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*The necessary and unchangeable Difference of
Moral Good and Evil.*

18

A
S E R M O N

Preached at the

A S S I Z E S

HELD AT

WINCHESTER

BY THE

Hon. Mr. Baron REYNOLDS and Mr. Baron CLARKE,

On Wednesday, March 2, 1742-3.

BY

ROBERT EDE N, B. D.

Rector of *Headbourne Worthy* near *Winchester*, and Chaplain to the
Right Honourable *William Earl of Coventry*.

*Published at the Request of the High-Sheriff, and the Gentlemen of the
Grand Jury.*

L O N D O N :

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To the Worshipful

EDWARD HOOKER, Esq;

High-Sheriff of the County of *Southampton*,

And to the

GENTLEMEN of the GRAND JURY,

<i>The Hon.</i> John Wallop, <i>Esq;</i>	John Bonham Smith, <i>Esq;</i>
Powlett St. John, <i>Esq;</i>	Henry Foxcraft, <i>Esq;</i>
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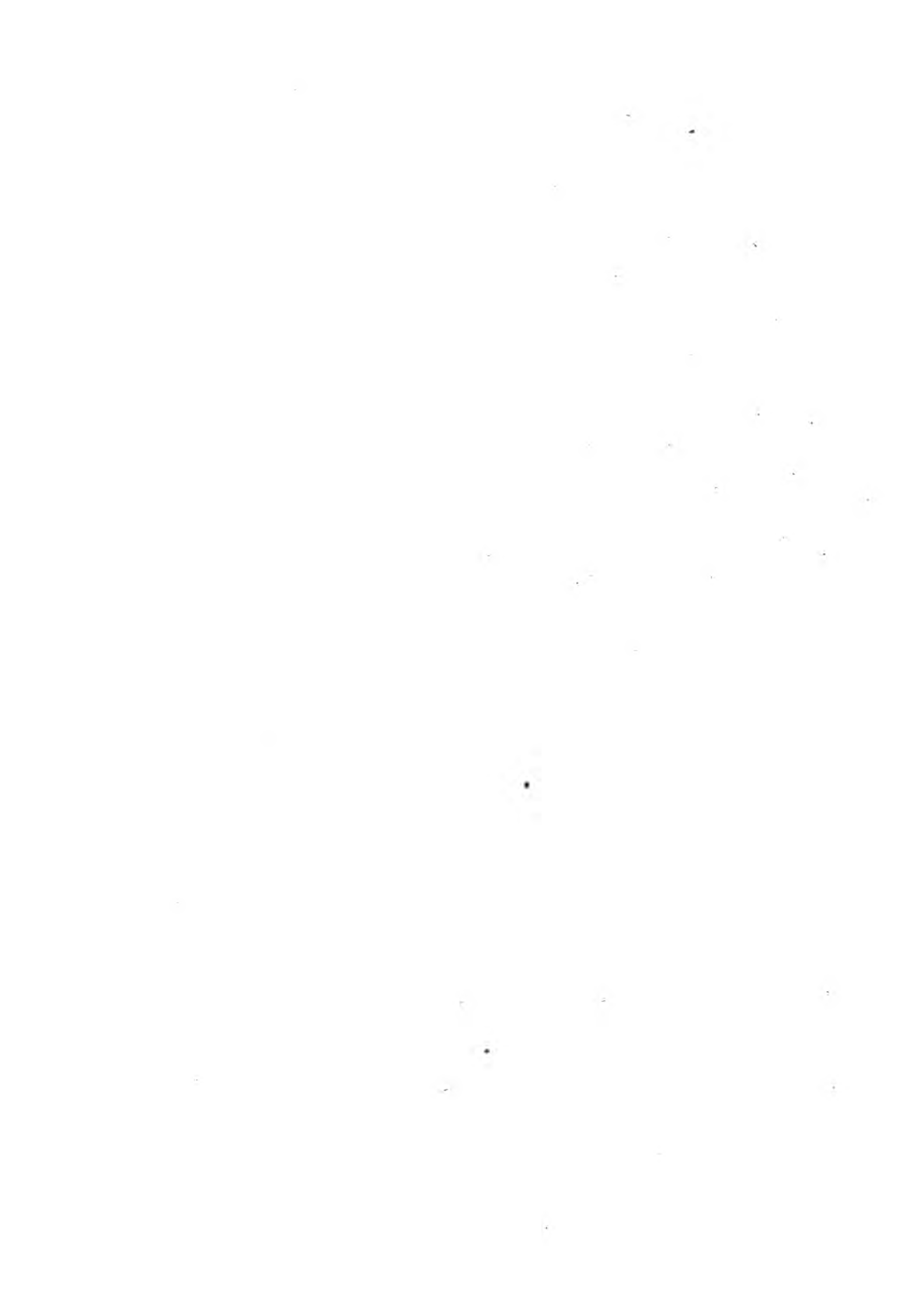
This Sermon,

Published at their Request,

Is humbly dedicated,

By their most Obedient Servant,

Robert Eden.



Isaiah V. 20.

Wo unto them, that call Evil Good, and Good Evil; that put Darknefs for Light, and Light for Darknefs; that put Bitter for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter.



THE plain Intent of the metaphorical Representations here made use of by the Prophet seems to be this; — That since Moral Truths, when simply proposed to the Understanding, often fail of that serious Attention and Regard, which is due to them, they might be more clearly perceived, and more effectually recommended, when compared with such familiar and sensible Objects, as are more apt to strike the Imagination; and that strictly speaking, as *St. Paul* expresses it with peculiar Force and Elegance, we might have *our Senses exercised to discern both Good and Evil.* Heb. v. 14.

It must indeed be owned, that the Intellectual Faculties, if properly disposed, are as quick in apprehending the natural Decency and Comeliness of what is right and honest, and the natural Turpitude and Deformity of what is wrong and dishonest, as the Sight is in discerning the Variety of Figures and Colours; or the Ear in perceiving the Harmony, and Disproportion of Sounds; or the Palate in distinguishing different Tastes. But such is the Degeneracy, and wilful Perverseness of Mankind; so powerfully engaging are the Solicitations of present Pleasure, that too

many directly, or indirectly, both in Theory and Practice, endeavour to undermine and destroy the sacred Foundations of Religion and Morality, by confounding the essential and eternal Difference of Good and Evil. To evince the Absurdity of such Attempts, will naturally tend to promote the Interests of Piety and Virtue, of Justice, and Righteousness, and may not be thought unsuitable to the present Solemnity.

I shall, in the *first* Place, therefore endeavour to shew, that there is a real and essential Difference between Moral Good and Evil, independent of the Will of Man, and previous to any human Compact or Constitution.

Secondly, I shall consider to what Persons the Denunciation in my Text may be thought justly applicable; or who may be said to neglect or disregard this real and essential Difference.

Thirdly, I shall give you some of the principal Reasons, why Men so frequently err in this important Point; and,

Lastly, From the Errors and Misconduct of Mankind, I shall deduce the Necessity of Laws, and of enforcing them by Penal Sanctions.

First then, There is a real and essential Difference betwixt Moral Good and Evil independent of the Will of Man.

I will presume it was designed by the Author of Nature, that Man should act, and consequently that he is obliged to act according to his Nature. In order therefore to determine what this Obligation is, and what the Duties are, which are incumbent upon him, it will be proper to advance gradually from the inferior Parts of the Creation, and to consider the Powers and Faculties by which he is distinguished; his Situation and Character in the Scale of Beings; what he is in himself, and what becomes him as a Part of the Universe; for as the Order and Harmony of
the

the Creation depends upon every Creature's acting according to the Law of its Nature, we shall then perceive what this Law of Nature is with respect to Man.

As to the Material and Inanimate Parts of the Creation, we find these, by vertue of the irresistible Impressions of Omnipotence, keeping their proper Distances, and regularly observing the Laws of Motion and Gravitation. *The Firmament sheweth the Handy-work of Almighty God, whilst the Sun as a Giant rejoyceth to run his Course, and the Moon observes her appointed Seasons.*—As to Vegetables, they also are determined in their Growth and Increase by certain Methods prescribed to them. — The various Tribes of Animals, in the Exercise of their several Operations, uniformly fulfill the Will of God. In the expressive Language of holy Job, *The Hawk flies by his Wisdom, and the Eagle mounts at his Command.*

Pfalm xix. 1.

Pfal. civ. 19.

Job xxxix. 26, 27.

Thus the several Classes of Being below us are methodized, and determined towards certain Ends, and regularly observe the Law of their Creator according to their respective Natures.

If we advance still higher, and consider the Nature of Man: as God has taught him more than the Beasts of the Field, and made him wiser than the Fowls of Heaven, Are not certain Duties expected from him agreeable to this Pre-eminence? As he enjoys superior Privileges, he is unquestionably under higher Obligations; which are (as he is a rational and voluntary Agent, and consequently a moral and accountable Creature) to consider his own Nature, the Nature of those Beings to which he stands related, and to perform the respective Duties which arise from such Relations, and are suitable to his own Nature and Circumstances.

Job xxxv. 11.

Let it be acknowledged therefore, — That there is one
Supreme

A Sermon preached at Winchester, before

Supreme Lord, the Creator of all Things, and the infinitely wise and good, and powerful Governor of the Universe.

—That Man is of a social Nature, and that we stand related to each other as Citizens of the World; as Members of publick Communities, or private Societies and Families.

— That we are Creatures endowed with Understanding and Free-will, and capable of Happiness by preserving the Health of our Bodies, and by improving the Faculties of our Minds.

Is it not evident from this View of the Divine and Human Natures, that there ariseth an Obligation to the Performance of certain Duties? Does not that essential Suitableness, which Obedience has to the Relation between a rational Creature and his Creator, plainly imply, that for an intelligent Being to conform himself in all Things to the Will of God, carries in it a moral Rectitude and Goodness; and that to disobey or oppose his Will, imports a moral Obliquity without supposing any Obligation from any previous Law or Command? Should we not adore his Greatness, to whom we owe our Existence? Shall we not invoke his Power, who is our Protector and Preserver? Shall we make no Returns of Reverence and filial Affection to the tender and indulgent Parent of Mankind? Shall the mute and insensible Part of the Creation glorify their Author by carrying upon them the plain Mark and Impress of the Deity; and shall a rational, thoughtful and inquisitive Being, made after the Image of God, pay no Tribute of Praise and Thanksgiving, nor acknowledge or adore his infinite Perfections?

Again, Is it not evident, that Justice and Righteousness, Mercy and Fidelity, Subjection to Government, and Obedience to Laws, preserve the Order, Peace, and Welfare of Societies? Does not an Equality of Right require an Equality

lity of Behaviour between Man and Man ; and if we expect mutual Support and Protection, *Should not we do unto others, as we would they should do unto us?* *Matt. vii. 12.* Are not Temperance and Sobriety, a due Restraint of our Passions, and the Improvement of our rational Faculties, the most certain Means of private Happiness, and most suitable to a Reasonable and Religious Being?

If such Duties are not our proper Business and Employment, What Superiority has Man, who is *made little lower than the Angels; above the Beasts that perish;* *Psalms viii. 5.* except that he may be sensible of his Degeneracy, and wretched State; that he may act with a Consciousness of Guilt and Folly, and of his Subjection to those inferior Appetites, which such Creatures only can be happy in gratifying, as are naturally and solely subject to them? For however they may influence the Corruption of human Nature, its natural Dignity is actuated by nobler Principles.

As certainly then as there are different Beings in the Universe, and different Relations between these Beings, there are different Actions and Duties to be performed intrinsically and essentially obligatory ; and the Distinction betwixt Good and Evil, Right and Wrong; no more depends upon the Will and Pleasure of Man, than the obvious and sensible Difference of *Light and Darknefs, Bitter and Sweet;* no more than Proportion or Disproportion in Geometry and Arithmetick. It depends not upon Man's Judgment, but whoever will trace moral Obligation to its true Original, will find that the first Link of this Chain is fixed to the Throne of God.

Having thus endeavoured to establish the necessary and unchangeable Difference of moral Good and Evil; I proceed, *secondly*, to consider to what Persons the Denunciation in my Text may be thought justly applicable.

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The first I shall mention are those who maintain, that Good and Evil depend upon the Laws and Constitutions of the Civil Power, or are founded in the Opinions and Customs of Mankind: *Hypotheses* truly worthy of *Epicurus* and his Followers; as false in themselves, as they are ridiculous in their Consequences.—If there had not been an essential Difference antecedent to all human Institutions, what just Cause can be assigned, why any positive Laws should be made at all concerning any moral Obligations? And what, except their original Tendency to promote the Glory of God, and the universal Benefit and Welfare of Mankind, could procure them any additional Confirmation from the Civil Power? Agreeably to this Suggestion, several judicious and learned Persons, who have wrote concerning the Grounds and Origin of the *English* Laws, always suppose the *Law of Reason* to be one of the first and principal Foundations of them.—That Justice and Injustice do not depend upon civil Institutions, appears also from our common Notions of Equity. For if nothing was just, but by vertue of a written Law, there would surely be no Occasion for any subsequent Determinations to correct or mitigate a former Sentence given according to such Law. The Truth is, that moral Virtue is so far from depending upon any political Establishment, or deriving its Origin from human Laws, that human Laws derive their Origin from moral Virtue, and the absolute Distinction between Good and Evil. Accordingly all our legal Processes presuppose the Principles of Morality, and the Duties of Natural and Revealed Religion; Duties which we should be obliged to the Performance of, were there no such Thing as Government, and in some Cases even in Opposition to human Authority.

I must add this obvious Remark, that Laws themselves
being

being denominated just and good, they must derive this Character from somewhat external. In short, they are stiled just and good, because they are wisely calculated for such Ends as contribute to the Glory of God, the Good of Society, and the Perfection of human Nature. Thus *the Testimonies, which God has commanded us*, are said to be *ex-* *Psal. cxix.*
138.
ceeding righteous and true; that is, even the Divine Commands are agreeable to eternal and immutable Truth and Righteousness.

With regard to the Law of *Opinion* or *Reputation*, the Word *Honestum* (which indeed originally signifies no more than creditable or honourable) being used to signify good and virtuous, has induced some Persons to think, or at least to declare, that Actions were right or wrong only, as they happened to be in Reputation, or Disrepute; but it must be observed, that Honour is not the Foundation, but the Consequence of Virtue; and because it is the proper and genuine Effect of it, for this Reason only, both in sacred and prophane Authors, Virtue and Praise are used as synonymous Terms. Hence it is that *Tully*, who frequently uses this Word to signify moral Goodness, condemns the Folly of the undiscerning Multitude, in esteeming popular Commendation and Applause the Criterion of Virtue; and there are no Expressions throughout all his Works more strong and significant, than those in which he affirms Virtue and Honesty to be absolutely, and in their own Nature laudable, without Regard to any external Circumstances whatsoever.

They also may be thought very justly to deserve the Denunciation of the Prophet, who delude themselves and others by specious Appellations, and endeavour to reconcile Mankind to the Deformity of Vice, by substituting some remote and inoffensive Ideas, some soft and palatable Titles, in order to lessen or remove our natural Abhorrence of it;

but no Misapplication or Confusion of Names, no artificial Colourings will alter the real Nature of Things. Criminal Indulgences may shelter themselves under the affected Terms of Gallantry and Politeness, and may gain Protection from false Notions, great Examples, and common Practice: Superstition may style itself Devotion: Enthusiasm and Bigotry, and that *Wrath which worketh not the Righteousness of God*, may be accounted *Zeal according to Knowledge*: Licentiousness may flatter itself with the Name of Liberty, and a Disregard of all legal Restraints with that of perfect Freedom. On the other hand, Virtues, being misrepresented by Envy, Ignorance, or ill Nature, may oftentimes go under the Name of their adjacent Vices: But the Bounds by which they are separated and distinguished, will remain invariably fixed and unshaken; and wise Observers will not be deceived by false Denominations, however Men may try to blend and confound their several Natures and Properties.

Such Persons also may justly be said to put *Evil for Good, and Good for Evil; Darkness for Light, and Light for Darkness*; who exalt human Reason above the true and compleat Morality of the Gospel, which, on account of its Purity and Perfection, is peculiarly stiled *Light* in Opposition to that Ignorance and Error, which overspread the World before the Beams of Divine Knowledge shone upon Mankind. *Ye were sometimes Darkness*, says the Apostle, *but now are ye Light in the Lord; walk as Children of Light*. Nothing can be more ungrateful and presumptuous, than to prefer what some Men falsely and improperly call the absolutely perfect Law of Nature to that truly perfect Institution, wherein the Laws of Godliness, Righteousness, and Sobriety, are confirmed with new Authority, and illustrated with greater Light; an Institution, which finishes and compleats

compleats all the imperfect Models of Religion in former Dispensations by exalting our Ideas, by animating our Hopes, and persuading the Disobedient by more powerful Terrors; for without considering the *Depth of the Riches* Rom. xi. 33. *of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God*, in the OEconomy of our Redemption, Christianity is far from being a *bare Republication* of those Truths, which in Pagan Theology being ignorantly or superstitiously disguised, irregularly delivered, or not being recommended by proper Authority, were either neglected, or were the Occasion of Scepticism and Infidelity.

Thus apt are Mankind to confound the Distinction of Good and Evil in Theory and Speculation, which are as manifestly disregarded in Practice. For if the Exercise of Justice and Mercy is right; of Injustice, Unmercifulness and Cruelty wrong, and incompatible with the Peace and Happiness of Mankind; those surely who invade the Property of others by Force or Fraud, who make any Attempt upon their Persons, or upon their Characters, plainly endeavour to annul the Obligations of Truth and Virtue, and to defeat all the excellent Purposes of Laws and Government.

It will not be improper or unseasonable to observe, that the Words of my Text are taken by many Commentators in a *judicial* and more restrained Sense; and then the Sin, against which the Woe is denounced, is the declaring a guilty Person innocent, or an innocent Person guilty in Courts of Justice; than which nothing can be more prejudicial to the Interests of Virtue, or more inconsistent with the Duty and high Office of those *Ministers of God*, 1 Pet. ii. 14. *who are sent by him for the Punishment of evil Doers, and for the Praise of them that do well.*—It will not be difficult also to determine how far God's Menaces against the *Jews* may extend

extend to the subtle Insinuations of such false and delusive Oratory, as may happen to defend that Cause with Success, which ought not to be countenanced or patronized by a truly honest and upright Man; by which Means the

Job xxix. 12. *Fatherless, and he that has none to help him, may be deprived of their Right, their Comfort, their Support; and Widows*

Psalms lxxviii. 64. *may have double Cause to make Lamentation.* It is not so much to be admired, that a certain Heathen * *Sophist*, who

* *Protagoras.* questioned the Existence of a Deity, and openly maintained, that Truth depended upon each Man's Opinion, should esteem it an Excellency to recommend a bad Cause: But surely no one, who professes Christianity, should want those good and virtuous Qualifications, which even *Tully* and *Quintilian* require as well as Wit and Eloquence. Not only the *Jews*, but the *Athenians* and *Romans*, severely condemned all Practices of this Kind. A proper Regard to the essential Difference betwixt Right and Wrong, Good and Evil, and a due Veneration for that God, whose Command

Deut. xvi. 19. it is, that *Judgment shall not be wrested*, should prevent every one from causing those Laws, which were originally designed to ascertain Men's Rights, to become the Means of perplexing and confounding them. If there be any

Isaiab v. 23. *Persons who thus justify the Wicked for Reward, and take away the Righteousness of the Righteous from him, the Example of holy Job is highly worthy of their Attention and Regard; who upon a Review of his Conduct as a Magistrate, and a Dispenser of Justice, with an eloquent Earnestness breaks out into these comfortable and generous*

Job xxix. 11, &c. *Reflections. When the Ear heard me, then it blessed me, and when the Eye saw me, it gave Witness to me: because I delivered the Poor that cried, and the Fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The Blessing of Him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the Widow's Heart*

to

to sing for Joy. I put on Righteousness, and it clothed me; my Judgment was as a Robe and a Diadem. I was Eyes to the Blind, and Feet was I to the Lame: I was a Father to the Poor, and the Cause, which I knew not, I searched out; and I brake the Jaws of the Wicked, and plucked the Spoil out of his Teeth.

In this View it is also natural to observe, that the prophetic Denunciation extends to all partial Verdicts; all unjust Accusations; all wrong and sinister Methods of Defence; all vexatious Suits, and malicious Prosecutions, and all Falsifications whatsoever in judiciary Proceedings.

I am *thirdly* to give you some of the principal Reasons, why Men so frequently err in this important Point.

It is very possible indeed, and considering the present Corruption of the World, it may not perhaps be uncommon, for Men to sin calmly and deliberately against clear Light and Knowledge, and in Defiance of the faithful Suggestions, and wholesome Rebukes of Reason and Conscience; but the Wickedness of Mankind must be allowed to proceed principally from *Prejudice* and *Passion*; from *want of Thought and Reflection*; from *bad Examples*, or *an unhappy Education*; all and every one of which cast a fatal Darkness before the Mind of Man, and render him incapable of discerning the true Nature and Consequences of Things.

Prejudice, the never failing Source of confused Notions, and irregular Practices, attends Mankind in every Stage and Condition of Life, and subsists in every Form and Degree in which there is a Possibility of Error. It does not endeavour to discover Truth, but to disguise and defend Falshood, and seems not so much inclined to inform the Understanding, as to bribe it, even to a Disregard of its own Convictions. *It makes us like the deaf Adder, that* Psalm lviii. 4.
stoppeth

stoppeth her Ears ; It refuseth to hear the Voice of the Charmer, charm be never so wisely : And therefore many absurd and dangerous Tenets, both with Regard to Religion and civil Policy ; many grievous and enormous Crimes ; much Strife and Contention, Slander and Persecution, and even Murder itself, have had their Rise from this Principle of Error and Delusion.

The *Lusts* and *Passions* also have a wonderful Efficacy towards darkening the Understanding. They alter every Object we converse with, by putting their own Colours upon it, and render us Blind and Deaf to every Circumstance, and every Argument, by which our corrupt Inclinations are not countenanced and confirmed. They favour every Scheme of Libertinism and Indulgence, however false it may be in its Principles, however unworthy it may be of a rational and religious Creature ; because Schemes of this Kind do not upbraid the Wicked with offending the Law, and do not object to them their Transgressions ; and we accordingly find that our Notions of Right and Wrong have been generally represented as the Effects of Education, Custom, Superstition, and the like, by those Persons whose corrupt Practices have induced them to be Advocates for Vice and Licentiousness.

Heedlessness and *Incogitancy*, which in high Stations are too often owing to the vain Amusements of Luxury and Grandeur, and in Persons of inferiour Rank to Idleness and a brutish Sensuality, cause the same Ignorance and Confusion in the Soul about spiritual Things, as a rambling and unattentive Eye would do with relation to corporeal Objects, and occasion such Follies and Vices as make Men scarce fit to

Psalms xlix. 12. *be compared with the Beasts that perish. Go to the Ant,*
Prov. vi. 6. *thou Sluggard, consider her Ways, and be wise. — The Ox*
Isaiab i. 3, 9. *knoweth his Owner, and the Ass his Master's Crib ; but*
 Israel

Israel doth not know, my People doth not consider: In consequence of which, it immediately follows, *Ab! sinful Nation, a People laden with Iniquity; they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the holy One of Israel to Anger.* Isaiab i. 4.

As the Generality of Mankind also want a due Penetration of Thought, and Strength of Reasoning for forming a just and regular Judgment of Things; they are frequently led into mistaken Notions of Virtue and Morality, and into criminal and unwarrantable Practices, either by a Conformity to vicious Customs and Manners, which generally prevail, or by the *Example* and *Authority* of their Superiours, whom they suppose, from the happy Opportunities which they have of improving their Understandings, most capable of judging and acting aright. Thus many Persons sacrifice the Obligations they are under to the Author of their Being, to the popular and fashionable Extravagances of the Age, and subject his eternal and immutable Laws of Righteousness to the irrational Behaviour of those irreligious Persons, who highly aggravate their own personal Sins, by the unhappy Influence which their Irregularities have upon the rest of Mankind: For as good Examples spread their kindly Influence, and diffuse Instruction by very powerful, though silent Methods of Persuasion; so on the other hand, Lewdness and Intemperance, Profaneness and Immorality, will have proportionably contagious and malignant Effects.

As to *Education*, it is of such Importance to our future Life, that our different Proficiency in Moral Virtue, as well as the Variety of our intellectual Attainments, depends chiefly upon it. Without cultivating the Understanding, Ignorance will overspread the Mind; without Religious Instruction and early Impressions of Duty, our Passions and Vices will soon grow up like baneful Weeds, and choak,

and over-run the hopeful Plants of Virtue and Goodness. The best Manners and Dispositions, if neglected, will soon be corrupted by evil Communications; and as the Power of Habits is always great; so the Growth of evil Habits is much quicker, and their Strength much greater than of those that are good. St. James very justly represents the Progress of Impiety, *When Lust has conceived, it bringeth forth Sin; and Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth Death*; so that Men easily run from one Sin to another, till they have as it were *filled up the Measure of their Iniquities*, and become proper Objects of the Severity of Justice, and the Sword of the Civil Magistrate. Of such Importance is a religious Education and an early Sense of Duty, that very probably many of those unhappy Persons, who suffer ignominiously by the just Sentence of the Law, if they had been well principled in Religion and Morality, would have *lived the Life of the Righteous, and their last End too might have been like his*.

James i. 15.

Matt. xxiii.
32.

Num. xxiii. 10.

Since thus corrupt are the Principles; since thus irregular and vicious is the Conduct of Mankind, and the Distinction betwixt Good and Evil so frequently disregarded; we may hence, in the last Place, very naturally deduce the Necessity of Laws enforced by penal Sanctions, in order to restrain the Wicked and Licentious from such Violations of their Duty, as are inconsistent with Justice and Humanity, and with the Peace and Order of Society. But it may not be improper to trace the Necessity of Laws a little higher, which will evidently appear not only from a View of the present Temper and Dispositions of Mankind, but from the Original of Government, and the Ends of Civil Union.

Although by the genuine and uncorrupted Propensions of their Nature, Men are strongly inclined to social Duties, and unquestionably have the Seeds of Justice and Kindness, Benevolence and Compassion implanted in
their

their Breasts; yet the true and leading Cause, why Men consented to resign their natural Liberty, and to form civil Societies, seems to have been to guard themselves by united Power against those Injuries, which one Man was in Danger of sustaining from another in a State of Independency. Now a Society enter'd into for this End must suppose some Rules or Laws, according to which the Members of the Community must agree to be governed and directed. Their associating themselves without such Rules would rather add to their Disorder and Confusion, than remedy the Inconveniences they were before subject to; for in Proportion to their Number, and the Diversity of their Genius's, Inclinations, and Affections, Sin and Vice, Discontent and Tumult would probably increase and multiply. In short, without some uniform, consistent Scheme; without general Rules to which particular Cases were to be applied; without certain Punishments appointed for Delinquents, the Members of Society would be utterly incapable of subsisting together. For if, when we have the Privilege and Advantages of Civil Constitutions, we are often exposed to the violent Insults of unjust and merciless Men; what miserable and unhappy Circumstances should we be in, if, instead of wise and deliberate Determinations, when Matters have been well weighed by Men of Judgment, Prudence, and Learning, well skilled in the Temper and Constitution of that political Body to which they prescribe, each capricious Fancy, and each irregular Appetite, were the Rule of human Conduct? If indeed all Men could be brought to a strict Observance of the Laws of Nature;—were Honour and Justice, Fidelity and Innocence so universally and sincerely esteemed, that Men would by no means violate them, though sure of Impunity;—Did the same generous and benevolent Principles, by which some few are distinguish-

ed, govern the Lives and Actions of all;—were the Original Corruption of our Nature (as some wild Sectaries and Enthusiasts, who thought civil Jurisdiction incompatible with the Covenant of Grace and Peace, have vainly imagined) absolutely refined and purified under the Gospel Dispensation; there would then indeed be no need of any Secondary Helps; no need of human Laws to direct, or of Punishments to exact Obedience. In the Language of the Prophet, *Justice would run down as a Stream, and Righteousness as a mighty Torrent*, without any particular Channel or Direction; nor would any Mischief be consequent upon it, if every one was permitted to do *what was Right in his own Eyes*. — But since human Nature, in its present Circumstances, is widely different from this ideal Representation of it;— since the Ungodly and Profane are so far from being obedient to the Laws of Reason, that even the additional Force of Revelation is found insufficient to engage them to their Duty, notwithstanding the Purity of its Precepts, the Excellency of its Doctrines, and the Weight of its Sanctions; — since the malevolent Passions of Anger and Ambition, Avarice and Envy, are the chief Principles on which many Persons act, What a Scene of Disorder and Unhappiness would a Society be, if no human Restraints were laid upon its Members, and that prevailing Motive, the Fear of immediate Punishment, were removed?—Excessive Enormities would be almost as universal as those evil Thoughts, and malignant Principles, which give Birth and Occasion to them; and those secret Sins, which are afraid of the Civil Power, would exert themselves in open Acts of Iniquity and Oppression. The Contempt of Dominion would soon break out into Rebellion, and Men of factious Spirits would not content themselves with *speaking Evil of Dignities*. Men would be hurried

*Amos v. 24.**Deut. xii. 8.**2 Pet. ii. 10.*

ried by the Violence of their Passions, wheresoever the Gratifications of Lust, or the Appearance of Advantage should draw them. Every real Perfection, every fancied Superiority would be a Temptation to injurious Actions, and would supply Matter of Controversy and Dispute. Whoever thought himself molested or injured, would take such Measures to redress his imaginary Grievances, as his own Imprudence should suggest to him. Revenge would lose no Opportunity of satiating its Fury, and ungoverned Passion would speedily execute its rash and severe Sentence. Diffimulation would make use of every Artifice; Self-love would gratify itself in every Shape, and no inordinate Appetite would bear Controul. The licentious Multitude *would eat up that Bread, which our Sons and our Daughters should eat; what we had sowed, another would reap; and when we had planted a Vineyard, another would gather the Grapes thereof.* In short, we should want all the Advantages essential to Peace and Happiness, in which Lord Bacon makes the Use of our Law principally to consist; namely, the Security of our Persons from Death and Violence; the Disposition of the Property of our Goods and Lands, and the Preservation of our good Names from Shame and Infamy.

I would not be thought to disparage Humanity so much, as to imagine that in a State of Nature every Act whatsoever would be an Act of Hostility; but it must be allowed, that it is in a great Measure owing to the established Laws of Government, and to *these most proper and solemn Methods* of putting them in Execution, that the *Land is not filled with Violence; that Wasting and Destruction are not within our Borders, and that there is no just Cause of a general Complaining in our Streets.* Those very Persons, who maintain that private Vices are beneficial to Society, or that Civil Government is unnecessary, would soon experimentally

ally find the Truth of this Suggestion, if Men had a License to sin. If the Innocent might be injured, the Helpless persecuted and oppressed, the Ignorant and Unwary circumvented and defrauded by the False, the ill-natur'd and perfidious Part of Mankind without Censure or Controul ; *the Overflowings of Ungodliness would make them afraid*, and they would fly for Sanctuary to those Judicial Restraints, which in some refined Productions of the present Age have been decried as needless, although the Source of every Advantage which redounds to Society.

Psal. xviii. 3.

To conclude — Since Good and Evil are so invariably distinguished ; — since the Nature of God, the Nature of Man, and the different Relations we stand in, so evidently point out to us our respective Duties ; let us not endeavour to confound this manifest Difference, or to lessen or destroy the Obligations of Religion and Morality.

With regard to the *Supreme Being*, let us have an awful Sense of his infinite Perfections, and let our inward Veneration discover its good Effects in an uninterrupted Course of genuine and unaffected Piety.

With regard to our *Fellow-Creatures*, let us *be kindly affectioned one towards another*, and let every Act of Justice, Mercy and Generosity, which can contribute to the Comfort and Happiness of Mankind, shew our just Sense of the Fraternal Relation we bear to each other, and of the peculiar Excellency of Christian Benevolence.

Rom. xii. 10.

With regard to *ourselves*, let our private Life be adorned with every Grace and Virtue, which is suitable to the Dignity of human Nature, and the Purity of the Gospel of Christ ; *with Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, and Meekness, against which there is no Law.*

Gal. v. 22,
23.

In respect to *Prejudice, Incogitancy, Passion, Custom and Example*, let no weak or vicious Prepossessions corrupt

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rupt our Judgments, and give a wrong Bias to our Understandings; but let our Conduct be founded upon serious Reflection, and rational Evidence; upon truly religious and honest Principles: Let us sacrifice every inordinate Passion, every selfish Sentiment to Candour and Probity, to Honour and Virtue, and the Love of Truth; and let no fashionable Vices, no popular Corruptions, no servile Condescensions, no Views of Interest or Ambition betray us into a Transgression of our Duty.

And since it appears that Society cannot subsist without Government and Magistracy, let us reverence the Guardians and Executors of our Laws, on account of the Dignity of their Office and Character, and *esteem them highly in Love* ^{1 *Thess.* v. 13.} *for their Works Sake.* Let Magistrates themselves rule in the Fear of that God whom they represent, and *for whom they judge*; making Use of all their Influence to discourage ^{2 *Chron.* xix. 6.} Vice and Immorality, Atheism and Infidelity, and to promote Virtue, Righteousness, and good Manners; as well knowing that it is absolutely necessary to the Support of the Civil Powers, that the Distinctions betwixt Good and Evil should be strictly observed; that Religion should supply the natural and unavoidable Defects of human Laws, and that human Laws should enforce and second the Precepts of Religion. Let those Laws, which are enacted for the Good of the Publick, answer the End of their Institution, by being executed with Diligence, Equity and Fidelity; and by being obey'd, and submitted to with that Cheerfulness and dutiful Regard, which becomes good Christians and good Subjects.

Finally, Let us all live soberly, righteously and Godly, under a perpetual Expectation of a righteous Distribution of Rewards and Punishments at that Great Tribunal, which
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the present Solemnity naturally recalls to our serious Consideration.

I shall close this Discourse with the Exhortation of St. Paul, which not only supposes the unalterable Difference of Good and Evil, but contains a noble and perfect Summary of the Whole of Virtue and Moral Goodness. *Phil. iv. 8.* *Whatsoever Things are true ; whatsoever Things are honest ; whatsoever Things are just ; whatsoever Things are pure ; whatsoever Things are lovely ; whatsoever Things are of good Report ; if there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praise, let us think on these Things.*

F I N I S.

