and in God thro’ him, do actually obey the gospel; (which is contrary to fact and experience) but, that all who obey it, obey it from this *principle*. It is this faith that purifies their hearts; and animates them in the discharge of all the duties of the christian life—Let me explain myself a little more particularly upon this point.

IT is very evident that no man can obey as a Christian, who has not the faith of a Christian. It is supposeable that a *Mahometan*, or even an *Atheist*, might *externally* perform any duty which the gospel enjoins upon us. But if a *Mahometan* or *Atheist*, known to be such, should perform many of these duties, no one, surely, would call this *christian* obedience. Evangelical faith being wanting, there cannot,

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properly speaking, be any thing of evangelical obedience in any actions whatever.

SUCH faith in Christ, and in God thro' him, as is mentioned above, has a very natural and apparent *tendency* to make the subjects of it truly pious and virtuous; and to yield that obedience to the gospel, which is required of them. As far as the belief of any thing; as far as any faith, in the primary and most proper sense of the term, can influence the tempers and practices of men; such a faith as I am speaking of, bids the fairest of any, to have a good influence upon men's hearts and manners; to turn them from sin to God; and to induce them to obey his commandments. What can be supposed sufficient and effectual to this good end, if a belief of such truths as are revealed in the gospel; if believing Christ to be really that divine messenger which he is said to be; if believing, that he came into the world to redeem us, according to the evangelical account of this matter; if believing in God, thro' him, believing in his righteousness and holiness; his goodness and mercy; his promises and threatenings; what, I say, can be supposed sufficient and effectual to turn men from sin to righteousness, if such a faith as this, has not that influence and efficacy? if it leaves  
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the subjects of it, as it found them, *dead in trespasses and sins*? There is certainly no faith, considered in the first and most proper sense of the word, which can disengage men from their evil courses, and induce them to love and serve God, if this faith fails to do it. And as this is the obvious tendency of it; so

It is manifest thro'out the new-testament, that the apostles of our Lord, and other holy men, lived under the influence of such a faith. This was the spring, and source, and animating principle of their obedience. It was this, that made them *abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good*. It is by this faith, that they are said to have *walked*: And the *life which they lived in the flesh, they lived by this faith of the Son of God*. This is the faith, which is said to *work by love*: And *this is the victory that overcometh the world*, says St. John, *even your faith*. It was by faith, that these holy men *run with patience the race set before them*: It was by this *shield of faith*, that they were armed against all temptations; and *wherewith they were enabled to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked*. In fine it was faith, that gave them spirit and courage to encounter, and strength to overcome, all difficulties and dangers, in the discharge of their duty

SERM. — The account which the apostle gives  
 IX. us of some renowned men before the  
 coming of Christ, ( whose faith was not  
 essentially different from our's) is agreeable  
 to what is said above. “ *By faith*, Moses,  
 “ says he, when he was come to years,  
 “ refused to be called the son of Pha-  
 “ roah's daughter—*By faith* he forsook  
 “ Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the  
 “ King ; for he endured as *seeing him who*  
 “ *is invisible*” — “ And what” (as the a-  
 postle goes on) “ shall I more say? for the  
 “ time would fail me to tell of Gideon,  
 “ and of Barak, and of Sampson, and of  
 “ Jephtha, of David also and Samuel, and  
 “ of the prophets ; who *thro' faith* subdu-  
 ed kingdoms, *wrought righteousness,*” &c.  
 Thus was faith the great operative prin-  
 ciple in good men, even before the com-  
 ing of Christ : It was the same principle in  
 general, which wrought in the apostles  
 and primitive christians : And it is this  
 principle that operates in good men, in  
 all succeeding ages. This is the heavenly  
 seed, which taking root in the heart,  
 springs up, and ripens into good fruit :  
 This is the source and fountain from  
 whence obedience flows : And without  
 such a principle of faith, there can, as  
 has been observed before, be no obedi-  
 ence properly *evangelical*. But

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NOTWITHSTANDING the visible, apparent tendency of faith, to produce obedience ; to make men truly pious and virtuous ; and altho' no person does, or can, obey the gospel, but from this principle ; yet it is manifest both from scripture, and daily observation, that people may be the subjects of faith, while they live in disobedience to Christ's commandments : They may have faith, without having their tempers and manners conformed to the dictates of it : Their lives and practice may be contrary to what they profess to believe ; yea, to what they actually do believe. So that tho' faith is the true principle of obedience, in all those who obey ; yet it is not, in fact and event, a principle of obedience in all that believe ; for there are vicious believers ; as well as vicious infidels. We learn from the new-testament, that many who believed in Christ and the gospel, of old, wholly apostatized from the faith afterwards ; some in a shorter, and some in a longer time. Many others, who did not make *shipwreck concerning faith*, but continued to *hold it* ; yet held it *in unrighteousness* ; making *shipwreck of a good conscience* ; and being *to every good work reprobate*. Our own observation may, perhaps, illustrate and verify these representations of scrip-

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 scripture. Have we not known some who professed to believe in Christ; to trust in the mercy of God thro' him; and even to be very confident of their title to eternal life; ( of whom we cannot pretend to say, that they did not thus believe, and trust, and confidently expect salvation ) Have we not, I say, known some such persons, who were far from being good men, if the tree is to be known and judged of by its fruit? Yea, have we not known some, who were not only believers; but very *warm* and *zealous* ones, who have wholly *departed from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, as was foretold? \** Have we not seen examples of such as our Saviour speaks of, who “ hear the word, and anon *with joy receive it*; yet not having *root* in themselves, endure only *for a while?*” †

• 1. *Tim.*  
 † 1.

† *Mat. 13*  
 20, 21.

IT is very evident then, that faith is not really a practical principle in the hearts of all *believers*: Some of them are very little, if any thing, the better for their faith—And there is one thing that deserves a particular notice here: Which is, That the Apostles, in their epistles to particular persons, or to christian churches, never speak of the *vicious, impenitent* professors of christianity, as being *destitute of true faith*; or as being really *unbelievers*, while

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while they professed to have faith. On the contrary, they always take it for granted, that these persons, however wicked, were really believers notwithstanding their wickedness; exhorting them to repent and amend; and to live suitably to their holy vocation. In this respect, at least, there is a very remarkable difference betwixt the Apostles, and some modern preachers of the gospel. The latter speak to, and of, all the wicked professors of christianity, as unbelievers, as destitute of *true* faith; upon a presumption that where faith is, there will always be obedience; or, that no true believer, can remain vicious. Now I am bold to say, that this manner of preaching is altogether *unscriptural*; and that there cannot be a single instance produced, from the writings of the apostles, which justifies it. For, as was said before, They always take it for granted, that men may be really *believers*, and address them *as such*, how much soever their lives and morals might resemble those of *pagans* and *infidels*. So that we cannot reasonably doubt, but that faith, *true faith*, which is a principle of obedience in some persons, is not *so* in others; not *working by love*, nor producing *the fruits of righteousness*.

SOME will probably inquire, How  
it

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it comes to pass, that faith, which is the principle and source of obedience in some persons, should not be so in others, universally? Why the hearts and manners of many should be influenced by their faith; while the hearts and manners of as many, perhaps a much greater number, should be so much at variance with their faith? so opposite to what they profess to believe; and which they really do believe, according to the present hypothesis? And, indeed, tho' the possibility of this, and the truth of the supposition, is evident from the whole current of scripture, and verified by daily experience; yet it may well be accounted one of the greatest speculative difficulties that occurs, upon the subject of religion: And it is one, of which it is, perhaps, beyond the sphere of human understanding to give a clear and full solution; since it seems plainly to run up into the old question concerning *liberty*; so that They who can fully clear up all the difficulties attending the doctrine of human freedom, as opposed to necessity, can be at no loss for an answer to this—But who They are, I have not yet found——

SOME think this fact is sufficiently accounted for, only by supposing that good and wicked men under the gospel, (tho' both

both of them are truly believers) believe in different degrees of intenseness. There are doubtless degrees in faith ; there is a strong and lively faith, as well as a weak and languid. Those who are the subjects of the former, it is said, are obedient to the dictates of it ; faith, in them, becoming an operative, practical principle : Whilst those, whose faith is feeble and weak, do not give themselves up to the guidance of it ; this weak faith not being a practical principle, as the other is : But if it were strengthened to a certain degree, it is supposed, it wou'd become so ; and certainly be productive of good fruit.— Thus, as some suppose, it comes to pass, that faith is actually a principle of obedience in some persons, and not in others. But this is far from being a full solution of the difficulty : For the question still occurs, how it comes to pass that some men are thus *strong in faith* ; while others give but a feeble and cold assent to the great truths of christianity ? Besides, if there is any such thing as human liberty, it is certain that, of different men, whose faith is the same, both for kind and degree, some may act agreeably, others contrary thereto : And to say, that all men whose faith is alike strong, must act alike, is, in effect, to deny that men are free creatures ;

unless

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SERM. unless we suppose their freedom lies rather  
 IX. in believing, than acting. For if there  
 is a necessary connection betwixt men's  
*faith* and *practice*, it is plain that they cannot be free in the *latter* of these respects ; so that they must either be free in the *former*, or not at all. And, to human appearance, some great and strong believers are much worse men, than some who have but *little faith*,

OTHERS suppose that here is a *specific, essential* difference in the faith itself, of those who obey the gospel, and of those who do not : From which difference in the *kind* and *nature* of their faith, it is said, we are to account for the difference which there is in their lives and manners ; one of them being always, and universally, a principle of christian obedience ; the other, never. But it seems impossible to give any intelligible account of this supposed *specific* difference in men's faith. For to say, that one man's faith is wrought by the special operation of the spirit of God upon his heart ; and another's, not ; is not to point out to us the difference which there is supposed to be in these men's faith ; but only to tell us, how these different persons *come by* their faith : Which is quite another thing. If two persons assent to the same divine truths ;  
 if

if they believe in the same God ; if they depend upon the same Saviour ; their faith is, for *kind*, the same, in how different a manner soever we may suppose they *became* the subjects of it. This faith, as was said above, may, indeed, be strong in some persons, and weak in others : But this makes only a *gradual*, not a *specific* difference in their faith itself.

SOME, who suppose there is a *specific* difference betwixt the faith of obedient, and that of disobedient christians ; in order to make out this difference, and to show how faith becomes a principle of obedience in some persons and not in others ; tell us, that one is a penitent faith, an humble faith, an holy faith ; and so on : Whereas the other is an impenitent faith ; not humble, unholy, &c. But upon examination, it will appear, that this is rather to tell us how *men differ* from each other, than how their *faith differs*. For since a penitent faith, includes penitence, an humble faith, humility, and an holy faith, holiness ; to say that one person has a penitent, humble, holy faith ; but that the faith of others is not a penitent, not an humble, not an holy one ; really amounts to no more than saying, that some believers are penitent, humble and holy ; but that other believers are not so.

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SERM. Which is only telling us, how widely professed christians differ from each other in their moral and religious character ; not showing us how the faith of a good man differs *specifically* from that of a wicked one.

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THE same faith, both for *kind* and *degree*, may be attended, or accompanied, with different qualities in different men. One believer may be wise and learned ; another simple and unlearned. Does this difference betwixt the men, infer any *specific* difference in their faith ? No surely ! Thus also one believer may take a particular pleasure and delight in the exercise of one worldly calling or occupation ; another, in another. Do these different turns of men's minds, infer a *specific* difference in their faith ? You will justly answer, None at all. Well : In like manner (for aught that has hitherto appeared) the same faith may be accompanied with repentance, humility, holiness, in one man ; and with hardness of heart, pride, unholiness, in another. These contrary qualities may be found in believers ; the former of them in some, the latter in others : But neither of them are faith, *strictly* and *properly* speaking ; but somewhat quite distinct from it. Tho' some believers are penitent, humble and internally holy ;  
yet

yet these moral and religious qualities, or these christian graces, *strictly* speaking, are not faith ; but they are as distinct from it, as wisdom and learning ; or any other natural and civil accomplishments ; or any particular turn of mind, with relation to secular employments. We might as well say, that there is a *specific* difference betwixt the faith of a wise man, and that of an ignorant one ; betwixt the faith of a christian *magistrate*, and that of a christian *merchant* ; as that there is such a difference betwixt the faith of a *saint*, and that of a *sinner* : Yea we might as well say, that there is a specific difference betwixt the faith of a man of a *fair*, and one of a *dark* complexion ; — the faith of an *European*, and that of the *Æthiopian* baptized by *Philip*. For, in truth, learning and ignorance, civil magistracy and merchandize, darkness and fairness of complexion, are not more distinct from faith, *properly* so called, than moral and religious qualities are ; such as repentance, humility and holiness. These good qualities are not only distinct from faith, and faith from them ; but there is no *necessary* connection betwixt them. Some believers are possessed of them ; others are not. Nor can this fact be accounted for, by supposing, that there is a specific difference

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SERM. betwixt the faith of the former, and that of  
 IX. the latter. For if there were really any  
 such difference, yet the question would  
 still recur, How comes one man to have  
 the good faith? another, only that of an  
 inferior kind? And besides; those who  
 have endeavoured to make out such a  
*specific* difference, have not, by any means,  
 done it. For they either only tell us how  
 we come by true faith, saying it is wrought  
 in us by the spirit of God, &c. (which,  
 however true it may be, is not to show  
 us wherein *that* faith, considered in itself,  
 differs from any *other* ) Or else they tell  
 us, it is a penitent, humble, holy faith:  
 Which is, in effect, to say, that the faith  
 of some men differs *specifically* from that  
 of others, by having somewhat which is  
 really *distinct* from faith, joined with it;  
*viz.* repentance, humility and holiness.  
 So that to have recourse to this supposed  
*specific* difference in men's faith, in order  
 to account for some men's obeying, and  
 others not obeying, the gospel; is really  
 no more than saying, in other words, that  
 some men obey the gospel, because they  
 do not only believe, but are also penitent,  
 humble and internally holy; *i. e.* they o-  
 bey it, because—they obey it! While o-  
 thers disobey it, because, tho' they be-  
 lieve, yet they remain impenitent, proud,  
 unholy;

unholy ; *i. e.* they disobey it, because—  
 they disobey it! And is not this a very  
 notable solution? When the very thing  
 which is inquired, is, How it comes to  
 pass, that some believers are penitent,  
 humble and holy; others the reverse?

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By this time, I suppose, it is very evident, as was hinted above, that this inquiry runs directly into another; and terminates therein: I mean, the perplexing question concerning *human liberty*; and it can only be resolved fully by those, who can *fully* reconcile our freedom (which ought not to be doubted of) with the scripture-doctrine of God's fore-knowledge, and eternal counsels; of his governing providence, and the operations of his spirit and grace. To pretend to answer the difficulty, by *dehying* human freedom, and resolving all into the absolute sovereignty, and power of God, is only to *cut the knot*—And on the other supposition, that we are free, there is somewhat in this subject, which is, even at first view, *above humanity*—somewhat, to which we *cannot attain*—somewhat, which is evidently *too high* for creatures of such limited faculties; and probably for all CREATURES. And if we *exercise ourselves in these things*, I know of no valuable end it can answer—except that of convincing us of our ignorance,

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norance, 'till we come, at last, to fit down contented and resigned, *where* the holy apostle did, saying with him—"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" † God's counsel and providence govern the world; but yet men are free!—

† Rom. 11  
33.

\* James 1.  
14.

AND if we are really free creatures, we cannot go any farther towards a solution of the question we have been considering, than this—Some men *will* and *chuse* to conform their tempers and practice to their faith; and do so, by the concurring influences of God's Spirit. Others *will* and *chuse* to continue in their sins; not as being *tempted* (much less *compelled*) thereto *of God*; but being "drawn away of their own lusts and enticed."\* Higher than this, I think, we cannot go, without losing ourselves. We must either take up with this simple, *scriptural* account of the matter; or else bewilder ourselves with that, both needless, and fruitless inquiry, What determines our will and choice to one side, rather than to the other? With relation to which question, I shall only observe, That in all those respects, wherein we are actually *Free*, (whatever respects they are) certainly nothing determines

mines us *necessarily*, or *unavoidably*, so that we could not but make the choice we do : We are *Arbiters* here, chusing for, and determining, *Ourselves*; this being the proper notion and nature of liberty, as opposed to necessity.

THOSE persons who deny the foreknowledge, and the eternal purposes of God, because they cannot clearly reconcile this doctrine with that of human liberty, seem very worthy of blame : Since, if the scriptures are true, these doctrines must both be true. But those who, because of the difficulty which they find here, deny that man is free, are still much more blameable : Because the denial of liberty, is the charging of all our sins on God ; making him the author, as well as the punisher, of them : and so, absolutely destroys his moral character : Whilst, at the same time, this is of the most fatal tendency with reference to practical religion—

IN that revelation, with which God has favoured us, it is forever taken for granted, that we have a *self-determining* power ; (whatever difficulties may attend the supposition) I mean, the power either of accepting the mercy offered us, by complying with the gracious terms of it ; or *rejecting the counsel of God against ourselves*. So that none ever had, or shall

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have, just cause to complain, that the God of all *grace* and *mercy*, so *cruelly* mocked and insulted them, as to offer them *deliverance from the wrath to come*, and eternal life in his most glorious presence, upon *impracticable* conditions: Which would, in effect, be to give us a sight of heaven, only to render us more wretched in the loss of it; and to make damnation itself the more intolerable! Such doctrine as this we, indeed, sometimes hear; such *hard speeches*! — But if you can believe Him, for whom it is *impossible to lye*, “Life and death are *set before you*, blessing and cursing:” And of this, both “heaven and earth are called to bear record; therefore CHOOSE Life!” \* †

\* Deut.  
30. 19.

BUT

† THERE are many things attended with insuperable difficulties in speculation; things, of which no clear account, or *Rationale* can be given; yea, which seem to run us into some absurdity, if supposed true: Which things are, nevertheless, certain, indubitable facts; such as cannot be denied, without denying our own daily experience. Liberty, as opposed to necessity, I take to be somewhat of this kind. Great perplexities and difficulties arise upon the supposition of it; but much greater, upon the denial. All human language is exactly accommodated to the doctrine of freedom: so that we could neither understand each other, nor ourselves, without the idea of liberty; or a power both of choosing and acting *variously*, or *differently*, within a certain sphere, under the *same* given circumstances. For this is the true, proper notion of liberty: At least, this is the sense in which the terms *liberty*, *freedom*, *active power*, are used in this note. And without the idea of such a power, what do we mean by such forms of expression as these, which are common? *viz.* That we can do so or so; but cannot do another thing; That we would do this or that.  
if

BUT it is not intended in what is said above, concerning human power and liberty,

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if we could ; but cannot : And, *vice versâ*, That we could do this or that, if we would ; but will not : That we will try, or use our' endeavours to do so or so ; and do it, if we can. This is the language of nature ; and every man understands these forms of expression : Which, yet, would be quite senseless and unintelligible to us, without the idea and supposition of liberty. There would be no foundation for such a distinction betwixt what we can, and what we cannot do, &c. All men have therefore the idea of liberty : which is, indeed, one of the most plain and simple of all our ideas : Even children have it. And

It may be fairly argu'd that we are free, and conscious to ourselves of our being so, from our having this idea. For how did we, *at first*, come by it ? It could not, I think, come into our minds, *originally*, from any thing external and material ; or by means of any of our corporeal senses and organs. There seems to be nothing in all visible nature, which could suggest it to us at first ; tho' spontaneous animal motion bids the fairest for it. If we had not actually experienced the thing ourselves, we could have no more idea of it, than a blind man, of colours, or a deaf one, of sounds. This idea could be gotten only by reflecting upon what has passed in our own minds ; upon what we have experienced in ourselves, by a kind of internal sensation. We are, therefore, *conscious* of our freedom : So that those who deny there is any liberty in man, do not only contradict the experience of others ; but their own. For they have this idea, no less than others ; which yet, they could not have, but from experience.

HOWEVER : If it should be said, that we do not get the idea of active power, by reflecting on our own experience ; but that it might be *naturally* suggested to the mind *ab extra*, by animal motion, of which we are daily witnesses ; or by any other phenomena in nature : It will, even from hence follow, that there are really some phenomena in nature, which correspond to this idea ; for otherwise the idea could not have been *naturally* suggested to our minds by these appearances. So that, even upon this supposition, it follows that the notion of liberty, or active power, is a *natural* one ; bro't into our minds by daily observation. And if this is the case, it is surely *natural* to believe there is freedom : Consequently to deny

SERM. ty, that men either do, or can, obey the  
IX. gospel in the manner required of them,  
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deny this, is *unnatural*; and to contradict a man's own daily observation. For we do not live a day without seeing what has, at least, the *appearance* of liberty; and what, according to the present supposition, originally suggested to us the notion, or idea of it.

THERE is, demonstrably, liberty *somewhere*; in some *One* Being, at least. All things could not have proceeded in an eternal series of necessary causes and effects, each of which is both an effect with relation to somewhat preceding, and a cause with relation to something following. We must ascend, and follow the chain, 'till we come to a first Mover, how distant and remote soever: Which first Mover, must be a free Being, or have a principle of active power, which is the same thing. He cannot be necessarily actuated by any thing: Which would be, in effect, to suppose there is a Cause of the first Cause; or that the first Cause is a necessary effect of another necessary Cause, &c. &c.

To deny to this great first Cause, the power of imparting to his creatures a *measure* of freedom; or of making a free creature, who can either chuse and act, or not, within a certain sphere, (how narrow and limited soever that sphere may be) is making much *too free with Him*. There is not the least contradiction or absurdity, in the supposition of a creature's having active power, or being a *free agent*. And

If active power be not an *incommunicable* attribute of the Creator; (which we have no reason to think it is) or if a creature may *possibly* be endow'd with liberty; we have no reason to *doubt* but that we have it *ourselves*: Since, upon supposition that we were actually free; we could not be more *experimentally* certain that we were so, than we are at present. That we are possessed of active power, is so immediately, so experimentally known by us; and we have such an inward consciousness and feeling of it; that no difficulties, merely *speculative*, can overthrow, or in any measure invalidate, this evidence of it. We are not more certain of any one thing, except, perhaps, of our own existence, than that we are free creatures.

BUT it will perhaps be said, that tho' we do, indeed, *seem* to ourselves to be free; yet we may not *really* be so: This may be all a delusion.—To which it is answered, that if this should

independently of the concurrence and SERM.  
 blessing of almighty God. The meaning IX.  
 is

should in fact be the case, it is impossible for us to know it to be so; or to have any reason to think it so; since we are as immediately and experimentally certain of our freedom, as we are of any one thing whatever, with the single exception mentioned before. Those notions and principles, which lead People to doubt of their freedom, must in their own nature, be far more precarious than *that* is. We might as well call in question the testimony of any, or all of our senses, as doubt the truth and certainty of our experience in this case; this consciousness of our freedom, I mean, whatever speculative difficulties may lye in the way. We might as plausibly, at least, question the existence of an external, material world; question whether we *really* see, hear, smell, taste or feel, any thing; because of the difficulties which occur respecting the *modus* of that communication and intercourse, which there is betwixt *body* and *mind*: We might as plausibly, at least, say, that tho' things *seem* to be so and so; yet they may not be *really* so; but we be deluded by false appearances: We might, I say, as plausibly talk thus, as call in question the *reality* of our freedom, because we cannot clearly see *how* we can be free, consistently with some speculative opinions; nor fully solve all the difficulties arising upon the supposition of our being so. The *former* is not more certainly a matter of daily experience to us, than the *latter*: We are conscious of, and feel, our freedom *within* us, as truly and certainly as we see or feel corporeal objects *without* us.

If men will not rest satisfied with such experience; but will still doubt the truth of their own outward senses, and internal consciousness; saying, that tho' things *seem* to be thus, yet they may not be so in *reality*; there is no remedy—These are the faculties which the Author of our beings has given us: Nor have we any other way of coming to the truth, which is better than this, or even so sure and infallible. If the truth of these faculties, or the certainty of the testimony which they bear, is called in question, we are, of course, reduced to a total absolute *scepticism*; having no *Data*, no first principles, on which to proceed in any case whatever; whether with reference to religion, or common life: We may doubt of every thing, or believe any thing; even *transubstantiation* will be no longer, an absurdity, or incredible for the  
 good

SERM. IX. is only this, that God does actually afford, or is at least ready to afford, his aid and assistance

good old *protestant-reason*, that it is a contradiction to *experience* and *common sense*. For altho' all our senses *seem* to contradict it; yet it *may* be really true—

CERTAINLY those things, of which we have such an immediate consciousness, such an experimental knowledge, as is here intended, and as we actually have respecting our own freedom; ought not to be called in question, upon any pretence of *speculative* difficulties: Which must necessarily, and in their own nature, be more doubtful and precarious. We are to look upon the former as *first principles*, ( as they really are ) from which if we once depart, we have absolutely no footing; no ground at all left to stand upon; but are plunged into an abyss, or endless labyrinth of doubts, from whence no clue can extricate us—And, indeed, what a *paradox* is this? that men should deny what they acknowledge *seems*, even to themselves, to be true from *experience*, on account of difficulties merely *speculative*! This is the case with relation to liberty: For these men universally confess, that they *seem* to themselves to be free.—This is such a degree of *scepticism*; it is such *infidelity* to common-sense; such a want of *faith* and *trust* therein, and to those faculties which God has given us for the more immediate, and the most infallible, guide of life; that one would think it impossible, were there not examples of it! Moreover,

THE doctrine of liberty only, accords naturally to that common *moral* sense of things, of actions and characters, which all mankind in all ages, in all countries, have had, and have: I mean, their sense of ill-desert, and its contrary, both in themselves and others. It is indeed the notion or supposition of liberty, (ever intimately present to the human mind, tho' some perversely disown it: It is, I say, this idea of liberty) which partly constitutes that moral sentiment, and internal feeling, which is here intended. All men know what *peculiar* sentiment *that* is, which possesses the human mind, upon seeing, or only hearing of, some remarkable instance of cruelty, injustice or perfidy. This sentiment (or, call it what you please) is closely connected with the notion of liberty: Or rather, the former cannot be, without the latter; which is really a constituent part of it. There is sometimes indeed a momentary resentment and anger, resembling it, raised in our breasts, even against inanimate,

assistance to men, in such manner and such measure, that they may, thereby, *work*

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inanimate, *inactive* beings. But we soon check such resentment by reflecting, that *that* at which we are angry, was intirely passive; that it had no self-moving, active principle; but was actuated in some manner, as to itself, quite unavoidable. This single reflection, that the being, or thing, could not help, could not avoid what has happened, immediately allays all resentment; tho' we may have received harm and damage therefrom. Which shows, that there is a close, an intimate connexion, betwixt the ideas of *blame-worthiness* and *liberty*; so that the former cannot be without the latter, as was hinted before. Nor can a man calmly and coolly think any action really culpable, or him that did it, of ill-desert, without presupposing, that he was a free being: At least no man can think so, 'till he has *made himself* another kind of creature than God made him.

AND now, since the great Author of our being has framed our minds in such a manner, that we thus naturally connect the idea of liberty, with that of demerit, or ill-desert; so that it is almost, if not altogether impossible, to have the latter of them without the former; we may fairly conclude, that *He Himself* cannot resent, or be angry with his creatures for, any thing besides the abuse, or the neglect, of their own freedom and active powers. Consequently, He neither does, nor will punish them, properly speaking, for the omission of that which they had no power to perform, or the doing of that which they could not forbear. We cannot be more certain that there is really a righteous moral government established in the universe, than we are of this: We cannot even have the idea of such a constitution, without taking this supposition along with us, our minds being moulded and fashioned as they are. And whether it becomes Us to attribute such a kind of proceeding to the Author and Lord of all, as we all necessarily condemn in each other, under the names of *cruelty, injustice, tyranny, &c. &c.* all are left to judge!—

BUT it is particularly to be observed, that both the *Jewish* and the *Christian* revelations, proceed wholly upon the supposition that men are free creatures. This point is never once brought into question; but is always taken for granted: And upon this foundation the whole superstructure of precepts, exhortations, promises and threatenings, is apparently built: **Revelation, in this respect, exactly co-inciding with, and corresponding**

SERM. *work out their own salvation*; so that if  
 IX. they do not, it is owing to a criminal  
 neglect

responding to, the natural sentiments, the common feelings of men's own breasts and consciences. So that human liberty is, in fact, the true basis of the moral constitution of things; or God's moral government as distinguished from his natural: It is the basis of *all religion*, whether natural or revealed. And from hence it follows, that any system of principles which militates against this doctrine; or which cannot be supported, but by the denial of it, must *necessarily be false*; and (tho' christen'd by the venerable name of *religion*) must be a *real contradiction to all religion*.

BUT if it could be truly said, (as it cannot) that Christianity either asserts, or supposes, men not to be free creatures; 'tis plain, Christianity ought not to be credited. For we are more certain of this *fact*, that we are free, from daily *experience*; than we can be of the truth of Christianity, in the way of *inference, deduction, or reasoning*: Which reasoning all manifestly depends on the truth of some *historical facts*, of which we must, in the nature of the thing, be less certain than we are of the *other*. No revelation, therefore, can possibly overthrow the doctrine of human liberty: So far from this, that any pretended one which contradicts it, ought to be accounted an *imposture*, for that very reason. We could not *rationally* have been believers in Christ, without being first believers in our own senses, had we been spectators of his miracles; or, even the *subjects* of them, *feeling in our bodies*, that we were healed by him: (*Mark 5. 29.*) Nor can any man set Christianity at variance with the experience and feeling, with the *common sense and reason* of mankind; or exalt *faith* to triumph in their ruins; without being first more truly an Enemy to *them*, than he is a Friend to religion afterwards —

WHAT good ends Christians can propose to themselves, even in making it a *question*, whether men have liberty or not? (which, surely, is never made *one* in the holy scriptures.) I am unable to conceive. But their attempting to establish the negative, is still more surprising; unless they were sure that they were right, beyond the possibility of a mistake: For should they happen to be wrong, they cannot well be insensible of the fatal mischiefs which may naturally follow, if they could persuade people to believe, that they *can chuse and act no otherwise than they do*; thus furnishing them with a full and ample excuse for

neglect of the power which they have, notwithſtanding the ſuppoſed depravity, and

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all the impieties, and villanies, which they are either guilty of at preſent, or may have an inclination to commit! And how *gravely* ſoever men may talk, or write, while they are endeavouring to reconcile the doctrine of neceſſity with our daily experience; with our natural notions of virtue and vice, merit and demerit; with a righteous moral government, and with the religion of the *Bible*; I muſt confeſs it appears to me, to be no better than *formal, ſolemn* trifling upon a ſubject, which ought not to be trifled with! In ſhort, if any ſpeculative principle can be juſtly ſaid to be contrary to the common ſenſe, or ſentiments, of mankind; to be immoral; to be impious; it is *this*, of an univerſal neceſſity: For it really *terminates in Atheiſm*, if purſued in its juſt and natural conſequences.

It is, probably, a great while before men can bring themſelves heartily to acquieſce in this opinion: Common reaſon and ſenſe greatly reſuſt at it. And if it ever ſits quite eaſy upon peoples minds at laſt, it is becauſe their minds are, *by ſome means or other*, corrupted and debauched. Some perſons, doubtleſs, have recourſe to this doctrine, as a *ſalvo* for their vices; and that they may find reſt from a *guilty* conſcience. For this is a ſhort, tho' not a wiſe and ſafe method, for men to rid themſelves of the remonſtrances and upbraidings of *that* officious, troubleſome companion: Tho' I would not, by any means, ſuggeſt, that this is *always* the caſe.—

OTHERS ſeem to have embraced this doctrine, merely becauſe they tho't it follow'd from ſome *philofophical* and *anatomical* principles, which they had laid down, and were not willing to part with. Thus, particularly, a learned Phyſician and Anatomift, who, not long ſince, wrote in defence of it, tells the world, That he had great reluctance at embracing it; becauſe it ſeemed to him, at firſt, to be inconſiſtent with the natural idea of vice and virtue, and the principles of religion; (in which he ſeems to have been a ſerious believer) However, he ſays, he found himſelf obliged to admit it, in conſequence of his *hypotheſis* concerning the *vibratory* motion of the *nerves*; the *medullary* ſubſtance; the *ſpinal* marrow, &c.!

If ſome other Gentlemen had, with equal plainneſs and honeſty, declared to the world their reaſons for embracing this doctrine of neceſſity, it is probable they would have ſaid, “ It was becauſe they were *reſolved*, at all adventures, to defend *their*

SERM. and real imbecility of human nature.  
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 may

*their (religious, shall I call it ? or irreligious ?) hypotbesis ; which they knew not how to defend well without it."* However, *That system of Theology* is, perhaps, as indefensible with, as without this doctrine : Since it is, hereby, weakened and pulled down *in some respects*, in the same proportion that it is strengthened and built up in *others*. The doctrine of necessity, if true, would, indeed, afford a solution of some of the difficulties respecting fore-knowledge, predestination, and *Their mechanical conversion* : But if these Gentlemen design, in *Their system*, to vindicate the *moral Character* of God, and the equity of his dealings ; particularly in consigning the *wicked* to endless torments, *rather* than the *holiest* man on earth, or *angel* in heaven ; if this, I say, is really *any part* of their design, they are so far from receiving any help at all, in this respect, ( wherein they needed so much ) from the doctrine I am speaking of ; that *that* which was before their *grand difficulty*, is heighten'd, hereby, into an *absolute impossibility*—For

It is to no purpose for these Gentlemen to tell us, That *vicious men* are *justly* punished, because they are not actuated by a foreign, *external* constraint ; but will, and chuse to sin, and do it voluntarily : Which is the method in which some of them have endeavoured to vindicate the divine justice in the perdition of the wicked. This is equally evasive and futile. For what they call *willing* and *chusing* to sin, and doing so *voluntarily*, is either that which the sinner might have avoided, or that which he could not avoid : Let them *chuse* their alternative. If they say, this was avoidable ; then the doctrine of necessity is given up : If, unavoidable ; then the objection against punishing the sinner for it, remains in its full strength : For if the sinner ( it seems we *must still call him so* ! ) could not possibly have avoided thus *willing, chusing, and acting* ; but was, in every successive moment of his existence, even from the first, laid under a necessity of doing just as he did ; whether this were owing to any *external* constraint, or to some *internal, original* bias, or impulse of *nature* ; makes not the least alteration in the case, so far as divine justice is concerned in it. He is as blameless on the latter supposition, as he would be on the former : And if it would be unrighteous to punish him on one ; it would be equally so, to do it on the other—

BUT

may have been, in their representations of our corruption; our inability to do good; and, of the manner of God's operations upon the hearts of men; yet it is the undeniable doctrine of the gospel, that vicious men cannot attain to true evangelical holiness, merely by their own strength, or exclusively of the divine assistance. But still, this assistance being afforded to all, who set themselves to seek it, and to correct their tempers and manners, as they may, and ought to do; it follows, that the perverseness of men's will, not their impotence, is the reason why any fall short of that internal purity, and external obedience, which is necessary in order to their inheriting eternal life: Nor can any one doubt, but that this is the truth, unless he first doubts the veracity, or misunderstands the words, of *Him* who has said—"Every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that

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BUT what was intended at first, only for a short *marginal* note, is already become a very long one. I shall, however, just add, that it is astonishing to see some *apparently* sober, religious men, so solicitous to establish *Their* doctrine of the divine decrees, of the uncontrollable sovereignty, and all-determining providence of God, as to do it at the expence of his *moral* *perfections*!—to see them so much more solicitous to prove, That the Judge of all the earth DOES WHAT HE WILL; than That "the Judge of all the earth WILL DO RIGHT!"—If it is impiety, even to "speak wickedly FOR God"; † how much greater impiety is it, to "speak wickedly AGAINST Him!"

† *Job* 13. 7.

‡ *Psalms* 139. 20.

SERM. “ that seeketh findeth ; and to him that

IX. “ knocketh it shall be opened ” — “ If ye—

“ being evil, know how to give good

“ gifts unto your children ; how much

“ more shall your heavenly Father give

“ the Holy Spirit to them that ask him ? ” †

† Luke 11.  
10.

SOME, by faith, which they call a principle of obedience, seem evidently to intend believing, together with that repentance ; that humble and pious temper of soul, which is the fruit of God's spirit, co-operating with our sincere desires to obey and serve him : *i. e.* they mean internal goodness and holiness, as well as faith. And indeed the scriptures frequently use the term faith in the same latitude ; particularly, when we are said to be *justified* thereby. And if we understand it thus, faith is indeed always, and in all who have it, actually a principle of obedience ; I mean, of *external* obedience ; for this faith is *itself* obedience, considered as a practical principle in the heart : and therefore it cannot, with any propriety, be opposed to, or contradistinguished from, internal piety and goodness ; or that *divine nature*, of which we are made partakers by the *great and precious* promises of the gospel, accompanied with the divine blessing.

IT seems impossible, in the nature of the thing, that any person who is possessed of

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of this divine principle of faith, understood in the complex sense here spoken of, should not externally walk agreeably to the gospel; or that he should continue to work iniquity. For this would be to suppose, that a man might be wicked externally; and yet be internally pious and holy! Whereas our Saviour says, with reference to this very point, That "EVERY good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree CANNOT bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."\* Faith, considered in this large sense, seems to have a close and inseparable connexion with christian obedience: In any other sense of the term faith, it has no such connexion therewith. And it may be added, that no man can obey the gospel as a christian ought to do, without having this divine principle in his heart: If this is wanting, a man is internally wicked; and so not justified; nor intitled to the glorious promises of the gospel, whatever his external behaviour may be.

\* Mat. 7.  
17, 18.

I AM not much concerned, whether that which is said above, is most agreeable to the sentiments of this, or the other denomination of Christians; being verily

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perswaded, it is *the truth as it is in Jesus*—  
 Nor do I know how I can conclude this  
 discourse better, than by beseeching you  
 all, to see that your faith is improved in-  
 to such a practical principle of holiness  
 and obedience in your hearts, as has been  
 now spoken of. Without faith, in this  
 sense ; or unless people have such a pious  
 trust and confidence in God, thro' Christ ;  
 such a persuasion of his goodness and  
 holiness ; of the truth of his promises and  
 threatnings, that they are formed into the  
 divine image ; and internally resign them-  
 selves to the divine will ; their outward  
 behaviour, however irreproachable, can-  
 not be well-pleasing in God's sight ; as  
 that of Christ's faithful servants is. There  
 is a faith which is dead for want of  
 works : There may also be works which  
 are dead, for want of faith ; I mean for  
 want of a truly pious and christian tem-  
 per at the bottom, in conjunction with  
 what is more usually termed faith. With-  
 out this, our external obedience is scarce  
 better than mere formality, and empty  
 ceremony ; since God looketh at our  
 hearts. That is not a pure fountain, from  
 whence such obedience flows : Nor are  
 those who perform it, truly made alive un-  
 to God, by Jesus Christ ; They have not  
 yet in them that *well of living water, spring-*  
 ing

ing up into everlasting life, which our Saviour speaks of; intending hereby the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive. But "let him that is athirst, come; and WHOSOEVER WILL, let him take the water of life freely." †

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† Rev. 22.  
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S E R M O N X.

On the Extent of Evangelical Obedience.

JAMES I. 21, 22.

*LAY* apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

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**T**HE nature and principle of evangelical obedience having been considered in the forgoing discourse; we are now to consider the *extent* of it; and to give a short description thereof, as it is found in good men, who are the heirs of salvation. This was the last head of discourse proposed, when we entered upon this subject.

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I HAVE, more especially, two reasons for speaking of the *extent* of christian obedience; and giving a short description of it, as it is actually found in the hearts and lives of Christ's true disciples. One is, that they who are *really* christians; and not only *nominally* such, may have the great and blessed satisfaction of knowing that this character belongs to them; and so may reasonably *hope for the mercy of God unto eternal life*; being still excited by this very hope, to purify themselves yet more; to make farther progress in piety and virtue; and to *perfect holiness in the fear of God*.—The other end, which I have in view, is, that those who are not truly *doers of the word*, may not *deceive their own selves*; that they may not hope to be *blessed in their deed*; but may know wherein they fall short of what is necessary to constitute the christian character; and so be excited to amend their ways, 'till they come up thereto.

THESE two ends may, by the blessing of God, be both attained by laying before you the christian rule of life and conduct, (by which we are to be judged hereafter) in order to your comparing your own tempers and manners therewith. Those whose hearts and manners correspond to this law of liberty, (allowing for such de-

SERM. X. viations as may properly come under the head of human infirmities) may justly have confidence towards God; and *assure their hearts before Him.* On the other hand, those whose own hearts condemn them, as being presumptuous, wilful transgressors of this *law of liberty*, may be equally sure that they are not heirs to the blessings annexed to the observance, but to the condemnation annexed to the violation, of it. The gospel, as it is a rule of life to us, and as we behold the glory and perfections of God therein, is a sort of spiritual fountain, or intellectual mirrour; by looking into which, we may discern the true features and lineaments of our souls. In this it is, that the good man may discover the *beauty of holiness* (the divine image) in himself, as it were by reflexion from it: It will give him back, and make him see, his own likeness; his *other self*: And, at the same time that it shews him all that is truly beautiful and amiable in his *inner man*, it will also shew him, wherein *that* still needs polishing and adorning. By means of this, the wicked may likewise come to a sight of their moral deformity: For this glass represents ugliness and deformity in their just and proper colours, no less than it does beauty and comeliness, in *their's*: It is not a de-  
ceitful

ceitful one, which will either flatter the bad, or bely the good; but it will truly shew every person to himself, who, instead of taking a careless side-glance at it, looks full and direct upon it, with an open and honest face. Nor should either the good or bad, having looked into it when presented before them, and beheld themselves therein, *go their way and forget what manner of men they are.* \* But this is often done by vicious men; who do not like to retain either God, or themselves in their knowledge and remembrance. They are disgusted at the ugly image represented to them, when they see themselves in contrast with the purity and holiness of God, as exhibited to them in His word. Far different from *Narcissus* in the *fable*; who was loth to lose sight of himself in the chrystal stream; and so would have gazed forever; *They* are generally for losing sight of themselves as soon as possible. Such a disagreeable and loathsome object as a sinful, polluted, guilty soul, fills them with horror, instead of delight; and they are uneasy 'till the very idea of it is erased from their Minds. Good men, on the other hand, receive a sacred pleasure by observing the image and superscription of God in their own hearts, while they are contemplating His word; tho' this is

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1. 24.

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a pleasure attended with humiliation, and a degree of grief, because they approach no nearer to the great *Exemplar*. However, by continuing to look into this sacred mirror, they grow daily into an exacter conformity to the glorious, the divine *Original*: — *They all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.* § — But I wander too far from the particular design of this discourse; which, you remember, was to consider the *extent* of christian obedience.

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3. 18.

AND it is evident that this obedience ought to be co-extended with the *rule* of it. What is that? The law of Christ; the whole collective body of christian statutes, injunctions, and prohibitions: *So speak ye and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.*\* It is manifest that our obedience is not truly christian, unless we pay a religious regard to the whole evangelical law, however *broad* this commandment may be; and how many *points*, or distinct precepts, soever, it may be distributed into. People may flatter themselves as much as they please, and imagine it as easy as they please, to be truly pious and good. But one may be bold to say, that no man was ever altogether a christian, without giving his heart intire,  
and

• James  
2. 12.

and undivided, to God thro' Christ; so as to be internally disposed to yield obedience to all his known commandments. There is no true principle of christian piety and goodness in the heart, but what is an universal one; not confined to this, or the other precept and duty, but extended to all of them in general. This will be evident to any one, who attentively considers what is implied in a principle of obedience to God, and of submission to his authority. For this is really a principle uniform, and consistent with itself, thro'out. He that truly loves virtue, as being what it is, loves it universally; tho' a man may in many cases put on the appearance of it, without really loving it at all. So he that truly loves God, and reverences his authority, as such, reverences it universally, so as to have a temper of mind disposed to submit, in all respects, to the divine will, without reserve or limitation. In this respect, there is a wide difference betwixt a due principle of obedience to God's will, as discovered to us in the gospel of his Son, and a principle of obedience to any human authority, whether civil or parental. No one but God, has an absolute, unlimited authority over us. We may therefore (and indeed ought to) have reserves in our breasts, with

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with regard to all human authority ; not being obliged, in reason, to yield up ourselves intirely to the will and disposal of men ; or to do whatsoever may, by them, be enjoined upon us. We are bound to reverence, and submit to, our natural parents, and the civil Powers, so far as their right of commanding extends : If we do so, it is sufficient. But if we have not a disposition thus to submit to all their rightful commands, we can neither have the temper of dutiful children, nor of loyal subjects : *i. e.* we cannot have either a true principle of filial obedience, or of obedience to the Powers that are *ordained of God*. Apply this to the case in hand ; to that obedience which we owe to God ; and then the argument will stand thus : The authority of our Saviour, or that authority of God, with which he is invested, has no limitation, besides those which God's own infinite wisdom, justice and goodness, fix and prescribe to it : which is, in effect, to say that it has none at all—There is nothing, which can in the nature of things, interfere with the authority of such a Being, so as to limit it, to supersede it, or set it aside : It is in its own nature both *supreme* and *universal*. Is it not, then, evident that our obedience ought to be without any reserves, exceptions

or

or limitations? and that God's holy will and commands, as made known to us in the gospel, are the only measure and standard of that obedience which is truly christian? Is it not incongruous to imagine, that we can really reverence the divine authority, with reference to *any* of the divine commandments, without doing so as to *all* of them? The same principle of love, reverence and submission, to God and our Saviour, which is even necessary to constitute a truly christian obedience to any one commandment; must and will run thro', and take place with reference to the whole divine law; to all points and branches of it. It is, in the very nature of it, an uniform, universal principle; which regards the divine authority, as such; and is therefore co-extended with the divine commandments: They alone can limit and bound it, in those persons, in whom it really takes place. My meaning is, that no man who supremely loves and reverences God, and from this principle, lives conformably to *some* of his commandments; can persevere from time to time in known, wilful disobedience to *others* of them; or even to *one* only. It is a contradiction. We may therefore be as certain, as we can of any thing, that he who has not a disposition

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SERM. tion to obey the gospel universally, has  
 X. not a truly pious disposition to obey it at  
 all; *i. e.* that he has no principle of obedience which comes up to the evangelical standard. Knowingly and habitually transgressing any one commandment, is a demonstration that a man obeys no others in the manner which he ought to do. He has not *cut off that right hand*; he has not plucked out *that right eye which offends*. Either *mammon*, or some other worldly object has the possession of, and the dominion over his heart; and still separates it from God. There is somewhat, in this case, which has the preheminance, and supremacy in a man's heart: It is plain that God has it not: If He had, a man could not thus presumptuously transgress one of his commands from time to time; for the sake of serving another master: *And his servant he is, to whom he obeys*. He is not truly the servant of God and righteousness: he does not truly, and in the manner he ought to do, obey any of God's laws; which cannot be done, without a supreme love to him, and a reverence of his authority as such. So that known habitual sinning, in any case whatever, is a proof, that a man is, in some sort, guilty with reference to all the commandments; tho' he may seem to keep  
 them

them all, with one single exception.

THIS is not so much my own reasoning, as it is St. *James's*; for I must now confess to you, that I borrowed it all from *him*. You have it comprised in the 10th and 11th verses of the 2d chapter of his epistle—  
 “ Whosoever shall keep the whole law,  
 “ and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, do not commit adultery, said also, do not kill :  
 “ Now if thou commit no adultery ; yet  
 “ if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the [ whole ] law.” The meaning is not, that one offence comprises all other offences in it, or *makes* a man a transgressor of the whole law, because this is offending against that one supreme authority, which binds all the commandments upon us : This is, I think, a forced, unnatural construction ; and very remote from the true spirit, and sense of the passage. The apostle asserts no such thing : But what he intends is, that offending in one point, tho’ it does not of itself *make* a man guilty of all, yet it proves him to be so, and he certainly is so, in some degree, tho’ he may *seem* to keep the whole law, excepting in that one point. And the argument to prove this [ver. 11,] is conclusive, if understood thus—That God who has forbid one  
 crime,

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SERM. crime, has forbid all others : Therefore,  
 X. if you truly reverence his authority, you  
 will obey *all* his commandments : And  
 tho' you may pretend to obey many of  
 them, and appear both to yourselves and  
 others to do so ; yet if you habitually and  
 presumptuously disobey any *one* of them,  
 it is certain you do not obey any of them,  
 as you ought to do ; and, therefore, must  
 be more or less guilty with respect to all  
 points of christian duty. This seems to  
 be plain and intelligible : But if the ar-  
 gument needs further illustration, it will  
 receive, from the last verse but one in  
 the preceeding chapter—" If any man a-  
 mong you *seem* to be religious, and  
 bridleth not his *tongue*, but deceiveth  
 his own heart, this man's religion is  
 vain." The obvious meaning of which  
 is, that how religious soever any man  
 may *seem* to be ; yet if his tongue is not  
 under any restraint ; if he offends in that  
*one point* ; he is deceived in himself ; all  
 his religion is scarce better than *shew*, and  
 vain formality : He has no real principle  
 of piety or goodness in him ; and there-  
 fore must be guilty, in a degree, with re-  
 ference to all points, even those wherein  
 he may *seem* to keep the law. There is  
 nothing forced in this construction. And  
 may not what the apostle says concerning  
 that

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that one point, of not *bridling* the tongue, be applied to all other vicious, immoral practices? May it not be said, with equal certainty, that if any man among us *seem* to be religious; and yet is a *Thief*, a *Drunkard*, a *Liar*, an *Extortioner*, or *Adulterer*, &c. this man's religion is also *vain*? that he has not the fear of God before his eyes, nor the love of God, and of his Saviour in his heart? that he is no true disciple of Jesus Christ; but that all his religion is mere formality and shew? that tho' he may, to outward appearance, keep the whole law, one point of it excepted; yet he really observes none of the commandments, from a principle of love and reverence to God and his Redeemer? that he is, therefore, really guilty, in a degree, with reference to all points even of the law of liberty? and that he must therefore be condemned as a transgressor of this whole law? — This seems to be evidently true; and it is, I think, the plain doctrine of St. *James*. †

MANY.

† I HAVE in part, tho' not wholly, followed the common interpretation of *James* 2. 10, 11. Which interpretation I find, since the writing of this Sermon, is rejected by the learned Dr. *SHERLOCK*, the present Bishop of *LONDON*, in a discourse lately published on *Matthew* 22, 4. His Lordship tells us, that that interpretation “ amounts to this: All laws are founded upon one and the same authority of God; therefore every offence against any law, is a  
“ contempt

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MANY cannot reconcile themselves to this doctrine, That a man must have respect

“ contempt of the authority upon which all laws depend ; and  
 “ therefore every act of disobedience, is a breach of the whole  
 “ law.”——“ To those who have plain sense, and can fol-  
 “ low it, he says, this must appear absurd :” And that “ the  
 “ true and natural interpretation,” is to be collected from the  
 new-testament “ Notion of love, as being the fulness of the  
 “ law, and of all the commandments being comprehended in  
 “ this saying, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self.*” And  
 when the Apostle says, that *whosoever offends in one point, is*  
*guilty of all* ; his Lordship tells us, that “ in this verse, he con-  
 “ siders the royal law, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour, &c.* as the  
 “ whole law.”

His Lordship judges, that the common interpretation is  
 “ evidently liable to all the difficulties of the *Scot's* paradox  
 “ that all offences are equal”——So that “ there will be no dif-  
 “ ference between killing your neighbour and your neighbour's  
 “ horse ; for he that has forbid you killing your neighbour, has  
 “ likewise forbid you doing any act to the hurt and detri-  
 “ ment of your neighbour.”

His Lordship says farther, that “ the apostle's inference in  
 “ the latter part of the verse [ i. e. ver. 11. ] does not answer  
 “ to the principle laid down in the former,” in the common  
 method of interpretation. “ *He that said do not commit adultery,*  
 “ *said also do not kill.* This is his principle : And he infers,  
 “ *Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art be-*  
 “ *come a transgressor of the law.*——But what is this towards  
 “ showing that the breach of one law, is the breach of all ?”

His Lordship thinks, that the translators have “ misled  
 “ people in the understanding of this whole passage.” For says  
 he, “ Instead of *for he that said,* it should be rendered *for the*  
 “ *law which said,*” &c. And “ the place thus rendered contains  
 “ a clear reason of what went before. If, says he, [ i. e. the  
 “ Apostle ] you offend in any point of charity or duty, you  
 “ become a transgressor of this whole law, *Thou shalt love thy*  
 “ *neighbour as thy self.*” The Bishop judges, that this in-  
 terpretation is evidently favoured by the whole preceding  
 context, wherein the apostle is treating of the royal law of  
 charity, and of relative duties. — And “ This place in St.  
 “ *James,* says he, being thus understood and explained, there  
 “ is no occasion for any niceties or distinctions,” &c.

pect to *all* the commandments, in order  
to his escaping condemnation, and inheriting

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ing

THIS is the sum of his Lordship's reasoning upon the point. But (with all the deference that is due to an author to whom the world is so much indebted for his excellent discourses on some practical subjects, as well as those in defence of Christianity,) the old interpretation of St. James, seems to be as unexceptionable as the new; even after his Lordship has endeavoured to explode the one, and to establish the other.

HIS Lordship's interpretation seems as "evidently liable to all the difficulties of the Stoic's paradox," as the old one. For if he who, in any one instance, injures his neighbour, is a transgressor of the *whole* law of charity; (which contains in it all the social duties, and forbids every kind of injury) may it not still be objected, that this is to make all offences against our neighbour equal? Who, it may be asked, can do more or worse, than to break this *whole* law of love? For to break the *whole*, is to break it in *all its parts*, or in *all points*. But yet this is what every man does, according to his Lordship, who trespasses in any one particular point: For thus he interprets the Apostle, "If you offend in any point of charity or duty, you become a transgressor of this *whole* law, *Thou shalt love*," &c. How can the *whole* of a general law, which contains innumerable particulars, be broken by violating it in *one point* only! And if, according to the old *interpretation*, (*viz.* that he who *offends in one point is guilty of all*, because he violates that one Authority, upon which all laws depend) all crimes are equal, as his Lordship says they are; One would think, that even according to *his own*, all offences against our neighbour must also be equal; since any one is a breach of the *whole* law of charity. So that it seems to be as true, according to *his*, as it is according to the *other* interpretation, that there is "no difference between killing your neighbour and your neighbour's horse": For that law of charity which says, *Thou shalt not kill thy neighbour*, says also, *Thou shalt not kill thy neighbour's horse*: And the *whole* of this law, his Lordship tells us, is actually broken by him, who "offends in any *one point* of charity or duty."—But if any think the Stoic's paradox may be avoided here, by saying, that tho' any particular offence against our neighbour is a breach upon the whole law of charity; yet the nature and circumstances of some offences may render them more criminal than others: Why

may

SERM. ing eternal life. Many a person doubtless  
 X. reasons thus with himself—"What harsh,  
 rigorous

may not the same paradox be also avoided, in the old way, by saying, that tho' every transgression is, in a sort, the violation of all God's law in general, as it is a violation of that *one* general authority, on which all laws depend; yet the nature and circumstances of some sins against this one great authority, may render them more heinous than others? "To *some* men "who have plain sense, and can follow it," there will, perhaps, appear no more *absurdity* in this latter method of solving the difficulty, so far as it relates to the *stoical* paradox, than there will appear in the former.

AND tho' his Lordship is pleased to say, that "the apostle's "inference in the latter part of the [11th] verse, does not "answer to the principle laid down in the former," in the old way of interpretation; I must beg leave to think it answers as well thereto, in this, as in his Lordship's interpretation: Tho' One would not dissent from such an acknowledged master of reason and critical learning, but with caution and diffidence. This 11th verse evidently contains the grounds of the assertion in the preceding verse, *viz*, *That whosoever offends in one point is guilty of all* [points.] And considered in this light, the meaning of the inference, *Thou art become a transgressor of the law*, must be this, Thou art a transgressor of the *whole* law, so as to make thee *guilty of all*; as it is expressed ver. 10. This is the design of the argument, both in his Lordship's method of interpretation, and in the other; it is common to them? Only his Lordship confines the words, *guilty of all*, to the great law of charity; the person spoken of, is guilty of breaking that *whole* law, tho' not of all laws in general. And agreeably hereto, his Lordship, by a transgressor of the law, ver. 11. understands "a transgressor of this *whole* law, *Thou shalt "love,"* &c. So that in both methods of interpretation, the inference in the latter part of ver. 11, must answer, not only to the principle laid down in the former part; but also correspond to the Proposition to be proved, *viz*, that he who offends in *one* point is guilty of *all* (points.) And the question is, How this inference answers better, either to the principle in the former part of the verse, (which is the medium to prove the proposition,) or to the proposition itself, upon his Lordship's hypothesis, than upon the old. Upon the old one the argument stands thus, The one great Lawgiver, on whose authority all laws

rigorous doctrine is this, under the *gracious* dispensation of the gospel! Must I

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forsake

laws depend; and who has said, Do not commit adultery, has said also do not kill: Therefore, if thou dost not commit adultery, but yet killest, thou art a transgressor of his whole law; so that thou art *guilty of all* [points] thereof; *i. e.* as thou violatest that one authority which extends equally to all points. If the inference does not answer to the principle, (or medium) or to the proposition to be proved, in this way: Let us see, whether it answers to either of them any better, in his Lordship's. Upon his hypothesis, the thing to be proved is, That whosoever offends *against his neighbour* in one point, breaks the *whole* law of charity; or is *guilty of all* [points of that royal law.] The principle or medium of proof (in his Lordship's translation) is this—"For the law which said," &c. And the argument, I humbly conceive, must stand thus—The same royal law which "has forbid you killing your neighbour, has likewise forbid you doing any act to the hurt and detriment of your neighbour": Therefore if thou dost not kill thy neighbour; but yet injurest him in any *one* respect, thou art become a transgressor of this *whole* law of charity; so that thou art *guilty of all* [points] thereof; *i. e.* as thou violatest that one royal law, which extends equally to all points of social duty and benevolence. This is evidently the true state of the argument, upon his Lordship's hypothesis; but I must confess I am not able to see, that the inference answers any better, either to the principle, (or the medium of proof) or to the proposition to be proved, in this method of interpretation, than it does in the old. If it does not follow, that because all laws depend upon one and the same authority of God, therefore he who transgresseth one law, is a transgressor of the *whole* law, or *guilty of all* [points;] it seems not to follow, that because all particular social duties are comprehended in one and the same law of charity, therefore he who transgresseth one branch of that law, is a transgressor of the *whole* of it, or is *guilty of all* [points] thereof. There seems to be as much "occasion for niceties and distinctions" in one case, as there is in the other.

His Lordship judges, that his translation "For the law which said," instead of—*For he that said*, removes the difficulty which there is, otherwise, in this passage. However he candidly allows, that "the words in the original are of doubt-

"ful

SERM. forsake every known sin? or else lose my  
 X. soul at last! Tho' I disregard *one* of the  
 com-

“ful interpretation;” as they certainly are. And since the term *law*, is not in the original; and the *Greek* participle may be as well referred to that *One Lawgiver*, expressly mentioned by St. James in this epistle, as to the law itself, whether the *royal law*, or the law in its utmost extent and latitude; there seems to be no real necessity for departing from the common translation. But admitting his Lordship's translation to be preferable, it is not easy to see, how this helps the matter in any degree. For what is the law? or what can it say, considered independently of the will and authority of the *One Law-giver*? Thus abstractly considered, it lays us under no *obligation*: nor can it be broken in a moral or religious sense. It is only *ink and paper*, if written; only *sound*, if articulately pronounced; —even tho' pronounced in *thunder*, as at *Sinai*. So that tho' the true *critical* rendering were, “*For the law which said,*” &c. as his Lordship judges it is; yet we are obliged to recur to the will and authority of the Law-giver; and to consider *Him* as speaking to us in and by the law. The law, strictly speaking, is only the will of the Legislator, in some way or other made known to us: And this equally, whether the royal law of charity *only*, be intended by St. James, or the *whole* law of God in general. So that tho' his Lordship's translation were received; yet this would not, I humbly conceive, in any degree, tend to establish his sense of the apostle's doctrine, or to overthrow the common. This seems to be no more than a *verbal* criticism; which cannot, in the present case, (tho' it might in many others) make the least alteration in the sense and true design of the writer: Settle this point how you will, either one way or the other; yet the result will be exactly the same at last.

It must be added, (because his Lordship lays stress upon it) that tho' St. James is certainly speaking, in the preceding context, more directly concerning the great law of charity and the social duties; yet this does not seem to be a sufficient ground for understanding him in the 10th and 11th verses, as speaking of that royal law, and of these duties, *exclusively* of others. The reasoning here, may be naturally extended to all other laws, all other branches of duty; and still be as good and conclusive, as if it were restrained to the law and duties of charity. And there is, perhaps, as truly a connexion betwixt all christian virtues

commandments ; yet certainly my religious observation of *all the rest*, will turn

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the

tues in general, so that they may be resolved into *one*, viz. that of *filial love and reverence* to the *One great and good Law-giver* as there is a connexion betwixt all the *social virtues*, so that they may be resolved into that *one*, of *loving our neighbour as ourselves*.—

UPON the whole ; whatever of difficulty, or paradox, there is in this passage, in the old method of interpretation, it seems evidently to *remain*, in his Lordship's. For it is particularly to be observed, (tho' his Lordship has not mentioned it) That when a man who transgresseth in *one point*, is said to be guilty of all ; the word *all* is *plural* in the original ; and so cannot naturally be referred to any *one* general law. It is used in opposition to the *one point*, or *one respect*, in the preceding clause : And the obvious construction is, that whosoever offends thus in *one point*, is (*in some sense or other*) guilty in *all points*. The grand difficulty really lies here : And this, I humbly conceive, is not, in any measure, lessened by his Lordship's observations. For tho' you admit his proposed emendation in the version ; tho' you admit all which he says upon the context ; tho' you allow, that *St. James* is speaking only of that royal law of charity ; (which extends to all points of social duty, and prohibits all kinds of injury to your neighbour) tho' you concede all this, still the question returns, Why, or in *what sense*, he who offends in *one point* of this great *royal law*, must needs be a transgressor of the *whole* of that law ? or quality as to *all points* thereof ? This remains as much a difficulty, upon the supposition that the great law of charity only, is here treated of ; as it is upon the old supposition, that the apostle is speaking of God's law in general. All God's laws may be considered as *one general law*, consisting of various points, or branches ; as well as all the particular laws of justice and charity, may be reduced to that one, royal law, *Thou shalt love*, &c. Nor has the apostle's reasoning, ver. 11. any more obvious a tendency to prove, (on his Lordship's supposition) that he who offends in *one point* of the general law of love, is a transgressor of the *whole* of that law, or guilty of *all* ; than it has to prove, (on the other supposition) that he who offends in *one point* of God's general, universal law, is a transgressor of the whole of that law, or guilty of *all*. The reasoning, I humbly conceive, receives no additional

SERM. the ballance in my favour. A merciful  
 X. God will not cast me off forever, for indulging

ditional clearness, weight or cogency, by such a change of the supposition. For there is still a general law, consisting of innumerable parts, or branches, the whole of which, it is said, is broken, by him that offends in one point of it. And whether it were *The law*, which said, or the *Lawgiver*, which said, *Thou shalt not*, &c. this makes not, so far as I am able to see, the least alteration in the case.—

THAT which makes this passage appear so paradoxical as it does to many, is a palpable mistake of St. James's sense; in supposing him to assert something which he does not; viz. that offending in one point, or as to one particular law, is what makes, renders, or constitutes a man guilty with reference to all others; or "that an offence against one law, is a breach of all laws, however different they are in kind or degree." This would, indeed, be rather a contradiction than a paradox; and equally so, whether said only with reference to the various points of the royal law of love; or to the various branches of God's law in general. But the apostle asserts no such thing as either. He asserts only, that the man who thus offends in one point is [really] guilty of all; and that he is a transgressor of the [whole] law: Which is quite a different thing from saying, that in that very act, by which a man offends against one precept, he offends against all the rest. Let us therefore keep to the very words of the apostle—"He is guilty of all." But how? in what sense guilty? Certainly he does not externally disobey all the laws of God: For the same man is supposed, in the former part of the verse, to keep the whole law, [outwardly] with one single exception—Now look to the 26th ver. of the preceding chapter; and there you will find a sure and easy clue to the apostle's meaning: *If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that man's religion is vain.* Offending in that one point, or giving a wicked licence to the tongue, is a proof that all a man's religion is vain; however religious he may seem to himself, or others to be: Yea tho' he seem to keep the whole law in other respects, he deceiveth his own heart; and is guilty with reference to all the commandments: For since such a man does not truly and piously observe any of the commandments; but his religion is all vain; certainly he is guilty in all points; or with relation to all the commandments. For there is really no medium be-

dulging one lust only, when I so sincerely  
 serve him in the general course of my life.

SERM.  
 X.

Y 4

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twixt *truly* and *piously* keeping the commandments, and *really* breaking them. Such a man is, therefore, guilty of *all*; a transgressor of the *whole* law. Tho' he does not transgress the whole, BY offending in *one* point; (which it were absurd to suppose) yet his thus offending in *one* point, is a proof and evidence of his being wicked and hypocritical at the bottom. And an evil and wicked heart is more properly a contradiction, to, and a *transgression* of, all God's commandments; than any external conformity thereto, without a pious, good heart, is *obedience* to them.

FOR the farther illustration of this passage, it is to be observed, That, upon the footing of *mere* law, any single deviation, tho' but for a moment, and in the least point, would render a man a transgressor of that *whole* covenant of works; or of that whole law. The whole law in this case would be, in such a sense *one*; [*one* covenant;] that it must be either *wholly* kept, or *wholly* violated, by every person under it. There could be no medium here. Such a *unity* is of the very nature and essence of a dispensation merely *legal*. But the apostle is here speaking to Christians, upon christian principles; the principles of evangelical grace. And tho' he uses the terms *law*, in the 10th and 11th verses; yet he means the christian law, as contradistinguished from the *Mosaic* covenant of works: This he calls *the law of liberty*, ver. 12. And there is really such an *unity* even in this covenant of grace also, that it must be either *wholly* kept, or *wholly* broken, by each man that is under it. This appears from the condition of it, on our part: Which is *faith*, in that comprehensive sense in which the word is often used in scripture; *i. e.* as including uprightness of heart towards God; which every man is either possessed of, or not. So that every man either *wholly* keeps, or *wholly* breaks this covenant of grace. This uprightness, or sincerity towards God, is opposed to *perfection* on one hand; and *both* to *refined* hypocrisy, and to *presumptuous* sinning, on the other. It is the *medium* betwixt them. No sincere christian is perfect; no one is an habitual transgressor in any one point. The former is incompatible to the present imperfect state of mankind; the latter is inconsistent with sincerity towards God; or with *faith*, in that sense of the term before alluded to. And these things being considered, the sense of this passage will, I conceive,

SERM. That compassionate Redeemer who loved  
 X. men so well as to die for them, cannot, surely, be so severe to mark iniquity against me. No: If I uprightly  
 and

ceive, be intelligibly expressed; and the reasoning of the apostle set in a true and convincing light, in the following paraphrase of the 10th and 11th verses, *q. d.* Whosoever shall externally observe the whole gospel rule of life, excepting in one point, wherein he knowingly and presumptuously offends; tho' he may seem to be religious, yet that man is certainly destitute of sincere piety to God; his religion is vain; he deceiveth his own Heart. This is an evidence that he obeys none of the commandments in a truly christian manner; and therefore, that he is guilty with respect to all of them in general. For remember, that the same great Lawgiver, who forbids murder, forbids adultery also; and His commands, you know, are equally obligatory in all cases: So that whosoever truly knows and loves Him, and sincerely reverences his authority, will have no reserves, but pay a sacred regard to all his commandments. And therefore, tho' you should not actually commit adultery, in the common gross sense; yet if you commit murder, or live in the practice of any other known sin; this proves you to be such contempters of God and his authority, as cannot be supposed truly, and in a christian manner, to observe any of his laws, however you may flatter yourselves. And if you do not properly observe any of them; you must, of consequence, be adjudged transgressors of the whole christian law; and guilty, in a greater or less degree, with reference to all points of your duty in general. Sincerity and piety towards God, being wanting, you are nothing; and are cut off from all reasonable hopes of salvation, even tho' you are under the merciful covenant of the gospel.

I HAVE been the longer in endeavouring to show the true sense of this passage, and wherein the force of St. James's reasoning lies; because I conceive this to be a point of real importance. Tho' I should scarce have said any thing upon it, in the way of criticism, but as an APOLOGY for myself; for not embracing Bishop Sberlock's new interpretation: Whose [just] great name and character seemed to demand this; and whose writings are so much esteemed amongst us;—tho', by none more than by him, who has thus presumed to dissent from his Lordship.

and conscientiously obey all his known precepts, one only excepted ; he will surely accept this obedience ; and overlook this one transgression, on the score of human weakness. " — O thou *Hypocrite* ! Dost thou talk of thy sincere, religious, and conscientious obedience to Christ's commandments, whilst thou acknowledgest, there is one of his commandments which thou disregardest ! I tell thee, in the name of the living God ! that thou dost not *truly* and *properly* obey any one precept of the gospel, while there is any one which thou presumptuously violatest from day to day. Thou deceivest thine own heart : Thou art a transgressor of the whole law, and guilty of all, rather than a true and conscientious observer of the law, in any one respect. If thou hadst a real principle of love and duty to Christ in thy heart, thou wouldest regard all his known commandments ; and not think any of them grievous : Thou wouldest not think of compounding with thy Creditor and gracious Benefactor thus ; but be desirous, as far as possible, to pay thy whole debt to him.—Thou canst not serve two Masters : Thou canst not be half loyal to thy King and Redeemer, and half rebel : Thou art all rebel, 'till thou intirely submittest thy will to *His*, and  
makest

SERM.

X.

SERM. makest THAT a universal rule to thee to  
 X. walk by;— 'till thou renoucest that be-  
 loved lust, which causes thee thus to  
 transgress in one respect. However thou  
 mayest flatter thy self, this sin which so  
 easily besets thee, is the lord which has  
 dominion over thee; and thou art *the*  
*servant of sin unto death*—

BUT let us suppose, for the present,  
 that the terms of salvation were less rigo-  
 rous: Let us suppose that the gospel had  
 assured us, that provided we heartily  
 and sincerely obey all the divine com-  
 mandments excepting *one*, we shall  
 be saved. Tho' the very supposition of  
 our heartily and conscientiously obeying  
 some of the commandments, while we set  
 any one of them at nought, is absolutely  
 absurd, and self-contradictory; yet I will  
 take the possibility of it for granted; and  
 see what such a *gracious* dispensation for  
 breaking *one* commandment will come to  
 —what the consequence will be.— God  
 being thus condescending, it must be pre-  
 sumed that it is left to every particular  
 man to *chuse* what particular command-  
 ment he will strike out of the decalogue:  
 Which will be *that*, certainly, to the ob-  
 servance of which, he is the most averse;  
*that* which the most thwarts his own par-  
 ticular turn and temper and inclination.  
 For

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For example, one man has a strong and peculiar disposition to swearing and blasphemy; to the *taking of God's name in vain*: before *him*, the *third* commandment, certainly, falls a sacrifice. Another is peculiarly addicted to cozening and stealing: *He* strikes out the command which forbids this. Another has a peculiar disposition to bely, and slander his neighbours: *He* will be at no loss what commandment is most grievous to him. Another has a particular pique against the *seventh* commandment; because he cannot endure to be under such a restraint, with respect to his neighbours wives and daughters, as *that* lays him under. Another is very cholerick; and could often taste the sweets of bloody revenge, were it not said, *Thou shalt not kill*: With *Him*, the *sixth* commandment will find *no quarter*: And so on—Every man will make a sacrifice of that commandment; of that particular precept or prohibition, which stands most in the way of his gratifying his favourite, master-passion; of that which would keep him from *his own iniquity*; from *the sin that doth so easily beset him*. Well; God is so gracious as to dispense with the observation of *one* of his commandments, thus far, that the habitual transgressor of it, shall not be subjected

SERM. subjected to condemnation ; but obtain  
 X. eternal life, thro' the merits of Christ,  
 provided this habitual sinner *piously* and  
*conscientiously* observes all the other com-  
 mandments : This being the case, I say,  
 it follows, that every man may give full  
 scope to himself, as to that particular lust  
 or sin, which his heart is most set upon.  
 And he will doubtless esteem this a great  
 and blessed *privilege*, which he enjoys by  
 the Gospel ; and *improve it* accordingly.

IT is farther to be observed, that there  
 is no *one* great, cardinal vice or impiety,  
 to which one man or another is not more  
 inclined, than to any other : And every  
 person, by the present supposition, being  
 permitted to practice that *one* sin, which  
 suits his humour and taste the best ; it  
 plainly follows, that *all* sins are permitted ;  
 not, indeed, all to one and the same man,  
 but one to one man, and another to ano-  
 ther. No one must be so selfish as to en-  
 gross and monopolize all kinds of sin :  
 But yet all men may take them all, and  
 share them amongst themselves : And yet  
 no man give up his hopes of salvation !

Now let me ask any man in his senses,  
 Whether this is not to give all manner of  
 wickedness and impiety a *free course*, that  
 they may *run* and be *glorified* in the world ?  
 Is not this, in effect, to open the gates of  
 the

SERM.

X.

the bottomless pit, for a monstrous, *hellish* swarm of vices to issue out, and overspread the face of the earth ; like the *locusts* which St. *John* saw in his vision, coming up from thence ! How wretched and miserable ? how much like hell, must this world be, if every man might habitually break *one* commandment with impunity ? if one man might cheat or rob ; another perjure himself ; another blaspheme his maker ; another commit adultery ; another, murder ; and so on ? Does not the present supposition tend to deluge the earth with a flood of wickedness and violence. For since men are not generally much set upon the practice of more sins than *one* ; and since, upon the present supposition, every man may indulge himself to the full, in *one* ; there is manifestly but little difference betwixt giving men a licence to indulge themselves in that particular *sin*, which they are the most inclined to ; and giving them the same licence with respect to all others. However different the two suppositions may appear at first view, they come very near to the same thing at last : So that you had almost as good take off all the restraints and obligations of religion from men's minds, at once ; and tell them they might be saved, altho' they habitually violated

all

SERM. *all* the commandments ; as take off that  
 X. obligation in *one* respect, by telling them,  
 they may be saved altho' they persevere  
 in the breaking of *one* commandment. Is  
 not such an indulgence as I am speaking  
 of, absolutely repugnant to the wisdom  
 and holiness of God ?—that God, who is  
 of *purser eyes than to behold iniquity* ? It is  
 certainly repugnant to all sober, rational  
 conceptions of God, and of a moral go-  
 vernment, to imagine that He gives men  
 any such dispensation for sinning, tho' but  
 in *one* point ; or that he will have mercy  
 upon those who thus offend. Nor is this  
 less contrary to the exprefs declarations of  
 the gospel, than it is to sober reason.—  
 But, as was said before, this supposition  
 itself, that men may possibly obey *all* the  
 commandments of God, sincerely and pi-  
 ously, as christians ought to do ; and yet  
 presumptuously persevere in any knowin  
 sin, is a contradiction. There is no true  
 and hearty obedience to *any* of God's com-  
 mandments ; there is no truly pious and  
 holy principle in the heart of a man, un-  
 less *all* the commandments are regarded.  
 Piety and virtue, or evangelical holiness,  
 is a *uniform* character. No man can be  
 habitually pious in some respects, and yet  
 habitually impious in others : No man can  
 truly love virtue, as such, in some in-  
 stances,

SERM.

X.

stances, without loving it in all. He may, indeed, do many pious and virtuous actions, if you consider them externally; and view only the surfaces of things: But *God looketh at the heart*; and while *that* remains rebellious to *one* commandment, God accounts the transgressor, as he really is, in some sense, *guilty of all*.

UPON the whole: A truly good man presumes not to say in his heart, "*These* commandments will I keep, because I can do so, without much trouble or inconvenience to myself; but *that* other I will disobey, because it is irksome to flesh and blood; and requires great self-denial." This is evidently the language of stubbornness and rebellion; 'tis the language of an heart unsubdued to the authority of God; an heart unanimated with love and gratitude to Christ; an heart un sanctified by the Holy Spirit; and therefore *unsealed to the day of redemption*. The language of a truly good man's heart, is this,—“O my God! O my Redeemer, and Saviour! I am not mine own, but bought with a price: Therefore will I be *wholly* thine; I will glorify God in my body and in my spirit which are his; I will do nothing which thou hast forbidden; I will renounce every lust however dear: I will, by thy grace and assistance, *walk in all thy*  
com-

SERM. *commandments and ordinances blameless.*—

X

He that has not such a principle of universal, unreserved submission to the will of God and his Redeemer, rooted in his heart; has *none* that is *truly christian*: But he is still *alienated from the life of God thro' the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart.*

HAVING thus shown, That christian piety and virtue is a uniform, universal principle in the heart, extending itself to *all* the precepts of the gospel; so that whosoever truly obeys in one instance does so in all instances; and whosoever disobeys habitually in one respect, is, in a sense, *guilty* of all; I proceed now to give a more particular description of this obedience, as it is found in *the heirs of salvation.*

IT appears from what has been said above, that christian obedience is partly internal, partly external. It begins in the *heart*, in faith, or a principle of real piety and virtue seated *there*. Thence it diffuses itself into the actions and lives of men, regulating and animating all their outward deportment. Those who are really the subjects of christian piety, or evangelical holiness, are the same men *within*, that they are *without*, or in appearance. If you could look into the breast of a good man you would there see that, which corresponds

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responds and answers to his outward behaviour; the latter being only a resemblance and copy of the former; tho' one attends the other as certainly and invariably as the shadow does the substance, there being an inseparable connexion betwixt them. So that, on one hand, He is certainly no christian, all whose religion is within, not exerting itself in a good external behaviour: And, on the other hand, He is no christian, all whose religion is external, having nothing which corresponds thereto in his own heart and breast. The one has neither the *power* nor the *form* of godliness: The other, tho' he has the form, yet he denies the power thereof; being like those, whom our Saviour compares to "*whited sepulchres*, which indeed appear beautiful *outwards*, but are *within* full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."

AGAIN: As the precepts of the gospel may be distributed under the two heads of *negative* and *positive*; *i. e.* commands prohibiting the doing of some things, and injoining the doing of others; christian obedience may be distributed into *negative* and *positive*, likewise; so as to correspond to these different kinds of precepts. The true disciple of Christ accounts himself obliged, not only to abstain from what his

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Lord has forbidden, but to do those things which he has required. Accordingly he avoids with care, all those paths which he is admonished not to walk in; and conscientiously performs the duties which are enjoined upon him. He knows that in the judgment of the great day, according to our Saviour's own representation of it, men will be condemned, not only for committing those crimes which the gospel has forbidden, but also for omitting those duties which it has required us to practice. He is therefore cautious, on one hand, lest he should trespass against any of the negative commandments; and careful on the other, to fulfill all the duties and obligations lying upon him.

THIS leads me to observe, that christian obedience respects both the *moral*s of the gospel, and the *positive institutions* of it. A true disciple of Christ esteems himself bound to conform to the *instituted* worship, and the *ritual* or *ceremonial* part of Christ's religion, as well as to that part of it which we distinguish therefrom, by the name of *moral*. With him, every thing is an essential branch of duty and obedience, which Christ's laws have actually and plainly enjoined, by whatever name it is called, whether morality, or positive institution. Indeed the *obligation* is, in a sense moral, altho'

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altho' the duty, considered in itself, may not be so. For certainly we are under a moral obligation to comply with the *whole* will of God and our Redeemer, in what way soever it is made known to us ; whether by the light of nature, or by revelation and positive command. I do not, indeed, assert that a christian lays an *equal* stress upon every thing which Christ has commanded. There were some *weightier matters* of the law, of old : There are also some *weightier matters* of the gospel now : And our Saviour and his apostles, have evidently made this distinction. However, a sincere christian does not think any of his Lord's commandments of so little importance, that they need not be obeyed. There is, in short, no *trifle* in our religion, unless you will say, that the Author of it was a *Trifler* !—All the real duties of it are solemn, weighty and important, in their respective places ; and all stamped with a divine authority. The whole system of christian duties, or of christianity reduced to life and practice, is like a goodly *fabrick*, arising into uniformity, proportion and beauty, by a correspondence and due adjustment of the various parts. A skilful *Architect* will omit nothing which might contribute to the regularity, the strength and beauty of

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the whole *pile*, merely because it is not a main *pillar* in the building, nor a part of the *foundation*. Neither will a wise and good man neglect any one duty, under the vain pretence, that it is not a *fundamental* one ; or that his spiritual *edifice* will stand strong enough without it. And those who excuse themselves from known, plain duties, under this hypocritical pretext, will find that they have not *built their house upon a rock*, but only upon the *sand* ; and *great* will be the *fall thereof*.

BUT I must be a little more particular still, in this account of the christian temper and character, as it respects God, our Saviour, our neighbour, our selves.

THE sincere Christian has an undissembled love and veneration for God, as the best and greatest, and most glorious of Beings. He heartily respects and honors Him ; is thankful for His mercies ; trusts and hopes in Him ; and prizes His favour above all things. Hence it is to him as his meat and his drink to do the will of his Father, who is in heaven. He is patient under adversity, as being sent or permitted by Him for wise and good ends. In prosperity, he confides not in the uncertain things of this world ; *but in the living God, who giveth him all things richly to enjoy*. He is truly grateful to Him,

Him, as the original author and bestow-  
 er of every thing good and desirable,  
 whether pertaining to life or godliness.  
 He is heartily sorry and penitent for his  
 sins ; confessing them, from time to time,  
 with humility and a contrite heart ; pray-  
 ing for the forgiveness of them, in the  
 spirit of the *Publican* ; and imploring the  
 divine assistance, that he may walk more  
 as becomes a child of God for the future,  
 and be kept by his power thro' faith unto sal-  
 vation. To which end, he does not only  
 pray, but also watch ; and is diligent in  
 the improvement of all the means which  
 God has appointed, in order thereto ;  
 thinking it great presumption and impiety  
 to trust in God for salvation, in any other  
 way than that which He has ordained.

THE true disciple of Christ, loves *Him*  
 also in sincerity ; and heartily esteems and  
 honors him, as being the *image of the in-  
 visible God, the brightness of his glory, the  
 express image of his person.* He considers  
 him as the great Ambassador and Prince  
 of peace, whom God sent into this apos-  
 tate, guilty world, to save sinners ; to save  
 that which was lost. This he accounts  
 a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance ;  
 as good tidings of great joy to all people. He  
 loves and honors this great Minister of  
 heaven, as One who has shown the most  
 amazing

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amazing kindness and condescension to guilty men, in becoming incarnate; in undergoing poverty and reproach, and *enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself*; in pouring out his soul unto death, and *bearing our sins in his own body on the tree*. The true disciple of Christ cannot think of these things, without being filled with pleasing admiration, with holy gratitude, love and joy. And having a fixed belief of their truth, and a thorough sense of them upon his heart, he accordingly reposes his trust in Christ for salvation, in subordination to the Father, who sent him on this gracious errand. He willingly resigns himself into the hands of his great Redeemer, in full confidence that he is *able to save them unto the uttermost, who come unto God by him*; and that he is faithful to *keep that which is committed to him*. And knowing that God has exalted him, that he might be a *Prince*, as well as a *Saviour*, he considers him as his Lord and Sovereign, whom he is bound to obey; and accordingly submits to be governed by his laws. Without this he knows that Christ can profit him nothing. However this is not the only motive of his obedience: Love and gratitude to One, who has laid him under such mighty obligations, are a strong incentive thereto; and he is sensible

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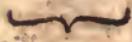
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ble he can never *live* enough to *Him*, who has *died* for him. From these and such-like considerations, the sincere Christian cheerfully conforms himself to the commandments of his Redeemer ; often calling to mind the time when the heavens which have received him, shall again reveal him with his mighty angels, in the glory of the Father ; to be *admired in all them that believe* ; and to render to the irreclaimable workers of iniquity, according to their doings : The contemplation of which final scene, and great decisive day, when the *mystery of God shall be finished*, fills him with sacred awe, mixed with holy hope and joy ; all conspiring to make him diligent that he may be found of his Judge in peace, *without spot and blameless*.

CHRISTIAN obedience may also be considered with particular reference to our fellow-men. A christian looks upon all men as his *brethren* by nature ; as the offspring of the same God, the common Father of all. He accordingly bears a hearty good will and benevolence to all ; especially when he reflects, that Christ so loved them, as to *give his life a ransom for all*. This extensive charity makes him bear a part both in the joys and sorrows of others : He is not an indifferent, uncon-

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cerned spectator of the woes and calamities that befall his fellow-mortals ; or like the rock on the sea-shore, which proudly looks down on the shipwreck at its foot, without a groan, or sympathizing tear. No ! He feels for all ; *weeping with them that weep, and rejoicing with them that do rejoice.* As he has opportunity, he *does good to all men ;* but *especially to them that are of the household of faith.* He is sincerely desirous of acting such a part upon the stage of life, as may render him serviceable to the world, whatever station providence has assigned him ; — serviceable, more particularly, to those, with whom he has any special connexion or intercourse. He therefore proceeds, according to his capacity, in all the transactions of civil and social life, by the rules of justice, charity and prudence. Is he a civil ruler ? The apostle's description is exemplified in him ; — *He is the minister of God for good ; a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well.* Is he a private subject ? He is a quiet and peaceable one ; being *subject for conscience sake, and giving honor, to whom honor is due ; fear, to whom fear ; tribute, to whom tribute.* Is he a parent ? He is a kind and tender one ; and endeavours to promote both the present and future welfare of his offspring. Is he

a child? He *honors his parents in the Lord*, knowing that this is right. Is he a master? He is a just and reasonable one, remembering that he also has a *master in heaven*. Is he a servant? He is faithful and diligent, with good will doing service; knowing that *what good thing soever a man doth, the same he shall receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free*. The true christian is just to all men, *rendering to all their dues*: He is obliging to his friends, grateful to his benefactors, placable to his enemies, compassionate to the poor and afflicted, sincere in his promises, faithful in the performance; more disposed to cover, with the mantle of charity, the faults and follies of his neighbours, than wantonly to expose them. He does not judge, and condemn, and set at naught his brother, merely because he is of a different persuasion in religious matters; this common practice being as contrary to the spirit and genius, and to the express precepts of the gospel, as either *drunkenness or stealing, adultery or profane swearing*. In fine here; the real Christian loves his neighbour as himself; and from this principle, does unto all men *whatsoever he would that they should do unto him*. By this grand, comprehensive maxim, he regulates all his social behaviour; even in those cases where express, positive

precepts

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SERM. precepts are wanting, as well as those  
 X. where they take place.

LASTLY: Christian obedience may be considered with relation to a man's self. And if we consider it in this light, the true disciple of Christ keeps under his body, and brings it into subjection: Or in the language of St. Paul in another place, He, thro' the spirit, mortifies the deeds of the body. The rational and spiritual part in him ( which is king by divine right, in the œconomy and constitution of man ) bears sway over animal nature, restraining the subject-passions, and giving law to them. No sin reigns in his mortal body, so that he obeys it in the lusts thereof. He is neither a gluttonous man, nor a wine-bibber, nor an unclean person; but is sober and temperate in all things, as one that strives for the mastery. He possesseth his body in sanctification and honor †, as the temple of the Holy Ghost ‡, and the habitation of God thro' the Spirit\*.

† 1 Thes. 4.

‡ 1 Cor. 6. 19

\* Eph. 2. 22

THUS I have considered the extent of evangelical obedience; and given you a short description of it, as it is found in the hearts and lives of good men. It is, indeed, only the out-lines, and some of the most strong and distinguishing features of the new man, which I have drawn: There is not time to fill up and finish the picture.

Some

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Some persons would, probably, have been better pleased, if I had talked more of high *flights*, and *raptures*, and *extasies*, and less about the *morality* of the christian character. But such things, in this kind of painting, I must confess, appear to me to be no better than vain *ornaments*, and *flourishes*, and a gaudy *drapery*; which rather obscure, than heighten and improve, the beauties of a piece. The christian character is so amiable in itself, without any thing of this sort, that it stands in no need thereof to recommend it to those, who have a true and just *taste*. It is not every christian that is caught up with Saint Paul, into the *third heaven*, and hears *unspeakable words*, and has a *multitude of revelations* given to him: And many that only *fancy* this is the case with them, are *lifted up above measure*; thinking themselves so *spiritual*, that they have no need to be *moral*. In short, to speak of things of this nature, I mean of these flights and raptures, as common to sincere christians, and the evidences of a good estate, (as many do) has a direct tendency to mislead and beguile people; but none at all, to edify them, or make them *wise to salvation*. For which reason I have chosen to confine myself within the limits of strict, sober truth, in speaking upon this important point.

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point. Nor can I think that any man has a right, according to the doctrine of the gospel, to look upon himself as a favourite of heaven, and an heir of the promises, the temper of whose mind, and whose outward behaviour, does not in general correspond to the account given above. Indeed that kingdom of God which is *within* us, consisting in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, is, in some respects, like His external and visible kingdom: It is, as a *grain of mustard seed*, (which is the *least* of all) when it first takes root in the heart: but it afterwards becometh a *tree*, shooting its branches to heaven; and, being watered with the dew thereof, and warmed by the influences of Him, who is a *Sun* as well as *Shield*, it beareth more than *twelve manner of fruit*, grateful to God and man. Hence it comes to pass, that all truly good men may not be able to see, with equal clearness, the evidence of their being such; because this must depend, in a great measure, upon the progress they have made in goodness and holiness. However the *new-born babe*, as well as the full-grown *man*, in *Christ Jesus*, has all the features and members of a *child* of God: Tho' I have been speaking of the christian temper and character in general, without descending to any

any such niceties ; which seem to be un-  
profitable, and therefore needless.

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I HAVE been laying before you, my Brethren, that *law of liberty*, which is the rule of your obedience, and by which you are to be judged hereafter : I have been holding up to you that sacred mirror, which I mentioned to you in the beginning of this discourse, in order to your seeing and knowing yourselves. Have you looked into it ; and beheld the true features and complexion of your souls ? your moral and religious characters ? If you have, suffer me to be so officious as to ask you, *What manner of men you are ?* Do you find the christian temper within you, so that you can reasonably look upon yourselves as being in a state of favour with God ; and rejoice in hope of His glory ? Do your consciences bear you witness, that your hearts are upright towards God ? and that you come up to the character of those who are *doers of the word* ? to the character of Christ's faithful disciples ? Has the gospel had its proper influence upon your hearts, so that you do not only *seem* to be religious, but are really and *internally* so ? Do you perform the various *duties* required of you, as well as abstain from those *sins* which God has forbidden ? Do you pay a due regard both

to

**SERM.** to the *moral* and the *instituted* part of christianity ; walking in all the ordinances and commandments of the gospel ?—those which you yourselves cannot but acknowledge to be such ; and obligatory upon you ? Do you love God above all things, esteeming his *favour as life*, and his *loving-kindness as better than life* ? Is your treasure and your heart in heaven, *whither the fore-runner is for us entered, even Jesus* ? Do you sincerely love and honor your Redeemer ? Do you love your neighbour as your selves ? Are you just to all men ? forgiving ? kind ? charitable according to your own capacity, and the necessities of others ? Do you honor your superiors ? Are you condescending to your inferiours ? Do you rejoice in the prosperity, and mourn in the adversity, of others ? Do you observe all the known laws of sobriety and temperance, *mortifying your members which are upon the earth* ? cherishing and cultivating your rational, intellectual part, and *walking in the spirit* ? In fine, are your wills subdued to the divine authority ; so that you make the known laws of the gospel the rule of your conduct in every respect ?—“As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God !”—\*

If you can answer these important questions



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questions in the affirmative, you have no reason to doubt but that you are the children of God ; *and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away*—If you cannot ; you have certainly no ground to think yourselves Christ's true disciples, such as he will own hereafter, when he shall be revealed from heaven. If there is any one known commandment which you habitually violate, you have *no lot nor portion in this matter*. And if any should think such doctrine as this, *harsh and severe* ; and that, according hereto, by far the greater part of the christian world must be condemned ; I shall only answer, that you are not to blame *me* for this : I had *no hand in making* the terms, upon which God offers eternal life to his sinful creatures : I was not his *counsellor* ; but only *declare* to you, as plainly as I can, what these terms *really are*—

BUT however rigorous this doctrine may seem to men that are wedded to this world ; that are immersed in sensuality and vice, instead of being purified in the fountain opened to wash in, therefrom ; I doubt not, but some of my hearers judge otherwise ; and can truly say, that both their inward temper, and external conduct, correspond

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correspond to the representation given above, of evangelical obedience. Happy, thrice happy, are all such ! They may be assured, that their *transgressions are forgiven*, and their *sins covered* ; that they are *justified from all things* ; that there is *no condemnation belonging to them* ; that they are the friends of the great, the eternal God ; that they are intitled to his favour in life, in death, thro'out eternity ; and that when He, who once died for them, and unto whom they now live by faith, shall *appear the second time without sin*, they shall also *appear with him in glory* ! “ For he is faithful that promised. ”—

THERE are, probably, other Persons, who are in doubt whether they come up to the character of christians, or not. And it is certainly incumbent upon all such, to be impartial in the examination of their own hearts ; and to grow *better*, than they are at present, that so these doubts may be removed. Possibly they may be truly good and pious, notwithstanding their suspicions concerning themselves : It is also possible that their suspicions are but *too well* grounded ; and that they are, at least, as bad as they fear they are. (But be their real state and character what it will, it will certainly be no *disadvantage* to them, to endeavour to *know* what

what it is ; and to *make their calling and election sure*. To be in *doubt*, in so interesting and important a point, must needs occasion great *disquietude* in the breast of every good man ; but it may be of *fatal* consequence for the vicious to come to a *wrong* determination as to themselves : And this is what they are in danger of, by reason of that partiality, which is so natural to us all ; and to which vicious men are peculiarly subject.

BUT notwithstanding self-condemnation is so irksome and disagreeable ; yet it is to be feared that some cannot avoid it ; the conviction of their wickedness being too full and strong upon their minds to be resisted, or evaded. Would to God there were none, whose whole temper and character in general, is so directly and flagrantly the reverse of the christian, as absolutely to take away from them the power of *doubting* in the present case ! Can he who neither *fears God, nor regards man* ? Can the profane swearer and blasphemer ? Can the thief ? Can the liar ? Can the reviler of his brethren ? Can the drunkard ? the adulterer ? the whoremonger ?—Can a person who knows that *either* of these characters belongs to him, make it a *question*, whether he is a christian, or not ! whether he is intitled to the great and precious

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precious promises of the gospel ! whether he is a son and heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ, to the heavenly inheritance ! No : it is impossible, if he *looks into the perfect law of liberty*; and into his own heart, at the same time : He will find his *sin written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond, and graven upon the table of his heart.* † He must know, that he is not of God ; but *of his father the devil, whose lusts he does.* ‡ I will not, indeed, presume to say, that there are any persons of such a flagitious character in *this assembly* : ( For I would not bring a railing accusation even against the *devil*, tho' I were contending with him, as *Michael* did, about the *body of Moses* ; § much less would I bring such an accusation against my *brethren* : ) However, One may venture to say, without giving just cause of offence, that there is seldom such a number of people together, in any part of *Christendom*, where there are not more than *one, or two, or ten* persons, to whom no better a character belongs—What the natural presumption is, therefore, in the present state of the world, You are as able to judge as I——The matter is referred, as in the presence of *Him*, who is *acquainted with all our ways*, to every man's own breast and conscience.

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ALL revealed religion is an *appeal* to the reason and consciences of men ; to the law originally written, by the finger of God, upon the fleshy tables of our hearts. Christianity, the *word* which you hear, and ought to *receive with meekness*, is a *slip* or *cyon* brought from heaven to earth, to be *ingrafted* upon the *natural, wild olive-tree* ; that so you might *bring forth fruit unto God*. But if you will perversely tear out this *cyon* ; if you will not suffer it to grow ; if you will not give in to the dictates of your own hearts and consciences, but will thwart and contradict them, (as people often do) what remedy can be found !—*Tho' one arose from the dead*, you would not give heed to him !—Let every one who hears me, be admonished, therefore, not to reject *Moses* and the *Prophets*, *Christ* and the *apostles*. I warn you, in the name of that God, who has given you your reason and moral sense of things, to *reverence your selves* ; and not to put your reason and conscience to silence, as you value the *salvation* of your souls. O Man ! *God is greater than thy heart, and knoweth all things*. Thinkest thou, then, that thou shalt escape his *righteous judgment*, when thou condemnest thyself ; and canst not avoid doing so ? I will not appeal even unto *Cæsar*, in this interesting cause ; but

SERM. to yourselves. Under a perfectly right and  
 X. good administration of things, all depends  
 upon a right *temper* of mind ; upon honesty  
 and uprightnes of soul. Therefore if  
 thou hast not this *temper*, thy soul is lost !  
 Heaven is shut against thee, whosoever  
 thou art, that persistest in rebellion against  
 thy God, thy Redeemer, thyself. Turn then,  
 at God's reproof ; at thy Saviour's reproof ;  
 at thine own *reproof* ; at the reproof of thine  
*own conscience* ; for to this I make my ap-  
*peal*. Do you not know that you are *sin-*  
*ners* ? Fly, then, for refuge to lay hold upon  
 the hope set before you ; that so you may  
 have that *strong consolation*, which results  
 from the gospel, to them that hold both  
 faith and a good conscience, instead of holding  
 the truth in unrighteousness. And Behold !  
 that God, whose righteous laws you have  
 so often broken, is gracious and merciful ;  
 not willing that you should perish. If you  
 humbly confess and forsake your sins, He  
 will forgive your sins, and cleanse you  
 from all unrighteousness, even in the foun-  
 tain that was opened, by the Roman spear,  
 in thy Redeemer's side : For the blood of  
 Christ cleanseth from all sin. Behold ! He  
 who once bare your sins in his own body  
 on the tree, and is since " passed into the  
 heavens, Jesus the Son of God, " is a mer-  
 ciful and faithful high priest, in things per-  
 taining

taining to God ; and those that come un-  
 to him, he will in no wise cast out. Be-  
 hold ! that blessed *Spirit of promise*, of dis-  
 cipline and comfort, which you have so  
 often grieved and quenched, and driven  
 away from you, is ready to return, to rest  
 upon you, to take up his abode in your  
 hearts ; and to *seal you to the day of redemp-*  
*tion*. Behold ! “ there is joy in heaven o-  
 ver one sinner that repenteth ! ” — But if  
 neither the severity of the law, nor the  
 grace of the gospel ; if neither the fear of  
 hell, nor the hopes of heaven ; if neither  
 the terrors of divine and merited wrath,  
 nor the endearments of divine unmerited  
 love ; if neither of these things, nor all of  
 them in conjunction, can bring down, can  
 soften and dissolve thy stony heart ; if  
 thou art thus abandoned, thus irreclaim-  
 able ; if thou hadst rather cause exultation  
 and triumph in hell, amongst the angels  
 of darkness, than rejoicing in heaven, a-  
 amongst the angels of light ; take then,  
 thine own course, and see what the end  
 of these things will be — “ the end of them,  
 who obey not the gospel of God. ” \* In  
 vain do you hope for mercy upon other  
 terms than those, which the God of mercy  
 and of truth has marked out to you : In  
 vain has He manifested so much love and  
 compassion to you : In vain has He given

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 X.

\* 1 Peter 4.  
 17.

SERM. his own dear Son to be the Saviour of the  
 X. world: In vain was a *body prepared* for him,  
 in the divine counsel, before the founda-  
 tions of the world were laid: In vain was  
 he made manifest in the flesh, in the *ful-  
 ness* of time: In vain was *that* body  
 hung, and broken, and pierced on the  
 cross, the sun, in the mean time, hiding  
 his face, the veil of the temple being rent  
 in twain, the earth quaking, the rocks  
 rending, the graves opening, the dead  
 arising: \* In vain was “the blood of the  
 everlasting covenant” poured out for  
 you: In vain has God raised his Son from  
 the dead, and given him glory, that he  
 might be a Prince and a Saviour: In vain  
 is the forgiveness of sins that are past, thro’  
 the forbearance of God, preached to you  
 in his name: In vain is all this done, if  
 you will not accept of eternal life, upon  
 those gracious terms on which the gospel  
 offers it to you: And if you believe it can  
 be obtained upon any other, than those of  
 being doers of the word, you *deceive your-  
 selves*, and YOUR FAITH IS ALSO  
 VAIN! Remember that divine admonition,  
 —“Because I have called, and ye refused,  
 “I have stretched out my hand, and no  
 “man regarded: But ye have set at  
 “nought all my counsel, and would none  
 “of my reproof; I also will laugh at your  
 “calamity,

\* Luke 23.

44.

Math. 27.

31, 52.

“ calamity, I will mock when your fear  
“ cometh ; when your fear cometh as  
“ desolation, and your destruction cometh  
“ as a whirlwind ; when distress and an-  
“ guish cometh upon you. Then shall  
“ they call upon me, but I will not an-  
“ swer ; they shall seek me early, but they  
“ shall not find me : For that they hated  
“ knowledge, and did not choose the  
“ fear of the Lord.—Therefore shall they  
“ eat of the fruit of their own way, and  
“ be filled with their own devices.” §

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§ Pro. i.  
24—31.



S E R M O N XI.

On the Deceitfulness of the Heart,  
and GOD's perfect Knowledge  
thereof.

JEREMIAH XVII. 9, 10.

*THE heart is deceitful above all things, and  
desperately wicked; who can know it?*

*I THE LORD search the heart, I try  
the reins, even to give every man accord-  
ing to his ways, and according to the fruit  
of his doings.*

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**T**HERE are three things to be con-  
sidered in the subject before us:

FIRST, What is implied in this asser-  
tion, That *the heart is deceitful above all  
things, and desperately wicked*; so that it is  
extremely difficult, if not impossible, ex-  
actly to *know it*?

SECONDLY, What is to be understood  
by God's *searching the heart, and trying the  
reins.*

THIRDLY,

THIRDLY, The end hereof, *namely*, SERM.  
XI.  
That He may give *every man according to his ways, and according to' the fruit of his doings.* }

THESE things comprehend the whole subject, which is to employ our thoughts at this time: And, being considered, they will lead us to some practical reflections of the most important and interesting nature.

FIRST, Let us consider, what is implied in this assertion, That *the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*; so that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, exactly to *know it*.

THE *heart* of man, in the moral, scriptural and theological sense, intends the mind, or soul; that living, active principle within us, which thinks, chooses, determines; and which is, properly speaking, the agent in all we do, whether good or bad, the body being only its instrument; intirely passive, and therefore not, in strict propriety, the subject of any moral or religious qualities whatever. So that to say the hearts of men are deceitful and wicked, and to say that *men* are so themselves, amounts to the same thing at last. And accordingly, in common discourse, when we speak of a wicked and good, a deceitful and honest heart, ascribing

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ascribing one to one man, and the other to another; we intend hereby to distinguish betwixt the real characters of men, considered in a religious or moral view; and to give to them respectively, that which belongs to them: This is what we design, in this manner of speaking, however unjustifiable it may be, to make so free with our neighbours characters, as we often do.

FROM the foregoing observation, it is evident that when it is said, that *the heart is deceitful, &c.* it cannot be intended, that the hearts of all men are so: For this would be, in effect, to say that all men are *deceitful* above all things, and *desperately wicked*. To say which, in absolute terms, and without limitation, would in fact be, to take away that distinction which we always make betwixt the characters of men, saying that these are upright and good, but those false and wicked: Which distinction betwixt men, is also constantly supposed, taken for granted, and asserted, in the holy scriptures. Can he be a good and upright man, whose heart is *deceitful* above all things, and *desperately wicked*! If he can, he must be such a kind of good man, as neither scripture, nor common sense, knows any thing of: So far from it, that in the language of scripture and common sense, to say that

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that a person's heart, is thus *deceitful*, thus *desperately* wicked, is to characterize him as a bad man, directly the reverse of him, whom the scripture styles good and upright. We must therefore, either totally confound all characters, asserting that there are no sincere good man, or else we must acknowledge that these words in the prophet, are spoken of the hearts of the wicked, exclusively of others. For it is absolutely impossible to show, who is the good man in distinction from the wicked, or who the wicked man, in distinction from the good, if it is common to all men to have hearts that are so *deceitful* and *wicked*. You can say nothing worse of the worst men, than you actually say of the best, if you apply this to all men in general: So that either your distinction betwixt good men and bad, must be vain and groundless; or else you wrest and pervert the sense of scripture, when you apply this worst of characters to all men without exception. However, it is not designed in what is here said, to intimate that the hearts of any men are perfectly upright and good. There is doubtless a degree of deceitfulness and wickedness in the hearts of the best. But the scripture does not, by any means, authorize us to speak in such strong, general terms, as these

SERM. these in the text, concerning the hearts of  
 XI. those, whom our Saviour himself distinguishes from others, by saying, that they,  
 *Luke 8.* have an *honest and good heart.* \* Certainly  
 15. no one man's heart can be both *honest and good*, and *deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.* To say both these things of the same persons, at the same time, would be as palpable a contradiction as can be named. Were a man to tell me, that my heart was "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," however true this might be, I should think he called me nothing better than a *Knave* or a *Villain*: And all those who acknowledge this of their *own* hearts, do, in reality, acknowledge that the same character belongs to themselves; tho' I am perswaded that many, who express themselves in this manner, neither deserve such a character, nor would be willing to take it upon them: As to some others, I will not be confident.—

WHEN it is said in the text, that the heart is deceitful, &c. it is evident that the prophet had the *Jews* more especially in his eye, whose general, national character at this time, was that of a profligate, abandoned people, in the common gross sense; in contradistinction from a pious and virtuous people: Such they are represented to be, in this very chapter; and particularly

larly in the first verse of it—"The sin of SERM.  
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 " *Judah* is written with a pen of iron, and  
 " with the point of a diamond; it is gra-  
 " ven upon the table of their hearts, and  
 " upon the horns of your altars." It might  
 well be said of such a people, in general,  
 that their *hearts were deceitful above all*  
*things, and desperately wicked*; tho' there  
 were, doubtless, *some men of an honest and*  
*good heart* among them, even at this very  
 time. It is evident, therefore, from the  
 context, from the common use of words,  
 and from the real distinction which there  
 is betwixt characters, (which distinction  
 is constantly supposed and asserted in scrip-  
 ture) that what is here said of the heart, is  
 not to be refered to the hearts of all men  
 without distinction. This can no more  
 be supposed, than it can, that when our Sa-  
 viour says, "Out of the *heart* proceed evil  
 " thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornicati-  
 " ons, thefts, false-witness, blasphemies;" § *Mat. 15.*  
 he intends to represent all men in com-  
 mon, as being murderers, adulterers, forni-  
 cators, thieves, false-swearers, and blas-  
 phemers! Which certainly he did not in-  
 tend, since none, to whom either of these  
 characters belongs, "shall inherit the  
 " kingdom of God." \* Indeed, as was  
 said before, the best men are not perfectly  
 free from all deceit and wickedness: But  
 still,

§ *Mat. 15.*  
19.

\* *1 Cor. 6.*  
9.

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still, to be deceitful and wicked is not their general, predominant character ; but the very *reverse* of it, viz. to be sincere, upright and good. \*

It is to be farther observed, That when the heart is said to be deceitful, the primary and most direct meaning, probably, is, that it is deceitful with regard to other persons ; so that they cannot know it perfectly, nor safely repose an intire, absolute confidence in a man, however just he may appear to be : A man may be deceitful and hypocritical in all his pretences to virtue and religion ; in all his promises ; and sadly disappoint those who put their trust in him—This sense seems naturally suggested by the verses immediately preceding—“ Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm ;”

“ and

\* It would not be much to the purpose, to object to what is said above, the account which St. Paul gives, Rom. 3d. of the universal wickedness of mankind ; as where he says, “ There is none righteous, no not one,” &c. Because it is manifest, that St. Paul here means, *righteous* in the strict, *legal* sense : It being his aim, in this passage, to prove, That *all the world is become guilty before God*, in such a sense, that *by the deeds of the law, no flesh shall be justified* : And so to show the necessity of evangelical *grace* and *mercy*, in order to justification. The apostle intends, that there is no man *wholly* without sin : Or as it is expressed, Eccles. 7. 20. That “ there is not a just man upon earth, that doth good, and sinneth not.” Which, surely, is a very different thing from saying, that the heart of the holiest man on earth is “ deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”

“ and whose heart departeth from the Lord,” &c. Why? Because *the heart is deceitful*; and God alone, who is true and faithful, can be fully and intirely confided in. This seems to be the primary, and most obvious meaning of the passage. However, since every man who is deceitful with reference to his neighbour, is also, in some sense, deceitful and false to himself; and since the scripture notion of hypocrisy, evidently includes both these species of dishonesty; and (I may add) since the words of the prophet are so general, that they may well enough comprehend both; I shall take the liberty to suppose, that both may be actually intended here. And accordingly we may consider the deceitfulness of the heart in a twofold light; first, with reference to *others*; and then, with reference to a man's *self*.

1<sup>st</sup>. WITH reference to *others*. There is scarce a man, however destitute of virtue, religion, and honor, who does not, at times, put on some shew and profession of them: And this is often, tho' not always done, with a fix'd, formal intention to deceive others into a good opinion of him; that so he may carry his worldly designs and projects into execution more effectually than he could, without the

con-

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SERM. conveniency of a mask. Masks are not  
 XI. only used in *kings courts*, where great men  
 are gorgeously apparalled, and walk in *slip-  
 pery places* ; they are also worn in *cottages*,  
 by the ignoble *vulgar*. And they are put  
 on by both, for the same end in general ;  
 which is, that the Wearer may accomplish  
 some sinister, dishonest purpose, which  
 he could not accomplish so well without.  
 Those who pretend to a public spirit, to  
 a patriotic principle of conduct, are not  
 always the men they would be tho't to be.  
 No ! They are sometimes as void of true  
 honor, integrity, and love to their coun-  
 try, as the meanest sycophant and court-  
 parasite. The mask will, perhaps, drop  
 off in a little while ; and you will see  
 these raving patriots become as arrant  
 parasites, as those, against whom they  
 raved ; bartering all their pretended ho-  
 nor, and public spirit, for the *wages of  
 unrighteousness*, or only a *title*. But de-  
 scend from these heights, to the inferior  
 ranks of life. Do you not see artizans,  
 tradesmen, labourers of every sort, yea,  
 even beggars, putting on a mask of honor,  
 virtue and integrity, *in their way*, in order  
 to deceive, and impose upon, other peo-  
 ple ? in order to accomplish their particu-  
 lar ends ? The deceit, the wickedness of  
 men's hearts, is the same in every degree  
 and

and station of life: It is as true, that *men of low degree are vanity*, as it is, that *men of high degree are a lie.* \*

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\*King Dav.  
vid.

SHALL we say then, that there is no such thing as honor, virtue, and publick spirit, in the world? that all men's pretences thereto, are vain and hypocritical? and that they would throw off the mask, could they accomplish their ambitious, covetous, or other worldly designs? † No! We can only say, that we are *often* deluded and mocked by false pretenders to virtue and honor: Unless there were really such qualities in nature, there could be no counterfeits of them, any more than there could be false, counterfeit coin, without any true and genuine—Not only the ignorant and over-credulous, are often cheated and deceived by the false pretenders to virtue; but even the wise and prudent; I might add, the *very elect*: For even good men are not exempted from deceptions and impositions of this kind. Yea, how great a paradox soever it may seem, it is certainly true, that honest, good, undesigning men, in whom there is *no guile*, and who always speak and act in the simplicity of their hearts, are oftner deluded

B b

by

† A *Sir R*— may think this a true representation of mankind; but a *Sir A. O*— knows it is not; and every honest man knows so too.

SERM. by these false appearances of virtue, than  
 XI. other persons. They are not so apt to be  
 suspicious and jealous, and therefore are  
 not so much upon their guard in this re-  
 spect, as others. Knowing, even from  
 experience, that there is in nature such  
 a thing as uprightness, honesty and good-  
 ness; they are prone to confide in the pre-  
 tenders thereto; and to take up with any  
 plausible appearances. And this is the  
 only clue, that will lead us fully into the  
 sense and spirit of St. Paul's words—  
 "Charity thinketh no evil—believeth all  
 things, hopeth all things." A man  
 who is truly good and beneficent him-  
 self, *knows* that goodness and beneficence  
 are not empty names, but real qualities  
 and characters: And he is, therefore, dis-  
 posed to think that all who have the ap-  
 pearance, have the reality and truth of  
 them. On the other hand, he who does  
 not find in himself these moral qualities,  
 tho' he sometimes puts on the shew of  
 them, is inclined to think all others who  
 pretend to them, false and hypocritical, or  
 at best fanciful men; that all is but a mask,  
 in order to a person's carrying on his pri-  
 vate selfish designs—And whoever thinks  
 thus; whoever tells me that there is no  
 real honor, religion, virtue, or public spirit  
 in the world, tells me, in other words,  
 that

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that he himself has no honor, religion, virtue, or publick spirit: And tho' I could believe him, if he said this only of *himself*; yet I cannot, when he says the same of *all* other men. No one, who himself experiences what is termed honesty, goodness, religion, charity, can, in the nature of the thing, doubt whether any man can be held and influenced by these principles, or not. And therefore a man's denying that any are, or can be, thus held and influenced, is not only a tacit confession, but a plain demonstration, that he himself is a wicked man, and a *Villain* at the bottom; and equally so, whether he be a *low* or an *high-liv'd* one—But not to digress too-far—

THERE is no one virtue or grace, but what is laid claim to by persons who are destitute of all. The *Pharisees*, of whom we read so much in the gospel, were, if we can believe our Saviour, such men. They made many and long prayers; they fasted; they gave alms; they did many good things; so that they *outwardly appeared righteous unto men*. \* But, what said He, who *knew what was in man*? He said they made long prayers for a "pretence"; that they gave alms to be "seen of men"; that they were "hypocrites"; that they were like "whited sepulchres"; and that they

• *Matt. 23*  
28.

SERM. should "receive the greater damnation."  
 XI. Charity, the bond of perfectness, was *Judas's* pretence, when he objected against the waste of precious ointment on his Lord; but the truth of the case was, that he wanted to have it "sold for more than three hundred pence," and the money put into the *bag* which he carried, being a *Thief*. It is not he, who pretends to have the greatest abhorrence of dishonesty and knavery, that is the freest from them in his commerce and intercourse with mankind. Nay; the most wicked and treacherous designs are often carried on under the appearance of friendship: Which long since gave occasion to that observation of *Solomon*, that "the kisses of an enemy are deceitful": And this was remarkably exemplified, when the Son of man himself was "betrayed with a kiss." The most solemn promises and engagements of service, and friendship, are often so far from being strong enough to hold him that makes them, that they are made by him, with a formal intent to break them; and to do some greater injury to the person who relies on them, than could have been done without them. In short, there is no man, who has a mind to deceive, that cannot find many ways of doing it, unless he is a fool as well as a knave. Religion  
 itself,

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itself is, perhaps, oftener made a cloke for wickedness, than any one thing. Tho' all men who appear religious, are not designing hypocrites; yet "gravity is of the very essence of imposture." And many persons, by an affected gravity, by a serious kind of grimace, by a pretended scrupulosity about some trivial things, by a shew of zeal, and a series of religious tricks and artifices, have cheated the world into an high opinion of their sanctity, without having one single virtue. And it is to be observed, that people sometimes put on this mask of religion, with a formal design to impose upon the world; that they may indulge their vices, and injure their neighbours without being suspected of doing it, or in danger of detection. There have been so many known examples of this gross hypocrisy, that we can have no certain, infallible dependence upon any man. Those, of whom we have had experience for many years, sometimes turn out to be the reverse of what we took them to be: And we do not know, but others may do the like hereafter; since we cannot know the heart: So *deceitful* is it, so *desperately wicked*!

OUR blessed Saviour has given us the surest criterion, the most infallible rule, that we can go by, in forming our judg-

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ment about men and characters: "By their  
 " fruits ye shall know them." And by at-  
 tending to this, we may sometimes disco-  
 ver those to be inwardly *ravening wolves*,  
 who come to us, and live amongst us, in  
*sheeps cloathing*. But even this rule is, in  
 one sense, insufficient; because no rule  
 can make Us infallible in the application  
 of it. It is much easier for us to know  
 who are, and must be, wicked men, than  
 to know who are certainly good. The  
 former is, in some cases, possible: Since  
 he that is visibly immoral, impious and  
 flagitious in the course of his life, cannot  
 possibly be good in his heart. But on the  
 other hand, he, whose behaviour is, to all  
 human appearance, the most pious and  
 unexceptionable, may yet possibly not be  
 good: He may sin where he ought to  
 pray, *in secret*: He may be habitually  
 guilty of many vices, which shun the  
 observation of the world. In which case,  
 his heart is certainly bad: Yea, his actions,  
 which appear the most specious and com-  
 mendable to us, may spring from such  
 principles as would rather denominate  
 them vicious, than virtuous, in the eye  
 of One who could penetrate to the source,  
 and bottom of them. Were not even the  
 prayers of the *Pharisees* wicked and im-  
 pious, when made for a *pretence*? and that  
 they

they might devour widows houses? Such suspicions are not, indeed, to be indulged with respect to our neighbours, while their behaviour is visibly good and blameless: But as this may possibly be the case, the mentioning hereof, tends to illustrate and confirm what is said in my text, concerning the deceitfulness of the heart; and the impossibility of our coming to a perfect knowledge of it. But

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2<sup>dly</sup>. IT is now time to consider the deceitfulness of the heart, in the other point of light proposed, viz. with relation to a man's *self*. There is such a thing as a *deceived* heart, an heart which deceives, and imposes upon, *itself*; as well as an heart which is deceitful and dishonest with relation to others. There are many persons, to whom those words of the prophet are applicable, "A deceived heart hath turned him aside." \* This is a character which we often meet with. Nor is the scripture-notion of hypocrisy, only this, that a man sometimes puts on the shew or appearance of religion and virtue, on purpose to delude his neighbours. This hypocrisy is of the grossest kind. Every such man must be conscious to himself, that he is only *acting a part*. But there is a more subtle and refined kind of deceit, whereby a man deludes even himself, while he

\* *Isa.* 44.  
20.

SERM. is not sensible that he is deluding others,  
 XI. nor has any formal intention to do so.  
 That we are thus in danger of delusion from within, from ourselves, is plainly implied in all those passages of scripture, where we are admonished not to *deceive our own selves*; to *try*, to *prove*, to *examine* ourselves, and the like. And the self-deceit, which we are thus warned to guard against, is, I suppose, what the scripture more generally intends by hypocrisy, than it does the gross kind mentioned before.

THIS will, probably, sound like a paradox to many, For it may be asked, "What we are so intimately acquainted with, as with ourselves? Do we not know what passes within us? our own thoughts, and designs? the principles and motives upon which we act? Is it not a contradiction to suppose, that we can be ignorant of these; or deceived about them? So that it is so far from being difficult for any man to know his heart, that it is impossible for him not to know it."

BUT let us proceed deliberately here. Do you know your heart, in the sense of an *Anatomist*, when he talks about the heart, because you are conscious of your own thoughts, desires, volitions, &c? You will answer, No; this is quite another

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ther thing : You must see a human body opened, the heart dissected, and view every part of it carefully, before you can know the heart in this sense. Very just.

Well : You do not any more truly know your heart, in the *moral, scriptural* and *religious* sense of the term, merely by being conscious of your own thoughts, volitions, &c. than you know it in the *anatomical* sense : But in order hereto you must, if I may use the expression, see the *soul dissected* ; and examine the parts, or several powers, faculties and operations of it distinctly ; compare them together, and the whole, with the rule of moral right.

Without this, you may be intirely ignorant of your hearts, or be deceived as to your own true character and temper ; *not knowing what manner of spirit you are of*, \*

\* Luke 9.  
55.

however conscious you may be of your own thoughts, desires, volitions, actions. Is it not probable ? is it not certain, that many persons have been mistaken as to their own moral and religious character ; thinking themselves good and upright men, when they were the reverse hereof ?

Is it not probable that many of the *Pharisees* of old, and many other persons in later times, were, and are, thus mistaken in themselves ; thinking their character good and honest, tho' really bad and dishonest,

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honest, at the bottom? This will not be denied. Certainly then, there is such a thing as dishonesty of heart, which a man is insensible of; such a thing as self-deceit; such a thing as a man's imposing upon, and cheating himself, in some way or other; and doing it so artfully, that he does not stand convicted and condemned of himself, afterwards: He is *hardened thro' the deceitfulness of sin*, even while he cries, "*The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord;*" and actually thinks he has a right to say to others, as those *hypocrites in Isaiah* did— "Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou." \*

\* Chap. 65  
ver. 5.

To lay open this whole *mystery of iniquity*, which has already worked, and, probably, still works, in so many persons, would require much more time than there is for it at present. Nothing more is, therefore, to be now expected, than some general hints—It is all to be deduced from, as it may all be resolved into, two well-known principles or affections in human nature: I mean a sense of moral obligation and religion, which all men have in some degree, so that they cannot but wish to *die the death of the righteous*; and a love to this present world, so that they are desirous to enjoy the gains, the honors, the pleasures

pleasures of it. These principles, in many cases at least, interfere with each other; and so there arises a strife and contest betwixt them, for the dominion and sovereignty, *the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh*; which two being contrary the one to the other, a man cannot do the things which he would. \* SERM. XI.

He would be religious, and yet gratify his worldly lusts and passions: He would serve two masters, both God and Mammon: He would unite those things, which cannot really be united: He will not renounce all pretensions to religion and virtue, for the sake of the world; nor yet will he renounce the world for the sake of religion and virtue: He would make the prosecution of both consist together; and be under the joint sway of two Lords; which, in this case, is impossible: No such composition can be made.

BUT tho' this is evidently the case; yet what is this to the deceitfulness of the heart? to hypocrisy? to self-deception? You will presently see. Every man must be the servant either of God, or of the world: He must be either good or bad: He must have a certain, determinate *internal* character. But those whose character is really bad and vicious, are not willing to see and know it. They could not  
but

SERM. but be more dissatisfied with themselves, if  
 XI. they thoroughly *knew themselves*. Hence,  
 they open their intellectual eye but half-  
 way, squint, wink hard, look askance,  
 take only side-glances, and use a magnifying  
 glass, if I may so express it, when they take  
 a view of any thing which they imagine  
 commendable in themselves, turning the  
 other end of it, when they look upon  
 their faults. The heart plays such jugg-  
 ling, legerdemain tricks with itself! Men  
 that are void of fairness and probity of  
 mind, evidently put deceptions upon  
 themselves, in various ways; insensibly  
 flattering themselves, that they are certain-  
 ly and truly good, and upright, while they  
 certainly are not; but live in the prac-  
 tice of flagrant immoralities, which every  
 one almost, except themselves, sees plainly  
 enough. So deceitful are men, even with  
 regard to themselves! And the clue  
 mentioned, if pursued, would lead us  
 thro' all the doublings, and labyrinths  
 of a dishonest heart; that *den* of brutal  
 lusts and passions; that *cage of unclean birds*;  
 that *dark-vault*, which is *full of dead men's  
 bones and of all uncleanness*, tho' the monument  
 over it may appear white and beautiful.

THE principle of conscience sometimes  
 operates so strongly in a man, that he  
 cannot go directly counter to it, with his  
 eyes

eyes wide open : And yet the worldly and vicious principle is so much stronger, that he *must* obey the latter, and still *seem* to himself to be religious ; or, at least, not very vicious. Hence such a man will have numerous evasions and palliations, by the help of which he will justify himself, to himself, in his evil practices. He can make human frailty, perhaps, a salvo for almost any thing : “ His faith is quite orthodox, so that he abhors the very name of *Arminianism* : The temptation is great ; and the *Devil* is a powerful, subtle adversary : Or every thing must be resolved into the over-ruling providence of God : Who is there that is wholly free from sin ? Even good men, formerly, were sometimes guilty of greater sins than his, he supposes : He is, besides, punctual in the performance of some duties ; none of the external ordinances of religion are neglected by him : Or he often gives alms to the necessitous : And *charity*, he reads, *will cover a multitude of Sins* : Or, if that will not, certainly the righteousness of Christ will : This or that precept of the gospel, he thinks, needs not be so rigorously interpreted, since we are under grace, not the law : Altho’ such and such things would be criminal in other circumstances ; yet this case is peculiar,

and

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XI.

SERM. and the general rule does not extend to it."

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By such subterfuges and tergiversations ; by such twistings and serpentine windings, a man that is not truly upright, will often evade those religious and moral obligations, which every honest, good man, sees and feels, and is influenced by : To him, darkness will be light, and light darkness ; bitter will be sweet, and sweet bitter ; evil good, and good evil. He will pacify his conscience so far, that he will not much censure himself, if at all, for the greatest immoralities and impieties. Yea, he will think he is *doing God service*, by shedding the blood of his saints : He will, perhaps, vent his unholy pride, his spleen and malice against man, even in his prayers to God ; condemning, and endeavouring to expose another, as an heretick, an hypocrite, and a wicked man ; thinking that this is all *true Zeal* for God and pure religion—So when the *Pharisee & Publican* went up into the temple to pray, the former said, *God, I thank thee, that I am*  
 † *not as other men,—or even as this publican.* †  
 Poor man ! He was full of arrogance, spiritual pride, and censoriousness, while he was accusing his brother *to the Father*, as a graceless hypocrite ; and blessing both God and himself, that he was *not as other men*. Thus will those, who are not thoroughly  
 honest

† Luke 18.

10.

honest at the bottom, *deceive their own selves*: SERM.

Thus will they behold, or think they behold, a mote in their brother's eye; and yet not see the beam that is in their own:

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They would not do thus, were they not hypocrites; if they had a *single* eye, instead of an *evil* one: For honesty as well as charity, begins at home. Under a specious shew of sanctity, and zeal for God and religion, there often lurks a corrupt, *pharisaical* heart; but yet so disguised, that the unhappy owner of it does not *know it*. So *deceitful* is the *heart*! so *desperately wicked*!

THE hypocrisy here spoken of, is essentially different from that, which consists in putting on the garb and form of Godliness, with a premeditated design to impose upon, and to delude, others.—When a man does thus, he must be conscious to himself, that he is a deceiver and impostor: But this other kind of hypocrisy, consists in self-deception; in a man's accounting his vices, no vices; his imaginary, counterfeit virtues, sterling and genuine; and so in mistaking his own moral and religious character. However, the former kind of hypocrisy, it is probable, often ends in the latter, being quite swallowed up and absorbed therein: I mean that men who, at first, put on the mask  
of

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of virtue and religion chiefly for the sake of deceiving others, wear it 'till they come, by degrees, to think it is not a mask at all, but true religion: So that they are at length as much deceived in themselves, as others were mistaken in them before. This may be illustrated by that which I take to be a just, as well as common observation, *viz.* That men sometimes invent lies and slanders, and propagate them at first, knowing them to be such; but having long repeated them, they themselves come at last to think them real truths, and propagate them afterwards as such!

THIS kind of hypocrisy, when it has taken deep possession, and strong hold of a man, renders him almost proof against conviction; so that his case is really more desperate than that of people, who hardly make any pretensions to virtue and religion. Persons, being thus intrenched and fortified, those spiritual weapons which are mighty thro' God to the pulling down of strong holds in other men, are used to little purpose, in order to the battering down their high-towering imaginations; and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. \* You can much easier come at those, who live profligate lives, without making any shew or pretence of being religious, than at these self-flatterers, and

\* 2Cor. 10  
5.

and self-deceivers: Which is the true ground of those remarkable words of our Saviour to the "*Chief PRIESTS,*" in the temple—" I say unto you, that the *publicans* and the *harlots* go into the kingdom of God before *You.* †"

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† *Math. 21*  
31. compared with  
*ver. 23.*

HYPOCRITES, in the scripture sense of the word, not only deceive their neighbours and themselves; but they, at least constructively, and by natural implication, endeavour to deceive and mock God; to palm upon Him their counterfeit religion and virtue, for true; and to conceal from Him their real wickedness. In the language of the Prophet, they "seek deep" to hide their counsel from the Lord, and "their works are in the dark; and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?" But "wo unto them!"\* For the LORD *searcheth the heart.* Which brings us to the second general head of discourse proposed, *Viz.*

\* *Isai. 29.*  
15.

SECONDLY, To consider what is implied in God's *searching the heart, and trying the reins*: Upon which point I need not be long. This is spoken after the manner of men. Searching and trying, when applied to creatures, supposes some difficulty in the case; and being literally understood, it connotes imperfection; which certainly must be no part of the

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idea when these terms are used with relation to Him that is “perfect in knowledge;” and by whom “actions are weighed.” The sense in general is, that however deceitful men’s hearts are; however difficult or impossible it is for *Us* exactly to know either the hearts of others, or even our own; yet God has the most thorough, immediate, and perfect knowledge of them. However we need not scruple to use the phraseology of scripture, with reference to this point, or any other—It would be needless, and in vain, not to say presumptuous and impious, for us to scrutinize into the *manner*, in which God knows our hearts, or knows any thing else. “There is no searching of His understanding,” \* who searcheth our hearts, which we cannot perfectly understand ourselves. It sufficeth, (or, at least it ought to suffice *Us*, short-sighted mortals) that both reason and scripture evince, that the great Author of all things can be ignorant of nothing; not even of our hearts, our most secret tho’ts, counsels, desires and purposes; or the internal frame, temper, and operations of our souls. “Neither  
“ is there any creature that is not mani-  
“ fest in his sight; but all things are na-  
“ ked, and opened unto the eyes of Him,  
“ with whom we have to do;” † *to whom*  
*we must give an account.* GOD

\* *Isa.* 40.  
28.

† *Heb* 4.13

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GOD judges of men's characters, not by outward appearances, but by their hearts: His eye penetrates into the most secret recesses of our souls; and therefore His "judgment is according to truth." He takes cognizance of our hearts in all we do. When we come before him to serve him, and "sit before him as his people sit-teth," he observes whether we do it in sincerity and devotion, or whether our hearts are still "far from him." When we pray to, or praise him, he observes whether we worship him "in spirit and in truth," or for a *pretence* only; and that we may get leave of our consciences to indulge our lusts. When we impart of our temporal substance to the necessitous, he observes whether this is done in christian charity, and singleness of heart, or that we "may be seen of men." Whatever good things we do, and whatever sins we abstain from, he observes whether we do thus from a sense of duty, and a regard to his authority, or merely from some prudential and worldly considerations. He discriminates exactly betwixt the inward characters of all men; knowing who are truly good and upright, notwithstanding their numerous imperfections and failings; and who are at the bottom still vicious, notwithstanding some things

SERM. which may appear good and commendable in them.  
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NOR does such a perfect knowledge of our hearts, as is here intended, only imply in general, that God distinguishes between good men and bad ; but also that he observes in what degree either of these characters belongs to us ; what enhances the guilt of some ; what lessens that of others ; what exalts and enobles our virtues ; what tarnishes and sullies them. It farther implies, that God sees our good and bad purposes, whether we have ever an opportunity to put them in execution or not. On one hand, he takes notice if there be a *willing mind*, altho' a man has it not in his power to do according to his wishes. On the other hand, he sees our evil devices, purposes and inclinations, altho' they never become effect. In fine here, when God is said to search our hearts, and try our reins, the meaning is, that none of those artifices and disguises which men use, in order to impose upon one another ; nor any of those deceits and delusions, which they sometimes put even upon themselves, can in the least degree conceal their true character from almighty God. The "Father of Spirits" immediately inspects our souls ; penetrates to the bottom of them ; and traces them thro'

thro' all those labyrinths, and doublings, and *dark paths*, which neither our own, nor the *vulture's eye hath seen*. †—“ O Lord! thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting, and up-rising; thou understandest my tho't afar off. Thou compassest my path, and lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before.— Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? —If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day. The darkness and the light are both alike to thee: For thou hast possessed my reins.” †—But let us proceed,

SERM. XI.  
† Job 28.7.  
† Psa. 139 1,—

3<sup>dly</sup>. To consider the end for which God thus *searcheth our hearts*, and *trieth our reins*, Namely, *To give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings*. This is still speaking after the manner of men. God is necessarily omniscient, and therefore cannot but know our hearts. However, He is here represented as searching them,

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them with a particular design and intention: Which manner of speaking, when used with regard to men, implies somewhat voluntary, as opposed to that which is necessary—But we may keep to the language of scripture, notwithstanding; always remembering, it is not an imperfect, but a perfect Being, that is spoken of.

WE are to consider God, not as a curious Spectator, taking notice of our ways and hearts for his amusement; but as the sovereign Lord and Judge of men; the gracious Rewarder of the good and upright, and the just Punisher of the wicked and deceitful man. This mighty “Judge of all the earth, will do *right* ;” finally rendering to every man that which is fitting and proper, whether it be good or evil; and this, in due measure and proportion. He who has done every thing else by rule; He that has adapted one thing to another in the visible world, with the greatest wisdom and exactness; He that has not only “*weighed* the mountains in *scales*, and the hills in a *ballance*” ; He that has not only “*numbered* the stars, calling them all by their names,” and “*meted* out the heavens with his *span* ;” but also “*numbered* the very *hairs* of our heads,” the sands upon the sea-shore, and the drops in the ocean; He that has ad-  
justed

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justed and proportioned all things in the natural world, I say, with the utmost care and exactness, from whence there results such an astonishing order, beauty and harmony; This most glorious Being cannot, surely, be less exact in whatever relates to the intellectual and moral world, for the sake of which alone, the other was created. Happiness and misery will eventually be dealt out by Him to those, to whom they respectively belong; and this in exact weight, measure and proportion, *according to every man's ways, and according to the fruit of his doings*; in a manner befitting the great Author, the all-powerful, all-wise, all-just, all-good and merciful Governor of the world.

NOR could He do what is right, fit and equal, in this sense, unless he *searched our hearts, and tried our reins*. This is necessary for a moral Governor; in order to a proper distribution of rewards and punishments, happiness and misery. The knowledge of our words and external actions only, would not (if I may use such an expression concerning God) *qualify* him to judge the world; and to render to moral, religious creatures, that which is right and fitting. For the goodness or badness of a moral and religious creature, such as man, evidently depends, in a great measure, if

SERM. not wholly, upon the internal frame and  
 XI. temper, the turn and disposition of his  
 heart. The love of Goodness is plainly  
 essential to a good character : So that if  
 we could, any ways, certainly know,  
 That that man, whose moral and religious  
 conduct, externally considered, is blame-  
 less and good, (such as it ought to be) had  
 yet no regard to religion and virtue in his  
 heart, no sincerity or uprightness, but  
 was only acting a part ; should not we  
 ourselves be far from looking upon his  
 character as good, in the sense now in-  
 tended ? Should we account any one a  
 pious man, because he often said his pray-  
 ers, if we knew him to be an Atheist in  
 his heart ? or only knew, that he had no  
 love and reverence for that God, to whom  
 he prayed ? Should we account any one  
 a true christian, because he “ named the  
 name of Christ,” if we knew that he did  
 not believe in him ? that he did not respect  
 and honor him ? Should we think any one  
 truly charitable, because he “ gave his  
 goods to feed the poor,” if we knew that  
 he had no fixed principle of benevolence in  
 him ; but “ did alms to be seen of men ?”  
 Should we think any one temperate and  
 sober, in the moral and religious sense,  
 because he abstained from acts of intem-  
 perance, if we knew that this proceeded  
 solely

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solely from a regard to his health and reputation? Certainly we should not. Well; this may all be true with respect to some persons, altho' we do not know it to be so. Yea, some parts, at least, of this good behaviour externally considered, may proceed from a bad principle; from some sinister, vicious design. For a man may "bring even his prayers to God with a wicked mind." How then must such a man's character stand in the eye of Omniscience? Or how could God "give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings;" if he did not "search the heart, and try the reins?" Under a perfect moral government, must not the *heart* be the standard of the man; so that he shall be rewarded or punished according as *that* is good or bad? upright or deceitful? and in proportion as it is either? No actions can be deemed good, under such a government, any farther than there is an honest, good temper within, which corresponds to them: Nothing truly bad and culpable, any farther than there is somewhat wrong and vicious in the heart. We should never have tho't of settling and determining the moral and religious characters of men, by their outward conduct, had it not been for our own necessary imperfection; be-  
cause

SERM. XI. cause we cannot see the heart, we must judge by the outward appearance. This is the best rule for us to judge by ; the appearance being a probable indication, tho' not an infallible one in all cases, of the internal, real character. But a perfect, all-knowing Being, stands in no need of such a clue : He looketh directly at the *heart* : *There* he seeth the character as it really is ; and he will give every man according to his own, whatever it be.

FOR the farther illustration of what is here intended, let us suppose a person born with such natural infirmities, or placed in such disadvantageous circumstances, that he could perform none of those actions which the world usually calls good and virtuous. This person might, nevertheless, be blessed with a pious and virtuous mind, a good and upright heart : Would he not, then, be one of a pious and good character, and as rewardable under a righteous moral government, as if he had been in a capacity to " bring forth good things, out of the good treasure of his heart ? " Or will you say, his character is vicious, and that he is of ill desert, merely because he does not perform those good works which others do ? and which he himself would perform, were it in his power ! Suppose another person

person labouring under the like infirmities and disadvantages ; so that he has never had it in his power to do any harm ; to do any one action which the world calls impious or immoral. This person might, nevertheless, have an impious, malicious turn of mind ; his heart might be full of envy and malice ; he might have an inclination to do the evil which he cannot. Is not his character, then, bad and vicious ; so that he as truly deserves punishment, from a perfect moral Governor, as if he had been externally vicious ? Certainly he does. These suppositions are made only to show, that a man's character, is really good or bad only in proportion as his heart is so ; and that it must finally be well or ill with him accordingly. And otherwise there would be no need of God's *searching the heart*, in order to his *giving every man according to his ways*. For this he might do without knowing the heart, if external actions made the character ; and men were no farther either rewardable or punishable, than they are outwardly virtuous or vicious. Why need the heart itself be searched, unless the heart itself is to be " brought into judgment, with every " secret thing ? "

THIS is evidently the doctrine of the gospel, and, I think, the dictate of reason also.

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also. Upon any other supposition, what will you make of St. *Paul's* doctrine, that *tho' a man give all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned, and have not charity, he is nothing?* What will you make of St. *John's* doctrine, that *whoso hateth his brother is a murderer?* What will you make of our Saviour's own doctrine—*He that looketh—hath committed adultery—already in his heart?* Apply what is said in these passages, to all other instances of virtue and vice, and it will hold equally true. Whatever good deeds a man does; yet if he has not a corresponding good temper, *he is nothing*: Whatever sins and lusts a man's heart is set upon, of those he is guilty in the sight of Him, who *looketh at the heart*, and will give to every man according to what he sees *therein*. I shall just add here, that it may be taken for granted, every man is internally vicious, at least in the same degree that he is externally so. But it cannot be supposed, on the other hand, that every man is internally good and pious, in the same proportion that he seemeth to be so, for this plain reason; Because, were this fact, there could be no such thing as hypocrisy, or deceitfulness of heart; as there manifestly is, in that twofold sense which has been considered.

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UPON the whole: We are assured that God "hath appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man, whom he hath ordained." In that day the *secrets* of all hearts, which are not even now *secrets* to our Maker, will be disclosed to all: And it shall fare with men according to their real goodness or badness, their internal character. It is indeed, often said in the holy scriptures, "That men shall be "judged according to their works;" "according to their deeds;" according to "the things done in the body." But it is so expressed, upon a presumption that men's hearts correspond to their works; or, *vice versa*, their works to their hearts: Which, in general, may be taken for granted, notwithstanding any thing that has been said in this discourse. But there are manifestly some exceptions: And it is equally manifest, that in those cases where there is not such a correspondence betwixt men's hearts and their deeds, a man's heart, not his deeds, is what must be regarded by the righteous Judge of all. All men shall be dealt with, according to what they really are in the estimation of the all-knowing, all-just and good Governor of the world; not according to outward appearances, or the false judgments which any form either of themselves or others.

THE

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XL



THE reflections which, I suppose, naturally arise out of this subject, are such as follow.

WE are hereby cautioned not to place any undue trust or confidence in men; but to exercise a degree of wariness and circumspection in all our intercourse with them. "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man: It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes." Common *prudence*, which ought to be reckoned among the virtues, requires this caution and circumspection; since men may be very different from what they appear to be. "Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out. Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness; but

\* *Prov.* 20. 5, 6. "a faithful man who can find!"\*. Thus said the wisest, if not the best of men. A distrust of our fellow-men may, indeed, be carried to an extreme: (Which is most frequently done by men that are themselves destitute of honor, honesty and virtue:) Without a considerable degree of mutual trust, faith and confidence, it is manifest that there can scarce be any such thing as social happiness, and a friendly, agreeable intercourse with our neighbour. And a good man would rather strain a

point,

point, *hope all things*, and expose himself to some disadvantages and impositions, than, by an universal distrust and suspicion of others, cut himself off from the satisfaction of thinking he is conversing with those that are as upright as himself. It is to be added, that the daily commerce, and various affairs of the world, could not be carried on in a manner the most beneficial to the Whole, were jealousy, and diffidence of man to man, universally to take place. The present state of mankind, however imperfect, plainly requires some degree of mutual faith and dependence. However, there is, in some sense, an extreme even in virtue. Intire, unre-served confidence is to be placed in God alone : And those who place it indiscriminately in others, may possibly have reason to lament their easy credulity ; and experience the truth of the prophet's words—*Cursed is the man that trusteth in man.*

BUT since men's hearts are, in some sense, treacherous and deceitful even with regard to themselves ; we are hereby admonished to examine our *own* ; to scrutinize them with the utmost care, and to *keep them with all diligence* : For out of them are the *issues* both of life and death. *Solomon* tells us, that “ he that trusteth his own heart is a fool.” His meaning is, that

since

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SERM. since there is great deceitfulness in the  
 XI. hearts of wicked men, and a degree of it  
 in the hearts of all men, it is folly in any  
 One to be unsuspecting, or not jealous,  
 concerning the integrity of his *own*. A  
 truly wise man will be, in some degree,  
 faithless and unbelieving towards his own  
 heart. But you will say, perhaps, "My  
 heart is good and honest: Why, then,  
 should I be so injurious as to distrust  
 it?" It is true, your heart *may* be good  
 and honest; but how do you know it is  
 so, unless you have examined it? unless  
 you have *put it to the question*? unless you  
 have tried how it will bear the torture of  
 being severed from the world? unless you  
 have denied yourself as to those sins and  
 lusts, which most *easily* beset you? unless  
 you have taken up your cross, and follow-  
 ed your Saviour? This is the test of an  
 honest heart. And if you have never done  
 this; if you have never distrusted your-  
 selves, nor do so at present, it is almost a  
 demonstration that you are one of those  
*unwise* men, of whom *Solomon* speaks; and  
 that, however charitable you may be to-  
 wards your own heart, it is still *deceitful*  
*above all things, and desperately wicked*. Some  
*other* persons, you allow, are mistaken in  
 thinking their hearts good and upright,  
 while they are not: May not this possibly  
 be your *own* case?—

But

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BUT whatever some persons may think, it would be a great abuse of this scripture-doctrine, That the heart is deceitful, to infer from it, that a man, by self-examination, by attending to the operations of his heart, and bringing it to the test of scripture and reason, under that influence of the good Spirit of God, which is common to all men, cannot come to a scriptural, rational, and satisfactory determination concerning his own heart, whether it be good or bad. The possibility of this, in the way of rational deduction and inference, ( to say nothing of the *Witness of the Spirit* ) is plainly presupposed in all those passages, where we are admonished to prove and examine ourselves to this end, that we may know *ourselves* : Particularly in those words of the Apostle, “ Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith ; prove your own selves. *Know ye not your own selves*, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates ? † ” What propriety ? what sense would there be, in this exhortation, unless professed christians in general might, by exercising due care, come to a rational, satisfactory, and scriptural determination, concerning their own proper character ? It is to be farther observed, That “ truth, and real good sense, and

D d

thoroughly

† 2 Cor. 13.  
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“ thorough integrity, carry along with  
 “ them a peculiar consciousness of their  
 “ own genuineness : There is a feeling  
 “ belonging to them, which does not ac-  
 “ company their counterfeits, error, folly,  
 “ half-honesty, partial and slight regards  
 “ to virtue and right, so far as they are  
 “ consistent with that course of gratifica-  
 “ tion which men happen to be set up-  
 “ on.” \* A truly honest, good man,  
 either must, or may if he pleases, and  
 provided time and opportunity are allow-  
 ed him, satisfactorily know his own heart ;  
 he may know his own religious charac-  
 ter so far, at least, that anxiety and fear  
 shall be *cast out*. And may not a wicked  
 man know, if he will, that he is really so,  
 with equal certainty ? He may : He is un-  
 der no *necessity* of dishonestly closing his  
 eyes, any more than a good man ; tho’  
 he may be more inclined to do it. There  
 is no disputing facts ; many wicked men  
 have actually seen themselves to be really  
 such—Since then both are possible, it high-  
 ly concerns us all to prove, to examine,  
 and know *our own selves* : For whether we  
 do so or not, there is ANOTHER who  
 “ searcheth our hearts, and tryeth our  
 “ reins, even to give every man accord-  
 “ ing

“ing to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.”

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THERE are none, perhaps, who have more reason to be suspicious of themselves, than your hot religious zealots; the great sticklers for what they call orthodoxy, whether justly, or unjustly, it now matters not. You will sometimes see men wrangling in such an unchristian manner, about the form of godliness, as to make it but too evident that they deny the power thereof. You will find some who pride themselves in being of what they call the true church, showing by their whole conversation, that they are of the *synagogue of Satan*. Some contend, and foam, and curse their brethren, for the sake of the *Athanasian Trinity*, 'till 'tis evident they do not love and fear the ONE living and true God as they ought to do. Others you will see raging about their peculiar notions of original sin, so as to prove themselves guilty of actual transgression: About election, 'till they prove themselves reprobates: About particular redemption, 'till they shew that they themselves are not redeemed from a *vain conversation*. You will hear others quarrelling about imputed righteousness, with such fury and bitterness, as to show that they are destitute of personal: About special grace, so as to

SERM. show that they have not even common :  
 .XI. About faith, while they make shipwreck  
 of a good conscience : And about the  
 final perseverance of the saints, 'till they  
 prove themselves to be no saints ; and that  
 if they had ever any goodness or grace,  
 they are now fallen from it—But, “ who  
 “ is a wise man, and endued with know-  
 “ ledge amongst you ? let him shew out  
 “ of a good conversation his works with  
 “ meekness of wisdom. But if ye have  
 “ bitter envying and strife in your hearts,  
 “ glory not, and lie not against the truth.  
 “ This wisdom descendeth not from a-  
 “ bove ; but is earthly, sensual, devilish.—  
 “ The wisdom that is from above, is first  
 “ pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy  
 “ to be intreated, full of mercy and good  
 “ fruits, without partiality, and without

James 3. “hypocrisy.” \*  
 13. THE extreme *folly* of hypocrisy is very  
 evident from what has been said. God  
 knows our hearts already ; and the false,  
 deceitful man, who has deluded others or  
 himself, will be as certainly condemned  
 hereafter, when we shall “ all appear be-  
 “ fore the judgment-seat of Christ,” as  
 those notorious profligates, who “ declare  
 “ their sin as *Sodom*.” Go on then, O man,  
 to deceive thy fellow-mortals and thy-  
 self ! Go on to mock God, saying in thy  
 heart,

heart, "The Lord shall not see; neither shall the God of Jacob regard it!" But yet, "He that planted the ear, shall not He hear? He that formed the eye, shall not He see? He that chasteneth the Hea-  
 "then, shall not He correct" \* *Thee also!* †  
 Thou mayest put out the eyes of thine own understanding, and become blind to thy self and thy danger: But thou canst not quench the eye of day; thou canst not put out the eyes of thy Judge, which are as a flame of fire. "in every place, be-  
 "holding the evil and the good:" †  
 There is no darkness, neither shadow of death, where thou canst hide thyself from Him.—It is said, there are some animals which, being pursued, are so simple as to shut and hide their eyes from the pursuer, and their danger; thinking both are removed when they are no longer seen; and so being self-blinded, they become a more easy prey. These silly animals (if there are any such) are no ill emblem of foolish, self-deceivers; who being hunted and haunted by their own consciences, and pursued, as it were, by the great Avenger of blood, "make lies their refuge, and hide themselves under false hood; §" and become blind to their danger, thinking that God sees them no longer when they are hidden from them-  
 selves.

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Psal. 94.  
 9, 10.

Pro. 15.  
 3.

Isai. 28.  
 15.

SERM. selves. But in vain ! They will soon fall  
 XI. into His hands, whose eye will not spare §  
 § Ezek. 5. in the day of vengeance !

II.

BUT tho' this subject should be considered primarily and principally, as a warning and admonition to all false pretenders to religion and virtue ; yet it may be improved with great propriety, for the encouragement and consolation of all those, whose hearts are right with God ; especially those, whose lot it is to have their " names cast out as evil ; " to be reputed wicked and graceless men, and " separated from the company " of them who say, *We are holier than thou.* While some of the worst men have been extolled for their piety, it has often been ( shall I say, the happiness ? or ) the unhappiness of the best, such " of whom the world was not worthy, " to live and die under reproach ; to have all their good evil-spoken of ; all they say or do, misconstrued, and perverted to their disadvantage, by wicked or mistaken men. Thus partial, thus blind, thus unjust, is the world in which we now live. But let us not account those upright men miserable, whom our Saviour pronounces *blessed*, † however *despitefully* they may be used at present. God " searches the hearts, and tries the reins, " not only that he may  
 render

† Luk. 6. 22

render to the hypocrite and the wicked man, his just deserts; but that he may also give to the upright, in whom he delights, such things as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive; He does it, "even to give every man according to the fruit of his doings," whether he be wicked, or sincerely good: And *great is Their reward in heaven.* With this consideration, holy men of old used to support their spirits under the censures and ill-usage, which they received from the world: None of these things moved them: They were kept in *perfect peace*, their minds being *stayed* upon God—"It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment:—He that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." \* With such considerations the prophets, and apostles, and other good men of old, used to comfort themselves under bad usage, and so, in a sort, to defeat the malice of their enemies: And in proportion as men in

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\* 1 Cor. 4.

2, —

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later ages have the same faith in God, and the same integrity of heart, they will also derive consolation from them, under similar trials, or any other.

THE world is now in a great measure masked: Even professed Christians often carry two faces, more resembling *Janus*, the pagan deity, than their *Father which is in heaven*. But the time is coming when all the world will be unmasked; when one man shall have but one face; when every person shall appear in his own proper colours; when the deceitful, hypocritical man, shall be stripped of his gay plumage, and borrowed ornaments; and the Upright shall appear to be what they really are, adorned with those internal graces and virtues, which are “in the sight of

§1 Pet. 3 4. God of great price.” § Men’s true characters shall be thus made manifest, in the *day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God*; when “the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the arch-angel, and with the trump of God;” when He “shall sit upon the throne of his glory,” all nations being gathered before him, the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. In this day of retribution, on the decisions of which, our whole interest and being depends, how different may we

rea-

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reasonably suppose men will appear, from what they appear to themselves and others in this world, where so many walk about in disguise, in a *vain shew*! Whom do I behold yonder, on the *right hand*, with holy joy and triumph in their faces, in expectation of the blessed sentence! Are not many of them those, whose unaffected piety and virtue was unnoticed in this world? Are not many of them those, who were once reproached and condemned by rash men, as infidels, as heretics, as hypocrites, as workers of iniquity?—But what do I hear Him, whose judgment is according to truth, saying to them?—“Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!”—“Whom do I behold yonder, on the *left hand*, with unutterable woe and anguish in their faces; cursing the *sea*, *death* and *hell*, for *giving up the dead which were in them!*\* and praying to the deaf, unpitying *rocks* and *mountains* to fall on them, and hide them from “the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne; and from the “wrath of the Lamb!” † Are they only those, whose “sins were open beforehand, “going before to judgment?” ‡ Are not many of them those, who once made a profession of religion? those, who once *contended*

• Rev. 20  
13.† Chap 6.  
ver. 16.‡ 1 Tim. 5  
24.

SERM. tended so earnestly for what they called the  
 XI. *faith delivered to the saints*? Are not many  
 of them those, whom this deluded world  
 tho't almost the only saints in it? Are not  
 many of them those, who shew'd such  
 zeal even about the circumstantials and  
 forms of religion? Are not many of them  
 those, who were once the great asserters  
 of what they termed orthodoxy? and who  
 were for *compelling*, even by *carnal wea-*  
*pons*, all they supposed out of the true  
 church, "to come in?" Are not many  
 of them those, who once tho't and said,  
 that they who did not believe exactly as  
 they did, should *perish everlastingly*? Are  
 not many of them those, who once ima-  
 gined almost all mankind excepting them-  
 selves, would be damned?—But what sen-  
 tence do I hear from the mouth of Him,  
 who knoweth the hearts of all?—"De-  
 part from me, ye Cursed!"—What is now  
 become of all that seeming concern for  
 the glory of God? the purity of religion?  
 the salvation of souls? Alas! this was on-  
 ly a cloke, a mask: Worldly policy, am-  
 bition, a party-spirit, pride, covetousness,  
 self-conceit, uncharity, bigotry, unholy  
 wrath, censoriousness, or the lust of do-  
 mination, was at the bottom, concealed  
 from these men themselves, perhaps, as  
 well as from many others, under those  
 fair

fair pretences! While they made broad SERM. 2  
 their *phylacteries*, and affected so much XL  
 gravity, devotion and sanctity, they still  
 loved the chief seats in the *synagogues*, and  
 at *feasts*; greetings in the *markets*, and to  
 be called, *Rabbi, Rabbi*. Are there no  
 men of this same character in the world  
 at present? Would to God there were  
 not! There are, indeed, many professed  
 enemies to the gospel, treating it with  
 the utmost contempt, scorn and derision;  
 and blasphemously reproaching the Author  
 of it; *which to them is an evident token of*  
*perdition*, † notwithstanding their pre-  
 tences to probity of mind, and a sincere † Phil. 1.  
 love to truth and virtue: For if the gos- 28.  
 pel is true, we know that such men *hate*  
*the light*. But there are, probably, many  
 other persons, who cannot endure what  
 is commonly called infidelity and irreligi-  
 on, or even the least *deviation* from the  
 principles which they have *received by tra-*  
*dition from their fore-fathers*; who are yet  
 as destitute of real goodness and integrity  
 of heart, as many open revilers of Christ:  
 So that had they lived when their pre-  
 decessors, the *Pharisees* did, 'tis likely  
 they would rather have cried, "Crucify  
 Him, Crucify Him," than "Hail Master;"  
 unless, perhaps, they had cried, "Hail,"  
 and kissed Him, only to *betray*!—O vain  
 mortals!

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XL

mortals ! God is greater than your hearts, and knoweth all things : He now searcheth them, " even to give very man according to his ways." To His equal, impartial judgment, I leave you ; praying, that ye may approve things that are excellent ; that ye may be SINCERE, and without offence till the day of Christ.\* So shall not shame, indignation and wrath, but glory, honor and peace, rest upon you. Alas ! " The hope of the ungodly is like dust " that is blown away with the wind ; " like a thin froth that is driven away " with the storm, like as the smoke " which is dispersed here and there with " a tempest, and passeth away as the remembrance of a guest that tarrieth but " a day. But the righteous live forever " more : Their reward is with the Lord, " and the care of them is with the Most " High. Therefore shall they receive a " glorious kingdom, and a beautiful " crown from the Lord's hand : For " with his right hand shall he cover them, " and with his arm shall he protect " them." †

† *Wisdom of Solomon*, V. 14, 15, 16.

## S E R M O N XII.

ON the Shortness and Vanity of  
human Life:

Occasioned by the Death of a young Person.

PSALM XXXIX. 5, 6.

BEHOLD, *Thou hast made my days as an  
hand-breadth, and mine age is as nothing  
before Thee: verily every man at his best  
estate is altogether vanity. Selah.*

SURELY every man walketh in a vain  
shew: surely they are disquieted in vain—

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THE subject of this sacred Ode, is the  
brevity of human life: A subject,  
which cannot be attentively considered,  
without making us wiser and better.  
The *Psalm* was composed by *David* in a  
time of sickness, as plainly appears from  
the latter part of it: "Remove thy stroke  
away from me—When thou with re-  
bukes

SERM. XII. " bukes dost correct man for iniquity,  
 " thou makest his beauty to consume a-  
 " way like a moth—O! spare me, that I  
 " may recover strength before I go hence,  
 " and be no more." People in the gloom  
 of adversity, especially when they have a  
 prospect of soon *walking thro' the valley of  
 the shadow of death*, often entertain very  
 different sentiments of the present life, and  
 its enjoyments, from those which they en-  
 tertained in high health, in the vigor of  
 youth, in great prosperity, *when the candle  
 of God shined upon their heads.* \* Men are  
 not generally roused into a thorough sense  
 of the shortness of this mortal race, and of  
 the vanity of life, 'till the race is almost  
 run thro', and sorrow comes fast upon  
 them. In early life, and in our prospe-  
 rous days, we say with Him in the para-  
 ble, " Soul, thou hast much goods laid  
 " up for many years; take thine ease, eat  
 " drink, and be merry;" not considering  
 that " this night our souls may be requi-  
 red of us." Thus do many fondly build  
 upon length of days, and please themselves  
 with the gay hopes of a long succession of  
 pleasurable enjoyments here: When " Be-  
 hold! God has made our days as an  
 " hand-breadth, and our age is as nothing  
 " before him: When every man at his  
 " best estate is altogether vanity; walking  
 " in

• Job 29.  
 3.

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“in a vain shew:” So that if we eagerly pursue after, and expect, felicity here below, we do but “disquiet ourselves in vain.” Time and experience will, sooner or later, convince every man that such hopes are delusive; and that such pursuits terminate where they begin, in *vanity and vexation of spirit*; not in the possession of that solid happiness and satisfaction, which is the object of them. It were well for us, if we were convinced of this most certain, this most salutary truth, more seasonably than we usually are; that so, knowing our *end*, and the *measure of our days, what it is*, we might early apply our hearts to *wisdom*: For we could scarce fail to do thus, did we but *number our days aright*; did we but *know how frail we are*, and make a proper estimate of this vain life—To which end it is, that this passage of scripture is chosen for the subject of the present discourse.

AFTER representing to you the *shortness*, I shall represent to you the *vanity* and troubles, of this life. Then, *both* will be considered as the appointment of almighty God: For, behold, it is He that has made our days as an *hand-breadth*, and *subjected the creature to vanity*, so that *the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now.* † These things being distinctly

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tinctly, tho' briefly, considered, the subject will be closed with some practical inferences and reflections.

FIRST, Let us consider the brevity of life. Our days are said to be as an *handbreadth*, one of the shortest measures in use: And our age is as *nothing* before God; before Him, with whom "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." With relation to an eternal, omniscient, all-comprehending Mind, the longest limited duration must be indeed as *nothing*. When the Prophet speaks of the greatness, the power and majesty of God, he says that "all nations before Him are as *nothing*; and are counted to him *less than nothing*." And when we contemplate Him, who is God *from everlasting to everlasting*, the King *eternal and immortal*; and then consider the short span of human life, we may adopt the same prophetic style, and say, that our age before God is not only as *nothing*, but even *less than nothing and vanity*.

BUT the duration of this our mortal life is as nothing, even with relation to some finite Beings: I mean those which were present, and ministring spirits to God, when the foundations of the earth were laid; and when it was said, "Let US make man." The *Angels*, those  
"Morning



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our origin from the dust of the earth ; they behold us returning to dust again in quick succession : They see our beginning and end, as it were in the same instant ; themselves (those of them I mean, that

kind, together with the final decision and issue of it, was represented to St. *John* in vision, *Apoc.* 12. 7 —“ And there was war in heaven : *Michael* and his angels fought against the *dragon* ; and the *dragon* fought and his angels, and prevailed not—And the great *dragon* was cast out, that old serpent, called the *devil* and *satan*, which deceiveth the whole world”—The scripture informs us that the *Logos* had a body prepared for him, and that he partook of *flesh* and *blood*, that he might “ thro’ death destroy him that had the power of death, that is the *devil*.” But that he took into personal union with himself, an human *soul*, my Bible saith not ; nor that there is any other true God, besides “ his Father and our Father, his God and our God.” Indeed some who call themselves Christians, have exalted even the *Virgin Mary* above all that is called God in *heaven*, and that is worshipped *there* ; saying that she is more kind and merciful than God himself ; and praying to her to command her Son to befriend them ; styling her the *Mother of God*, &c. It would be no great surprize to me to hear that the *Pope* and a general Council, had declared the *B. Virgin* to be the fourth, or rather the first Person, in the *Godhead*, under the title of God, or Goddess THE MOTHER ; adding that neither the Persons are to be confounded, nor the substance divided ; that the Mother is eternal, the Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal ; but yet that there are not four Eternals, but one Eternal ; that this is the catholic saith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved—HE THAT HATH AN EAR TO HEAR, LET HIM HEAR ! And he that hath a mouth given him to blaspheme, [*Rev.* 13. 5, 6.] and a tongue to babble without ideas, (understanding not what he says, nor whereof he affirms) let him blaspheme and babble ! But neither Papists nor Protestants should imagine that they will be understood by others, if they do not understand themselves : Nor should they think that nonsense and contradictions can ever be too sacred to be ridiculed.

that are not fallen) enjoying perpetual beauty, youth and vigor. To intelligences which have existed thro' so many successive ages, our transitory life here on earth, must be next to nothing and vanity. And

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MANY things, in their nature corruptible and perishable, persevere in their original state of beauty and splendor, much longer than mortal man, who fadeth like a flower. The heavenly bodies, (those great *Preachers* and *Apostles* of natural religion, which declare the glory of God so audibly and intelligibly, that "there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard") hitherto shine, and perform their revolutions and several functions, without any apparent diminution of their lustre, or visible signs of decay. The sun, their Prince, who has seen so many successions of men upon the earth, the rise and fall of so many nations and empires, that sun is still vigorous, and strong, and healthy, tho' he is so old; as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoicing as a strong man to run his race: His circuit is unto the end of the earth; and there is nothing hid from his light and heat.\* But even he is mortal; and will one day sicken and languish, all his fires becoming extinct; and his ruddy countenance, black as sackcloth of

\* Ps. 19.

SERM. *hair.* † For the heavens themselves shall  
 XII. wax old and perish ; they shall be folded up  
 † *Rev. 6. 12* and changed—But thou Lord! *hast immor-*  
*tal*ity, dwelling in light ! Thou art the  
*Father of lights, with whom there is no va-*  
*riableness, neither shadow of turning !*

THE days of man are now as an *hand-*  
*breadth*, even compared with the age of man  
 in the first periods of the world. We read  
 of one and another of the Antediluvians,  
 who lived to near a thousand years of Age:  
 Indeed they all did so, (excepting *Enoch*  
 who was translated) descending from *Adam*  
 † *Vid. Gen.* down to *Noah*, in a right line. † And since  
 Chap. V. the sacred historian makes no remark, in-  
 timating that the longevity of these Fa-  
 thers was unusual at that day, the natural  
 presumption is, that it was common for  
 other men to live to such an age, before  
 the flood. How short then is human life,  
 in this age of the world, compared to  
*Their's !*

AND in the next period after the flood,  
 men commonly lived four or five hundred  
 years ; as appears from *Moses's* account of  
 § *Gen. XI.* the *generations of Shem*, the son of *Noah*. §  
 However the life of man seems to have  
 been gradually contracted, from the time  
 of *Shem* to that of *Terah*, the Father of  
 him who is the *Father of the faithful*. So  
 that

that the age of man in *Abraham's* days, may be computed to be about an hundred and fifty years. From which it seems to have been still shortened, down to the time of *Moses*, who fixes the measure thereof at threescore years and ten.—“ We spend our years as a tale that is told. “ The days of our years are *threescore years and ten.*” \* However *Moses*, the author of this Psalm, does not mean that men generally attained to these years, in that period of the world. He intends that a man who arrived at such an age, might be looked upon as one that had *lived out all his days*, so that dying then, he came to his grave in a *good old age, as a shock of corn when it is fully ripe.* The far greater part of those who were born into the world, doubtless died much earlier; but to survive longer, might be looked upon as somewhat unusual and singular; and indeed scarce desirable. For thus it is immediately after explained:—“ And if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow: for it is soon cut off, and we flee away.” This representation seems to be agreeable to the present state of mankind; so that from the days of *Moses*, there has probably been no considerable alteration in the age of man. To be sure it is not

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\*Psal.XC.  
9, 10.

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protracted to a greater length in common now than it was then, if it is not shortened.

IN these later ages of the world, but few of mankind, comparatively speaking, attain to threescore and ten; by far the greatest part, not to half, nay not to a quarter, of those years. Many die in youth; many more in childhood and infancy. Many no sooner see the light, than they are again involved in death and darkness: and some never see it at all, *passing away by an untimely birth.* \* Thus,

\* *Psal.* 58.  
8.

O Lord! "Thou turnest man to destruction; and say'st, Return, ye children of men.—Thou carriest them away as with a flood—In the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth. For we are consumed by thine anger." † Before the undistinguishing

† *Psal.* 90.  
3.—

scythe of death, fall promiscuously the rich and the poor; the kings and counsellors of the earth, with their subjects and slaves; the robust and the infirm; the young and the old; the beautiful *Rachel* and the tender-ey'd *Leah*: With baser shrubs, and grovelling weeds, fall the plants of renown, and the cedars of *Lebanon*; the rose of *Sharon*, and the lilies

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lies of the vallies ! All, All, high and low, great and small, are swept away together by the mighty *flood* which God has bro't upon the world : So that the *Nile*, as it has I think been described by some, is an emblem hereof ; sometimes carrying along in it's current, the Lords of this lower world, together with inferior animals, into the common ocean. Thus are we promiscuously carried down with the irresistible torrent, and launched together into the wide, fathomless ocean of Eternity, where we sail like *Drake* and *Columbus*, in search of new Worlds ! How short is the space which we have to prepare, and lay in provisions, for such a voyage ? Behold, our days are not measured by furlongs, by leagues and degrees, but by an *handbreadth* ; and our age is as *nothing* : Verily every man at his best estate is altogether *vanity* ! Our life is " as a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." But

SECONDLY ; The present life is not only short and precarious ; but also attended with many sorrows. Our days which are *few*, are also *evil* : So that there is no such thing as being completely happy here. When we centre our hopes and expectations in any thing below the skies,

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we fondly deceive ourselves; and gather thorns instead of roses. It is as impossible for a reasonable, moral creature, to be truly happy in the enjoyment of sensual and worldly objects, as it is for the eye to be pleased with the sound of a viol, or the ear charmed with a beautiful landskip. Those objects, in the enjoyment of which alone, such a creature as man can rest and be happy, are those of an intellectual and moral kind: Others have no similitude, no analogy or agreement, to the superior and most excellent part of our nature; So that the immortal spirit will still pine, and languish, and crave more, crying, *Give, Give,* 'till it is "filled" with all the fulness of God." Those persons who are the most successful in pursuing worldly happiness, and whom many may be apt to envy, are not (believe it!) really the happy men they are often taken to be. They are generally, not only far less happy than they are supposed to be; but also, than they would really be, were they not so eager in the pursuit of such a felicity. They walk in a *vain shew*, and *disquiet themselves in vain*. It is only the shew, the appearance of felicity, which they have; a gaudy out-side shew, the form of happiness without the power. And the more anxious we are to obtain  
felicity

felicity in this world, independently of SERM.  
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 God, the great source thereof, the *fountain of living waters*, the more do we disquiet ourselves in vain: In the language of the prophet, we *spend our money for that which is not bread, and our labour for that which satisfieth not*. We have wants which cannot be removed, desires and affections which cannot be satisfied, by terrestrial things: So that we are wretched even in spite of that pride, which prompts us to esteem our condition happy. And if sensual, worldly men, would but speak out the plain truth, they would join with *Solomon*—"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, and vexation of spirit;" and confess, that even in the midst of *laughter* their hearts are often *sorrowful*.

BUT the vanity, vexation and disquietude, from which human life is inseparable, arises not merely from the *want* of proper objects here below; to gratify the various affections and cravings of our compound nature, and to fill up the mighty void in our breasts: There are many *positive* evils and calamities, to which we are unavoidably subjected. For "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards." The greater part by far, of mankind, are, by the very condition of their birth, to eat bread in pain and sorrow,

SERM. row, if they eat it all ; to toil hard only  
 XII. for a tolerable subsistence and living here.

Many are, by the providence of God, reduced to great distress, to suffer hunger, nakedness and cold, with all the numerous and sad attendants of extreme poverty. The greatest part of mankind now are, and almost always have been, oppressed by wicked tyrants, called civil rulers, kings and emperors ; oppressed by God's scourges, that call themselves his ministers for good. Many are afflicted with long and painful diseases, which render them incapable of relishing or enjoying any thing ; and so as to make both light and life a burden to them. Some are betrayed by pretended, false-hearted friends ; others are assaulted and ruined by professed enemies. Before we return to the dust ourselves, we are often called to weep over our dear deceased friends and relations, our other selves ; and have sorrow upon sorrow. In short, numberless are the disappointments and afflictions of one kind and another, *whereof all are partakers*. Nor is there any station of life, from the throne to the galley, or the mines, exempted from trouble : Purple and Ermine, as well as rags and sackcloth, often cover an aking, distressed heart :  
 And every heart knoweth its own bitterness.\*

\*Prov. 14.  
 10.

While

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While we tabernacle in flesh, we must, whether we will or no, be in one respect like our blessed Saviour—"Men of sorrows, and acquainted with grief:" And if we would not *keep such company*, then, as the apostle said in another case, we *must needs go out of the world*. Neither riches nor power; neither wisdom nor piety, can wholly secure us from trouble and vexation here: For even those good men who have "the first-fruits of the spirit, groan within themselves, waiting for the adoption, viz. the redemption of the body." † The short life which we live in these mortal bodies, cannot, in the nature of the thing, but be a life of pain and disquietude, even tho' we live in hope of a better; and were placed in those very circumstances, which we ourselves esteem the most eligible of any in this world. Nor is this the effect of blind chance or fate: For,

THIRDLY, We are to consider both the brevity and the sorrows of this life, as the appointment of God almighty, God all-wise, just and good—"Behold, *Thou* hast made my days," &c. Independently of revelation, we know but very little how we came into this state; what we were placed here for; or what shall become of us when a period is put to the present

Rom. 8.

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present life. But the holy scriptures give us light in the midst of this darkness. Revelation informs us, that to be subject to sorrow and death, is not the original, natural state of man: But that we are brought into this state of vanity and trouble, by the righteous Lord and Governor of the world, in consequence of the disobedience of our common Father. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin*—Mankind, to speak after the manner of men, were originally designed for immortality; and to be ever happy in innocence, and the favour of God: But the apostacy of our first parents brought them under his righteous displeasure: and thence both they and their offspring became subject to death; which has accordingly reigned from *Adam to Moses*, and from *Moses* to the present time, even “over them that have not sinned according to the similitude of *Adam’s* transgression.” So that tho’ this is the appointment, yet it is not the arbitrary appointment, of our Maker.—It is the effect, and the manifestation, of God’s just displeasure against the sin and rebellion of our progenitors: And He, in this particular instance, *visiteth the iniquity of the FATHER upon the CHILDREN*, not only to the *third and fourth generation*, but to all

all generations. For in consequence of this first transgression, "it is appointed un-  
 " to [all] men once to die;" to die the *first* death, tho' not the *second*; it being certainly only men's own personal sins, that can subject them to inevitable misery and torment in the world to come. Only *the soul that sinneth*, shall die the second death.\* The general doctrine of scripture concerning the introduction of mortality into the world, may be summed up in those emphatical words in the book of *Wisdom*—"God made not death [originally;] neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living. For he created all things that they might have their being;—and there is no poison of destruction in them; nor the kingdom of death upon earth. For righteousness is immortal.—But ungodly men with their works and words called it to them." †—"God created man to be immortal; and made him to be an image of his own eternity. Nevertheless, thro' envy of the devil came death into the world: and they that do hold of his side do find it." ‡ Such as *hold of his side* find, not only temporal, but everlasting death.

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\*Ezek. 18.  
20.

‡ Chap. I.  
ver. 13.

† Chap. II.  
ver. 23, 24.

HERE you see the source of death. The overflowing flood of mortality, by which

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which we are carried away, has its origin in the righteous displeasure of almighty God, against the workers of iniquity. It might perhaps be in vain, I am pretty sure it is unnecessary, for Us to enquire minutely, how the measure of man's days came to be gradually contracted from time to time, after the fall, till it was brought down to the present standard, an *handbreadth*. Some have attempted to account for this, by assigning some natural, physical causes: How successfully, I shall not pretend to determine. But to me, this matter seems not to fall within the sphere of human knowledge: So that the most modest and pious, and indeed the wisest way of speaking of it, is to say—"Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." It is enough for US to know, That He who, for the sin of man, originally sent death into the world, has also, in his infinitely wise, righteous, and good providence, determined the measure of human life in all the different periods of the world; by whatever natural means or causes it may have been contracted gradually, 'till our age is become as *nothing before Him*.

THE same general account is to be given of the sorrows and troubles, which has already been given of the shortness, of human

man

man life. For as mortality does not, so neither does *affliction*, come forth of the dust, nor doth trouble spring out of the ground.\*

God who ordained the former, ordained the latter also: *His hand and counsel* are equally concerned in bringing both upon mankind. We are subjected to such *vani-ty*, not *willingly*, but by reason of Him who hath subjected us *in hope*. §

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Job 5, 6.

§ Rom. 8  
20.

INDEED many of the sorrows to which we are here exposed, seem evidently to flow from, and to be naturally connected with, this decaying, mortal frame, which we have since the fall. Hence, bodily pains and diseases, 'till we return to the dust: Hence, our turbulent, disorderly, and uneasy passions: Hence we are called, from time to time, to mourn our deceased friends; our parents, our brethren, our offspring: Hence, when old age comes, with its natural attendants, this is peculiarly an *evil day*; the years then coming wherein the most say, that they have *no pleasure in them*.† These and many other evils, seem to be inseparable from this decaying, mortal condition.

† Eccl. 12.

BUT there are some other sorrows, which spring not so directly from our mortality; and which have no *natural* connexion therewith, tho' they were connected with it in God's sentence and curse:

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 } curse : I mean those troubles which arise from the sterility of the earth, in consequence of the fall ; by which means it becomes a painful, laborious thing, for the greater part of mankind to get a subsistence. This, we know, is agreeable to the original sentence ; and therefore it is to be ascribed to the will of the same God, who has subjected us to mortality—  
 “ Cursed is the ground for thy sake : in  
 “ sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days  
 “ of thy life. Thorns also and thistles  
 “ shall it bring forth to thee : and thou  
 “ shalt eat the herb of the field. In the  
 “ sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,  
 †Gen. 3. 17 “ ’till thou return unto the ground.” †

THERE are many other evils and sorrows, which may perhaps be more properly ascribed to men’s own, personal, voluntarily misconduct, than to their necessary frailty and mortality, or to the curse of God upon the ground. For how numerous are those pains and calamities, which spring directly from the lusts of men ? from that intemperance, and those other vices, which it would be false to say men could not avoid ; and to charge which upon God, would be blasphemy ? Mankind certainly bring innumerable sorrows upon themselves, by their own ill conduct ; all which it is more just and

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reasonable to place to the score of their own personal wickedness, than to speak of them as the *unavoidable* consequence of their being mortal creatures, placed in such a state as the present.

HOWEVER, even these evils seem to flow, in one sense, from the original apostacy; or from the curse of God upon man, consequential thereto. For our mortal body (the consequence of Adam's sin,) being in close union with our spirits, is the seat of those passions, which are the immediate occasions of our sinning personally:

“ We know that in us, that is in our *flesh*, dwelleth no good thing.” It is “ the *flesh* that lusteth against the spirit.” It is “ the law in our *members*, that warreth against the law of our mind, bringing us into captivity to the law of sin.” If sin reigns, it “ reigns in our *mortal* body, and we obey it in the lusts thereof.” Hence we read of the *body of this death*; i. e. this *mortal* body of *sin*. It was by the ordination of God, that we were put into these bodies; which expose us so much to temptation, that it is almost, if not altogether impossible for us, wholly to avoid sinning. And hence, I suppose, it is, that we are said to be by *nature* children of *wrath*: for no farther than we are naturally the children of *disobedience*, can we

SERM. be naturally the children, or the objects of  
 XII. wrath. \* However, no passion or affection,  
 with which we are born, can be in itself  
 sinful; it becomes so, only by wilful or  
 careless indulgence. A creature cannot,  
 strictly speaking, be a sinner, till he has  
 violated some law of God, or of nature:  
 for "sin is the transgression of the law."  
 But not to digress—

*Eph. 2. 3.*  
 compared  
 with Chap.  
 5. ver. 6. &  
*Col. 3. 6.*

UPON the whole; both the shortness  
 and the sorrows of life, are the effect of  
 God's righteous displeasure against the sin  
 of our first parents. Tho' we should al-  
 ways distinguish betwixt those calamities,  
 which are inseparable from this our mor-  
 tal condition, inseparable from our present  
 state of trial and discipline, as it is the ap-  
 pointment of God; and those evils and  
 miseries, which mankind bring upon them-  
 selves by their own wilful misconduct,  
 by their personal vices. For want of  
 making which distinction, many persons  
 charge God foolishly; and utter hard speeches  
 against Him, when they ought only to  
 condemn themselves.

BUT our time is poorly employed in  
 contemplating the brevity and sorrows of  
 this vain life, unless we are taught hereby  
 to make a right estimate thereof; and to  
 pass thro' these temporary troubles, in the  
 paths of wisdom and piety; to those joys  
 that

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that will never end. Let us, therefore, now draw some practical inferences and reflections from this subject.

AND here, in the first place: Altho' it may be natural for us to lament our mortal and sorrowful condition in this world; yet since this is by the appointment of God, we ought humbly to acquiesce in it, without murmuring. Our duty is submission, not complaining or finding fault. God had an indisputable right either to give us life and being, or not; to give it to us either for a longer or shorter time; and to make our condition, either more or less happy, as seem'd proper to his unerring wisdom and goodness. We have no demand upon his justice for a longer or happier life, than that which he bestows upon us in this world, short and unhappy as it is. Nor should it be ever forgotten, that perfect wisdom, righteousness and goodness, are the rule of his dispensations towards his creatures. The State we are now in, is such a one as God judg'd proper to place us in, in order to manifest to Us, if not to other beings in other worlds, his holiness and righteous severity; his just displeasur'd against the workers of iniquity. It is a signal manifestation of his anger against the first transgressors of his law in this world, and a

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perpetual *memento* to Us, their posterity. In a manner somewhat analagous hereto, it is, that the children of traitors and rebels to their earthly Sovereigns, are often deprived of the inheritance which, by the constitution of the government, I would otherwise have descended to them; and are subjected to divers inconveniences; yea, to a degree of shame and infamy, altho' themselves transgress not *after the similitude of their ancestors*. *glibni nr bnd hod ti* HOWEVER, God, who has thus subjected us to mortality, to vanity and temporal sorrow, on account of the original rebellion and treason of our first parents, when they hearkened to the devil, has subjected us in *hope*. Our condition is not *desperate*: So far from it, that God has made ample provision for our deliverance from this state of bondage, corruption and death, *into the glorious liberty of his Sons*. For as in *Adam* we die, so in *Christ* we may be made alive: And as we have *bore the image of the earthy*, so may we also *bear the image of the heavenly*. \* How joyfully does it become such creatures, in such a state, to receive the glad tidings of salvation thro' Christ, who has "abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light thro' the Gospel" Sad indeed would be our condition, subjected to

\* 1 Cor. 15.  
40.

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so many calamities and sufferings as we are, and so soon to drop into the grave, if in this life only we had hope; if we had no prospect of a more desirable state of existence hereafter. Nor indeed can we have any well-grounded hope or prospect of such a state, independently of the express promises of God, in the gospel of his Son. Mere reason, or the light of nature, suggests no arguments for a happy immortality, which are conclusive and satisfactory, so that we can rest upon them. But "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a living hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."† This most interesting subject of life and immortality after death, lay wrapt in night and darkness, after all the efforts of human reason and wisdom, being hid from ages and generations: But it is now set in the full beam and light of day, by the gospel shining upon it; and by Him who has shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of His glory, in the face of Jesus Christ.\* Tho' vexations, sorrows and death abide us here; yet there are mansions of endless peace and joy prepared for

† 1 Pet. 1.  
3, 4.

\* 2 Cor. 4.  
6.

SERM. for us hereafter, unless we *will not enter in,*  
 XII. *thro' unbelief.* To such mortal, miserable,  
 sinful creatures, how good is this news  
 from a far country? how refreshing this cold  
 water, to the soul which thirsts after per-  
 fection and immortality? The contempla-  
 tion hereof, to those whose hearts are fully  
 possessed with the belief of these things, at  
 once makes the heaviest afflictions seem  
 light, draws out the venomous sting of  
 death, and snatches the victory from the  
 grave; enabling them to triumph over it  
 in hope of the glory of God, and of that "e-  
 ternal life, which He that cannot lie hath  
 promised." \* *Tit. 1. 2.*

BUT we are admonished by the subject  
 we have been considering, to expect af-  
 flictions of one kind or another, while we  
 dwell in these earthly tabernacles; and  
 should arm ourselves with patience, that  
 we may bear them in a becoming manner.  
 It is an important branch of wisdom, to  
 proportion our expectations as to this  
 world, to the nature of the things of it;  
 and not to hope for more felicity here,  
 than it is probable we shall ever enjoy.  
 Being thus wise, we should, I believe,  
 expect but little from this world, besides  
 vanity and vexation of spirit: At least, we  
 should always be prepared to meet with  
 trials and sorrows, so as not to be much  
 shocked.

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shocked or ruffled by them when they come, as they certainly will, however we may fondly flatter ourselves. It is both the folly and the unhappiness of many, that they promise themselves more felicity here below, than is consistent with this imperfect state, and the designs of providence. If we ever enter into rest at last, it must be "thro' much tribulation."\*

■ *AA* 14.  
22.

We are apt to presume in our prosperity, that we shall never be moved; but some sudden, unexpected calamity, soon refutes the fond presumption. And being thus unprepared to grapple with affliction, it proves an over-match for us; and falls much heavier than it would otherwise have done: For to the natural weight of it, there is added the uneasiness and anxiety, which is always attendant upon disappointment, and frustrated hopes. There are not many virtues, of which we have more need in such a world as this, than resignation and patience. By snatching too greedily at happiness here, we only make ourselves the more miserable—"Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; establish

SERM. “ stablish your hearts ; for the coming of  
 XII. “ the Lord draweth nigh.” \*

James 5.  
 7, 8.

BUT since life itself is so fleeting and precarious, we are admonished not to put the tho'ts of death far from us ; but to be in daily expectation of, or at least, in daily preparation for, this great change. To lay our account for living long in this world, is one of the most unaccountable follies, and pregnant with numerous mischiefs : And yct there is scarce a folly which is more common. We have, almost every day, affecting examples before our eyes, of human frailty, and the uncertainty of this vain life. We see our neighbours, our acquaintance, our friends, our relations, dropping in death and darkness, not to arise *'till the heavens be no more*. We see people of all ranks, of all ages, the young and old, rich and poor, male and female, bond and free, daily bowing before the *King of Terrors* ; many of whom, we cannot but acknowledge, were far less likely a few days since, to fall before him, than ourselves. And yet, some way or other, we still flatter ourselves, that it will be long before our own turn comes to do homage to this great *Monarch*. We take it for granted, except when we are in some imminent danger, that we have several years at least yet to live. It is not only the  
 young

young and healthy, that presume thus; **SERM.?**  
 but even the infirm, the aged; those, on **XII.**  
 whose heads hoary time has snowed, per-  
 haps, more than threescore years and ten;  
 and who already stoop, as it were to go  
 down to the tomb. Many, who are  
 scarce more than the remnant, the shadow  
 of their former selves; and of whom it is  
 almost a miracle that they are still alive,  
 seem to think that hardly any thing short  
 of a miracle, can put a period to their  
 days. Strange infatuation! Mysterious  
 delusion! "Death still draws nearer,  
 "never seeming near!"

THIS fond presumption upon life, is  
 not less pernicious in it's consequences,  
 than it is in itself, absurd and unaccount-  
 able. It is the source of the most fatal  
 errors in the conduct of life. This is the  
 true reason, why so many neglect those  
 things that are of the last importance, and  
 on which their whole being depends,  
 while they busy themselves in trifles;  
 while they are careful about many things  
 of no real importance, *and disquiet them-  
 selves in vain.* Men could not be so taken  
 up with their amusements and pastimes,  
 or with the cares of this mortal life, as they  
 generally are, if they had a just sense of  
 the shortness and uncertainty of it, and of  
 what depends upon it. Much less would

SERM. they dare to go on, from time to time, in  
 XII. the violation of God's known command-  
 ments, if they seriously reflected, that the  
 same hour wherein they sin, they might  
*lift up their eyes in hell, being in torment!*

SINCE this life is so short, and the sor-  
 rows of it so numerous, it highly con-  
 cerns us to improve the present opportu-  
 nity for securing the special favour of our  
 Maker, by faith unfeigned, and obedience  
 to the gospel; that so we may be forever  
 happy in his most glorious kingdom and  
 presence. We are degraded, in some mea-  
 sure, from the original dignity and perfecti-  
 on of man: But we are not totally cast off,  
 and disinherited; by that great Lord and  
 Father, whose *offspring* we are. He has  
 given us the strongest possible assurance,  
 that he delighteth not in our destruction;  
 but *that the wicked forsake his way and live.*  
 He now allows us an opportunity to work  
 out our salvation; that so we may pass  
 out of this world of sorrow and death, into  
 that, where *all tears shall be wiped away from*  
*our eyes;* where there shall be no more  
*death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither any*  
*more pain; the former things being passed a-*  
 way.\* If we do not *despise his rest*, but are  
 heartily desirous of entering into it, there  
 is a peaceful harbour provided for our re-  
 ception, from the storm that has almost  
 ship-

\* Rev. 21.

Shipwreck'd us ; and which continually SERM.  
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beats upon us, while we sail upon the stream of Life. There is a sacred ark prepared for us, which can neither sink nor overfet ; and which shall finally rest, when the waters are asswaged, not upon the mountains of *Ararat*, but upon mount *Zion* that is above, the mount of God ; where all those who do not refuse to be saved, shall appear before Him, and *behold his face in righteousness.* Let us not therefore drown, and sink into perdition ; or, “ neglect so great salvation ; which at “ the first began to be spoken by the Lord, “ and has been confirmed unto us by them “ that heard him ; God also working “ with them both with signs and wonders, “ and divers miracles, and gifts of the “ Holy Ghost, according to his own will.” Have we any time to lose, or throw away, when life is so precarious, and when our All is at stake. What tongue of man, or of angel, can fully express the imprudence and madness of those, who can trifle and procrastinate, and hull themselves to rest in their sins, when they know not what a day, an hour, or a moment, may *bring forth!* “ Awake ! thou that sleepest, “ and arise from the dead ; and Christ “ shall give thee life.” *Awake, and call upon thy God, or thou diest forevermore!*

SERM. Now is the *accepted time*, and the *day of*  
 XII. *salvation*: To morrow may not be so; but  
 the day of perdition to those, who having  
 \* *Rev. 2. a space given them to repent, repent not!* \*

21.

Moreover :

THOSE who truly fear God, while they live in this world of trial and discipline, altho' they are already *sons*, should still learn *obedience by the things which they suffer*. † We should endeavour to make a right use of all these temporal sorrows, that so they may turn to our spiritual and eternal advantage. It is not a mere act of *sovereignty* in God, to afflict and grieve the children of Men : nor does he do it willingly. † For altho' we may have had *fathers of our flesh*, who corrected us only after their own pleasure ; yet the Father of our spirits chasteneth us " for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness : " And if we gave *Them* reverence, " shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live ? " Our afflictions are friendly admonitions, designed in providence to wean us from this world, to exalt our tho'ts and desires to a better, to purge away our dross, and to refine our virtues, that being thus tryed, we may come forth as gold, and be " found unto praise, and honor, and glory." If we concur with the gracious de-

† Heb. 5.  
8.† Lam. 3.  
33.

NOT

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sign

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sign of providence in afflicting us, neither despising the chastening of the Lord, nor yet fainting when we are rebuked of him, we shall be made the wiser and better by our troubles; even *they* will work together for good to us. To which end, of whatever kind our afflictions are, we should always consider him, who once endured the contradiction of sinners against himself; Him, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame; Him, who being made a little lower than the angels, for the sufferings of death, is now crowned with glory and honor. For while we keep in view this illustrious example of patient, obedient suffering, and of glorious reward, it will be impossible for us to be "weary or faint in our minds:" \* Since, if we *suffer* with him, and in imitation of him, we know that we shall also be *glorified*, and shall *reign, with Him.* † But irreclaimable transgressors should remember, on the other hand, That he who being often reproved by God's word, and the afflictions which his providence sends, still hardeneth his neck, and his heart, "shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." §

\* *Hel. 12.*  
3.

† *Rom. 8.*  
17. and  
*2 Tim. 2*  
12.

§ *Pro. 29*  
1.

Again:

SINCE this world is so full of vanity and sorrow; since there is so little of solid hap-

hap-

SERM. happiness to be expected from it, we ought  
 XII. not, surely, to be very fond of living long  
 in it. If God had made our days less than  
 an hand-breadth, it is not easy to see why  
 good men should be much dejected at this  
 reflection, unless the present life had been  
 much less vain and unquiet than it really  
 is. It is very incongruous for those, who  
 are daily complaining of the sorrows of  
 life, to be so fond of living, as men usually  
 are. Why are we backward to leave  
 that world, where we can find no rest for  
 the sole of our foot ; and are as uneasy as  
*Noah's* dove, before the waters subsided ?  
 Shall I tell you the true reason, why  
 professed Christians are generally so de-  
 siring of living, and so afraid of dying ?  
 It is because they have some mis-givings ;  
 some apprehensions that they are not pre-  
 pared for another world ; or at least, not  
 for that, which they would choose to go ;  
 and that if they should make an exchange,  
 it must, probably, be for the worse. And,  
 indeed, it must be confessed, that they who  
 have no rational grounds to believe, but  
 that if they die, they must die the death  
 of the unrighteous, and their last end be  
 like his, have great reason to be desirous  
 of living longer here, as troublesome and  
 vexatious as this life is. But what cause  
 have good men to be fond of life, or afraid  
 of

of death? they, who have a well-grounded hope in the exceeding great and precious promises of the gospel, whereby they are already "made partakers of a divine nature?" Is there any thing on this side the grave, very desirable? any thing in, or beyond it, very terrible, to them? Do we fear the grave will be always victorious? Do we fear, that the angels, when they receive our departing spirits, will lose their way, and not convoy us safely to *Abraham's bosom*? Do we dread the tho't of being again united to our dear friends, who died in the Lord; and who are gone before us to the paradise of God? Are we loth to become communicants with the church triumphant of the First Born, which are both written and blessed in heaven? In fine, do we dread the tho't of going to the general assembly of just men made perfect? to the innumerable company of angels? to Jesus the Mediator of the new-covenant? to God the Judge of All? to Him, with whom is the spring of life; in whose presence there is fulness of joy; and at whose right hand are pleasures forever more? There seems not to be any thing very terrible in these things; nor any thing in death, which should make a sincere Christian, thro' fear of it, all his life-time "subject unto bondage." If it is these

bodies

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SERM. XII. bodies which we now inhabit that we are so fond of, even they shall shortly be restored to us : The sea, death and hades, will be faithful to their trust ; and deliver up the dead which are in them, when He who is Lord both of the dead and living, “ shall appear the second time, without “ sin unto salvation.” But these bodies we shall receive, in the renovation of all things, not gross and vile, as they are when laid in the grave ; but fitted up and repaired, and made more suitable for the habitation of purified, immortal spirits. The terrestrial body, shall be raised a celestial ; that which is sown in corruption, shall be raised in incorruption ; that which is sown in dishonor, shall be raised in glory. \* A truly living and christian faith, anticipates these things, making them present to the mind, as tho’ they were already accomplished : So that the language of the apostle will appear natural—“ God, “ who is rich in mercy, for the great love “ wherewith he loved us, even when we “ were dead in sins, *hath* quickened us to- “ gether with Christ, (by grace ye are “ saved) and *hath* raised us up together “ and made us sit together in heavenly “ places in Christ Jesus ; that in the ages “ to come he might shew the exceeding “ riches of his grace, in his kindness to- “ wards

• 1 Cor.  
15. 40.

“wards us thro’ Christ Jesus.” † Be once fully possessed of these evangelical sentiments ; and then, if you can, be sorry that God has made our days as an handbreadth, and our age as nothing before Him ; be anxious about what may befall you in life, and shudder at the terrors of the tomb !—“ O death ! where ? ”—

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† Eph. 2.  
4.—7.

FOR the same reason that sincere Christians cannot consistently be very fond of life, or fearful of death, they cannot mourn disconsolately for their pious friends, who have already “ put off this tabernacle.” To the truly good, the day of death is far better than that of their birth : And if we love them, we shall rejoice because they are gone to the Father. If you are not ignorant concerning them that are *asleep* ; if you do not think they are *perished* ; if you fully believe the great doctrines of the gospel, that Christ both died and rose again, and that “ Them also which sleep in Jesus,” God will raise up at the last day, as he raised him ; then go, if you can, and sorrow for your pious departed friends, “ even as others which have no hope.” § Go and mourn, because they are taken away from this evil, troublesome world. Go and mourn, because they are gone to the paradise of God ! Go and grieve, because They, whom you loved

§ 1 Thes. 4.  
13, 14.

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so well, are become so happy ! Be inconsolable, because They, who once mourned here, are now comforted ! Go and weep, because all tears, except those of joy, are wiped forever from Their eyes ! Make yourselves wretched in this world, because your friends are to be eternally happy in another ! because They are now at rest ; and shall hereafter come forth out of their graves, and live and triumph forever with Him that was “ slain, and has redeemed them to God, by his *blood* ” ! Put on sackcloth and mourning, because They shall shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father, even when that mortal sun which you now behold, shall be dead, ceasing to give his light ; and the heavens themselves shall be hung with blackness and mourning for his exit ! And while you are thus weeping over the graves of your beloved friends, drop another tear for yourselves, because you are to be forever blessed with them ; blessed, even beyond all your present conceptions and wishes, if You also should “ sleep in Jesus,” when your days on earth are numbered and finished !

But to conclude : How poor, how miserable a portion, falls to the share of those, whose only felicity is in this world ? Is this a world, in which to place our All ? in which

which to seek our supreme good?—this **SERM.**  
 world, where “all that cometh is vanity”? **XII.**  
 the fashion of which “passeth away,” and  
 from which, we ourselves must pass away  
 in a few days? What is a man profited if  
 he gain this whole world, even tho’ he  
 should not lose his own soul? One would  
 think it impossible for those, who have ra-  
 tional, immortal souls, to be much con-  
 cerned about any thing here below, altho’  
 their worldly pursuits did not interfere  
 with their eternal interest; there being  
 really nothing, or but very little, here,  
 worthy a wise man’s tho’ts, desires, and  
 cares. But for men to suffer this world to  
 engross their tho’ts; and to pursue the vain  
 pleasures, honors, and riches of it, even  
 to the loss, to the destruction and perdition  
 of their souls: What!—A summary  
 account of the wisdom of this world, is,  
 that it is *inexpressible* folly and madness.  
 O envied men! who are so wise as to fore-  
 go the most solid and durable happiness,  
 and to incur the most certain, and exqui-  
 site, and durable misery, for the sake of  
 bubbles and straws and shadows! for the  
 sake of this world, the sorrows of which  
 are so numerous; the very pleasures of  
 which are vexatious, and the more eager-  
 ly pursued, the less satisfactory!—Let  
 “not our heart envy sinners,” tho’ they

Hast

H h 2

“spread

Pro. 25.  
17.

SERM. "spread themselves like a green bay-tree."

XII. What tho' they live, become old, yea are mighty in power? § What tho' their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes? What tho' their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them? What tho' their cow calveth, and casteth not her young? What tho' they send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance? What tho' they take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ? What tho' they spend their days in wealth?— "In a moment they go down to the grave!" The wicked, however prosperous, shall soon utterly perish: "As the fat of lambs shall they consume; into smoke shall they consume away." † Such men may, indeed, imagine themselves both wise and happy for a while, making a mock and derision of those, who seek their happiness in God alone, sowing in tears, that they may reap in joy. But what the final issue and result of things shall assuredly be, both as to the righteous and the wicked, you may take in the language of the book of Wisdom—"Then shall the righteous man stand in great boldness before the face of such as have afflicted him—When they see it, they shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall

† P<sup>sal.</sup> 37.  
20.

§ Job 21.  
7—13.

“ shall be amazed at the strangeness of **SERM.**  
 “ his salvation, so far beyond all that they **XII.**  
 “ looked for. And they repenting, and  
 “ groaning for anguish of spirit, shall say  
 “ within themselves, This is he whom we  
 “ had sometimes in derision, and a proverb  
 “ of reproach. We fools counted his  
 “ life madness, and his end to be without  
 “ honor. How is he numbred among the  
 “ children of God, and his lot is among  
 “ the saints!— We wearied ourselves in  
 “ the way of wickedness and destruction  
 “ —but as for the way of the Lord, we  
 “ have not known it. What hath pride  
 “ profited us? or what good hath riches  
 “ with our vaunting brought us? All those  
 “ things are passed away like a shadow,  
 “ and as a post that hasteth by!” †

† *Wisdom of Solomon*, Chap. V. *begin.* — It may, perhaps, be difficult to assign a better reason why the *Song*, rather than the *Wisdom*, of *Solomon*, is admitted into the *Canon*, than this, *viz.* That people generally love and relish *Songs* better than they do *Wisdom*—

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SERMON XIII.  
 Of the true Value, Use and End of  
 Life; and the Conduciveness of  
 Religion to prolong, and make  
 it happy.

Occasioned by the Death of some aged Persons.

"Beware what earth calls happiness! beware  
 All joys, but joys that never can expire.  
 "Who builds on less than an immortal base,  
 "Fond as he seems, condemns his joys to death."  
 Dr. YOUNG.

PSALM XXXIV. 12, 13, 14, 15.

*WHAT* man is he that desireth Life, and  
 loveth many days, that he may see Good?

*KEEP* thy tongue from evil, and thy lips  
 from speaking guile.

*DEPART* from evil, and do good: seek  
 peace and pursue it.

*THE* eyes of the LORD are upon the righ-  
 teous; and his ears are open unto their cry.

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IT is, I believe, the common wish of  
 mankind, to attain to old age; at least  
 to that which we term so, tho' there is  
 really

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really no such thing as long life in this world. There are but few men; if any, who would be willing that the glass of life, which is turned up at their birth, and then begins to run, should be choaked and stopped before it is run quite out: We choose to see the last sand fall, and to attain to the full measure of man's days on earth. Nor does this satisfy all. Even three score and ten, or four score years, when, by reason of unusual strength, they are attained to, seem but a short life to those few who arrive at them, being spent as a tale that is told. \* The Psalmist's question in the beginning of the passage just now read, [“What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days?”] does not, therefore, imply, that there are few, or none, who thus desire to live long. Tho' interrogations often carry in them a negation, their sense is always to be determined by circumstances, and the subject spoken of. Accordingly the true import of this question, must here be, That mankind in general breath this wish, desiring to see many days, which is a truth, evident from our daily observation and experiences; in every person's creed THAT they may live long, is plainly the wish of people in general, so that this may be called their *Common Prayer*; whether

\* Psal. 90.

9.

ther

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ther made with, or without Book and Form: All in a manner conform to it, without any scruples of conscience: You will scarce find a single Dissenter. It is the wish and prayer, which is common to all nations, to all sects and parties, to people of all religions; and even to those who have no religion at all. Here Protestants and Papists, Jews and Mahometans, and pagan Idolaters, are agreed; all joining unanimously in the same petition. In this point, the high and low, the rich and poor, bond and free; in this the young and the old, male and female, people of all conditions, occupations and characters, are well united. Good men and bad, are not at variance here; both generally consenting in the same wish and conclusion, tho', perhaps, induced thereto by different, or even contrary, principles. They who despise this world, and they who court and adore it; Saints and Sinners, here shake hands; and even the Atheist is not singular: For he will pray to *Nature*, and his *Stars*, tho' not to *GOD*, to grant him many days on earth. That life is a desirable good, might, then, be an article in every person's creed; and indeed, the less people believe of *other things*, the more firmly do they generally believe *this*; so that the greatest *Sceptics* are, here, the greatest

greatest *bigots* ; being attached to this life and world, in the same proportion that they doubt of another. We might therefore change and invert the Psalmist's question, and ask—"What man is he that desireth *not* life, and loveth *not* many days?" And, indeed, the question thus put, does, I suppose, as fully and exactly express his meaning, as it does in the other way ; the negative particle making no real alteration in the sense of such interrogatories ; the true intent of which, can be determined only by the nature of the subject, to which they relate.

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IT is farther to be observed, that the royal Psalmist does not here speak with such an air, as would lead one to suspect, that he disapproved or condemned this common desire of living to old age. He speaks of it, not as being in itself criminal ; but as what was natural to man, and therefore innocent ; at least under certain restrictions and limitations. Mortality and death, are unnatural ; as unnatural as disobedience to God, which was the original cause thereof. And mere nature cannot but be fond of life, and desirous of removing death to as great a distance as possible. When I say, that mere *nature* cannot but do so, I mean that a man cannot, unless he is influenced by some high-

SERM. XIII. er principle than that of natural reason and sense ; or else lies under the pressure of some heavy calamity, which makes life a burden to him. The former is the case of those good men, whose treasure and heart and hope are in heaven, “whither the Fore-Runner is for them “entered, even Jesus :” The latter is the case of those wretched, those desperate men, who seek an assylum from pain and sorrow here, in a tragical, voluntary death. Had the desire of long life been in itself criminal, we cannot suppose, that the Psalmist would have encouraged this desire in us, by telling us, in the next words, what is the most likely way to prolong it, and render it happy— “Keep thy tongue from evil ; and thy “lips from speaking guile : depart from “evil, and do good, &c.” That is, Let him that loveth many days, that he may see good, keep his tongue, &c. This is the coherence and natural connexion of the Psalmist’s words.

It is also observable, That long life is often spoken of in scripture, as a good, a real blessing, the reward of piety. You know the story of good *Hezekiah*, when he was “sick unto death.” And God sometimes encourages the obedience of the young, with the hopes of living long.—

“Honor

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“Honor thy Father and thy Mother, that thy days may be long”—Thus also God says of the good man, “Because he hath set his love upon me, I will deliver him—  
 “—with long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.” † So length of days is said to be in the right hand of wisdom. And you know, that to die in youth; to be cut off in the midst of One’s days, by a premature death, is usually considered in scripture, under the notion of a real evil: and it is sometimes represented as the effect of God’s displeasure. To which purpose are the following passages—  
 “Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days”—“Be not wicked over much; for why shouldst thou die before thy time.” Many other passages might be added to these: But it is needless. As long life is the desire of all in general; so the scripture represents it as being no unreasonable, to be sure no criminal, desire: It is spoken of as the reward of piety; good men are encouraged with the hopes of it. Untimely, or premature death, on the contrary, is often considered as an evil; and threatned as a curse.

Now it may be useful, in farther discoursing upon this subject, to inquire, In what respects long life is a blessing? or

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why it should be accounted so? It will then be shown, that the practice of religion tends to prolong the life of man, and to make it happy: So that it is incumbent upon all, who love many days that they may see good, to depart from evil and do good, to fear God and keep his commandments: For "the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous; and his ears are open unto their cry." These things being done, the subject will be closed with some practical reflections, as the time will allow.

SINCE we all naturally desire to live long, it were to be wished, that we desired this upon rational motives, and considerations which it becomes such creatures as we are, to be influenced by. Let us therefore inquire, as was proposed,

FIRST, In what respects long life is desirable? why it should be accounted a blessing? and how far it is really so? In order to our making a proper estimate of life, it is necessary that we consider it as it is; that we consider it with those advantages, and those equally real disadvantages, with which the posterity of *Adam* possess it; that we consider the reference which this life has to another; to the true ends and purposes of life; and that we consider what influence our present

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sent behaviour, will have into our future happiness or misery, according to the principles of religion. Without having all these things before us, and keeping them constantly in view, it is impossible we should judge justly upon this subject: We shall not reason, but only rave; and bewilder our selves in an endless maze of uncertainty and error. If the foundation be not properly laid, the superstructure, however regularly built upon it, will be only as an airy castle in the land of Fairies. If we consider the present life, either as more or less happy than it really is; or if we detach it from futurity, as having no connexion with another state; we shall never come to a just conclusion concerning the point before us: We shall never know in what respects life is a blessing; how far it is so; how it is to be conducted in order to make the most and best of it: We shall always either under or over-rate its value; and the result of all, will be no better than a dream or reverie; at least, it will not be real wisdom, and salutary truth.

LET me therefore remind you of a few facts, and well-known principles, which are to be taken along with us; and which are so fundamental, that without them we cannot duly estimate the value of life; but  
must

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must needs wander far from the truth.

IT is to be premised, then, That the present life is, at best, a scene of great trouble and disquietude. This world was originally designed for a place of happiness, by our Creator: But man's apostacy from God, has changed it, tho' not into an hell, yet into an habitation of much sorrow and vexation. For notwithstanding the many delights, (far more, indeed, than we could claim as our due) which Providence bestows upon us here; yet so numerous, various, and incessant, are the adversities to which we are subjected, that we cannot but groan under them, as under a load and burden, from which we would gladly be delivered, were it possible without putting off these bodies.

IT is also to be observed, with relation to the pleasures of this life; that they are flattened and diminished by old age. Youth is the principal season for relishing and enjoying those, which are properly called animal, sensitive and worldly pleasures, as contradistinguished from rational, moral, and religious. It is said with peculiar propriety—"Rejoice, O young Man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth." For after people get past the meridian of life, the

the relish for such enjoyments gradually fails ; much in the same proportion that animal nature itself decays. To which it is to be added, that old age is usually attended with many positive pains peculiar to itself, youth being a stranger to them, tho' not to all others. And notwithstanding some exceptions, that is doubtless a just representation of advanced age in general, which the Psalmist gives : " If, by reason of strength, they be fourscore years ; yet is their strength labour and sorrow." *Solomon* has dwelt longer upon this gloomy theme of old age ; and painted the scene with deeper shades. The years are then come, when the most say, that they have no pleasure ; † when the sun and the light, the moon and the stars are darkened ; when the keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men bow themselves ; when the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows are darkned ; when they rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music are brought low ; when they are afraid of that which is high, and fears are in the way ; when the almond-tree flourisheth, and the grasshopper is a burden ; and desire itself faileth. This is *Solomon's* description of that old age, with its common infirmities and pains,

† *Ecles. 12.*  
1. —

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pains, to which we are so desirous of living. And tho' we should attain to it; yet it is to be remember'd, that we are not immortal; but must unavoidably die at last, how long soever our lives may be protracted.

WE must also remember, that whether we die young or old, we are to live forever after this mortal course is finished; and either be inexpressibly happy in another state, in the favour and loving-kindness of God; or inconceivably wretched, under his righteous displeasure. This is our time of trial and probation. Tho' we are a sinful, apostate race, yet we are candidates for heaven; so that if we are here reconciled to our Maker, thro' Him that was *made sin for us*; and serve God faithfully, we become his children; being "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with "Christ" to an incorruptible inheritance. And the greater degrees of true wisdom, of holiness and virtue, we attain to in this world; by so much the brighter crown of glory, will the righteous Judge of all, give us hereafter. On the other hand, those who live and die in their sins, are of course and consequence, heirs of the *second death*; and must be miserable in proportion as they have abused the goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering of God;

God ; and misemployed the talents committed to their trust. SERM.  
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THE things which have been briefly premised, are the common, well-known principles of religion ; how little foever they are attended to in a practical sence. And these principles, it is necessary for us to keep continually in our eye, in order to our forming a proper judgment of human life ; in order to our knowing, whether length of days is desirable, or not ; and if it is, for what reasons, and how far it is so.

AND in conformity to these maxims, it may be laid down for a certain truth, That long life is very little, if at all, to be desired for its own sake, or upon account of any happiness to be attained here, which is purely of a worldly nature, detached from religion, and the hopes of a better life to come. If this is really an happy state, upon the whole, considered in itself, and without any reference to another ; it must, indeed, be acknowledged to be a desirable one in the same proportion ; and long life might be wished for, were it only in respect of that felicity which is to be reaped here. I do not absolutely deny this to be the case. But, alas ! when we ballance the account, when we come to weigh the common

SERM. sorrows of life, against the common joys  
 XIII. of it, the scale of happiness will, I believe,  
 very little preponderate, if at all, as to  
 the greater part of mankind. Many of  
 the pains of life are, probably, far more  
 intense and vivid, than any of its pleasures;  
 and they are, certainly, of much longer  
 duration. People sometimes lie in extreme  
 torture for whole days, weeks, and  
 months, if not years together, with scarce  
 any intermission: In comparison of which  
 pains, all sensual, and worldly pleasures,  
 are very short-liv'd; and the most sensi-  
 ble, probably, the shortest. We never  
 find ourselves, nor see others, for any  
 considerable time together swallowed up  
 in joy and rapture, as we often see them  
 swallowed up of sorrow and anguish.

BUT leave uncommon, extraordinary  
 examples both of prosperity and adversity,  
 out of the question for the present; and  
 consider mankind in general, the main  
 body of the species as they rise. They  
 always have been, now are, and always  
 must be, poor and low in the world; ob-  
 liged to toil hard, to rise early, and set  
 up late, in order to get a livelihood for  
 themselves and families, eating the bread  
 of carefulness. In them especially is ful-  
 filled the prediction and threatening, when  
 the ground was cursed for man's sake—

“ In

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“In sorrow shalt thou eat of it.” What do the lower classes of mankind enjoy? what can they hope to enjoy, which should make such a life as this, considered in itself, very desirable to them? If from the land, you turn your eyes to another element; to them that “go down to the sea in ships; that do business in great waters;” is their kind of life any freer from care, disquietude or danger? They have not always *balcony* days; but experience the stormy winds and tempest. “They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and are at their wits end.” Come ashore again; and consider those, whose circumstances place them above the necessity of labouring for their *daily bread*; in the common sense of the phrase. Has not the merchant, for example, various cares and perplexities in his calling; so that quiet often flies him by day, and sleep by night, and so as to make his life almost one continued hurry, and scene of disquietude? And, perhaps, after having made himself a slave almost all his days, to heap up uncertain riches; he either never obtains them, or having obtained them, they suddenly “take to themselves wings, and flee away;”

† *Psal* 107.  
26, 27.

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leaving him only poverty, disappointment, and blasted hopes, to reward his pains! Reflect upon the man of literature, and studious of philosophical wisdom and knowledge: *Solomon*, the greatest proficient in this kind of wisdom; long since observed; that he that "increaseth knowledge," does, in some respects, "increase sorrow" also. So far is it from making a man truly happy! The joy and transport of an EUREKA, is of short continuance: And there are so many things which we desire to *find out*, but cannot, that there is, perhaps, as much disappointment and sorrow; as of solid happiness and contentment, resulting from these researches; the wisest men having the most thorough, feeling sense of their ignorance. Behold one Sage leaping into the Ocean, for grief that he cannot comprehend its ebbing and flowing! See another, precipitating himself into *Ætna*, for sorrow that he could not understand its fires and eruptions! Were they not more tortured on account of what they did not know, than satisfied with what they did? The plain Peasant and Mechanic do not feel these pains of ignorance; nor run thus learnedly out of their wits.

CONSIDER, next, the man of ambition, who "seeketh great things for himself,"

power

power and dignity, and high preferments in the state ; and let him be one, whose birth, qualifications and fortune, (to speak in the language of the world) give him some reasonable prospect of success in the pursuit. But there are many rivals and pretenders, some of whom must fail, if not the greater part of them. And then the disappointed candidate, is probably stung and tormented with resentment and envy. But those who succeed in these pursuits, ascending to the heights they aspired at, generally do so, in one respect, as the saints enter into rest, “ thro’ much tribulation ;” thro’ a long series of vexatious conflicts ; for if they do not often wrestle against *spiritual*, yet they wrestle against *temporal* “ wickednesses in high places.” And after all, the victors do not find that rest to their souls, which they promised themselves in their elevated stations. New desires, new cares, and sollicitudes, spring up from the *root of bitterness*, to perplex and trouble them. And what slippery places do they walk in ? being often raised by one prince, as it were only to be thrown down by his successor, or perhaps by himself. Perplexing cares haunt the courts and palaces of sovereigns ; where gorgeous apparel is often nothing but the splendid covering

of

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of woe: Fools may stare, and envy, thinking those who appear so gay and smiling, must needs be very happy: But wise men know better. Even those who wear a crown, and hold a scepter, often tremble lest one should fall from their head, and the other be wrested from their hand: And he that is so successful in his politics and wars, as to conquer one world, weeps because there is not another for him to ravage; mixing his tears with his triumph.

BESIDES the troubles and vexations which are attendant upon all the different ranks and stations of life, and peculiar to them respectively; there are others, which are common to them all in general: Such as bodily pains and diseases; and the griefs which spring out of the natural relations of life; even out of its nearest alliances, and closest connexions.\* Tho' there is a degree of happiness, yet there is also a degree, sometimes, indeed, a much greater degree, of sorrow and vexation, resulting from these connexions. They are the source of many disquietudes, while the relations subsist; and, often, of more and greater ones, when they come to be dissolved; as they must be, sometime or other, in a world where death reigns, as in

\* —Relations dear, and all the charities

Of Father, Son and Brother—

Milt. Lib. IV.

ours. The dissolution of these natural relations, cannot but deeply affect and grieve all those, who are not "without natural affection." The vices of mankind; covetousness, ambition, the spirit of contention and domination; and those other lusts of men, from whence come wars and fightings, oppression, tyranny and blood; these vices and lusts of men, I say, redouble all the other ills of life; and make it far more restless and miserable, than it would otherwise be. †

TAKING this world as we now find it; and ballancing the happiness and the sorrows of it, as nearly as we can, 'tis evident, that such a life is not much to be desired, for its own sake. One person's experience cannot, indeed, be the exact measure and standard of another's: I, therefore, congratulate all those, upon their happier lot, who have found much more satisfaction and good, than pain, disappointment and sorrow, here, abstracting this life from the prospect of a better to come. Put the supports of religion, and the

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† O shame to men! Devil with Devil damn'd  
Firm concord holds, men only disagree  
Of creatures rational, tho' under hope  
Of heav'nly grace: and, God proclaiming peace,  
Yet live in hatred, enmity and strife  
Amongst themselves, and levy cruel wars,  
Wasting the earth, each other to destroy!

¶ *Milt. Lib. II.*  
Vid. *Matth. 12. 24. — 27.*

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the hopes of futurity, out of the question ; and I should, for my own part, be almost tempted to say with *Job*, “ Let the day  
“ perish wherein I was born, and the  
“ night in which it was said, There is a  
“ man-child conceived. Let that day be  
“ darkness, let not God regard it from a-  
“ bove, neither let the light shine upon it !”\*

\* *Job* 3.  
3,

Were it not that people generally flatter themselves, that things will go much more according to their wishes sometime or other, in this world, than they have done heretofore ; did they not presume, and take it for granted, that they shall live more to their mind in the remaining part of their life, than they have hitherto done, I believe most men of reflection, would, to say the least, be very indifferent, whether they lived much longer or not : I mean, provided they were certain, that the whole term of their existence was comprised within the limits of this life. Many, doubtless, would chuse rather to be annihilated now, than to live over just such another life as their past, an hundred or a thousand times, and then be annihilated at last. † It is generally *that* hope, which

“ springs

† *Dans des malheurs presents, dans l'espoir des plaisirs*  
*Nous ne vivons jamais, nous attendons la vie.*  
*Demain, demain, dit-on, va combler tous nos vœux :*  
*Demain-vient, et nous laisse encore plus malheureux.*  
*Qu' elle est l' erreur, hélas ! du soin qui nous devore,*  
*Nul de nous ne voudrait recommencer son cours !*

“springs eternal in the human breast,” rather than any positive happiness and enjoyment, which makes people so fond of this life. By this hope we are led on from goal to goal, from one stage of life to another, still expecting to find some greater goods and satisfaction than we have found already; which hope usually proves abortive in the end. So that those who have lived long, who have had all the means of procuring worldly happiness which any ever had, and gone the round of every sensitive enjoyment, have at last been compelled to own, that all is but *vanity* and *vexation of spirit*; that what the world calls happiness, is scarce more than a shadow or a dream. And it is wise in others to trust Their experience, lest themselves should also be disappointed in the end.

THE result of what has been said, is, That the present life, considered in itself, if it may be properly called an happy one upon the whole, is yet so but in a very low degree; and therefore, that long life is but little to be desired; for the sake of any happiness that can, probably, be attained to here: (Tho’ I will not contradict the common opinion of the world so much as to say, that the sorrows of life are, generally speaking, more than a bal-

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lance to the enjoyments of it, being abstracted from hope:.) From whence it follows, that life itself, and length of days upon earth, are a blessing, chiefly, considered with relation to futurity; as this state is introductory to another, and as long life here gives us greater opportunity and advantage than a short one, for acquainting ourselves with God; for serving Him, and our generation according to his will; for working out our salvation, and securing to ourselves a happy immortality after death. Such a life as the present, however long, unless considered in this connexion with futurity, and somewhat that is to succeed it, would, I think, demand no great thanks to the Author of it; it being but an inconsiderable good in itself. But taken with its proper connexions and references, it cannot but be looked upon as a great blessing, which demands our sincere praise and thanksgiving to the bountiful Donor thereof. It is a price put into our hands to get that true wisdom; to do that good in the world; to gain those religious qualities and good habits, which will make us in some measure happy even now, and which will, thro' the goodness and grace of God, insure to us, and terminate in, eternal felicity. It is chiefly in these respects,

respects, that long life is desirable. To be candidates for immortal bliss and glory, and put in a way of obtaining them, is certainly a great privilege. And length of days, or a long preparatory, probationary state, where so much is depending as there is upon the present life, is certainly preferable to a short one. The more time is allowed us, the more effectually we may provide for our future well-being; the more we may acquaint ourselves with God and his ways; the greater improvement we may make in piety and virtue. And this will give us greater peace and hope in our latter end; and both qualify us for, and intitle us to, a brighter crown of immortality, than a lower degree of goodness would have done.

SURELY, when we have so great an interest at stake; when the salvation of our souls depends upon our becoming truly wise and good here, it is both natural and reasonable to desire, that this opportunity for making provision for another world, for an *eternal* state, should

\* There is no ground to think, taking the holy scriptures for our guide, that those who live and die in their sins, shall ever have a future opportunity to redeem their present miscarriages; or any other time of trial, after this life is terminated. So far as I am able to see, the utmost which these foolish, miserable men can hope for, is to be annihilated after suffer-

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be protracted as long as may be ; as long as is consistent with the good pleasure of God, and this our mortal condition. The making due preparation for another world, however practicable it may be supposed to be in a short time, is yet a business of so great importance, as no considerate man would choose to have hurried over, or crowded into a little narrow space, if it could be avoided. Possibly a person may be so foolish and improvident, as to neglect in childhood and youth, which are vanity, this most important of all concerns : And when this is the case, as God knows it too often is, is it not a great favour to have a farther time allowed for this purpose ; that so we may redeem in maturer life, or in old age, the follies and misconduct of our youth ; and may do that work at last, which ought to have been done at first ? Ask a man who apprehends he is just going out of the world, and is conscious that he has hitherto lived a wicked, profligate life, what he would give for two or three years more, in which to make his peace with God ? He will tell you, That if he

was

ing unutterable torments : Tho' I do not assert, that they can, according to the scripture account, hope for so great a favour as even this would be, viz. to be utterly blotted out of being ! However, it must be confessed, that some expressions of scripture seem, at first view, to countenance this supposition.

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was owner of a million times as many worlds as ever God created, he would freely give them all for a single year. And even good men, when they have the prospect of a speedy dissolution, unless they have already attained to a full assurance of faith and hope, cannot well help making the prayer which the Psalmist did in his sickness, "O spare me, that I may recover strength before I go hence, and be no more." § From these things we learn the true worth of time, the use and end of life, the improvement which we ought to make of it, how desirable long life is, and for what reasons. All, in a manner, terminates in this one point, viz, the greater advantage and opportunity which length of days gives for preparing for another state of existence, and making our *calling and election sure*. A future state being out of the question, there is so little solid happiness to be enjoyed here, and so many afflictions to be suffered, according to the common course of things, that it may well be questioned whether life is a blessing at all, or not; or a long one, preferable to a short one.

UPON these principles it follows, That a good man, *knowing himself to be such*, and that he is intitled to the great and precious promises of the gospel, has no reason, up-

§ Psal'm 39.  
13.

SERM. on his own account, to desire to live longer, how young soever he may be. The  
 XIII. great end of life is accomplished as to himself; so that for him to die would be gain. If such a man still prefers life to death, it must be solely upon a principle of benevolence to others, and devotedness to the will of God; that he may be instrumental of further promoting his glory in this world, and serviceable to his neighbours, to his offspring, to his dependents, to those, with whom he has some special connexions, and whose good he is deeply concerned for. And it is only upon the principles here laid down, that any tolerable sense can be put upon the apostle's words to his beloved *Philippians*—"Christ shall be magnified in my  
 " body, whether it be by life or by death.  
 " For to me to live is Christ, and to die  
 " is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this  
 " is the fruit of my labour: Yet what  
 " I shall choose, I know not. For I am  
 " in a strait betwixt two; having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ;  
 " for this is far better: But to abide in  
 " the flesh, is more needful for you."†

† *Philip.*  
 1. 20, — To sum up all in a few words: This is such a life as, being considered in itself, is very little, if at all to be prized: Consequently it is of little or no concernment to

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a man, whether he lives few or many days here ; only as this life has respect and reference to another ; and the longer we live, the more effectually we may provide for our future well-being. As soon as we are prepared for another world, especially if this matter is put beyond doubt to ourselves, we have no reason to wish to live longer for our own sakes, and can do so only upon a principle of charity, and submission to the will and providence of God ; *waiting all the days of our appointed time till our change come.* † For good men to desire long life upon this principle, (which is, I think, the only one upon which the Good can rationally desire it,) is truly noble and generous : And the *hoary head*, whether found upon “ such a “ One as *Paul* the aged,” or upon any other person, is truly “ a crown of glory, if it be [thus] found in the way “ of righteousness.” ‡ But the sinner, tho’ “ an hundred years old, shall be accursed.” \*

† Job 14.  
14.‡ Proverbs  
16. 31.

\* Isai. 65.

2032

VIX

SERMON

## S E R M O N XIV.

Of the true Value, Use and End of  
Life ; and the Conduciveness of  
Religion to prolong, and make it  
happy:

Occasioned by the Death of some aged Persons.

PSALM XXXIV, 12, 13, 14, 15.

*WHAT* man is he that desireth Life, and  
loveth many days, that he may see Good ?

*KEEP* thy tongue from evil, and thy lips  
from speaking guile.

*DEPART* from evil, and do good : seek  
peace and pursue it.

*THE* eyes of the *LORD* are upon the right-  
eous ; and his ears are open unto their cry.

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**P**EOPLE are so universally desirous of  
living long in this world ; and pro-  
mise themselves so much happiness from  
it, that it will, doubtless, appear fanciful  
and romantic to many, to say there is  
scarce any thing to be enjoyed here, for  
which it is worth while to live. But still

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this

this is the truth of the case : This world is a scene of folly and confusion, of disappointment and sorrow. Its pleasures are precarious, superficial and transient ; its troubles are certain, substantial, and almost uninterrupted. So that, were there to be an end of us at death, few or no considerate men, could ever expect to enjoy much good ; or, consequently, much desire to live long here. Such is this life, when considered in itself : But the prospect clears up, when we consider the reference which the present state has to, and its connexion with, another after death. Life is valuable, and length of days to be wished for, as it gives us an opportunity to acquaint ourselves with God, and to secure eternal felicity to ourselves, when our days here shall be numbered and finished. In any other respect, whether we live long, or die soon ; yea, whether we live at all or not, seems to be no very interesting point. But this matter was spoken of in the preceding discourse. It was proposed to show, in the

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SECOND Place, That if we are desirous of living long, and of making the best of life while it lasts, it becomes us to conduct ourselves by the maxims of religion: Or, in the language of the Psalmist, to

M m

“ lips

SERM. " lips from speaking guile ; to depart  
 XIV. " from evil, and do good ; to seek peace

" and pursue it." The practice of pure, undefiled religion, has a natural tendency to prolong human life, and to render it, in some degree, happy. For the righteous are not only intitled to the favour of almighty God hereafter, but to his peculiar care and guardianship in this world. Even here, " the eyes of the Lord " are upon the righteous ; and his ears " are open unto their cry." Godliness hath promise both of *the life that now is*, and also of that which is *to come* ; so that it is *profitable unto all things*. † And all kinds of arguments are used in the holy scriptures, to induce us thereto. The principal of them, are those which are drawn from a future state of rewards and punishments. But those that may be drawn from present convenience and inconvenience, tho' of far less weight and force with a wise man, are not wholly passed over in the sacred oracles : And, indeed, the latter may possibly have a greater influence upon some minds, than the former.

† 1 Tim. 4.  
8.

THE Psalmist takes it for granted, that the reason why men generally desire life, and love many days, is, that they may *see good* : They do not desire life, merely for the sake of living ; but in hopes of living

ving happily. And he assures us, that the most likely means, both of prolonging our lives, and of making them quiet and happy, is to pursue the paths of piety and virtue. This being the manifest scope and drift of the passage under consideration, this second head of discourse, I think, naturally resolves itself into two propositions; viz,

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THAT the practice of religion is the most probable means of *lengthening* out our lives: And

THAT it is also the most likely way for us to *see good*, or to live happily. God has connected the duty and interest of men together, not only so that they shall, in the result of things, find themselves gainers by serving Him; but so that religion is advantageous to them in the *Interim*, even in this world; only the case of *persecution for righteousness sake*, is to be excepted.

1<sup>st</sup>. THE practice of religion is the most likely means of *prolonging* human life. It has a direct natural tendency to lengthen out a man's days; while irreligion and vice have plainly a contrary one. All kinds of intemperance, debauchery and excess, tend to the death of the body, as well as to the destruction of the soul; so that they who "live after the flesh," often

SERM. *die* even a temporal death, much sooner  
 XIV. than they would otherwise have done.

Voluptuousness and sensuality disorder all the springs, and poison the fountain of animal life, bringing diseases upon the body, and most certainly shortening a man's days in a greater or less degree. How many persons, have, by their criminal excesses, impaired their health; and gradually ruined their constitution, so that they have scarce "lived out half their days?" There are, perhaps, as many, even in Christendom, who have died martyrs to the *Bacchus* and *Venus* of the Pagans, as have ever died martyrs to Christ.

ALL irregular affections, and inordinate passions, such as anger, malice, pride and envy, prey also upon the spirits and life; tho' not so apparently, perhaps, as bodily excesses. These mental disorders are the sickness of the soul; and by virtue of that union and sympathy, which there is between the soul and body, impair the health of the latter also. Even those vices of the mind, from which we may not suspect any present harm, sap and undermine us; gradually wearing away the strength, the vigor, and the lives of men. So that all the lusts both of the flesh and of the spirit, may be considered as a slow consumption, (tho', indeed, not

a very slow one in some persons!) which will prove mortal at last, tho' not feared at present. For notwithstanding some very dissolute men; men, none of whose passions have been under due restraint, have lived to a great age; yet, in all probability, these very persons might have lived a considerable time longer, had they been sober and *temperate in all things*, as those that *strive for the mastery*. Moderation in all corporeal gratifications and pleasures, and a mind freed from inordinate affections, from extravagant desires, from irregular, ungovernable passions, are life both to the body and the soul; they are "health to the navel and marrow to the bones."\* Or, in those other emphatical words of Solomon, "A sound heart is the life [even] of the flesh; but envy is the rottenness of the bones." § What is here said particularly of envy, is also true of all other moral disorders of the mind; of all vicious affections of the heart. Besides; the vices of men do not seldom bring them to an untimely end, from the hands of civil justice; and, sometimes, even from their own hands. Who will harm us, if we are followers of that which is good? Who would lay violent hands upon himself, were he not either deprived of his senses, or carried away by vicious passions,

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\* Pro. 3.  
8.

§ Chap. 14.  
ver. 30.

SERM. passions, and extravagant desires, which  
 XIV. have got the mastery over him?

UPON the whole, it is manifest that  
 “righteousness tendeth unto life” in this  
 world, and sin unto death. Had man-  
 kind persevered, from the first, in their  
 obedience to God, in their original inno-  
 cence, death would not have entered into  
 the world at all: For “righteousness is  
 “immortal.” And altho’ we are all now  
 under the sentence of death, it being “ap-  
 pointed unto men once to die”; yet the  
 execution of that sentence is naturally  
 hastened on the faster, the more we  
 deviate from the paths of righteousness.  
 And tho’ religion cannot make us immor-  
 tal here, yet it has a very obvious ten-  
 dency, in divers respects, to protract our  
 days upon the earth. But

2<sup>ly</sup>. THE practice of religion is also the  
 most probable means of rendering life *easy*  
 and *happy* to us, causing us to *see good*. It  
 is, indeed, no great degree of felicity that  
 any of the sons of *Adam* can reasonably  
 hope for, in this imperfect state. How-  
 ever, while we live, it is our wisdom to  
 make the best of life, to pass thro’ it with  
 as little sorrow, and as much peace and  
 satisfaction, as is consistent with such a  
 state. And if we aim at doing so, it be-  
 comes us to live under a sense of God and  
 re-

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religion ; to keep another world in mind, and to regulate our tempers and manners with a view thereto. It is in this way, if in any, that happiness is to be found: And indeed, *Solomon*, who had long and sufficiently tried all others, tho' to no purpose, came at last to this conclusion, That to "fear God and keep his commandments, "is the whole of man : " That the ways of wisdom are "ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace ; that she "is a tree of life to them that lay hold "upon her ; and that happy is every one "who retaineth her."\* The paths of irreligion and vice are full of briars and thorns, like the earth after God had cursed it. Whatever dissolute men may imagine, it is only wisdom, in the practical sense of *Solomon*, that will be productive of true peace and felicity. Sincere happiness grows not upon folly and vice ; this is a foil under the divine malediction. Men may "weary themselves in the way "of wickedness ;" but they will not find the way of peace, or any rest to their souls, till they find the way of virtue, and walk therein. Vice and folly as certainly make men miserable in a degree, even now, as they will terminate in irretrievable ruin: Religion as certainly contributes to the happiness of human life now, as it will

\* *Pro. 3.*  
17. 18.

SERM. will issue in eternal felicity. For  
 XVI. IT is to be observed, That in the same  
 proportion that religion tends to health  
 and length of days, it is also productive  
 even of temporal happiness. The felicity  
 of animal life, such as it is, has a close  
 connexion with health and soundness of  
 body ; and is, indeed, inseparable there-  
 from. The corporeal diseases which in-  
 temperance and other vices bring upon  
 men, and by which their lives are cur-  
 tailed, also diminish their happiness ; ren-  
 dering them incapable of relishing and  
 enjoying even those animal pleasures,  
 which are the grand object of their pursuit.  
 Do you imagine that he who, by crimi-  
 nal indulgences and excesses, and a liber-  
 tine course of life, has enfeebled his body,  
 and impaired his health, can receive as  
 much happiness from those objects which  
 God has accommodated to our nature,  
 considered as sensitive creatures, as One  
 who, by observing the rules of sobriety  
 and moderation, preserves himself in  
 health and vigor ? Far from it ! Such a  
 man frustrates his own aim : and while he  
 is criminally grasping at more pleasure  
 than he ought, deprives himself in a great  
 measure, even of that which he might in-  
 nocently enjoy ; yea, often brings such  
 pains and diseases upon himself, as make  
 life

life insupportable to him. There is a **SERM. XIV.**  
 great variety of evils, too many to be now  
 enumerated, which are naturally conse-  
 quent upon these libertine indulgences.  
 "Who hath woe? who hath sorrow?  
 "who hath contentions? who hath bab-  
 "bling? who hath wounds without  
 "cause? They that tarry long at the  
 "wine, they that go to seek mixt wine—  
 "At the last it biteth like a serpent and  
 "stingeth like an adder—Thine eye shall  
 "behold strange women, and thine heart  
 "shall utter perverse things. Yea thou  
 "shall be as he that lieth down in the  
 "midst of the sea, or as he that lieth  
 "upon the top of a mast." \* In short,  
 nothing is more manifest, than that what  
 is usually called a life of pleasure, by a  
 strange catachresis and abuse of language,  
 is really a life of pain and wretchedness;  
 and that men cannot enjoy the happiness  
 for which they are designed, considered  
 only as animals, in its greatest height and  
 perfection, while they violate the laws of  
 virtue in the pursuit of it.

\* *Pro. 23.*  
29.

RELIGION and virtue are also condu-  
 cive to the felicity of life, as they gene-  
 rally procure the esteem and good will of  
 men; even of those, who have little or no  
 religion themselves. They promote that  
 peace and good understanding betwixt

SERM. man and man, in which happiness here  
 XIV. very much consists. "When a man's ways  
 please the Lord, he maketh even his  
 enemies to be at peace with him." This  
 is not, indeed, universally the case. Even  
 our blessed Saviour and his apostles, were  
 as much or more maligned by the world,  
 than any other persons who were ever in  
 it. Here were some peculiar circumstan-  
 ces: But in general it is unquestionably  
 true, that a religious and virtuous con-  
 duct attracts the good-will, and procures  
 the good offices of mankind. A good  
 man is far less likely to get into trouble-  
 some contentions and broils, and to have  
 enemies, than a proud, ambitious, cove-  
 tous or wrathful one. Daily observation  
 confirms this. And there are some vir-  
 tues, which have a more immediate and  
 direct tendency to conciliate the friendship  
 of men; to promote and to establish that  
 good harmony which is so conducive to  
 happiness: I mean those virtues, which  
 are more especially alluded to in the text—  
 Let him that would *see good*, "keep his  
 tongue from evil, and his lips from speak-  
 ing guile let him depart from evil, and  
 do good; seek peace, and pursue it."  
 It is moreover, and indeed very par-  
 ticularly to be observed, That inward  
 peace, and tranquility of mind, is not to  
 be

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be obtained but by the practice of religion. We are moral and accountable creatures; and have an immediate consciousness and feeling of our being so. And till a man has taken a fatal opiate, and laid his conscience asleep, it will frequently call him to a severe reckoning for his evil deeds. It is an accuser, witness and judge, which he can neither fly from, nor easily bribe. And how unhappy is that man, whose own heart condemneth him? who, instead of being able to look up to his Maker with confidence, cannot even look himself in the face, without blushing and trembling? This, in general, is the case of wicked men; there is no peace to them. Even in their greatest prosperity, they are frequently disquieted by conscious guilt; and in adversity, that God, who is the confidence of the ends of the earth, is a terror to them. Thus are they "like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." How different is the situation of the good man, at peace in his own breast, at peace with his maker? in prosperity, having all his enjoyments heightened by conscious virtue and integrity; in adversity, having God for his refuge, a very present help in trouble, in which the help of man is vain! Verily, "the

† Isa. 57.  
20.

SERM. " work of righteousness is peace ; and  
 XIV. " the effect of righteousness, quietness  
 " and assurance for ever." But

RELIGION is more especially fruitful of happiness, as it gives the glorious prospect of endless felicity in the world to come. " We are the children of God, " says the Apostle ; and if children, then " heirs ; heirs of God, and joint heirs " with Christ—For I reckon that the " sufferings of this present time, are not " worthy to be compared with the glory " which shall be revealed in us." \* With-  
 \* Rom. 8. out this hope of glory, honor and immor-  
 16,— tality, which good men, have thro' Him that has abolished death, we might say of all things here below—" Miserable comforters are they all." What satisfaction can a considerate man take in this world, who knows that he has both a mortal body and an immortal soul, provided he has no stable, fixed hope of a better life to come? no hope, which is " as an anchor of the " soul, both sure and stedfast, entering " into that which is within the veil?" Wicked men cannot have this hope ; or at least, if they have it, it must be by deceiving themselves. And without it, one would think that the various sorrows and sufferings of this present time, together with the natural fears of death, must bear very

very hard upon a man's spirits, leaving but little room for mirth and joy : But with it, all things are tolerable ; it lightens every burden ; it inhances every blessing ; it mitigates every sorrow ; it gilds the most gloomy scenes of life ; and is a perpetual cordial to the fainting soul. It animates a good man, in every condition ; it gives him strength to do, and resolution to bear all things. It delights at home and abroad ; in company and in solitude : It brightens our days, and sweetens our nightly slumbers. From youth to age, it preserves the good in perfect peace, their minds being stayed upon God. Thro' this, they are happy even without those possessions and enjoyments, in which others place all their felicity ; so that "having nothing, they possess all things." It at once disarms both life and death of their sting and terrors—O blessed hope ! it is thou which turnest mourning into gladness of heart, darkness into light, and death into life : It is thou which turnest the sufferings of time, into the triumphs of immortality ; and causest us, even in this vale of tears, "to rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory!"

It appears, then, that the practice of religion tends naturally both to lengthen out our lives, and to make them happy ;  
and

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and that vice and irreligion have the contrary tendency, to shorten, and make them miserable. But when I speak of religion as having such a natural tendency, this is not designed, by any means, to exclude the providence of God, his care and guardianship of the righteous. Things have no other tendency, than what God himself has given them: It is He that has established all their connexions, and who constantly maintains them by his power and providence, "working all in all." If the lives of those who fear and serve God, are *prolonged*; or if such persons *see more good* than others, it is because "the eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry;" as it is expressed in the text. On the other hand, if the wicked *die in youth*; or if they live an *unquiet, joyless* life, it is because "the face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth;" as it is expressed in the verse immediately following. God's providence is minutely concerned in every thing that happens to us: And both the prayers of the righteous, and the blasphemies of the wicked, are loud and vocal in his ears. They are heard from the depths of the earth to the height of heaven, "going up for a memorial before God";

God"; the one for good, the other for SERM. 2  
 evil. And altho' this is not a state of XIV.  
 retribution, but of discipline; yet God  
 even now knoweth them that are his, and  
 shews them his peculiar favour; while he,  
 in some degree, chastizes the impious and  
 vicious, in the course of his providence.  
 He has actually connected our duty and  
 our happiness together, even in this world;  
 at least so far as to manifest, that He is the  
 righteous moral governor of the world;  
 and that *They* alone can be happy, who  
 truly fear him, and work righteousness.  
 Irreligious, dissolute men, may flatter and  
 deceive themselves, if they please. But  
 even they, in their *lucid intervals*, know  
 that this is true. — It is the immutable de-  
 cree of heaven, that none shall find their  
 account, even at present, in departing  
 from the living God; from the "fountain  
 of living waters"! They may, indeed,  
 hew out unto themselves cisterns; but they  
 will prove leaky, "broken cisterns, which  
 can hold no water"; which will not  
 retain a drop of pure, unadulterated hap-  
 piness; but transmit it all thro', leaving  
 only the scum, the dregs, and the filth  
 behind. ¶ That foolish prodigal who  
 leaves his Father's house, "where there  
 is bread enough, and to spare," tho' he  
 would fain fill his belly with the husks  
 "which

SERM. "which the swine do eat," shall still remain unsatisfied: He shall even "perish  
 XIV. "with hunger" in a strange land, unless he *comes to himself*; unless he "arises  
 "and goes to his Father." Then, and not till then, shall he know what happiness means, when his Father shall say—"Bring  
 "forth the best robe, and put it on him;  
 "and put a ring on his hand, and shoes  
 "on his feet; and bring hither the fatted  
 "calf and kill it; and let us eat and be  
 "merry: For this my son was dead, and  
 "is alive again; he was lost and is  
 § Luke 15. "found."§ In such language as this, He who *came to seek and to save that which was lost*, represents the misery of those who are "far from God;" together with their happiness upon their return to Him: Which description, tho' 'tis allegorical, is neither the less intelligible, nor the less emphatical.

BUT I must now close this subject with some reflections, as was proposed.

THOSE persons who have already attained to old age, agreeably to their wishes in youth, have great cause of thankfulness to the God of their lives. It is because they have obtained help from Him, that they yet survive. This, as has been already shown, is a great favour and blessing; if not on account of any happiness of a worldly

worldly nature, yet, at least, in respect of SERM. 2  
 the opportunity which length of days XIV.  
 gives men, for acquainting themselves ~  
 with God, and providing for their eternal  
 welfare. And certainly those who are  
 thus favoured of heaven, ought to return  
 their grateful acknowledgments thither.

THOSE of us also, whose friends, espe-  
 cially whose Parents (commonly our best  
 friends) are preserved to old age, ought  
 to bless God upon this account. It de-

mands our gratitude, both as it is a fa-  
 vour to them, whom we ought to esteem  
 and reverence, and also to ourselves.

The young need the counsels, the admoni-  
 tions, and good example of the aged:

And ought to look upon it as a great  
 blessing of heaven, when their pious pa-  
 rents are thus preserved to them. But in-

stead hereof, some ungracious children  
 seem to think it a burden and misfortune

to them, when those, from whom they  
 immediately derived their own being, live

to a great age; having their thoughts more  
 fixed, probably, upon an earthly, than

upon an heavenly inheritance. But it is  
 certainly very inconsistent with the honor

which we owe to our *Father* and *Mother*,  
*that our own days may be long* in the world,

to think the time long and tedious till  
*They* are taken out of it. And all such

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 disrespectful, undutiful children, better deserve the title of *bastards* than of *sons*, could it be given them without an implicit reflection upon those, for whom they ought to have a greater regard and reverence: He whose breast is warmed with true filial piety, will be desirous of protracting the life of his parents as long as may be; and of rendering age and infirmities as supportable and agreeable to them as he can; even after he can no longer expect to receive any considerable benefit from them. The death of a parent will always rather seem too early, than too long deferred, in the opinion of such persons. However, they will also remember, that men are born to die; and submissively bear the separating stroke, when it comes: Knowing, that tho' Father and Mother forsake them, they have a Father in heaven, eternal and immortal, tho' invisible; and whose paternal care is exercised over all *his offspring*; especially over those who "have received the spirit of adoption, "whereby we cry, Abba, Father!" †—  
 † Rom. 8. 15. But to proceed with our reflections—

It deserves the serious consideration of the Aged, whether they have lived so long to any good purpose? whether they have given their attention to the great ends of life? and made such an improvement

ment of their time, that they can give a good account of it to God; when he calls them to appear before Him? Which time is now near at hand, even at the door; since they cannot expect to survive much longer. It becomes not One, who is himself young, to be very officious in catechising or counselling the Old. But, methinks, if I were myself old, I should judge it proper to catechise myself, in some such manner as this—How have I employ'd those years which have roll'd over my head? how demeaned myself under that goodness, forbearance and long-suffering, which God has exercised towards me? Have I considered life as the gift and blessing of God, to be employed chiefly in learning his will, in acquainting myself with his Son Jesus Christ, and in doing his commandments, in order to my “having right to eat of the tree of life”? Have I glorified God in the world? and laid myself out, to be serviceable to my fellow men, in the improvement of the talents committed to me? Has it been my daily care and concern to approve myself to Him, who searcheth the hearts of men; and who will finally “give to every man according to his deeds”? Has the salvation of my soul been the grand object of my attention, as

SERM. almost the only thing that is worthy of it?  
 XIV. Have all other desires and pursuits been  
 habitually subordinated to this? What  
 proficiency in true goodness and holiness  
 have I made, during this long probatio-  
 nary state? Have I gained the mastery of  
 my lusts and passions; and, thro' the  
*Spirit, mortified the deeds of the body*, so  
 that I am now prepared to leave that  
 world, in which I have lived so long?  
 How many of my *contemporaries* are al-  
 ready numbered with the dead; while  
 I am still among the living? Where  
 should I now have been, had God taken  
 me out of the world in middle age, or in  
 youth, with *them*? in the paradise of  
 God, or in the regions of woe! Such ques-  
 tions as these seem proper for every aged  
 person to put to himself. Nor is it to be  
 doubted, but that many could truly answer  
 them in the manner, in which no one  
 could help wishing them resolved for  
 himself; all being desirous, whenever  
 they die, to "die the death of the righ-  
 teous." But, alas! is there not reason  
 to think, that some could not answer  
 such inquiries to their satisfaction? Is  
 there not reason to fear, that many have  
 spent their days in a very different man-  
 ner? in pursuing the vanities of this world,  
 without any serious, habitual concern a-  
 bout

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bout another? And that even now, when gray hairs are here and there upon them, they consider it not? I would observe the apostle's direction, "not rebuking an Elder, but intreating him as a Father, and the younger men as brethren." Let me beseech the Aged, with all due respect, to look both backward and forward; to reflect upon the life which they have already lived, and almost spent; and to consider that other life and state, which they are so soon to enter upon, according to the common course of nature. Possibly some of them may, upon a little reflexion, see that tho' they have lived so long, they have not lived to so good purpose as they might have done: And others, that they have not yet lived to any good purpose at all; but neglected the grand business and concernment of life, 'till life is now almost brought to a period. If there are any of them, who have not yet numbered their days aright, nor applied their hearts to wisdom, it behoves them to do it now, and to redeem the time. Their days which now remain may, probably, in one sense, be very easily numbered!—

THERE is scarce a more melancholly sight to a person of sober reflection, than a man who is just dropping into his grave with old age, still tho'tless of God, and  
another

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another state. It is matter of great grief to the wife and good, to see the Young thus inconsiderate ; thus forgetful of the God that made them ; thus regardless of their future interest : But to see the Aged so, is much more sorrowful. There is considerable ground to hope, that the Young may live to see the error of their ways, and become wise unto salvation. But when life is already, in a manner, run out ; when men have, as it were, one foot in the grave ; and are still pursuing vanity, straws and bubbles, with all the thoughtless levity and wantonness of youth ; there is, alas ! but little ground for hope with respect to them. If their case is not quite desperate, it is not far from being so. And surely those who have spent a long life in sin and folly, must have a much more awful account to give of themselves at last, than they who have spent only a short one in the same manner. They have “ heap-  
 \* James 5. “ ed treasure together for the last days ; ” \*  
 3. a “ treasure of wrath against the day of  
 † Rom. 2 “ wrath.” † Altho’ length of days, con-  
 5. sidered with reference to the true ends of life, is a great blessing ; yet those who thus misimprove it, convert it into the heaviest of curses : And good were it for those who thus become old in iniquity, and die therein, if they had died in youth ;  
 yea,

yea, if they had passed away like an *untimely birth*!

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BUT this subject must now be applied to the Young, to whom, indeed, it most properly belongs—*My Brethren*, do you “desire life, and love many days, that “you may see good?” I know you desire it. Hearken then to the counsel of divine wisdom: “Keep your tongues from “evil, and your lips from speaking guile; “depart from evil and do good”—Be assured from reason, from the experience of others, and especially from the infallible word of God, that *that* long life and happiness, of which you are so desirous, cannot be wisely and successfully fought after in any other course, than that of sober religion and virtue. The Young are generally hard to be persuaded of this truth, however certain, and however important it is to them, both with relation to this world and another, to time and to eternity. They please themselves with false notions of happiness; of an happiness independent of God, the source of all being, of all good;—of happiness in the abundance which a man possesseth; of happiness in worldly honors and preferments; of happiness in a sensual course of life. All these imaginations, depend upon it, if God is true, are mere delusions of the Devil,

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Devil, both God's enemy and your's. To pursue happiness thus, to the neglect of God and your souls, is a most certain, infallible way, to make yourselves miserable; miserable in some degree now, and inconceivably so hereafter. And by taking such a course you will, probably, shorten those lives which you love so well, and which were given you for far nobler purposes. "O that you were wise, that you understood this, that you would consider your latter end!" † For otherwise, you will only weary yourselves in seeking felicity, where it is not to be found; instead of seeking it in God, and in his service, where none ever sought it, and missed of it. Dost thou think that religion is a melancholly, joyless thing? Dost thou think we would rob thee of thy happiness, under the appearance of friendship? Dost thou think there is no true happiness, but in wealth and equipage? in earthly splendor, and sensual gratifications? Is thy heart thus attached to toys and vanities?—Alas! thy guardian \* Angel weeps over thee, ready to resign his charge, fearing lest he does not now minister to One, who shall be an heir of salvation! † Yea, He who was once made a little lower than the angels for thy redemption, but is now crowned with glo-

† Deut. 32.  
29.

\* Matthew  
18. 10.

† Hebrews  
1. 14.

ry and honor, § and worshipped by them; † even He, could grief enter the heavenly mansions, would weep over thee, as he once wept over *Jerusalem!* † Yea, His Father and your Father, His God and your God, is moved with pity for thee, saying, “How shall I give thee up!—how shall I deliver thee!—Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together!” \*

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§ *Heb. 2. 9.*  
† *Chap. 1.*  
*ver. 6.*  
† *Luke 19.*  
*41.*

\* *Hos. 11.*  
*8.*

THO' you may now, for want of consideration and experience, think you can be happy without being truly religious and virtuous; yet all the wise and good men who have gone before you, have born their united testimony, at the close of life, to the emptiness and vanity, and vexatious nature of those things, which you are so apt to set your hearts upon; and from which you promise yourselves felicity. Have they not all declared, at a time when they could have no temptation to deceive us, that they could never find any substantial good or satisfaction, in these things? Have they not, at the same time, born witness to the excellency of religion? to the solid peace, comfort, and joyful hope, resulting therefrom? Have they not declared, that their real happiness arose, in the course of their lives, not in proportion to their wealth, honors,

SERM. and sensual indulgences, but in proportion to their care to please God, and to do good in the world? Have not those, who have had much more experience of what it is in the power of riches, worldly honors and pleasures, to give their votaries, than any of Us can ever expect to have?—have not the Lords of millions, the great men of the earth, even mighty kings and potentates, as well as others, in lower life, born this testimony? Have not wise and good men, near the close of life, tho't that warnings and admonitions of this sort, were the most valuable legacy they could leave to their offspring, and surviving friends? to them, whom they were so far from envying any thing truly good, that they loved them as their own souls? Shall we pay no regard to the experience and testimony of so great a *cloud of witnesses*, who being dead yet speak; exhorting us to be followers of *them*, who already *inherit the promises*? Yea, rather, shall we not regard that great, that *faithful and true Witness*, who came from heaven on purpose to guide miserable men thither? even Him who has said, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” †  
 †—Him who has said, “My peace I give  
 “unto

† *Matthew*  
 11. 29.

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27.

“unto you; not as the world giveth,  
 “give I unto you: Let not your heart  
 “be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” †  
 Shall we seek for happiness in this world,  
 where none ever yet found it? Or where  
 none, who properly seek it, seek it in vain?  
 Happy are they, who learn wisdom from  
 the mistakes and follies of others! Be-  
 ware of the rocks upon which so many  
 thousands have been shipwreck'd, and  
 wholly destroyed. Some who have run  
 upon them, have, indeed, been so hap-  
 py as to get off again: And they have  
 kindly set up their beacons and landmarks  
 for the direction of those, who were to  
 fail after them upon the sea of life; where  
 there is many a *Scylla* and *Charybdis*, and  
 as many enchanting *Sirens* to draw us to  
 them. We have, besides those landmarks,  
 an heavenly Pilot: Who, then, will pity  
 us, if we refuse to be directed by him; and  
 will run upon certain destruction?—Even  
*He that made us, will not have mercy upon*  
*us; and he that formed us, will shew us no*  
*favour!* And a tendency to the North.

If we desire to live long; if, to pass  
 thro' the present scene with comfort; if,  
 to die in peace in a good old age; and if,  
 to live and triumph forever in that glori-  
 ous state, where there is neither an infant  
 of days, nor an hoary head; if this be

SERM. our desire, let us devote ourselves, in the  
 XIV. days of our youth, to the service of our  
 great and good Creator. We may then  
 hope that those words will be verified in  
 us, "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a  
 full age, like as a shock of corn cometh  
 in, in his season. Lo this, we have  
 searched it, so it is; hear it, and know  
 thou it FOR THY GOOD."\*

\* Job 5.  
 26, 27.

IN fine; Let all bear in mind the great  
 end of life; and let us all, young men and  
 maidens, old men and children, praise the  
 name of the Lord; serving the God of  
 our Fathers, with a perfect heart, and  
 with a ready mind. Tho' religion allows  
 us, while we live here, to be conversant  
 about our secular affairs; and altho' even  
 some good men often give a great part of  
 their attention to this world, (indeed much  
 more than they ought to do) yet it is es-  
 sential to the Christian character, that a  
 man's heart and hope are habitually in  
 heaven. The Mariner's needle, when du-  
 ly touched by the magnet, has a direction  
 and tendency to the North: And tho' it  
 may be disturbed, so that it will tremble  
 and waver for a time betwixt the two  
 poles, or even seem to incline most to  
 the south; will yet fix and come to a  
 stand, only where it ought to do. Thus  
 the soul of a good man, being thoroughly  
 touch-

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touched by the spirit of the living God, will ever tend towards Him, and point to heaven. Tho' it may be disturbed by attractions from below; and waver for a moment betwixt God and the world, or even seem to incline more to earth than heaven; yet it will come to a stand, and fix, towards no other point in the hemisphere besides the *Zenith*; whither He, who once descended, is again ascended, even far above all principality and power; whither He is gone to prepare a place, a safe retreat from the storms and disturbances of this impure, inclement region, for all his faithful servants; *that where He is, they may be also, and behold his glory.* If the great end of life is answered; if we truly know God and Jesus Christ; if we are "accounted worthy to obtain THAT world, and the resurrection from the dead;" § it is not very material whether we die in youth, or in advanced age. The death of those who live the longest, is sadly premature, if they die in sin and folly: It is, in the worst of senses, to die before our time, to be taken out of this world unprepared for another, unless it is by being fitted for destruction, and becoming ripe for vengeance! On the other hand, the death of those who live the shortest space, cannot well be said to be premature, provided

§ Luke. 20.

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ded they die truly wise and virtuous. To be fit for heaven, is in effect, to be old, and ripe for the grave. And some are so happy, as even in early life, to attain to that substantial wisdom and goodness, to which old age is often a stranger; So that you see "Honourable age is not that which standeth in length of time, or that is measured by number of years; But wisdom is the gray hair unto men, and an unspotted life is old age."

\* Wisdom  
4. 8, 9.

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T H E E N D.

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The most material ERRATA of the Press; those in the pointing,  
and even some in the spelling, being omitted.

Page,	Line,	Read,
13	13	effectual means &c.
16	12	from the bot. by others heretofore.
25	8.	bot. terrestrial &c.
31	3	disciple above his Lord &c.
32	4	not be the word &c.
35	1	marginal note passage &c.
36	10	to better &c.
45	3	one and another &c.
58	7	bot. doctrine &c.
59	3	bot. eclipse all the mental &c.
60	1	insusceptible &c.
65	11	be made truly good &c.
71	14	bot. reasonably &c.
76	12	at the same time &c.
79	9	bot. men in ; in order &c.
87	9	they call &c.
88	10	flashy &c.
101	3	bot. than the whole current &c.
105	3	inconsiderable soever &c.
107	6	consistency &c.
113	1	reasonings &c.
121	7	were not &c.
131	13 & 14.	bot. many things which &c.
139	8 & 9	bot. shall actually &c.
141	5	internal sanctity &c.
142	2	bot. to a great &c.
167	14	bot. than God &c.
243	2	bot. often said by &c.
251	4	abideth &c.
286	11	that there is &c.
318	14	receive it from the &c.
325	15	marg. note bot. guilty as to &c.
327	20	marg. note bot. the term law &c.
349	15	bot. reasonably look &c.
363	7	good men &c.
377	5	bot. Is it not &c.
389	9	bot. <i>SECONDLY</i> , to consider &c.
400	11	bot. distrusted yourself &c.
412	3	every man &c.
472	ult. Marg.	<i>voudroit</i> &c.
486	7	their original &c.





