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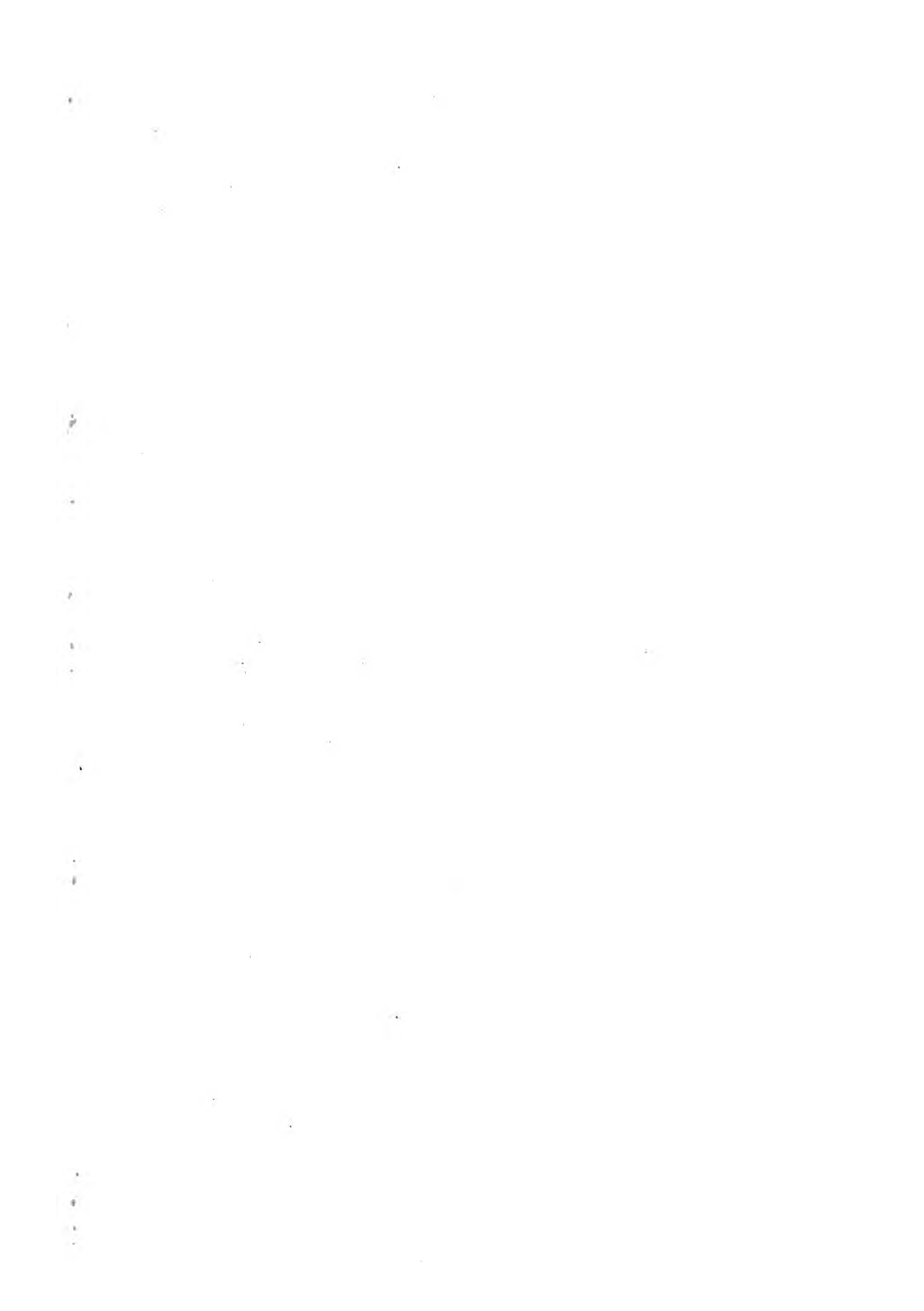


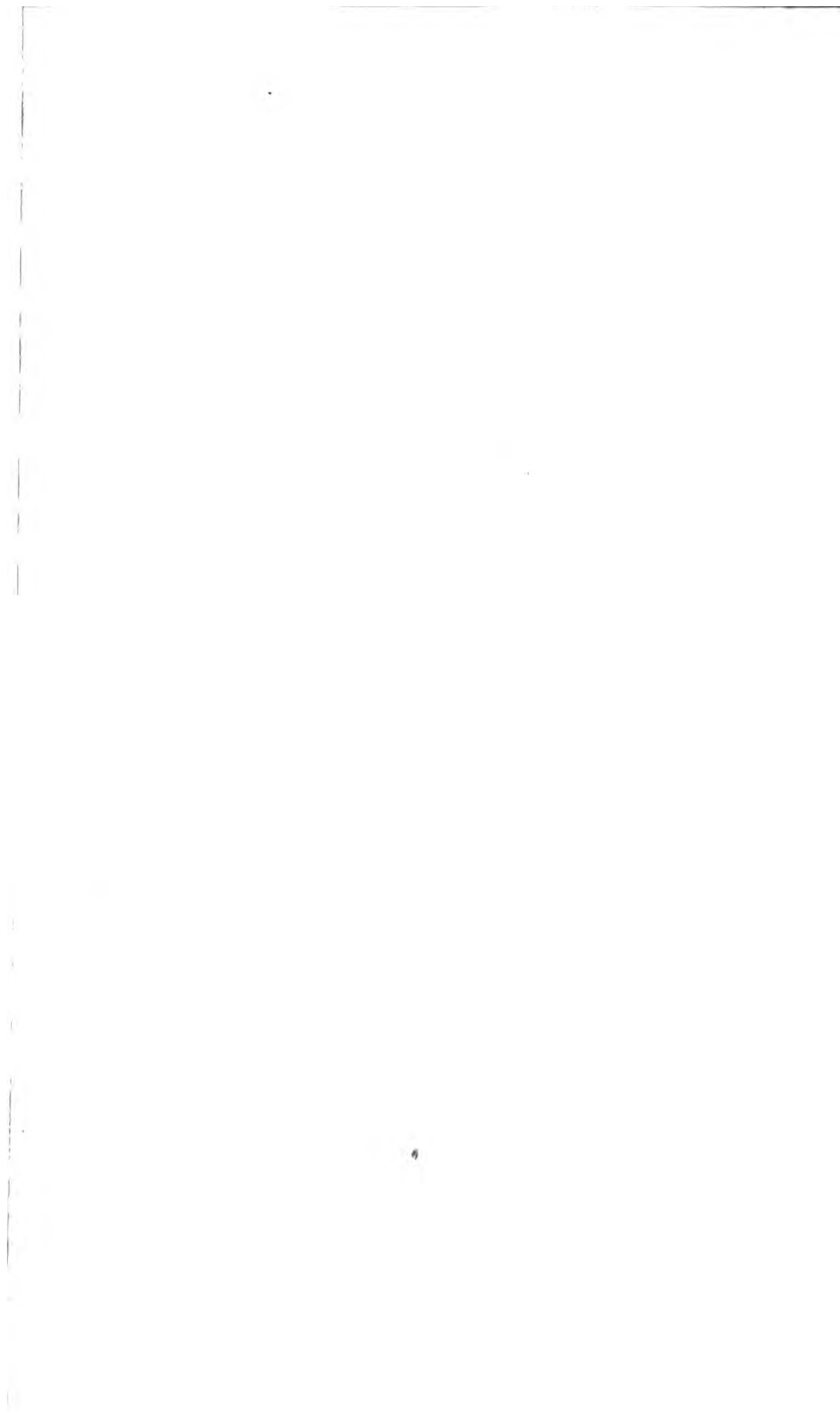
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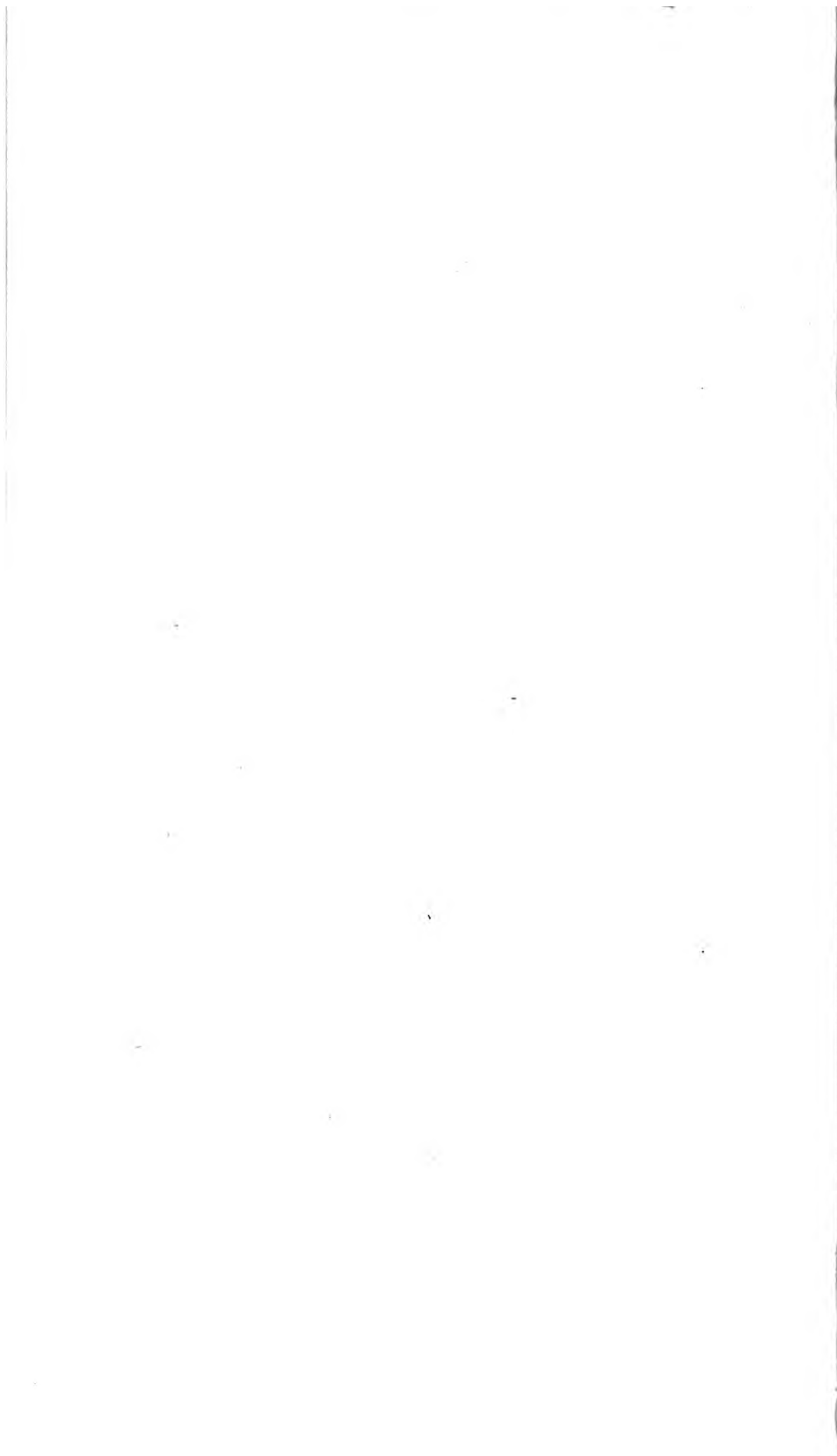


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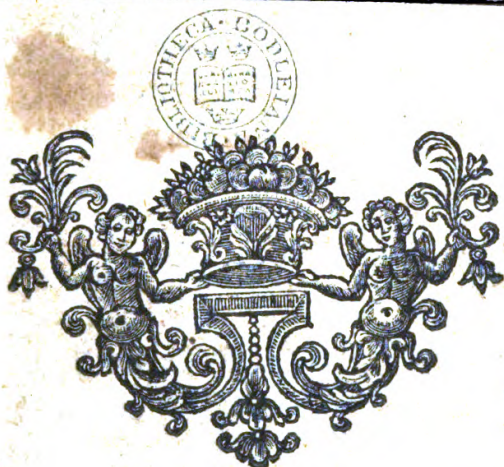


SERMONS

ON

Several Subjects.

By *J O H N F I S H E R*, A. M.
Late Vicar of St. *Lawrence* in the City of *Exon*; and
of *Colyton* in the County of *DEVON*.



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T O T H E

Right Reverend Father in GOD,

S T E P H E N,

By Divine Permission,

Lord Bishop of *Exeter.*

MY LORD,



HAVING been prevail'd upon by my Friends to send a Volume of my dear deceas'd Husband's Sermons to the Press, I could not long deliberate with myself to whom I should address them. The Favours you conferr'd upon the Author of them, when alive, and the gracious Continuance of your Kindness to myself since his Death, under the strait Circumstances wherein I was left, would not let me think of any one but Your Lordship.

Some of the Sermons were, I know, preach'd before Your Lordship, and met with your Approbation. Had they come immediately from the Author, they would very probably have appeared in a better Dress.

A 2

But

DEDICATION.

But such as they are, I most humbly beg your Acceptance of them, as a Testimony of the grateful Sense I bear, and ever shall retain of Your Lordship's Goodness.

If the Advantage arising from the Publication of them, does not, thro' an unlucky Concurrence of Circumstances, answer the Hopes I have been made to entertain, I shall however have this Satisfaction (which I can assure you is to me no small one) that I have hereby an Opportunity of acknowledging in the most publick Manner the many Obligations I have to Your Lordship.

That God in his good Providence would long continue Your Lordship among us, both as an Ornament of that Church over which you preside, and a most generous Patron of the Distress'd, is, my Lord, the most sincere and ardent Prayer of

Your LORDSHIP's

Most dutiful,

Most obedient,

and most oblig'd,

Humble Servant,

S. FISHER.

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THE
CONTENTS.

S E R M O N I.

PSALM civ. 24. *O Lord, how manifold are thy Works! in Wisdom hast thou made them all.*
Page 1

S E R M O N II.

JOB xxviii. 28. *And unto Man he said, Behold, the Fear of the Lord that is Wisdom, and to depart from Evil is Understanding.* 22

S E R M O N III.

JOB iv. 17. *Shall mortal Man be more just than God? Shall a Man be more pure than his Maker?* 41

S E R M O N IV.

GEN. iii. xv. *And I will put Enmity between thee and the Woman, and between thy Seed and her Seed; it shall bruise thy Head, and thou shalt bruise his Heel.* 59

S E R M O N V.

ACTS ii. 27. *Because thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see Corruption.* 78

S E R M O N VI.

MATT. x. 34. *Think not that I am come to send Peace on Earth; I came not to send Peace, but a Sword.* 104

S E R M O N VII.

ROM. iii. 31. *Do we then make void the Law through Faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the Law.* 131

S E R M O N VIII.

2 PET. ii. 19. *While they promise them Liberty, they themselves are the Servants of Corruption.* 159

S E R-

The CONTENTS.

S E R M O N IX.

PROV. iii. 27. *Withhold not Good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the Power of thine Hand to do it.* Page 190

S E R M O N X.

ECCLES. vii. 10. *Say not thou, What is the Cause that the former Days were better than these? For thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.* 209

S E R M O N XI.

GEN. iv. 10. *And he said, What hast thou done? The Voice of thy Brother's Blood crieth unto me from the Ground.* 242

S E R M O N XII.

ACTS xxiv. 25. *As he reasoned of Righteousness, and Temperance, and Judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy Way for this Time, when I have a convenient Season I will call for thee.* 259

S E R M O N XIII.

ACTS xxiv. 16. *And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Man.* 275

S E R M O N XIV.

2 TIM. iv. 7, 8. *I have fought a good Fight, I have finish'd my Course, I have kept the Faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that Day.* 294

S E R M O N XV.

ACTS viii. Part of the 31st Verse. *And he said, How can I, except some Man should guide me?* 309





SERMON I.

PSALM CIV. 24.

O Lord, how manifold are thy Works! in Wisdom hast thou made them all.



THAT there is a God, is a Propo-
sition that carries with it such a
self-evident demonstrative Truth,
that to endeavour to prove it would
be as needless an Undertaking, as that of a
certain Philosopher, who sought out Ar-
guments to prove his own Existence. It is
the Foundation of all Truth; the great
Hinge on which Religion turns; and upon
the Certainty of it all moral Obligations de-
pend, as likewise the universal Law of Na-
ture, and the eternal and necessary Diffe-
rences and Relations of Things. For God
is the Original of all Things, without a Sup-
position of whose Being there is not any
A Thing

SERM.
I.



SERM.

I.



Thing whatsoever that can possibly be accounted for ; for if we could suppose God not to be, we could never suppose the Possibility of any thing else. And yet, notwithstanding this, there are many obdurate Men, who have abandon'd Virtue, and are become Slaves to Vice ; who are Christians in Profession, and Atheists in Practice ; whose Interest and Advantage it is, that there should be no God, nor Judge of human Actions ; that would willingly cheat themselves into a Denial of this Truth, if they could do it with any tolerable Decency. Tho' 'tis very strange, how any one, who is endued with Reason, and has Eyes to look abroad into the World, to see the Hand of God in all his Works, and trace the Footsteps of Providence, can doubt of the Existence of that Being, whom Nature proclaims in all her Works ; *for the invisible things of him from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead ;* so that they, if any such there are, who actually doubt of it, are without Excuse. These things transcend the Bounds of any finite Capacity, and must of necessity be swallow'd up in Wonder and Admiration ; for tho' the holy Psalmist

various SUBJECTS.

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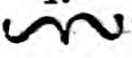
miff has in this Pfalm, where he has de- SERM.
scrib'd, or rather drawn out, a small Sketch of I.
the Power and Wisdom of God, given us many
sublime Ideas of the almighty Creator, yet
when he found the Theme was infinite, and
the Labour endless, he fums up all in this
pathetical Exclamation, *O Lord! how
manifold are thy Works! in Wisdom hast
thou made them all.* Which Words natu-
rally lead us to consider the Wisdom of God
in the Creation of the World. And accor-
dingly I propose to shew,

I. That the Works of the Creation are
not the Effects of Chance, but of an all-
wise God.

II. I will make some Reflections upon
the Whole.

First, then, I am to shew that the Works
of the Creation are not the Effects of Chance,
but of an all-wise God. And now, amidst
the infinite Variety of Things, where shall
we begin, or where shall we end? Shall
we view this Earth, which we inhabit?
Here every thing, whether animate or in-
animate, declares itself to be the Effect of
infinite Wisdom and Contrivance; and
A 2 God.

SERM. God is seen in all his Works. Amongst the
 I. animate let us consider Man, who is de-
 nominated the Image of the Almighty ; and
 he, we find, is fearfully and wonderfully
 made. If we view the curious Frame of his
 Body, the admirable Composure of his
 Limbs, the wonderful Disposition of all the
 Parts for Use as well as Ornament ; and
 indeed in this respect Nature has been very
 liberal and bountiful to us, in giving us
 two of a Sort of those Parts which are most
 useful and necessary ; thus we are furnished
 with two Eyes, two Hands, two Feet, &c.
 not only to complete the Harmony of the
 whole Composition, but that one might in
 some measure supply the Defect or Fail-
 ure of another. But now if we look with-
 in, and view the Springs and Movements
 that set this wonderful Machine a going,
 the amazing Contexture of the Fibres, with
 a thousand minute Parts inserted thro'out
 the Whole, all conspiring to carry on the
 great Ends of Life, a particular Description
 of which may be seen in Books on that Sub-
 ject : If we consider for every Action and
 Motion without, as for Example, whether
 we eat, drink, walk, speak, or whatever
 we do, the Miracles that are at the same
 time performing within to produce these
 Effects ;

Effects; I say, if we view this curious Frame, SERM.
compos'd, as is thought, according to the I.
strictest Rules of Geometrical Proportion, 
we shall see the whole World in Epitome.
Thus much for the Body; but if we view
the immortal Soul, that acts upon this Body,
how, or by what Means, we know not, and
gives it Power to perform the Operations of
a rational Creature, yet enables a Man to
contemplate the Works of God, and to re-
flect upon the Wisdom and Contrivance of
them, and in this respect lifts him up above
the rest of the Creation, what shall we say
of it, but reckon it the Effect of infinite
Wisdom?

As to the animal World, tho' it does not
come up to the Perfection of the rational,
yet 'tis altogether as perfect in its Kind,
every Creature having such Faculties, as
are excellently adapted to it, according to
the Rank in which it stands in the Universe.
Who can sufficiently admire the Sagacity
of some, the Subtilty of others, and the
extraordinary Care and Tendernefs of all
over their Young, to the everlasting Shame
of many rational Creatures? The Cunning
of the Fox, the Docility and Tractable-
ness of the Dog, and the Industry of the Ant,
are things very wonderful and surprizing!
The


SERM. The inimitable Net-work of the Spider, the elaborate Architecture of the Bee, as well as of the Bird, who buildeth her Nest on high, will always baffle the Wit and Industry of Man, not to say any thing of the other different Species of Creatures that inhabit the Earth and Sea, which are so many, that tho' a learned Author has endeavour'd to guess at them, yet 'twas nothing but a Guess, and can never be improv'd beyond a bare Probability ; for I believe it will be thought no improbable Conjecture to suppose, that there are as many, that cannot be seen by any Eye, as there are that can ; since it is acknowledg'd on all Hands that every Drop of Water, all sorts of Fluids, and consequently every Animal itself, as abounding more or less in Fluids, are full of them ; and how small then must the Parts of those little *Animalcula* be ! and how fine the Ligaments that tye them together ! But what is Matter of very great Surprize, is, that, amongst all the animate as well as the inanimate Part of the Creation, there are not two of any Species that are exactly alike ; the smallest Mite has something to distinguish him from another of the same Species, tho' his whole Body, without an Instrument, is not discernable. The first

first Creation of Matter is indeed very wonderful ; but how it could be diversified into such an endless Multitude of Forms is altogether as much to be admir'd.

SERM.

I.

Shall we now lift up our Eyes above this Globe, and take a Prospect of the upper Regions, *where the Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his Handy-works* ? there the Power and Wisdom of the Creator are equally conspicuous. And here no Pencil ever drew a Copy equal to this bright Original ! Who hath stretch'd out the Heavens like a Curtain, or form'd so splendid a Canopy ? The immense Prospect lies before us, thousands of dazzling Orbs promiscuously ranged entertain our wondering Speculations ; and who knows where the uniform Disorder ends ? We gaze away our Sight amidst the Swarm of Worlds, and are tir'd with Wonder and Delight. What a vast Number of fix'd Stars can we discern with our Eyes ! how many more by the Help of Instruments, and perhaps an infinite Number more, which neither Eye nor Instrument can discover ! all which, as we learn by the modern Improvements in Astronomy, are so many Suns, each of which, according to the antient Calculations, is above 160 Times bigger

SERM. I.  ger than the Earth, but is now thought to be a vast deal more, and probably the Center of such a Planetary System as ours. The Disposition of the Solar System, from whence the Disposition of the Whole may with great Probability be inferr'd, is of all things the most beautiful and harmonious, compos'd according to the nicest Rules, and the exactest Laws of Nature, the Planets being so order'd as to be within the Sphere of each other's Activity, by which they are suspended in the Air, and by the Force of Gravitation move round the Sun as their common Center. Thus are these glorious Bodies contriv'd to preserve each other from Desolation, and to set forth the Glory of their Creator. If we consider only the Body of the Sun, how delightful and magnificent does it appear! according to that of *Solomon*; *The Light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the Eyes to behold the Sun.* How delightful, and with what Splendor, when it first lights up the Firmament! how magnificent, and with what Grandeur, when in its meridian Height! The Psalmist excellently describes this, *Psal. xix. 6, 7. In them hath he set a Tabernacle for the Sun, which cometh forth as a Bridegroom out of his Chamber, and rejoiceth as a Giant to*

run his Course ; it goeth forth from the uttermost Part of the Heaven, and runneth about unto the End of it again, and there is nothing hid from the Heat thereof. 'Tis by the Influence of this glorious Body that every thing in the World lives and thrives. 'Tis this that gives the Earth a genial Warmth, and makes the Ground prolifick ; that calls the tender Blossom from the Bud, and gives to Trees and Plants their Bloom and Vigor. 'Tis this that thaws the Ice of old Age, and gives to Youth Nourishment and Activity. In short, it cheers the Heart of Man and Beast, and spreads a universal Gladness over the Face of all Nature, within the Influence of whose Beams every thing is gay, cheerful and lively, without it 'tis all Darknes, Horror and Desolation. 'Tis no Wonder then to find that there are some Heathens among the idolatrous Nations that worship and adore it ; for when once People are come to such a Pass as to be ignorant of the true God, whom Heaven and Earth adore, and worship Stocks and Stones, and other, many other, such contemptible, imaginary Deities, who are ignorant of their Devotions, and can't reward them for their Labour ; when they worship not only that which hath no Divinity, but that which

SERM.

I.

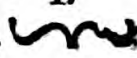


B


hath

SERM. hath no Life, which the Smith worketh in
 I. the Coals, and fashioneth with Hammers,
 and worketh with the Strength of his Arms;
 how much more natural is it, if any inanimate
 Creature could possibly be thought
 worthy of Adoration, that the Sun should
 be that Creature, that is by many Degrees
 preferable to the rest, and appears with so
 much superior Splendor and Magnificence!

But to proceed. Shall we go further and
 travel thro' every fix'd Star, and observe
 the wonderful Make and Contrivance of
 them, and how they stand to each other,
 and to the Whole? Or, shall we launch out
 into the Immensity of Space, and take a
 Prospect of the whole Creation at once, and
 from the infinite Expanse take a Survey of
 all Nature, as it lies wonderfully display'd
 up and down in it, and view the same U-
 niformity of Wisdom throughout this vast
 Infinity of Things, as in this World which
 we inhabit, and see all things carried on by
 the same Providence, and sustain'd by the
 same almighty Power? At this Distance,
 how small and inconsiderable would this little
 Globe appear! what a trifling Speck in the
 mighty Void, hardly more important than
 the least Mite we see in it! What a strange
 Sight! what an unexpected Prospect would
 this

this be to the proud and ambitious Man, SERM.
 who has already plac'd himself not only at I.
 the Top of this Globe, but at the Top of 
 the Universe, at the Head of all Things,
 tho' at the same time neither he, nor the
 World he lives in, does to the whole bear
 the Proportion of the smallest Grain of Sand!
 How astonishing are these things to a finite
 Capacity! how mocking is the Considera-
 tion of them to a human Intellect! The Psal-
 mist sufficiently declares his Admiration of
 them, as he gives us thus to understand.
*When I consider the Heavens, the Work of
 thy Fingers, the Moon and the Stars which
 thou hast ordain'd, what is Man that thou
 art mindful of him, and the Son of Man
 that thou visitest him!*

But what need we to call the Heavens and
 Stars to testify the Wisdom of the almighty
 Creator, since 'tis but to step back and visit
 this Earth again, and we shall find that the
 least Part of the Creation, even a Lilly of
 the Field, bears sufficient Testimony to it,
 and has the Seal of God, the Mark of the
 Divine Omnipotence visibly stamp'd upon
 it? How regardless are People generally of
 them, and how inconsiderable are they for
 the most part accounted, and yet *Solomon
 in all his Glory was not array'd like one*

SERM. *of these!* And indeed the smallest Leaf is
 I. of so wonderful a Contexture as to demon-
strate the Divine Hand that made it, and
 to shew it to be beyond the utmost Reach
 of all human Art. So that the same Wis-
 dom, which is display'd at large in the mag-
 nificent Prospect we have now been viewing,
 is equally conspicuous in the smallest Part
 of the Creation, the same Wisdom, tho'
 not the same Degree of it, being as necessary
 in the Formation of the minutest Animal, a
 Worm, or a Fly, as in the Formation of
 the World, or all things else that are in it.
 Whether therefore we consider the Works
 of God in whole or in part, at full Length
 or in Miniature, they express the greatest
 Wisdom imaginable. To whom else then
 shall we ascribe the Rise and Birth of all
 Things? *Who laid the Measures of the
 Earth?* says the Lord to *Job*; *or who
 hath stretched the Line upon it? whereupon
 are the Foundations thereof fastned? or
 who laid the Corner Stone thereof? Hast
 thou commanded the Morning since thy
 Days, and caused the Day-spring to know
 his Place? Where is the Way where Light
 dwelleth? and as for Darknes, where is
 the Place thereof? Hath the Rain a Fa-
 ther? or who hath begotten the Drops of
 Dew?*

Dew? Out of whose Womb came the Ice? and the hoary Frost of Heaven, who hath gender'd it? Canst thou lift up thy Voice to the Clouds, that abundance of Waters may cover thee? Canst thou send Lightnings that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are? Who hath put Wisdom in the inward Parts? or who hath given Understanding to the Heart? In this sublime manner did God condescend to talk with Job, and ascrib'd the Creation of all Things to himself by challenging him to find out another Author of Nature.

And, indeed, if we can't ascribe all these things to the Wisdom of God, to what can we ascribe them? Can we ascribe them, as the *Epicureans* of old foolishly did, to Chance, to that which has no real Existence in the World? for Chance is nothing but only the Ignorance of Certainty. When, therefore, we ascribe any thing to Chance, we don't mean by it that Chance is any thing real, much less that it is the Cause of any thing, however some may be amus'd by the Sound of the Word, but 'tis an Expression we make use of to shew our Ignorance of the true Cause. Thus when any Event happens in Life, which we could not foresee, 'tis common enough to attribute it

to

SERM.

I.



SERM. to Chance, because we can't see the Reason
 I. of it, *i. e.* the Train of Causes that have
 produc'd it ; for in any other Sense 'tis impossible there should be any such thing in Nature as Chance, there being a certain and necessary Reason for every thing ; and to a Being that sees all Things, and the Reasons of them, 'tis all Certainty, there can be no such thing as Chance ; but to a Being who can't see all Things the Case is thus : As far as he can discover the Reasons of Things, so far they are Certainties to such a one too ; and as far as he cannot do this, so far they stand to him upon the Foot of Chance. What shall we say then, that these wonderful Works of the Creation are, as the *Epicureans* say, the Effects of certain Atoms, or fine Parts of Matter meeting together by Chance ? Besides the Absurdity of supposing those to meet that will be for ever falling at certain Distances from each other, or to fall not in perpendicular Lines, but a little declining, which they suppose for no Reason in the World but to support a tottering Hypothesis ; yet as Chance has been prov'd to be nothing but the Ignorance of the Cause, to say that these Things met by Chance is no satisfactory Account ; for supposing this were true, yet we are not to rest here, but
 must

must go on to enquire for the Cause, the Cause even of that Chance, or rather of that which appears to us to be so; and what can that be but God? But all this while the Atoms themselves are not accounted for, which yet must be done in order to make a consistent Scheme; for whatever is must have a Cause, except the self-existent Being himself, the Supposition of whose Nature excludes all Cause.


But suppose, according to the vulgar Notion of it, that Chance were something real, a sort of a giddy Agent, that does things at Random, without any Thought or Design; can we imagine that this beautiful Frame of the Universe can possibly be the Effect of such a whimsical, uncertain Cause? Can we suppose that the constant and invariable Laws of Nature are the Effect of Casualty, or that the Worlds were made by Accident? Can we suppose that Matter madly thrown together should form so glorious a Body as the Sun is? or, could the lucky Hit be carried still further to Stars innumerable? How comes their Motion and Periods to be so regular, since Chance is by the Supposition so uncertain? Doubtless blind Fortune has not done all this, but the Hand of an all-wise God. What fortuitous Concourse
of

SERM.

I.



SERM. of Atoms could produce such a Creature as
 I. Man? or how came he to be endued with
 Reason? Is this by Virtue of a few Particles
 of Matter? Can any Thing give what it
 is not possess'd of? or, can Thought and
 Reason be suppos'd to proceed from a dull
 inanimate Substance? But why han't these
 Atoms, or this Chance, rais'd some lofty
 Fabrick or convenient Houses, as well as
 Men to inhabit them? These Conjectures
 are too weak to impose upon rational Crea-
 tures, and are as senseless as the Atoms them-
 selves. Who looks into the vegetative World,
 when all Nature is in its Bloom, when the
 flowery Meadows and Groves delight the
 Smell, and with pleasing Disorder and beau-
 tiful Irregularity salute the Eyes, and a-
 scribes all this to Chance, and not rather to
 the highest Wisdom? In short, if the Har-
 mony of the Universe was the Effect of
 Chance, then this plain Contradiction must
 necessarily follow; That nothing can be im-
 agin'd more certain and regular than Casualty
 and Accident. So that if Chance means
 Regularity, Order, Uniformity, Contri-
 vance, &c. then 'tis co-incident with the
 highest Wisdom, and becomes identified
 with it. Thus this ridiculous Error, like
 all others, when pursued far enough, runs
 up at last into Truth, and the *Epicurean*
 Chance,

Chance, abating only the Contradiction of **SERM.**
 the Word, is no less than the great God of **I.**
 Heaven and Earth. Which brings me, 
 as I propos'd,

Secondly, To make some Reflections upon the Whole. And, *first,* The Wisdom, which is every where display'd in the Works of the Creation, should lead us to praise and adore the great Creator. Man is the only Creature upon this Globe that is capable of discerning the infinite Beauty and Contrivance of them; for, tho' other Creatures are naturally sensible of the Use and Benefit of a great many of them, as, for Example, that the Grass is good for Food, the Tree for Shelter, &c. yet Man alone is capable of seeing how wisely and beautifully they are order'd and contriv'd, because he alone is endued with Faculties capable of such a Contemplation; he alone then is able to express a just Sense of it, to *praise the Lord for his Goodness, and declare the Wonders that he doth for the Children of Men;* and hence arises his Obligation to do it.

But Man is more especially concern'd to do this, because he is placed at the Head of Things, at least in this Part of the Creation, where all Things were made for his Use and
 C Service,

SERM. Service, the Earth, Air and Sea, and all
 I. Things in them; and not only so, but the
 heavenly Bodies also, *the Sun to rule the Day, and the Moon and Stars to give him Light in the Night Season*; for tho' these may have other Uses in Nature, yet as long as they serve the Uses of Man, it is the same to him as if they were made for him only, and require the same grateful Acknowledgments.

2. The Wisdom of God in the Works of the Creation should teach us not only Thankfulness, but Humility. For indeed, if we consider that, among the infinite Variety of Things with which we are incompass'd, there is not one of them that is thoroughly known and understood by Man, a few Properties only of a Thing being enough for an Age or two to find out, and the least Blade of Grass having Wonders enough in it to confound the greatest Philosopher, what Avenues can there possibly be for Pride to enter? Well then might it be said, that Pride is founded in Ignorance, and well might the most knowing be also the most humble.

3. The Wisdom of God discover'd in the Works of the Creation should teach us not only to be thankful and humble, but to be good, and to lead such Lives as may
 make

make us in some measure worthy of these Blessings which we were design'd to contemplate and enjoy. And indeed, if we are truly grateful and humble, these Virtues will naturally lead us to this; for all the Actions of a good Life are but so many Branches that spring from them. Whoever has a just Sense of Gratitude to God, and is possess'd of a truly humble Mind, will also of course be temperate, sober, just, and every thing else that is good and praiseworthy; he will put that Value upon Men and Things which they deserve; he will consider himself, not only as the Workmanship, but the Image of God; and therefore will be very cautious of doing any thing that tends to throw a Slur upon him whose Image and Superscription he bears. In short, he will do every thing to answer the Ends of his Creation, and to contribute to the Glory of his great Creator. *Which that we may all do, God of his infinite Mercy grant, &c.*



S E R M O N II.

J O B xxviii. 28.

*And unto Man be said, Behold,
the Fear of the Lord that is
Wisdom, and to depart from
Evil is Understanding.*

SERM.
II.
~



IN the foregoing Chapter, to which this has Relation, *Job* had been protesting against the Doctrine of his Friends, who all along asserted that Afflictions were ever the Consequence of Sin, and that some remarkable Vengeance always attended wicked Men; which nevertheless he grants that it does sometimes happen to be true, tho' he denies it to be always a constant Rule and Method of God's Proceedings: And being aware that they would be apt to suspect the Impartiality of this way of acting, and would not be able to reconcile it to the Justice of God, he shews

shews them that these things are beyond the Reach of human Capacity, that the Things of Nature would be a more proper Subject to employ the Wit and Industry of Man, whose Enquiries, when they have been carried this Way, have answered the End and proved successful, but that the Secrets of the Almighty are likely always to remain such to us, notwithstanding our utmost Endeavours to find them out. *Surely, says he, there is a Vein for the Silver, and a Place for Gold where they find it: Iron is taken out of the Earth, and Brass is molten out of the Stone. There is a Path which no Fowl knoweth, and which the Vulture's Eye hath not seen; the Lion's Whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce Lion passed by it. But where shall Wisdom be found? and where is the Place of Understanding? that is, who can find out the Reasons and Methods of God's Providence? This is indeed a hard Question for Flesh and Blood to answer: as for this sort of Wisdom, which is Wisdom in the highest Sense of the Word, there is no Purchase to be given for it; for Man knoweth not the Price thereof, neither is it found in the Land of the Living. The Depth saith, It is not in me; and the Sea saith, It is not with me: Where then shall*

SERM.
II.

SERM. shall we seek it? If it is not in the Earth
 II. nor Sea, where can we imagine it to be?

where are we like to meet with it? If we consult the same good Man in this Case, he will tell us that God alone *understandeth the Way of it, he knoweth the Place thereof*; and tho' he only hath seen it, and searched it out, and the Knowledge of it is not to be obtained by Man, yet he shews that God hath appointed Wisdom and Understanding of another Kind, more suitable to our Condition, more advantageous in the End, and which we are all able to attain; which consists in fearing the Lord, and departing from Evil. *Unto Man he said, Behold, the Fear of the Lord that is Wisdom, and to depart from Evil is Understanding.*--- Now tho' these Expressions, *the Fear of the Lord, and departing from Evil*, include in them the whole Sum and Substance of Religion, yet because *Job* had been speaking against a curious Enquiry into the Ways of Providence, and had shewn that that kind of Wisdom belonged only to God, and having in the Words of the Text pointed out to us a Wisdom of a lower Nature, in Contradiction to that which is more suitable to our Capacities, and which consists in the doing good and forsaking Evil,
 I believe

A Sermon of the same Nature to the same

I believe they are not to be taken here to signify Matters of Speculation, such as the deep Counfels of God, which always were and always will be far above out of our Sight, but that Part of Religion only which is more clearly made known, and which has a more immediate Relation to Practice.

SERM.

II.

From the Words of the Text I shall endeavour to prove, that true Religion is the only true Wisdom.

I. Because it directs us to the best End.

II. Because it affords us the best Means of obtaining it.

First, then, I am to prove that true Religion is the only true Wisdom, because it directs us to the best End. I call it *true Religion*, to distinguish it from that which is only so in Appearance; for every thing is not Piety and Godliness that seems to be so, nor is every thing *Religion* that bears the Name of it: For it is no unusual thing to put the Name of *Religion* upon that which is only the Product of Fancy, Interest, or a peevish Humour. With what Rage and Fury have some People harrassed one another about Matters foreign to Religion, from the great and unsearchable Decrees of
God,

SERM. God, down to the weak and simple Inventions of Men! By giving way to the idle Whims of Fancy and Imagination, People have been brought to look for Religion any where but in the Scriptures, to introduce the Doctrines of Men in the Room of the Doctrines of Christ, and at length to dispute away their Bibles, where alone the true Religion is to be found. Thus, by leaving Truth, we open a Way to numberless Errors which we are led into unavoidably. The hidden Things of Providence have been the Subject of much Debate and Enquiry for many Generations; but to what Purpose? Can we *by searching find out God*? can we *find out the Almighty unto Perfection*? *It is as high as Heaven, what can'st thou do; deeper than Hell, what can'st thou know*? And suppose we could find out these secret Ways of Providence, what is that to the fearing the Lord, and departing from Evil? Should we lead better Lives for it? or go to Heaven the sooner? Good and Evil are things easily learnt without any great Stretch of Abilities; and 'tis not the Knowledge of Mysteries that is required of us, but a good Life: For what doth the Lord our God require of us, but to *fear the Lord our God, to walk in his Ways, and to love him, and*

to serve him with all our Heart; and with SERM.
 all our Soul, to keep the Commandments of II.
 the Lord, and his Statutes which he hath

commanded us? And even in Things of less Importance, what different Shapes has Religion appeared in, according to the various Fancies and Inclinations of Men! Even in the Apostles Days, among the *Corinthians*, some were for *Paul*, some for *Apollos*, some for *Cephas*, and some for *Christ*; and they were so much divided about it, as if these Names had signified so many different Religions; as if *Christ* had been divided, and they had all set up a separate Interest for themselves. How Religion has been disguised by Self-interest, and an insatiable Thirst after Wealth, the World too well knows; and as long as Godliness is Gain in the obvious and literal Sense, and Religion is made a Craft, great will be *Diana* of the *Ephesians*. Nor has Religion suffered less from a peevish and quarrelsome Temper: With what Strife and Contention have Men engaged one another about what they have not understood; and which it would signify nothing to Religion if they had, or on which Side the Truth of the Matter in Dispute lay! For I believe it will be allowed, that in most religious Controversies, as they are

D

called,

SERM.

II.

called, Religion itself is least of all concerned: For Religion is not concerned about things of an indifferent Nature, but about Matters weighty and substantial. *The Kingdom of God, say St Paul, is not Meat and Drink, but Righteousness and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost: For he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of Men.* So that the true Religion is not that which lies out of our Reach, nor does it consist of trifling Speculations, but it goes into the Heart as well as the Head, and shines forth in our Lives.

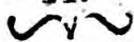
But this only by the way. Now taking it for granted, that that which directs us to the best End is the only true Wisdom, because 'tis agreeable to the Dictates of a rational Creature acting as such, I shall prove that Religion directs us to the best End, and therefore that it is the only true Wisdom. The best and most desirable End that can be imagined is eternal Happiness; and tho' 'tis what all Men wish for, yet nothing but Religion points it out to us, because nothing but that can give us any Certainty or Assurance of a future State, where alone it is to be had; and which the Christian Religion especially has made manifest by
the

the Appearance of our Saviour Jesus Christ, *who hath brought Life and Immortality to Light thro' the Gospel.* This was a great Secret to the wisest of the *Gentile* World, who, after all their curious Searches, and philosophical Inquiries, could not find where to set up their Place of Rest; and after all their Disputes about the Nature of Happiness, they made it a thin metaphysical Shadow rather than any thing real, and either left it as they found it, or else explained it by what wanted to be explained again, and was still the Matter in Dispute: And indeed 'tis no wonder that they who can't see beyond the Grave, with any Clearness or Certainty, can't discover the Seat of Happiness, and find out a Reward for the Righteous. Nature itself can never demonstrate this; nor can they who dwell in Houses of Clay, without some Assistance from Above, have any tolerable Apprehensions of *Houses not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens.*----- The *Stoicks* asserted, that Virtue was itself a sufficient Recompence, and an ample Reward for all the Pains, Troubles and Sufferings that Men undergo in this Life; which, tho' it is indeed an honourable Opinion of Virtue, and a noble Advance in Favour of Religion; and tho' it be like-

SERM.
II.

SERM.

II.



wife certain, that a good Man will be satisfied from himself, yet all this is only true in part, and will amount to no more than this, that it is very lovely and desirable, and which every wise and good Man would certainly chuse, and that too upon its own Account, by reason of the Satisfaction that arises from it. But if the Good and Bad go down together in the Dust, if one thing befalleth Men and Beasts, and as the one dieth so dieth the other, and we shall be hereafter as if we had never been, what is become of the Reward then? Shall it be a Reward to them who are not in a Capacity of apprehending it? who have not a Being to enjoy it in? Had they consider'd it not as the End, but only as the Means, they would not have pull'd down with one Hand what they endeavour'd to build up with the other, but would have given Virtue its due Praise and Honour, and not have detracted from it, by cutting off that Reward which will one Day be the Consequence of it; for *surely, says Solomon, there is a Reward, and thine Expectation shall not be cut off.* And indeed this is as reasonable for a Man that has a Soul, and performs the Conditions required, to expect, as it is for a God of infinite Bounty and Goodness to bestow.

bestow.---Hard would have been the Lot of holy Men of old, who suffered the most cruel Afflictions that Malice could invent, or resolute Goodness undergo, and delivered up their Lives in the Cause of Virtue, had there been no Recompence of Reward ; *for if in this Life only we have Hope in Christ, we are of all Men most miserable.* But we are sure they acted upon a wise and good Principle, even upon the strong Foundation of Faith ; for they were tortured not accepting Deliverance, that they might obtain a better Resurrection, a Resurrection to true and eternal Happiness.--- But Religion tends to make us happy in this World also, as far as Happiness is to be had here, as well as in the next ; for it has *the Promise of the Life that now is as well as of that which is to come* : And this it does, not by pleasing the Fancy, and gratifying the Senses ; this is a mean and sordid Happiness, which, depending upon the Body, is in the Power of every little Accident to obstruct ; but in giving Ease to the Mind, and Peace to the Conscience, which brings us as near Heaven as we can possibly be while we are upon Earth. And after all, what doth a wicked Life tend to ? What Profit hath the wicked Man of *all his Labour*

SERM. *hour which he taketh under the Sun? Only*
 II. *to wear away a few Days of Sorrow and*
 Misery here, and then to go into a State of
 endless Misery hereafter; where their *Can-*
dle shall be clean put out, and their Light
shall be turned into Darknes. But, on the
 other hand, the *Righteous shall shine forth*
as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father.
 Thus doth Religion obtain its End; and an
 End it is truly worthy of a rational Crea-
 ture, acting up to the Perfection of its Na-
 ture; and if, according as the End is more
 or less noble, so is the Wisdom in obtaining
 it, Religion must be the only true Wisdom,
 because it directs us to the best and most
 noble End, *viz.* eternal Happiness. I come
 now to shew in the

Second Place, that it is the only true Wis-
dom, because it affords us the best Means
of obtaining it.— Now those Means are
certainly the best that never fail of obtaining
their End, which are only to be found in
Religion. All other Means, by some un-
foreseen Accident or other, are often dis-
appointed of the End they were designed to
obtain; of which there is no Occasion for
any Proof, because every one has, one Time
or other, made the Experiment: But we
 are

are sure the Means which Religion affords will never fail of obtaining the End we all desire, because a God of Truth hath said it.— The Scripture abounds with Promises of eternal Life and Happiness to those that fear God and keep his Commandments, but it nowhere promises either upon any other Conditions; for 'tis not the Rich, the Mighty, or the Learned, who are entitled to Happiness, but they who are religious and good. Riches, for Example, are of themselves of no Use to make a Man happy, unless Happiness were to be bought, whereas it is to be purchased no otherwise than by being rich in good Works; nor is it to be obtained by Power and Might, by Conquests and great Atchievements, but by Meekness and Humility, by conquering a Man's Self, and subduing his rebellious Passions: For *he that is slow to Anger is better than the Mighty, and he that ruleth his Spirit, than he that taketh a City.* And what will even the Wisdom of Learning and Knowledge signify, unless a Man is *wise unto Salvation?* The Knowledge of Sciences, however useful in its Way, has but little Tendency to a good Life. He who professes Religion, and makes it his Business to be a good Christian, must be skill'd in Knowledge of
another

SERM. another Kind; he must know the Love of
 II. Christ, which passeth all Knowledge, he
 must be skill'd in that Knowledge which
 will enable him to provide for his eternal
 Happiness, which is no otherwise to be ob-
 tained but by fearing God, and keeping his
 Commandments; for a Man may go to Hea-
 ven without Philosophy, tho' he can never
 expect to go there without Religion. But
 what then is Learning a Thing of no Con-
 sequence? Is human Wisdom and Know-
 ledge of no Value? Is it no Advantage to
 be a Scholar? Yes certainly, much every
 Way; it is of great Use, not only in im-
 proving our Understandings, but also in
 obtaining many great and noble Ends in
 Life, which we could never obtain without
 it; and 'tis then only of little Use when 'tis
 consider'd apart from Religion; for when
 'tis separated from That, 'tis Science falsely
 so called, and is not true Wisdom, but only
 the Appearance of it; 'tis not that Wisdom
 which makes Men better, but that which
 sets Men even below their Inferiors; so
 true is that Saying of the Son of *Syrach*,
He that hath small Understanding, and
feareth God, is better than one that hath
much Wisdom, and transgresseth the Law
of the Most High.-----*Solomon*, after all his
 diligent

diligent and thorough Search after Wisdom, and his utmost Enquiry into every thing that had even the Appearance of it, finding that nothing here below could satisfy the Mind of Man, pronounces Vanity and Vexation upon all his Experiments, and being at last assured that Religion afforded the only Means of obtaining Happiness, makes that the Sum of all our Duty; and thus concludes his whole Enquiry: *Fear God, and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole Duty of Man.*----When the young Man asked our Saviour what he should do to inherit eternal Life, he did not turn him over to Arts and Sciences, and the Wisdom of this World, or bid him do what was not in his Power; but said, *If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments.* And when a certain Lawyer asked him the same Question, either to try his Knowledge, or improve his own, or to see whether he would teach any thing contrary to the Law of Moses, he enjoins nothing contrary to That, but refers him to his own Rule; *What is written in the Law? How readest thou?* And he answered, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Strength, and with all thy Mind, and thy Neighbour as*

E

thyself.

SERM. *thyself.* Upon which our Saviour did not
 II. say this was not sufficient, or that Matters
 of a speculative Nature were more necessary
 to Salvation, but said, *Thou hast answered
 right ; this do, and thou shalt live.* And
 indeed 'tis very consistent with the Nature
 of an all-wise and good Being, who would
 that all Men should be saved, to make the
 Way to Happiness plain and easy ; and since
 eternal Happiness is a Matter of infinite
 Concernment, and not confined to a few
 who have more Learning, and greater A-
 bilities than others, but that the Learned
 and Unlearned, Bond and Free, are all to
 be saved through the Mediation of Jesus
 Christ, if they will make use of proper
 Means, 'tis but reasonable to suppose that
 those Means should be such as are suitable
 to every Man's Capacity, and such likewise
 as will never fail of obtaining their End.---

Since then the Fear of the Lord, or a re-
 ligious Life, is the only true Wisdom, what
 remains but that we endeavour to obtain it
 by a suitable Behaviour and Conversation in
 every Action of our Lives? And indeed
 there seems to be less Need of any great Per-
 suasion in this Matter, because there are
 few but are willing and forward enough to
 be thought wise, even at the Expence of
 their

their Modesty; and therefore to be really so one would think should be much more desirable, especially if we consider, that this is not the Wisdom that makes us wise only for a Day or a Year, but for ever; and tho' it be true that *Tongues shall cease, Prophecies fail, and Knowledge be done away,* yet the Wisdom of Religion shall never fail us, because it leads us to a Place where nothing shall cease or be done away.---When a Man gains his End by proper Means, however trifling that End is when obtained, he is esteemed wise; how much wiser then must he be, who has obtained an End of the greatest Concernment in the World, even the Salvation of his Soul. And since People generally spare no Pains to obtain what, after all, is little else but Vanity and Sorrow, and hardly worth the Labour that is bestowed upon it; if they would but act in an equitable Manner, as in other Cases, they would use the greatest Pains and Industry about that which is of the greatest Moment: That, upon which a whole Eternity depends, certainly requires our utmost Care and Concern: And they have no Right to make use of any Argument with relation to the Difficulty of the Task, who have not at least taken the same Pains about it as

SERM.
II.

they have in other Cafes, to obtain any other good End. In fhort, a rational Creature fhould act as fuch, and as Religion is undoubtedly his greateft Bufinefs, fo fhould it be likewise his greateft Care. 'Tis true, it is not expected of a Horfe or a Mule, that have no Underftanding, to be religious; but Man, who has a reasonable Mind, muft act contrary to his Nature if he is not fo; fuch a one can never contradict Religion, till he has firft acted contrary to his Reason, and offer'd manifefit Violence to his Underftanding.-----And we may add to this likewise, that we profefs ourfelves to be Chriftians, and if fo, we don't act at all confiftently, if we are not Men of Religion; for however a lewd, diffolute Life may fuit with a *Mabometan* Scheme of Religion, yet for a Chriftian to live fo, who has engag'd to keep God's Commandments, *and to walk in the fame all the Days of his Life*, is the oddeft Thing in the World; 'tis going againft Nature and Principle both, and deftroying the Notions we have of Right and Wrong. But if, after all, People will ftill go on in a vicious Way of Living, and yet nevertheless expect to be happy, tho' they don't concern themfelves at all about Religion, which (as has been fhewn) is the
only

only Means of obtaining it, it lies upon them to shew where Happiness is promised without it.——*Since then a godly and religious Life is so necessary and becoming in every one who has a future Happiness to secure; 'tis much more so in those who are called to any holy Function, because they have stronger Obligations to it than other Men have. They who give Rules to others, must surely be supposed to practise them themselves, if they think to instruct with Success, and be living Examples of every Precept they teach others; for People will then only be convinced that we deal equitably with them, when we require no more of them than what we ourselves do constantly perform.*

To conclude. A good Life is the Sum of the whole Christian Philosophy; and every thing else is to be valued more or less, according as it has more or less Tendency to it: And whatever Fancies People may set up in the Room of it, which may be always Matter of Dispute, and become Demonstration in one Age, and Nonsense in another; yet, as long as the Word of God has any Influence or Authority with Men, *the Fear of the Lord will always be Wisdom, and to depart from Evil Understanding.*——

This

SERM. This is certainly right and true, whatever
 II. is not so. If then we will be wise for our-
 selves, let it appear by our Actions. *Who
 is a wise and knowing Man among you,
 says St James, let him shew out of a good
 Conversation his Works with Meekness of
 Wisdom.* This is Religion, or Wisdom,
 as Solomon loves to call it, that is *more pre-
 cious than Rubies*, that must always be
 cloathed with the Beauty of Holiness, and
 shine forth in the lovely Ornament of a
 good Life.

*Now to him, who is the Lord of all
 Power and Might, and the Author
 and Giver of all good Things, let
 us continually offer up our humble
 Prayers, that he would graft in
 our Hearts the Love of his Name, in-
 crease in us true Religion, nourish
 us with all Goodness, and of his
 great Mercy keep us in the same,
 through Jesus Christ our Lord: To
 whom with the Father and Holy
 Ghost, be ascribed, as is most due,
 all Honour, Glory, Might, Majesty
 and Dominion, henceforth and for
 evermore.*



S E R M O N III.

J O B IV. 17.

*Shall mortal Man be more just
than God? Shall a Man be
more pure than his Maker?*

IN the early Ages of the World, SERM.
III.
when the Almighty condescended
to speak to his Creatures, and de-
clare his Will in Dreams and Vi-
sions, these Words were spoken to *Eliphaz*,
in a Vision of the Night, as he was ruminat-
ing, in a pensive Manner, upon the Cir-
cumstances of what had happen'd to him be-
fore on such Occasions; and the Reason of
his relating them to *Job*, was, because he
thought he had been too presumptuous in
his Complaints on the Miseries of Life,
thereby tacitly accusing the Divine Provi-
dence of Injustice, in appointing him to
undergo

SERM. undergo so heavy a Burden of Afflictions :

III. For when *Job's* three Friends came to see him, of whom *Eliphaz* was one, and he had a long while in vain expected them to condole with him in his Miseries, and comfort him in his Sorrows, he could not forbear crying out, *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 Above, neither let the Light shine upon it: Let Darkness and the Shadow of Death stain it; let a Cloud dwell upon it; let the Blackness of the Day terrify it: As for that Night, let Darkness seize upon it; let it not be joined unto the Days of the Year; let it not come into the Number of the Months: Because it shut not up the Doors of my Mother's Womb, nor hid Sorrow from mine Eyes; for now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept then, and have been at Rest with Kings and Counsellors of the Earth, which built desolate Places for themselves. There the Wicked cease from Troubling, and the Weary be at Rest; there the Prisoners rest together, they hear not the Voice of the Oppressor; the Small and the Great are there, and the Servant is free from his Master. At which*
Complaint

Complaint *Eliphaz*, being greatly incens'd, sharply rebukes him for not putting in Practice those good Rules and Instructions which he had given others; and tells him, that he suspects his Piety and Goodness, because the Innocent were not wont to suffer such Things, but the Wicked and Oppressors, whom God had always humbled, tho' they exalted themselves never so much against him. And lest these Observations should not be sufficient to convince him of his Error, he relates to him what he had heard himself in a Vision. *A Thing was secretly brought to me, says he, and mine Ear receiv'd a little thereof; in Thoughts from the Visions of the Night, when deep Sleep falleth on Men, Fear came upon me, and Trembling, which made all my Bones to shake; then a Spirit passed before my Face, the Hair of my Flesh stood up, it stood still, but I could not discern the Form thereof; an Image was before mine Eyes, there was Silence, and I heard a Voice, saying, Shall mortal Man be more just than God? Shall a Man be more pure than his Maker? i. e. 'Tis in vain for frail Man to dispute, or contest the Justice of God's Proceedings, or for an imperfect Creature to exalt himself against his Maker; for tho' we suppose him to be as*

F eminently

SERM. eminently just and righteous. as he is unjust
 III. and unrighteous, yet as long as he has the least
 Imperfection in him, he can't be perfectly
 so, he can't therefore be as perfect as God
 who made him ; for whatever Justice or
 Goodness is in Man, must be so in God in a
 more excellent Degree. From the Words
 of the Text, I propose to shew,

I. That the Afflictions which happen to
 us in this Life are no Objections against
 the Justice of God. And then propose
 to shew,

II. That the Lesson most proper and na-
 tural to be learnt from this, is, not to mur-
 mur and repine at any thing that befalls us,
 but to submit ourselves and our Cause to
 God.

First, then, I am to shew, that the Af-
 flictions which happen to us in this Life
 are no Objections against the Justice of
 God. For to suppose the contrary, pro-
 ceeds from an Ignorance of God and Man.
 For any thing this Supposition suggests to
 the contrary, God may be indeed a Being
 endued with great Power, but as for Wis-
 dom, Knowledge, and Goodness, in these
 he

he must be defective; for if he is unjust in permitting Afflictions to befall good Men (for such the Argument intends them) he is so, either for want of knowing who these good Men are, or else for want of Goodness to give them their Due; upon both which Accounts his Wisdom also will be very liable to be suspected and call'd in Question. But now God is infinite every Way, not only in Power, Duration, Extension, &c. but in every thing else; for he is either Nothing, or the Sum of all Things. The Idea of God includes in it every thing that is great and excellent, and that in an infinite Degree, according to the Son of Syrach's sublime Description of him. *By his Word all Things consist; we may speak much, and yet come short, wherefore in Sum he is all. How shall we be able to magnify him, for he is great above all his Works? The Lord is terrible, and very great, and marvellous in his Power. When you glorify the Lord, exalt him as much as you can, for even yet will he far exceed; and when you exalt him, put forth all your Strength, and be not weary, for you can never go far enough. Who hath seen him, that he might tell us? and who can magnify him as he is? There are yet hid greater Things*

SERM.
III.
~

SERM. *than these be, for we have seen but a few*
 III. *of his Works.* He therefore must be just
 and righteous, and that in a most eminent
 Manner, for this is a Part of those glorious
 Perfections which make him be what he is:
 And if so, there must be a sufficient Reason
 for every thing he does, whether we are
 able to find out that Reason, or no.

Now, because the making those Afflictions we suffer in this Life an Argument against the Justice of God implies that Man is innocent, and therefore more just than God, because a righteous Man will not punish another without a just Cause, this Supposition also proceeds from an Ignorance of ourselves as well as of God. Whatever Light a vain Fancy, and a bloated Imagination, may have plac'd us in, and how innocent and righteous soever we may appear in our own Glass, yet if we will look into ourselves with an exact Scrutiny, and diligently view this Body of Sin which we inhabit; if we will but trace our natural Depravity to its Spring-Head, till we find that we were born in Sin, and shapen in Iniquity, and be at the Pains to observe the dismal Effects of it breaking out into rebellious Passions, perverse Humours, and every evil Work, we shall soon find the
 Mistake;

Mistake ; an impartial Eye will discover all those Deformities, which a too good Opinion of ourselves has always plac'd in a wrong Light. The Scripture and our own Consciences have concluded all under Sin. *Who, says the wife Man, can say, I have made my Heart clean, I am free from my Sin ?* And this is the Case not only of Sinners, but of good Men too ; and when Men are truly sensible of this, it is a sign that they are good. *What is Man, says Eliphaz, that he should be clean, and he which is born of a Woman, that he should be righteous ? Behold, he putteth no Trust in his Saints, yea the Heavens are not clean in his Sight ; how much more abominable and filthy is Man, who drinketh Iniquity like Water !* And, says Bildad, *Behold even to the Moon and it shineth not, yea, the Stars are not pure in his Sight ; how much less Man, that is a Worm, and the Son of Man, which is a Worm !* So that had we right Notions of God, and of ourselves, we should not make the Afflictions which happen to us in this Life an Argument against the Justice of God ; for then we should be convinc'd, that as God is infinite in every Respect, in Wisdom and Justice, as well as in every thing else, and is therefore a Being of all possible

SERM.
III.

SERM.

III.



possible Perfections, there must be a sufficient Reason for these Things; and a true Knowledge of ourselves would give us the Reason, a Reason sufficient to justify God in his Proceedings, and convince us, that whatever we undergo in this Life is no more than we might expect as the Consequence of our Guilt: *Why then should a living Man complain, as the Prophet says, a Man for the Punishment of his Sins? Or, why shall the righteous Lord be accounted unjust for punishing us according to our Deserts? or mortal Man be more just than God for deserving it?*

Tho' we can't trace out the Footsteps of the Divine Providence, and when we labour under any Afflictions, after our utmost Care and Endeavour to preserve our Integrity, may, with *Job*, want to know the Cause of such Proceedings, yet 'tis enough that we are guilty; 'tis sufficient to answer all Objections against the Justice of God, that we have deserv'd them, tho' perhaps they are not sent as the immediate Consequence of Sin, but as Trials to exercise our Patience and Humility, or for some other Reason which we are not able to discover. For if Afflictions were always the Consequence of Sin, wicked Men could then
expect

expect but little Content and Satisfaction, their Life would then be one continued Scene of Trouble ; whereas the contrary to this is very often true, good Men being sometimes more afflicted than they ; and tho' none are, strictly speaking, so good as not to deserve Punishment, yet, as there are better than others, they that are so would, by this Rule, have least of it. But this is not always the Case ; *Job's* Friends were therefore very much mistaken, when they asserted that good Men only were prosperous, and that the Wicked were the only afflicted Men in this Life, and consequently that good and bad Men were always to be known by the Comforts or Troubles that happen'd to them ; for tho' this may sometimes be true, yet that it is no constant Rule and Method of God's Proceedings *Job* plainly shews from History and good Observation. If this Opinion be true, he wants to be inform'd why many wicked Men enjoy the good Things of this Life, and want neither Power nor Might, nor old Age to prolong or encrease their Enjoyment, their Children are provided for, and they are not disturb'd in their Habitations, they spend their Days in Pleasure, uninterrupted with Pain or Sickness, and go easily and quietly to their Graves.

SERM.
III.



SERM. Graves. One dies in an Affluence of Wealth
 III. and Prosperity ; and another, perhaps a
 better Man than him, after a tedious Life
 of Sorrow, expires in Anguish and Tortures
 insupportable. *Wherefore, says he, do the
 Wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty
 in Power, and their Seed is establish'd in
 their Sight with them, and their Offspring
 before their Eyes ? Their Houses are safe
 from Fear, neither is the Rod of God upon
 them ; they take the Timbrel and Harp, and
 rejoice at the Sound of the Organ ; they spend
 their Days in Wealth, and in a Moment
 go down to the Grave. One dieth in his full
 Strength, being wholly at Ease and Quiet ;
 and another dieth in the Bitterness of his
 Soul, and never eateth with Pleasure. They
 shall lie down alike in the Dust, and the
 Worms shall cover them.*

When *David* saw the Prosperity of the
 Ungodly, that they were not in Trouble
 like other Men, it so tenderly affected him,
 that he could not forbear breaking out into
 this passionate Complaint, *Verily I have
 cleansed my Heart in vain, I have wash'd
 my Hands in Innocency ; for all the Day
 long have I been plagued, and chastned every
 Morning.* And *Jeremiah* was so perplex'd
 with the Thoughts of this, that tho' he
 would

would not accuse God of Injustice, whatever happen'd, but says; *Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee!* Yet in the very same Verse he can't forbear enquiring into the Reason of it. *Yet let me talk with thee of thy Judgments,* says he: *Wherefore does the Way of the Wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal treacherously?* This indeed has troubled the Thoughts of many good Men in all the Ages of the World, and 'tis founded entirely upon this mistaken Principle, That Afflictions are always Tokens of God's Displeasure, and that the Comforts of Life are always Marks of Favour: And this is so far from being always true, that the Reverse of it is very often so; at least these Things are often so promiscuously distributed, as to leave no Room for any such Conclusion: Hence some have form'd an Objection, not against the Justice, but against the very Being of a God. *All Things come alike to all; say they, there is one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked; to the Good and to the Clean, and to the Unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: As is the Good, so is the Sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an Oath.* Upon which Account they presently con-

SERM.
III.

clude, that 'tis to no Purpose for them to observe their Duty, or to take any manner of Care about regulating their Life and Manners, for that it all turns to one Account, the Effect is just the same, do what they will. But now, in Answer to this, let it be observ'd that the Happiness or Misery of a Man does not always appear by his outward State and Condition; there is no true Judgment to be made of his being happy by his being prosperous and rich in the World, and enjoying his Heart's Desire; for when a Man, full of Ambition and Revenge, thrives in the World, and has it in his Power to follow the natural Bent of his Inclinations, the Mischiefs that ensue plainly shew that Prosperity was sent him as a Curse: Nor can a Man be pronounc'd miserable from the Troubles and Disappointments he meets with; these Things are most commonly sent for the Trial of a Man's Virtue, or to subdue some growing Vice, and they will prove good or otherwise to a Man, according to the Use he makes of them; so that neither the one nor the other are Marks of God's Favour or Displeasure always.

But to proceed. The Afflictions which happen to us in this Life are no Objections
against

against the Justice of God, because he made us, and consequently has a Right to deal with us as he pleases. God gave us Life of his own free Gift, without our Desire or Deserving; for we could neither do the one nor the other, when as yet we were not, when we had not a Being to desire or deserve it in: He therefore must certainly have a Right to allot us to what sort or kind of Life he shall think most proper and convenient; for the Act of creating us implies in it also a Right of governing us. And this is further evinc'd from the Consideration of our own State and Condition, which is a State of Dependance, weak and defective, which implies in it a Want of Help and Succour; so that whatever happens to us in this Life can be no Objection against the Justice of God, because it comes from him who alone has a Right to dispose of us.

Indeed, were we altogether free from Sin, we might have some Plea for desiring a Life of Ease and Happiness, exempted from the common Casualties of which every Man living has his Share. But even then, could not God do what he pleas'd with his own? Shall the Thing form'd say to him that form'd it, Why hast thou made me thus? Shall we pretend to direct the Almighty in

SERM. his Dispensations, or teach him what is proper for him to do? Is this the Way we take in our own Affairs? Are we willing to be taught by our Inferiors? Do we not on the contrary too often hate Counsel, and despise Reproof, even from those whom we ourselves acknowledge to be wise? Shall we then pretend to guide the Hand of Providence, and point out the Way for him, whose Footsteps are not known? 'Tis to confound our vain Curiosity, and to manifest his own Glory, that God sometimes works an Effect beyond the Reach of all human Apprehension. So that, tho' he is a Being infinitely good and just, and therefore will not do any thing inconsistent with Goodness and Justice, yet he is infinitely wise too, and therefore is above any Rules we shall think fit to prescribe, and consequently will not be accountable to us for any of his Ways; so that all our busy Enquiries about these Things must be resolv'd into the Will of God, which is sufficient to silence all the Disputers of this World. When the Disciples saw the Man that was born blind, they immediately concluded that it was the Effect of some remarkable Sin of him or his Parents; and accordingly ask'd our Saviour, saying, *Master, who did sin, this*

various SUBJECTS.

55

SERM.
III.

this Man, or his Parents, that he was born blind? But to let them see that there were other Reasons for it than they were aware of, Jesus answer'd, *Neither hath this Man sinned, nor his Parents, but that the Works of God should be made manifest in him, i. e.* They were not guilty of any particular heinous Sin, for which they thought this Affliction was sent, as a Judgment, but that the Glory of God might be made manifest in restoring his Sight.

* But, perhaps, it will be said, that to resolve these Things into the Will of God, instead of clearing the Difficulty, is the only Way to make it the more perplexing. This may seem too arbitrary a Way of proceeding to make it satisfactory to Reason: For they that call in Question the Justice of God in this Case, will probably ask, how that can be clear'd up by resolving Things into an arbitrary Will? For if it be unjust for good Men to suffer Afflictions, 'tis not the saying, it is the Will of God to have it so, that can make it otherwise, that can alter the Nature of Things, and make that just which is in itself unjust. The Potter has indeed Power over the Clay, and accordingly makes what he pleases of it; but then it may be said, The Clay is not an intelligent Being, nor capable

SERM. capable of Pain or Pleasure, Happiness or
 III. Misery; and therefore can have no Wrong
 or Injustice done it. To all which let it
 be answer'd, that if the Will of God was
 capable of having a wrong Bias put upon
 it, like that of Man, there would be a great
 deal of Strength in the Objection; for then
 whatever was left to the Will, would be
 left to all the Mischief that could possibly
 proceed from a wrong Judgment, which,
 if the Will is determin'd by the Judgment,
 as it necessarily is, will have the Direction
 of it in its Turn, as well as a right one.
 But the Case is otherwise; for the Will of
 God, as it has an infinitely perfect Mind
 belonging to it, is incapable of being in-
 fluenc'd but by the infinite Truth of Things.
 Whatever, therefore, is left to the Will of
 God, is left to infinite Wisdom, infinite
 Goodness, and infinite Truth, and there-
 fore may very safely be relied on. Which
 brings me,

Secondly, To shew, that the Lesson most
 proper and natural to be learnt from this, is,
 not to murmur and repine at any thing that
 befalls us, but to submit ourselves and our
 Cause to God. Since Afflictions are not al-
 ways Evils, and, if they were, are however
 no

no more than what we have deserv'd, we should humble ourselves under the mighty Hand of God, who is infinitely wise, and therefore best knows what is most proper for us, and infinitely just and good, and therefore will not afflict us without a sufficient Reason for so doing. That we can't find out the Reason is no Wonder, because it is one of those Secrets of Providence which will not be unfolded in this Life, any further than this, in general, that it is some how or other for our Advantage, and yet, by a proper Submission and Resignation to the Will of God, it is the same thing as if we could find it out. For as God is a Being infinite every Way, by a proper Submission to him, we have the same Complacency and Satisfaction of Mind as if we saw the Reason explicitly laid before us; whereas to murmur and repine, is to cut ourselves off from this Benefit, 'tis to distrust God, and deny the Reason of his Proceedings: And as it is founded in Unbelief, so it ought to be subdued with all possible Speed; especially if we consider, that we profess ourselves Christians, have taken up the Cross, and must behave ourselves like the Disciples of Christ. We have promised to renounce the Poms and Vanities of the World, we can't therefore
expect

SERM. expect a Life of Ease and Satisfaction without
 III. a Mixture of Sorrows and Calamities, nor to
 arrive at perfect Happiness but thro' much
 Tribulation. This Argument, one would
 think, should make us easy under all Afflic-
 tions. Indeed 'tis easy for them who feel no
 Pain or Anxiety to forbear Complaints; for,
 as *Job* says, *Doth the wild Ass bray when
 he hath Grass? or loweth the Ox over his
 Fodder?* Yet still what will it signify to
 strive against God; for he giveth not Ac-
 count of any of his Matters? *What will it
 profit to oppose ourselves to the Almighty?
 Who hath hardened himself against him and
 hath prospered? Behold, he taketh away,
 who can hinder him? who will say unto
 him, What doest thou? If we speak of
 Strength, lo he is strong; and if of Judg-
 ment, who shall set us a Time to plead? In
 a Word, and to conclude, let us submit our-
 selves to God in every Condition of Life;
 and take care how we suspect the Justice of
 his Proceedings before we know the Whole
 of Things. At present we know only in part,
 a future State will reconcile all those Diffi-
 culties, and demonstrate, after all our rash
 and unwarrantable Complaints, that *the
 righteous Lord loveth Righteousness, his Coun-
 tenance will behold the Thing that is just.**



S E R M O N I V .

GEN. iii. 15.

And I will put Enmity between thee and the Woman, and between thy Seed and her Seed ; it shall bruise thy Head, and thou shalt bruise his Heel.



IN this Chapter we have a short, SERM.
but surprizing, Account of the IV.
Fall of Man, which introduc'd all
the Sin and Misery that has ever
since been spreading itself over the Face of
the whole Earth. No sooner do we behold
the happy Pair pure and upright, as they
came from the Hands of their Maker (and
happy indeed had it been for them, and for
us, had they continued so !) but presently
the Scene is chang'd, and they, who before
were wont to be blest'd with the Divine
H Presence,

SERM. Prefence, now hide themselves from the Pre-
 IV. fence of the Lord God among the Trees of
 the Garden. Unhappy Change! That heavenly Voice, that once left such pleasing and delightful Sounds behind, is now become a Voice of Fear and Terror: *I heard thy Voice in the Garden, says Adam, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.* Naked indeed! when his native Innocence was gone, and he had thrown off the beautiful Garment of an upright Mind. Thus those, whom we see in the foregoing Chapter at the Head of the Creation, the Favourites of Heaven, who were thought worthy to appear before God, and receive his Orders and Commands in Person, we find, in the Compass of a few Lines, standing before God, that very God by whom they were once so highly favour'd, in order to receive Sentence for their Disobedience, of which Death was before threatened as the Penalty. But God, whose Property is always to have Mercy, came down in Pity as well as Judgment, and soften'd the Penalty with a most gracious Promise, That tho' they had incurr'd the Penalty of Death, and involv'd themselves in a great deal of Trouble and Affliction, yet in the End they should get out of it all, and come
 off

victorious. For when Sentence was pass'd upon the Serpent, and he was pronounced cursed above all Cattle, and above every Beast of the Field, and commanded to go upon his Belly, and eat Dust all the Days of his Life, it follows, *And I will put Enmity between thee and the Woman, and between thy Seed and her Seed; it shall bruise thy Head, and thou shalt bruise his Heel;* i. e. Tho' thou hast deceiv'd her now under the Shew of Friendship, yet hereafter she shall be convinc'd that thou art not a Friend, but an Enemy; and, accordingly, there shall be Enmity and Variance between you, and between thy Offspring and hers; her Offspring shall frustrate and disappoint thy malicious Contrivances and Designs, and thou shalt only be able to do some bodily Hurt in return. This, I think, is meant by *bruising the Heel*; because when it is said, *the Seed of the Woman shall bruise the Serpent's Head*, if by that is meant, as it most certainly is, that it shall frustrate the grand Designs of that old Serpent the Devil, which were to destroy the whole human Race, and which no doubt he thought he had effected when he had seduc'd the Woman, imagining that the Sentence of Death, which was the Penalty of Disobedience,

SERM. would extend to the Soul as well as the
 IV. Body, and so not being able to gain his
 Purpose this Way, and yet being to have
 some Advantage still, that must be suppos'd
 to relate to the Body, signified, figuratively,
 by the Heel. I know the Bruising of the
 Heel is confin'd by some to the Sufferings
 of our blessed Saviour in his human Nature;
 but tho' it is more eminently true in that
 Sense, yet there seems to be no Reason to
 confine it to that only, because, as we are
 able to bruise the Serpent's Head by his Af-
 sistance, tho' he is the principal Agent, so
 tho' he was the principal Sufferer, and the
 Serpent bruis'd his Heel in a more particu-
 lar Manner, yet his Power over the Body
 extends to the whole human Race.

I shall not waste so much of your Time,
 or my own, as to give you a Detail of all
 the Opinions that have been conceiv'd about
 the Fall of Man; but, taking it for granted,
 that the Bible stands at least upon as good a
 Bottom of Truth as any prophane Author,
 I shall prove,

I. The Certainty of it; which will make
 way in the

II. Place,

II. Place, to shew the Certainty of Man's Recovery, founded upon the Prophecy in the Text. SERM.
IV.

III. I shall shew what we are to learn from these two Things.

First, then, I am to prove the Certainty of the Fall of Man. We are told, in the first Chapter of *Genesis*, that God made Man in his own Image, after his own Likeness; and that he saw every thing that he had made, and Man among the rest, and behold it was very good. The next Thing we meet with is, that the Lord God planted a Garden Eastward in *Eden*, and there he put the Man whom he had form'd: In this Garden was every Tree that was pleasant to the Sight, and good for Food, which was allow'd to be made use of; but in the midst of it were two Trees, the Tree of Life, and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which last was forbidden to be eaten of, upon Pain of Death. *Of every Tree of the Garden thou may'st freely eat, but of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil thou shalt not eat of it; for in the Day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely*

SERM. *surely die.* But, notwithstanding this, we
 IV. find the Serpent seducing the Woman, and
 telling her, That if they did eat it they
 should not die, but be as Gods, knowing
 Good and Evil. So that *when the Woman
 saw that the Tree was good for Food, and
 that it was pleasant to the Eyes, and a
 Tree to be desired to make one wise, she took
 of the Fruit thereof and did eat, and gave
 also unto her Husband with her, and he did
 eat ; and, as a Confirmation of their Guilt,
 we find them, in the next Verse, hiding
 themselves from the Presence of the Lord
 God amongst the Trees of the Garden.*

This is the Scripture Account of it; and
 a very plain and clear one it is. If this be
 disbeliev'd, it must be, either because it can
 be obviated by some other Part of Scrip-
 ture, or else that it implies some Absurdity
 or Contradiction, As to the first, the Scrip-
 ture is so far from obviating this any where,
 that it abundantly confirms it. *St Paul*
says expressly, that by one Man Sin enter'd
into the World, and Death by Sin. And in
 an older Book than any besides in the Bible,
 I mean *Job, Zophar* traces Wickedness and
 Misery up to the first Man. Then, as to
 the second, it is so far from implying any
 Absurdity or Contradiction, especially if
 we take along with us the Account of Man's
 Recovery,

Recovery, which is given us in the Text, SERM.
that it is the best, if not the only Informa- IV.
tion we have of our true State and Condi-
tion. It accounts for the two contrary Prin-
ciples that are within us, and makes the
whole Scheme of Religion one uniform con-
sistent Thing; whereas, if we lay aside
this, we have no other Account of these
Things. Who can pretend to account for
the Original of Evil without it? That
God could make nothing evil is plain, be-
cause he is a Being of infinite Perfection;
every thing that he made then must be
good, and accordingly we find it was so;
for he pronounc'd it to be so, after he had
made them. Well then, what Account do
we give of Evil? How came That into the
World? Since it could not come from God,
from whence should it come, but from some
Deviation from his Laws?

No doubt of it, when God made Man
in his own Image, he gave him a better
Body to dwell in than what we have at pre-
sent; for tho' it is the Soul, by which we
are said to be made in his own Image, and
after his own Likeness, yet 'tis very rea-
sonable to suppose that such a Soul had a
Partner more suitable to it than what it has
at present. Such a heaven-born Mind could
not

SERM. not be cloath'd with the tatter'd Garments
 IV. of Flesh and Blood in all its present Infirmi-
 ties, and the innumerable Variety of Dis-
 orders which it is now subject to. When
 you see an afflicted Mortal labouring under
 the Pressure of some stubborn and incurable
 Disease, longing to throw off his House of
 Clay, and to get free from the loathsome
 Prison of his Body ; to whom Life is the
 greatest Torment, and whatever can put the
 speediest End to it the greatest Happiness
 and Comfort ; can you think such a one came
 thus from the Hands of his Maker? View
 him again, and see whether this be like the
 first Man in his State of Innocence, in the
 Image and Likeness of God ?

We find by *Moses's* Account, at least we
 may very rationally infer so much, that
 Man had not died, had he not transgress'd ;
 and if so, surely a Body not subject to Death
 must be of a very different Make from what
 it is at present. Whence then should this
 Dropsy, that Fever, with a Multitude of
 other Disorders, that are perfect Health and
 Ease, compar'd with the more intense Pains
 of some acute Diseases that exercise their
 Tyranny over this earthly Body, proceed ?
 From natural Causes, you'll say. But how
 came Nature so corrupted, since it was at
 first

first pronounced good? We know, nothing SERM.
can come from God but what is good. IV.
Whence then comes Evil? This can never
be accounted for from Reason; and yet till
it be accounted for, there can be no such
Thing as true Religion; for till we know
from what Cause Evil springs, 'tis impossi-
ble to tell how to avoid or prevent it, or
find a Remedy for it. What a dismal State
then must this be, to be surrounded with all
sorts of Evil, natural and moral, without
knowing how we came by them, or how
to get rid of them! But now if we take
the Scripture Account of it, 'tis all easy
and natural: Man was made good and up-
right, but he transgress'd that Command-
ment, of which Death was threatened as a
Penalty. Immediately the whole Frame of
his Constitution was corrupted, and thus all
natural and moral Evils were first introduc'd
into the World. But still not without a Re-
medy; for tho' the Evil spreads to a great
Degree, yet the Good works on at the same
Time, and will at last prevail and get the
better of it.

All People have been forced to allow,
that there is a great deal of Evil in the World;
but because they could not charge it upon
God, nor tell how to account for it other-

I

wife,

SERM. wife, hence arose a very early Opinion of
 IV two independent Principles, the one of
 Good, the other of Evil. But this can't be
 suppos'd without implying a direct Contra-
 diction; for two such Powers, equally re-
 sisting each other, could produce neither
 Good nor Evil.

And there is but little Reason in another
 Opinion, which some have had, *i. e.* The
 Doctrine of a pre-existent State; for as that
 is only a Conjecture, so whatever follows
 from it will amount to no more. If it be
 said that God could have made Man so up-
 right that he should not have fallen, I say,
 supposing this could be done, and that, ac-
 cording to our View of Things, it would be
 right that it should be so, yet who shall say,
 that what we think to be right, he shall
 think so too? Or, who shall ask him,
What doest thou? We must take our Be-
 ings as we find them, and be content with
 them upon such Conditions as they are given
 us. I come now,

Secondly, To shew the Certainty of his
 Recovery, founded upon the Prophecy in
 the Text of the Seed of the Woman. *I will
 put Enmity between thee and the Woman,
 and between thy Seed and her Seed; it shall
 bruise*

bruise thy Head, and thou shalt bruise his Heel. This is the first and most glorious Prophecy that ever was given to Man, no less than a Prophecy of his Redemption from that State of Death and Misery into which he was unhappily fallen; which, tho' it gave but a small glimmering Light at first, yet is it the same Prophecy that shined brighter and brighter in After-Ages, till it was at last accomplish'd in a full Blaze at the Birth of the Messiah (as on this Day) that blessed Seed of the Woman, in whom, according to the same Word of Prophecy given afterwards to *Abraham*, all the Nations of the Earth were to be blessed. And here is the Difference, among other Things, between natural and reveal'd Religion; the one is full of Fears and Doubts, the other's Fears are swallow'd up in Hope, the Design of Prophecy, or of Revelation, being to convey Hopes to a Sinner.

That the Prophecy in the Text relates to the Redemption of Mankind will appear very plain, if we consider that the Design of the Serpent was to hinder Man from being immortal, or to make him immortally miserable. For if his Design was only to procure him a temporal Death, then he succeeded according to his Wish, contrary to

SERM. the Prophecy in the Text, which foretells
 IV. that the Seed of the Woman should bruise
 the Serpent's Head, *i. e.* frustrate all his
 Contrivances and Designs; for this, in all
 reasonable Construction, must be the Mean-
 ing of it. This being then the Design of
 the Serpent, the Prophecy in the Text
 plainly shews that he should not succeed in
 it, but that the Seed of the Woman should
 spoil those Designs, and consequently free
 Mankind from the Power of them. Put
 this in any other Light, and there is no Sense
 in it. If we were, for Example, to take
 it in a literal Meaning, besides the Absur-
 dity of supposing the Almighty to come
 down from Heaven in so solemn a Manner
 upon so trifling an Occasion, as only to give
 the Seed of the Woman a Power to bruise
 the Head of a Serpent, and the Serpent a
 Power to bruise his Heel, which surely can
 never be a Sentence worthy the Divine Being
 to pronounce, what has this to do with the
 Fall of Man? Man is represented here as
 fallen from his Duty, as a Transgressor of
 the express Command of God, and for which
 he is condemned, and receives his Sentence
 accordingly. Now what has all this to do
 with the Serpent's biting a Man by the
 Heel, or with Man's knocking him on
 the

the Head, either of which might be done, whether we suppose Man to have fallen or not? There is no manner of Connection in this, for the Serpent is represented as a Delinquent, not as a Serpent, for as such he could not be capable of moral Right or Wrong, but only as actuated by that grand Serpent the Devil; and accordingly Sentence is passed upon him as such, part of which we have here in the Text. As the Serpent then is consider'd here only as the Emblem or Symbol of something else capable of moral Wrong, and who actually had introduc'd it into the World, what Connection can there be in applying this to a common Serpent, capable neither of Right nor Wrong? He is here consider'd as a Criminal, and punish'd as such, which could not be if the Serpent only was punished. Besides, how does this appear in Fact? A Serpent is not kill'd oftner than other venomous Creatures. We must therefore necessarily have Recourse to some other Interpretation of the Words, and that is, to an Interpretation more rational and consistent, which is indeed the plain and obvious one, That our blessed Saviour, who is most emphatically stil'd the *Seed of the Woman*, shall destroy the Power of the Devil, and restore those who were held captive

SERM. captive by Sin to the glorious Liberty of
 IV. the Sons of God.

Before we can make it appear that our Saviour is here meant by the Seed of the Woman, we must indeed travel through a long Series of Prophecies. For tho' Mankind must from this first Prophecy have great Hopes of some extraordinary Blessing to come, yet what that should be, or what this Seed of the Woman should mean, was not to be discover'd : But afterwards, when the Promise was made to *Abraham*, that *in him all the Families of the Earth should be blessed*, which was also establish'd with *Isaac* and *Jacob*, and continued to *Judah*, and down to *David*, it received more and more Light, till it appear'd in its greatest Splendor, when that Day-spring from on High visited us, in whom all Prophecy was center'd. That Christ is most eminently this Seed of the Woman, to whom all these ancient Prophecies relate, we may learn from *St Paul*, who, talking of the Promise made to *Abraham* before the Law was given says, *Now to Abraham and his Seed were the Promises made ; he saith not, and to Seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to thy Seed, which is Christ*, Gal. iii. 16. And at the 19th Verse, talking of God's Design
 in

in giving the Law, he says, *Wherefore then serveth the Law? It was added, because of Transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the Promise was made.* What that Seed is, is plain from the 29th Verse, where those that belong to Christ are said to be of the Seed of *Abraham*. *If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's Seed, and Heirs according to the Promise.* And in the 4th and 5th Verses of the next Chapter he says expressly, that *when the Fulness of Time was come, God sent forth his own Son, made of a Woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the Adoption of Sons.*

Thus has the Divine Being, whom we have experienc'd to be infinite in Mercy, as well as in every other Attribute, when Man stood before him a Convict by the Law of Nature, and had lost all Hopes of a Reconciliation with God upon any further Trial of his Obedience, given him a gentler Law, and fresh Hopes of Favour, by declaring, That tho' the Serpent had drawn the Woman aside from her Duty, and the Man had also join'd in the Transgression, yet that he should not finally prevail, but that, for the future, he would *put Enmity between his Seed and her's*; which has been fulfill'd, not only

SERM. only in our Saviour, but in all good Chri-
 IV. tians ever since; and that the Seed of the
 Woman should at length prevail over him,
 and shake off his Dominion; that blessed
 Seed which came down from Heaven to
 perform the Mercy promis'd to our Fore-
 fathers, and to remember God's holy Co-
 venant; to perform the Oath that he swore
 to our Forefather *Abraham*, that he would
 give us, *that we, being deliver'd out of the
 Hands of our Enemies, might serve him
 without Fear, in Holiness and Righteousness
 before him all the Days of our Life.* What
 we are to learn from all this, I come now,

Thirdly to shew. From the Fall of Man
 then we may learn how to account for all
 the Evil that is in the World, and by his
 Recovery for all the Good that is in it. To
 these two Springs are reducible the Happi-
 ness and Misery of every Mortal. Every
 evil Thought, every vain Imagination, de-
 rives its Original from thence, as every good
 Thought and Action, every Rivulet of Hope,
 from the other.

And now we know the Original of Good
 and Evil, which, by the way, we know
 only by Revelation, no Scheme of Reason
 whatsoever having found out this grand
 Secret,

Secret, we may know both what we are, and how we came to be, what we are, and also what we may be, if we please; that we are indeed Creatures of the uppermost Rank of Beings that are upon this Globe; but Oh! how fallen! how chang'd from human Nature in its State of Innocence! But then, tho' our Nature have got a different Stamp from what it received at its first Formation, tho' the Characters are in a great measure obliterated, and the Divine Hand in some sort defac'd, yet we know that the Divine Goodness has put us in a Method to recover the Impression, and revive the Image of God, in which we were first made, from the Injuries of Sin and Death; to good an Effect we now find from that early Prophecy, which is now fulfill'd at the Coming of Christ, the promis'd Seed, into the World. This will naturally lead us to avoid two Things equally prejudicial to every good Man, *i. e.* Not to think too highly, or too meanly of ourselves; one leads to the high Road of Presumption, the other to the dangerous Precipice of Despair. As to the first, There have not been wanting some who have rais'd human Nature almost to a Level with the divine, and have made Man self-sufficient, a Creature perfect and

SERM independent, when at the same time every
 IV. single Man in the World is a Contradiction
 to it. But whence should this Perfection
 come? Not from Nature, for Man broke
 that Law, and was condemn'd by it; nor
 yet by any subsequent Law, for every thing
 after the first Transgression must of course
 be upon the Foot of Grace. 'Tis monstrous
 therefore to entertain such Notions of our-
 selves, so contrary to Fact and Experience,
 and which tend so manifestly to exclude God
 out of the Universe; for as far as we set up
 for Perfection in ourselves, so far we deny
 it to God. 'Tis a Perfection which we are
 not to thank God for: What Sort of Perfec-
 tion this is, I leave to every proud Man to
 consider. Nor are there wanting others,
 who, on the contrary, run down Mankind
 to a Level with Brutes, as if, because there
 is somewhat wrong in Man, there is there-
 fore nothing good in him. The dwelling
 too much upon the Consideration of Man in
 his fallen State, without considering enough
 his Redemption again by Christ, has thrown
 many into a gloomy, melancholy Opinion of
 human Nature; whereas, tho' Man is fallen,
 yet he is not lost; tho' he is a Sinner, and
 the Law allows no Pardon, yet the Gospel
 does. Man is therefore upon a noble Footing
 still;

still; for tho' he has Infirmities enough to pull down his Pride, yet, through the Gift of God, he is enabled to obtain eternal Life. In short, he has enough to blame himself and to thank God for, which is the true State of Man, consider'd as a Christian. Upon the whole, let us entertain such Notions of God and ourselves, that our Humility may entitle us to his Grace, and both together bring us to that Glory which by Sin we had justly forfeited.

SERM.
IV.





SERMON V.

ACTS ii. 27.

*Because thou wilt not leave my
Soul in Hell, neither wilt
thou suffer thine Holy One to
see Corruption.*

SERM.
V.



THE Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead is a Matter of such great Importance, that Christianity depends upon the Truth of it: For, as the Apostle says, *If Christ be not risen, then is our Faith vain, we are yet in our Sins.* And therefore we find the Apostles, when they first set out to preach the Gospel, after they were endued with Power from on High, open'd their Commission with asserting this great Truth; which they maintain'd with a Courage suitable to the Dignity and Importance of the Thing; and made it a Qualification for an
Apostle

Apottle which was to be chosen in the Room of *Judas*, That he should be one which had companied with them all the Time that the Lord *Jesus* was conversant among them, beginning from the Baptism of *John* unto the Day that he was taken up from them, that he might be a Witness with them of the Resurrection. And in this Chapter, *St Peter*, in his first Sermon, addresses himself to the *Jews* in this Manner; *Ye Men of Israel, hear these Words; Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approv'd of God among you by Miracles, Wonders and Signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; him being deliver'd by the determinate Counsel and Foreknowledge of God ye have taken, and by wicked Hands have crucified and slain; whom God hath raised up, having loosed the Pains of Death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.* And then takes a Quotation out of the 16th *Psalms*, and applies it as a Prophecy of the Resurrection. *For David*, says he, *speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my Face, for he is on my Right Hand that I should not be moved. Therefore did my Heart rejoice, and my Tongue was glad. Moreover also my Flesh shall rest in*
Hope,

SERM. *Hope, because thou wilt not leave my Soul
V. in Hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy
One to see Corruption.*

The Apostle here addressing himself to the *Jews*, does not argue about the Possibility of the Resurrection (for they had been long enough train'd up by Miracles to know, that nothing was too hard for an omnipotent Power ; besides, 'twas a Thing done so lately that it must have been well known, as appears from their not contradicting it) but declares and maintains the Certainty of it, and refers them to their own Prophet for their farther Satisfaction.

Before I come to handle the Doctrine which I shall draw from this Text, I think it will be proper to make the Way to it as clear as I can ; and therefore I shall lay before you the most considerable Interpretations which have been given of these Words, that you may see which has the best Right to be the true.

Some are of Opinion that the *Soul* in this Place is put figuratively for the *Body*, and that *Hell* signifies the *Grave* ; and to maintain their Opinion, have produced several Texts of Scripture in which these two Words are thus understood. But tho' this be very true in those Places, yet it don't seem to be
the

the Signification or Meaning of the Word in this; for then they would stand thus, *Thou shalt not leave my Body in the Grave, nor suffer thine Holy One to see Corruption.* Now here we may see the Absurdity of leaving the literal Sense of Scripture without a Necessity for so doing; for, according to this Interpretation, there is no Mention made of the Soul of Christ at all, without which to animate it again, the Body must have been still left in the Grave; for if it had risen again with another Soul, it would not have been a true Resurrection. So that if the Soul in this Place be not taken in a literal Sense, then it is not taken into this Interpretation at all, and consequently there could have been no Resurrection of the Soul with the Body. For the Soul can't be implied in the latter Part of the Text, *neither shalt thou suffer thine Holy One to see Corruption*, because the Soul could not see Corruption; and if the Soul were not risen, as it could not be if the Body only was risen, then there could be no Resurrection, and so it could not answer the Prophet's Hope and Expectation.

Others are of Opinion, that by *Hell* we are to understand the *Place of Departed Souls*;

SERM

V.



SERM. *Souls* ; but that Christ did not go there
 V. locally but virtually. And then the Text
 will stand thus ; *Thou wilt not leave my
 Soul in Hell*, or in the separate State of
 departed Souls, where it never was, *nor
 suffer thine Holy One to see Corruption* ;
 which Interpretation sounds very harsh and
 inconsistent. For if it was there only vir-
 tually, then it could not be there so as to
 justify the Expression of not being left
 there ; for a Thing can't be said to be ta-
 ken away, or not to be left in the Place,
 where it never was, only in a virtual Man-
 ner. If this were true, it must have been
 express'd after this Manner, *Thou wilt not
 suffer my Soul to go into Hell*, instead of
 saying it would not be *left*, where it never
 had been before. Besides, this is directly
 contrary to Scripture ; for our blessed Sa-
 viour promised the penitent Thief just
 before his Death, that *that Day he should be
 with him in Paradise* ; and as he was giving
 up the Ghost, he said, *Father, into thy
 Hands I commend my Spirit*.

Others again are of Opinion, that *Hell*
 signifies a *Place of Torments*, or the *State
 of the Damned* ; and that there it was where
 the Soul of Christ was not to be left. But
 if we look into the Reasons that are given
 for

for it, we shall be able to give a better Judgment of this Interpretation. Now one Reason for Christ's going into that State is said to be, To suffer there; but for what? To save others from it? That he did to all Intents and Purposes by his Death. Another Reason that is given for it is, That he went there to triumph over the Powers below; but this also was finish'd upon the Cross. But all this is founded upon a Supposition that the original Word, which we translate *Hell*, is always taken in a bad Sense, which I think is false, as I shall shew by and by; and therefore it is at best only an Argument drawn from a Supposition that wants to be proved.

Others are of Opinion, that by the *Soul* is meant the *rational Soul*, and that *Hell* signifies the *State of departed Souls*; and accordingly this Interpretation stands thus; *Thou wilt not leave my Soul*, i. e. my real rational Soul in the State of departed Souls, *neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see Corruption*; i. e. neither wilt thou leave his Body to corrupt in the Grave. And this seems to claim the greatest Right to be the true Meaning of the Words: For the original Word always signifies the separate State of the Dead in general. *Virgil* and others constantly use it in that Sense;

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SERM. and tho' it may be sometimes taken in a
 V. good Sense, and sometimes in a bad, yet 'tis
 very rarely taken in either, and never so as
 to exclude the largest Sense of it. However,
 let those Interpretations be as different as
 they will in other Respects, yet all agree in
 this, that the Words of the Text are a Pro-
 phecy of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ
 from the Dead; and accordingly in my fol-
 lowing Discourse I shall

I. Prove them so to be.


II. I shall prove that Jesus Christ did
 really and truly rise from the Dead, accord-
 ing to this Prophecy.

III. I shall shew what will be the Benefit
 of Christ's Resurrection to us.

First, then, I am to prove that the Words
 of the Text are a Prophecy of the Resur-
 rection. That the Prophecy here before
 us could not relate to *David* is plain from
 hence, that he did *see Corruption*; and this
 the Apostle urges to the *Jews*, in the
 Words immediately following the Text,
 that they might not think that *David* pro-
 phesied of himself. *Men and Brethren,*
 says

says he, *let me freely speak to you of the Patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his Sepulchre remaineth with us unto this Day : Therefore seeing he was a Prophet, and knew that God had sworn with an Oath to him, that of the Fruit of his Loins, according to the Flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit upon his Throne : He knowing this before, spake of the Resurrection of Christ, that his Soul should not be left in Hell, neither his Flesh should see Corruption ;* neither could this Prophecy relate to any one else since that Time, because every one since (our blessed Saviour excepted) has also seen Corruption. It is plain then that it must relate to one who did not see Corruption, which was Christ.

But to proceed. 'Tis a strong Argument with me that these Words are a Prophecy of the Resurrection, because *David* makes it the Reason of his Hope that he should not be shaken, or left helpless. *Therefore, says he, my Heart is glad, and my Glory rejoiceth, my Flesh also shall rest in Hope, because thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see Corruption.* Now what could it be to him, whether any one did or did not see Corruption, unless he had foreseen the Re-

SERM. V.  surrection of some one from the Dead, that would be an Advantage to him? How could his Flesh rest in Hope, unless he had had some Ground for his Hope? *But now seeing, as the Apottle says, he was a Prophet, and knew that God had sworn with an Oath to him, that of the Fruit of his Loins, according to the Flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit upon his Throne,* here was sufficient Ground for his Hope. Upon the Whole, 'tis a mean Way of Reasoning, that some have got, to throw aside an Argument merely because they don't like it, without being able to substitute another in the Room of it, that has any more Strength in it than only what they wish it to have. Let this Prophecy then be allowed to be fulfilled, or else let those who object against it lay down some other certain Rules, by which we may know when a Prophecy is fulfilled, and when not.

II. I come now, in the *second* Place, to prove that Jesus Christ did really and truly rise from the Dead according to this Prophecy; which, being a Matter of Fact, depends entirely upon Evidence. Here then it will be proper to enquire what Evidence we have for this Fact, and whether they have

have the proper Qualifications necessary for an Evidence in this Case. And then, in the next Place, whether there be any Evidence on the other Side; and if so, whether they be rightly qualified to give Testimony in this Matter. But before I do this, I think it will be proper to premise, that about the Time of our Saviour's Coming into the World the *Jews* look'd for some great Prophet, according to *Moses's* Prediction; and the chief Priests, and Scribes, and learned in the Law, sent from *Jerusalem* to ask *John* the Baptist, whether he was that Prophet, *i. e.* which *Moses* gave them Reason to expect; and many concluded that Christ was that Prophet, because, as they said, *no one could do the Miracles which he did, except God were with him.* And *St Peter* tells the *Jews*, that *he was approved of God among them with great Works, and Wonders, and Signs that God did by him; as ye yourselves also know,* says he. Here he appeals to their own Knowledge; and we find they did not deny it, but immediately upon it receiv'd the Word gladly, *and the same Day there were added unto them about three thousand Souls.* And he himself also, when the *Jews* asked him, *whether he was the Christ,* appeal'd to

SERM.

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SERM. to his Works; *They*, says he, *bear Witnesses*
 V. *of me.* And 'tis evident what a good Opinion many had of the Works he had done from this Saying, *When Christ cometh will he do more Miracles than these which this Man hath done?* From all which it is plain that they took him to be some very extraordinary Person. And the Use I propose to make of it is this, That upon the Strength of this Opinion of his Works, when he foretold of his rising again the third Day, they thought it would come to pass; and accordingly were in Expectation of it, as appears from the Precaution they us'd to prevent it, *viz.* by sealing a Stone, and setting a Watch. Now, while the *Jews* expected he would rise, the Apostles, on the other hand, thought he would not, but that they had with him lost all the Hopes he had ever given them: *For as yet they knew not the Scriptures that he must rise again from the Dead.* So that from the Expectation of the *Jews* on the one hand, and the no Expectation of the Apostles on the other, there is no room to suspect a Collusion in this Matter; and I think it is a corroborating Argument of the Fact, it being now brought as far as a Probability, and wants nothing but to be ripe for better Proof.
 And

And I chuse to mention this here, because the Matter of Fact is a distinct Thing, and ought to be tried by itself.

SERM.

V.



Another Thing I think proper to premise is, That no Objections about the Difficulties, that may be thought to attend this Event, can affect the Argument at all, because this is not a Subject of Philosophy, but a Matter of Evidence. And tho' such Objections are easily answer'd by shewing what a vast Extent of Knowledge it must require to be able to pronounce concerning the Possibility and Impossibility of Things, and how much we fall short of this Knowledge, and also how many thousand Things there are in Nature which we meet with every Day of our Lives, the very Possibility of whose Existence or Operations we should doubt of, did we not see them with our Eyes, and therefore are satisfied of the Truth of them, notwithstanding any seeming Difficulties or Impossibilities to the contrary; yet if the Matter of Fact is proved, all things of this Kind are out of the Question. Suppose a Man should start a thousand Difficulties concerning the Soul's re-animating the Body, what will an Argument drawn from hence prove? It will prove his Ignorance of the Thing, it's true, but it can never

SERM. never be Proof against the Thing itself; it
 V. can never be Proof against a Matter of Fact.

’Tis but to apply the Argument to something of a like Nature, and we shall easily see the Absurdity of it. We can’t, for Example, answer all the Difficulties that may be started about Gravitation, the Attraction of the Loadstone, &c. What then? Is there therefore no such Thing at all? No, we can’t say so, because we know there is. And this may be carried through all the other Mysteries of Nature, which we hardly know any thing of, and yet believe to be true. We ought therefore to answer all the Difficulties in one Case before we start any in another; or shew why the same kind of Evidence should not have a Right to our Assent in both Cases. We are here to judge of what we do know, and not of what we do not. The Truth or Falsity of this Matter depends upon the Fact: If it be not true, then there is no Need to talk of Difficulties; if it be true, which will appear by the Evidence, then the Fact which we do know ought to have greater Weight with us than the Difficulties which we do not know. I don’t say this, as if Objections of this Kind were not to be answer’d; for, as I have already observ’d, ’tis easily done; but because common

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most People are not so good Judges of these Things as they are of Matters of Fact: And therefore they should not leave a necessary convincing Argument for what is not so necessary nor so much to the Purpose. This will bring the Thing into a narrow Compass, and upon this Foot there will be no Need of any other Method to silence the *Jew*, than only to demand greater Proof than Testimony that *Daniel* was in the Lions Den and not devour'd; or that *Elisba* made Iron to swim, contrary to the Nature of it. Neither will there be Need of any other Method to confute the *Gentile*, than only to demand greater Proof than bare Testimony, that there were ever such Men as *Alexander* or *Cæsar*, if they reject such kind of Proof themselves.

But I proceed now to shew what Evidence we have for this Fact. And here, as it is a Matter of the greatest Importance, so we have a prodigious Number of Witnesses more than was ever required by any Law, to prove any Fact whatsoever. And, first, we have the Testimony of the Disciples to whom he appear'd as they were going to *Emmaus*; of *Mary Magdalen*, by whom he was seen as she stood at the Sepulchre weeping, and also of *Mary* the Mother of *James*. We

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have

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SERM. have likewise the Testimony of the eleven
 V. Apostles, to whom he appear'd as they were
 assembled together for fear of the *Jews*,
 and others with them; then we are assur'd
 he was seen at another Time by above five
 hundred at once. We have also the Testi-
 mony of Angels, who said to the Women
 that came to the Sepulchre to seek the
 Lord, *Why seek ye the Living among the
 Dead? He is not here, but is risen.* And
 we have one very extraordinary Evidence,
 which is that of God himself, who confirm'd
 the Truth of this Fact by giving the A-
 postles, who were more immediately set
 apart to give Testimony of it, a Power of
 working Miracles. But, besides all this,
 we have the Witness of Enemies also, so
 far as to prove that he was actually dead
 and laid in the Sepulchre, and was, after the
 sealing the Stone and setting a Watch, actu-
 ally gone out of it again. This was ac-
 knowledg'd by the *Jews* themselves. And
 we have the Evidence of St. *Paul*, who was
 at that Time a great Enemy and a Persecu-
 tor, and was converted himself by our Lord,
 as he was in his Way to *Damascus*, in order
 to carry on his Persecution.

Here then is the Evidence fairly laid be-
 fore you. Let us now see whether these
 Witnesses



Witnesses have the proper Qualifications necessary for Evidences in this Case. And in order to that, let us examine what Qualifications are necessary in Affairs of this Nature. Now in all Matters of Fact, and more especially in this, 'tis necessary that the Witnesses should have so much Knowledge as to understand when they see or hear a Thing, &c. 'Tis necessary also that the Witnesses should give Testimony according to their own Knowledge, as Eye-Witnesses, or Ear-Witnesses, according to the Nature of the Fact; and then 'tis farther necessary that they be Persons of Sincerity, in order to give a faithful Relation of what they know. Now that the Apostles, who were more immediately set apart to testify this Fact, had this first Qualification, *i. e.* had Knowledge enough for a Thing of this Nature, is plain, because the *Jews* themselves never objected their Want of it. They look'd upon them indeed as ignorant Men; by which they did not mean that they were void of all Understanding (as is plain from the original Word) but that they were Men of no Learning, which was not all necessary to testify a plain Matter of Fact. A Man may not be a Scholar, and yet he may have common Sense; he may not be a Philosopher,

SERM. and yet he may know what he hears or
 V. fees. But how indifferently soever the *Jews*
 might think of them, yet those that have
 argued their Cause for them, of late, have
 made Amends for that by supposing them
 to be crafty, designing Men. That they
 had the second Qualification, and gave Te-
 stimony according to Knowledge, is plain
 from hence, that their very Enemies, whose
 Business it was, and who undoubtedly did
 look into their Lives, and would certainly
 have detected them, had they been guilty
 of any Crimes, did not lay the least Immo-
 rality to their Charge. The Hope and Re-
 surrection of the Dead they might be ac-
 cused of, but for any thing else, we find
 no Charge against them. Nay, *St Paul*,
 when he was brought before *Felix*, in his
 excellent Speech that he made in his own
 Defence, challenges his Accusers to object,
 if they had ought against him, except it
 were for this one Voice, that he cried
 standing among them, *Concerning the Re-
 surrection of the Dead I am accused by you
 this Day.* The Silence of their Adversaries
 then in a Case, where there is no Probability
 that they would have been silent, could
 they have accus'd them of any thing, is a
 strong Argument that they did not think
 them

them to be wicked, nay, they were so far SERM.
from that, that the Exemplariness of their V.
Lives, and Purity of their Doctrine, brought
Multitudes over to the Christian Religion.

In the next Place let us see, supposing this to be a Cheat, what Motives they could have to contrive and carry it on. People don't use to cheat, unless it be to get by it: But this they could not propose to themselves; for all the Advantages lay on the other Side: Nay, they were so far from getting any thing by it, that they were sure to meet with nothing but Scorn and Contempt, and to bring themselves into a great deal of Danger by it. Now 'tis highly improbable to suppose that People would run themselves into Danger, and get the Hatred of the World by propagating a Cheat, knowing it to be such. To carry on a Cheat, when there is not only no Profit nor Advantage, but a great deal of Inconvenience, Hazard, and Disadvantage attending it, which might be so easily avoided only by telling the plain Truth, is too monstrous to be believ'd, especially of Men who had no Crime laid to their Charge. But, on the contrary, the greater the Advantages were which they renounced, the stronger Argument it is of their Sincerity, and Goodness
of

SERM. of their Cause. But they not only under-
 V. went many Difadvantages and Perfecutions,
 but laid down their very Lives for it too,
 which is the laft and ftrongeft Proof of a
 Man's Sincerity. And indeed if the Sin-
 cerity of the Apoftles had not been well
 eftablifh'd in the World, 'tis hard to account
 why fo many fhould voluntarily undergo the
 fame Hardfhips, and fucceed in the fame
 Dangers, by taking upon them the Christian
 Profeflion, in the Room of thofe who had
 been perfecuted for it before. But, to put
 the Matter out of all Doubt, God was plea-
 fed to juftify their Sincerity by giving them
 a Power of working Miracles, which the
Jews themfelves could not deny.

Thus you fee what Evidence we have,
 and how well the Matter of Fact is proved.
 Let us now fee what Evidence there is on
 the other Side; and, if any, whether they
 be rightly qualified to give Testimony in
 this Matter. Now the only Evidence on
 the other Side, is the Watch that was fet to
 guard the Sepulchre, which is no Evidence
 at all; neither indeed will the Nature of
 the Thing admit of any. For the Evidence
 of a Man, who can fay nothing, but that he
 did not fee another after he was rifen from
 the Dead, can't by any means be admitted

as

as a good Evidence, nor have the least Weight in lessening the Testimony of one who did see him. My not seeing a Person after his Resurrection from the Dead, can certainly be no Argument that no one else did. They might have been direct Evidences indeed, had the Fact been false; had he not risen, but remain'd still in the Sepulchre. But, instead of that, they are Evidences for the other Side: For when the Angel came and roll'd away the Stone from the Door of the Sepulchre, and told the Women who went there *to seek the Lord, that he was not there, but was risen, they were astonished, and went and shew'd the High Priests all the Things that were done.* As to their Qualifications for giving Testimony in this Matter, they are very indifferent; for we find, after they had been brib'd, they said, *the Disciples came by Night and stole him away.* How inconsistent is this, when we are assur'd they hid themselves for fear of the *Jews!* But how is it possible to steal a Body when there is a Guard set to watch it? This does not seem to be well contriv'd at all. Why to this it is answer'd, That it was done while they were asleep. Something, it seems, must be said; but any thing would have done better than this.

SERM. this. This looks as if they were in great
 V. Hastē for an Excuse; for, besides the Im-
 probability of supposing them all to be
 asleep together, and not to be awaken'd by
 the Removal of the Stone and of the dead
 Body, how came they to know, if they
 were asleep, that the Disciples stole him
 away? A Man that is asleep can be an Evi-
 dence of nothing but of his not being awake;
 and therefore can't be admitted as Evidence to
 a Fact suppos'd to be done when he was
 capable of knowing nothing of the Matter.
 Besides, had they been awake, as they really
 were, is their Evidence, who could say and
 unsay so much, to be depended upon, as
 theirs who, to an unexceptionable Life and
 Conversation, added Miracles also to con-
 firm the Truth of what they said? This
 is to interest Heaven in the Cause, and to
 procure the Almighty himself to ratify the
 Evidence.

Thus you see how the Matter of Fact
 stands. The Witnesses on one Side were
 so far from having any Motives of worldly
 Advantage for what they testified, that
 they depriv'd themselves of all Things, liv'd
 a Life of great Poverty, and at last laid
 down their Lives for the Truth of it; which
 tho' some have done for an Error, yet this
 is

is not consistent with their Character to do, SERM.
 even their Enemies themselves being Judges. V.
 Neither is it to be supposed that they would
 lay down their Lives for a Lye, whose Re-
 ligion teaches them to abhor it, especially
 since they are sure to be punished for it ac-
 cording to their own Scheme. And there-
 fore the Case being so, there is no replying
 to this but by disproving the Fact, all o-
 ther Arguments being out of the Question,
 as I have already shewn: But instead of
 that, the Evidence on the other Side own'd
 the Fact to the High-Priests; tho' after-
 wards they thought proper to disown it
 again, by saying that the *Body was stolen
 away, while they were asleep*: Yet that
 will amount to no more than this, that the
 Fact was supposed to be done when they did
 not know whether it was done or no; which
 is too weak of itself to be further exposed.

I am satisfy'd the Argument has drawn
 me too great a Length, but however I hope
 you will indulge me while I shew,

III. In the *third* and last Place, What
 will be the Benefit of Christ's Resurrection
 to us. And this is no less than a Confirma-
 tion and Establishment of the whole Chri-
 stian Scheme, which is a wonderful Con-

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trivance

SERM. trivance calculated for the Good and Happiness of Men, in that it is a more perfect Law than ever they had before, with a Provision in it for the Sins and Infirmities of Mankind, together with Directions where to apply for Assistance to help us in doing what we are not able to do of ourselves, and also in that it points out to us the Way to that glorious Immortality, which, by means of a little Light and much Darknes, some Conjecture, and much Uncertainty, had been hitherto sought in vain. Whereas, if Christ be not risen, then he prophesied falsely of himself, and so did likewise the Prophets of him. The Gospel is then nothing but a Fraud, there is no Certainty of a Pardon for Sin, nor any Assurance of a future State; for tho' some of the wisest of the *Gentiles* might hope that a good God would pardon their Sins, and might also have some tolerable Conjectures of a future State, yet what is Hope to Certainty? We have now an Assurance of all these Things. Now we can see the glorious OEconomy of our Redemption, *viz.* that *he who died for our Sins, rose again also for our Justification.*

2. The Resurrection of Christ from the Dead is the Foundation of our own Resurrection;

rection; for if he is risen as the First-Fruits, we shall also rise as the Harvest.

SERM.

V.

1st, Because the same Power can raise us too; and, 2dly, Because it will do so. For he that raised up Christ from the Dead, shall also quicken our Bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in us. But then we are to consider that these Benefits extend only to those that lay hold of them: For unless we rise with Christ, he is not risen for us at all. We have no Benefit of his Resurrection. We shall rise again, 'tis true; but to what? To live in Misery? Where's the Advantage? Who would not rather slumber away ten thousand Years in Death, than live so long in Torment? But, alas! we have not this in our Power; for a rational Soul cannot lie in the Dust. It is Heaven-born, and unless we deprive it of its celestial Beauty, thither it will return; but if we do, it will be sent into those melancholy Regions where no Light appears, save what the Glimmering of livid Flames casts, pale and dreadful; or, as the Poet has it,

Where Hope ne'er comes, that comes to all;

where dwells a Variety of Woes, Sorrows, Tortures insupportable; where there is no other Sight of God but of his Wrath, no other Proof of the omnipotent Being, but

SERM. what arises from the Horrors and Torments
 V. of the Place ; *where the Worm never dies,*
and the Fire is never quenced. But not to
 detain you any longer in View of this dreadful Prospect, this uncomfortable Scene of Horror, which I hope we shall never see any otherwise than by the Imagination, let us now turn our Eyes to that heavenly Place, where, if we rise with Christ, we are taught to set our Affections. Let us view that celestial Paradise, that is filled with the Glory of the Divine Being, in Comparison of which, *Behold even to the Moon, and it shineth not ; yea the Stars are not pure in his Sight :* Where is no Fear, no Sorrow, no Care, but a perpetual Round of Joy and Happiness, without Bounds, and without Expression. This is the happy Place we are design'd for ; and I suppose it will be readily granted, that it is good for us to be here. Let us then fit and prepare ourselves for this heavenly State, by living such a Life as will naturally lead us to it. And *as Christ was raised from the Dead by the Glory of the Father, even so let us also walk in Newness of Life.* So may we boldly triumph with the Apostle, *O Death ! where is thy Sting ? O Grave ! where is thy Victory ?* and
 move

move peaceably on from one Degree of Happiness to another, till at last we slide insensibly into that Infinitude of Happiness and Pleasure which is at God's Right-Hand for evermore.

SERM.
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Which God of his infinite Mercy grant unto us all for the Sake of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom, with the Father and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all Honour, Glory, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, henceforth, and for evermore.





SERMON VI.

MATT. X. 34.


*Think not that I am come to send
Peace on Earth ; I came not
to send Peace, but a Sword.*

SERM.
VI.



IF it were reasonable to judge of the Christian Religion by the ill Use that has been made of it, we should be forc'd to acknowledge these Words to be true in their obvious and literal Meaning. For the Practices of too many of its Professors have in all Ages of the World, from the Beginning of Christianity to this Time, been agreeable to this Interpretation.

But must it come to this at last, after all the Assurances we have, that the whole Design of our blessed Saviour's Coming into the World was to make us at Peace with God, and with one another ; that Peace was

was the glad Tidings he brought with him SERM.
 into the World, and the last Legacy he VI.
 left behind him when he went out of it : 
 Must it, after all, I say, come to this at
 last, that he *came not to send Peace but a*
Sword ?

We know that our Saviour's Doctrine
 teaches People to live better Lives than
 they were taught to do by any Rules they
 had before ; and, in particular, to shew
 more Love and Benevolence to one another,
 than the Law of Nature, or that of *Moses*
 requir'd them to do. And indeed if it does
 not teach us this, what does it teach us ?
 Now, will it not be thought a surprizing
 Thing, after all this, to find, in the Words
 immediately following the Text, that our
 Saviour says, *he came to set a Man against*
his Father, and the Daughter against the
Mother ? What ? Did not People know
 how to fall out, and be at Variance with
 one another, without any Directions for so
 doing ? They knew this too well of them-
 selves certainly to need any Instructions a-
 bout it : And therefore, if this is the Doc-
 trine which the Gospel teaches, it destroys
 all Religion in the World, even the Re-
 ligion of Nature itself.

But

SERM.

VI.

But how shocking and inconsistent soever these Words may appear at first Sight, yet a little Consideration will give them another Countenance, and shew that they contain as great a Truth as any in the Scripture, which our perverse Passions will easily tell us how to explain.

For tho' without all Dispute our Saviour came to *send Peace upon Earth, and good Will towards Men*, yet, as the best Things are most liable to be abus'd, that peaceable and benevolent Spirit has, through the Wickedness of Mankind, been abus'd into a turbulent evil Spirit of Hatred and Discord. Not that this is, or can be, the Effect of a peaceable Spirit, but of such a Spirit abus'd, and misunderstood. So that, tho' it be never so good of itself, it may by accident occasion a great deal of Evil. And as long as the Passions of Men are suffer'd to controul their Reason and Religion, so long will there be too much Truth in our Saviour's Words, that *he came not to send Peace, but a Sword*, i. e. Tho' the Intent and Design of our Saviour's Coming into the World was not to promote Discord, but Peace, yet, by means of the Perverseness of Mankind, it would be made an Occasion of Hatred and Discord, and so would be the same

same, in Effect, as if it had proceeded from a quite contrary Spirit, and as if he had *come not to send Peace upon Earth, but a Sword.*

SERM.
VI.


From the Words of the Text I shall

I. Prove the Truth of our blessed Saviour's Prediction, and shew that Christianity, tho' it be the most peaceable Religion in the World, has, by the Wickedness of Men, been made to propagate Hatred, Discord, and all manner of Cruelty.

II. I shall shew the dangerous Consequence of abusing Christianity to such wicked Purposes.

III. That we ought all of us, who have any Value or Esteem for the Christian Religion, to use our best Endeavours, in our several Stations, to restore it to its primitive Beauty and Comeliness, and make it appear to be, as it is in itself, a Religion of Peace and Love.

First, then, I am to prove the Truth of our blessed Saviour's Prediction, and shew that Christianity, tho' it be the most peaceable Religion in the World, has, by the Wickedness of Men, been made to propagate

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SERM. VI. gate Hatred, Discord, and all manner of Cruelty.

Was there nothing meant here by the *Sword*, but only the Hatred and Persecution that Christians were to expect from their Enemies, the Prediction might stop here, and there would be no great Wonder in it ; for 'tis no more than what one might very well suppose would happen. But there is a further more astonishing Meaning in it than this, and that is, the Cruelty and Persecution that Christians should exercise upon one another ; of which we have too great a Proof from the History of all Ages, ever since Christianity was advanced into an Establishment.

'Tis no Wonder that Unbelievers should be offended at the Christian Religion, and evil entreat the Professors of it, since it was not only contrary to their old Prejudices, but as it tended also to destroy and root out that Ill-nature they were willing to indulge, and to mortify and subdue those Vices they were loth to part with. But, could it ever be imagin'd that Christians themselves should be offended at it, who had profess'd to renounce all this? That they, whose Religion taught them nothing but Peace and Love, should turn it into Contention and Hatred?

Hatred? Yet thus it was: For when Unbelievers had left off to persecute Christians, and Christianity became the Religion of the Country, by an unaccountable sort of Madness, they fell to persecuting one another. Thus the Christian Religion, that was at first a happy Cement to join People together in Love and Friendship, soon became a Name to fall out by, and at length, by the Help of a great deal of Malice and Hatred, it became a Refuge for Spite and Ill-nature; and so the Gospel of Peace was turn'd into an open Proclamation of War.


Whoever looks into Ecclesiastical History, will find that the *Heathens* never persecuted the *Christians* with more Rage and Fury than they persecuted one another; so much Pains did they take to fulfil the Words of the Text in a literal Sense, and undo, for many Ages, all our Saviour had done before.

'Tis surprizing that any Body of Men, who call themselves Christians, should be guilty of so much Barbarity: And yet I believe it is a Truth no one can deny, that the ten persecuting Emperors of *Rome*, tho' they were *Heathens*, never massacred so many *Christians* as the Church of *Rome* has done since, tho' professing Christianity, and

SERM.

VI.

pretending to a greater Perfection of it than all the rest of the World: A Church, which, to the Sorrow of all good Christians, subsists not by the Purity of her Doctrine, but by the Sword; that is not founded, as every Christian Church should be, in Love and good Works, but in a certain Degree of Hatred and Malice, which they shew against those who have a Right to differ from them; and in an ill-natur'd Faith, that swallows up every thing else, and destroys the Principles of natural as well as reveal'd Religion; that, instead of promoting Good-will, and universal Charity and Benevolence, is perpetually contriving the Ruin and Destruction of Mankind: And accordingly, as it must be in such a Case, he is reckon'd to have the greatest Faith who has the least Charity. But can there be such a thing as a Religion so void of Humanity, especially pretending at the same Time to be Christian, as not to consist of Love and good Works? One would think it hardly possible; yet what will you say, when Murder shall be reckon'd among the chiefest of good Works? When he that killeth you shall do it out of Love, and therein be thought to do God Service? If this be Love and good Works, what evil Work can be worse, or what Mischief

Mischief can Hatred do more than this? SERM.
 And indeed we should be too partial to the VI.
 rest of the World, did we not acknowledge 
 that all Sorts of Protestants have shewn too
 much of this unchristian Spirit. They,
 who have in the most solemn Manner pro-
 tested against it, have, nevertheless, when
 they have had it in their Power, made too
 great Use of it in persecuting and harrassing
 one another; as if they protested not against
 the Thing, but against any one's making
 use of it but themselves; not considering,
 that Hatred or Cruelty is never the better,
 or the less so, for being Protestant, but will
 be just what it is, in what Shape soever it
 appears, and what Name soever it stands
 distinguish'd by.

The first Thing that offers itself to us in
 the Gospel is *Love*, which is the distinguish-
 ing Badge of a Christian. For as every Pro-
 fession has something to distinguish its Pro-
 fessors by, so the true Professors of Chri-
 stianity are known by this Mark of *loving*
one another: And as far as any one wants
 this charitable, benevolent Temper, so far
 he wants this distinguishing Mark, and be-
 longs to some other, and not to that Pro-
 fession. For as he is by no means a true
 Physician, who is not skill'd in Medicine,
 whatever

SERM
VI. whatever he may think fit to call himself; so neither is he a true Christian that wants Charity; because he wants that which is essential to his Profession as a Christian. And indeed 'tis very surprizing that this should want to be prov'd at all; for what can be plainer than this Expression of our blessed Saviour's, *By this shall all Men know ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another?* And yet if we were to look round us a little, one would think the Rule was revers'd, as if he had said, *By this shall all Men know ye are my Disciples, if ye hate one another.* For how many are there, whose Religion consists in little else, but in hating all of the opposite Side! That think they can't shew their Zeal but by their Wrath, and as long as they hate one another heartily, they imagine they give sufficient Proof of their Integrity, and of their stedfast Adherence to Religion. Instances of this Kind are too frequent; and yet these are the Men who profess a Religion of Love, that would be thought Advocates for the Gospel of Peace at the same time that they delight in nothing but Hatred and Discord; as if they were to commence Brutes in order to be Christians, and divest themselves of Humanity to prove their Zeal for Religion.

Thus

Thus Christianity, which is the most peace-
able and lovely Institution in the World, by
the Wickedness of Men, becomes the same
as if it had been made up of Fire and Sword.
Which brings me,

SERM.
VI.


Secondly, To shew the dangerous Consequence of abusing Christianity to such wicked Purposes. The Gospel is a Declaration of the Pardon of God to Mankind, and consequently a Revelation of his Love to his Creatures ; whoever therefore turns this Love into Hatred, as every one does who makes the Gospel a Cover for Persecution, tramples under Foot *the Blood of the Covenant, wherewith we are seal'd through the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus.* And if they were to die without Mercy who despis'd *Moses's Law*, of how much sorer Punishment shall they be thought worthy, who, by this their Apostacy from Christianity, have, in Effect, trodden under Foot the Son of God, and render'd his inestimable Love to Men useless and ineffectual !

This is doing the very Work of the Devil, and helping him out in that hellish Drudgery for which he will not fail to reward them : For we know very well whose Business it is to save Men's Lives, and whose

SERM. to destroy them; who it was that *went a-*
 VI. *bout doing good*, and who it is that *goes a-*
bout seeking whom he may devour. So that
 we can't be ignorant whose Kingdom a cruel
 persecuting Spirit tends to advance; not the
 Kingdom of Christ, but the Kingdom of
 Satan. For it is certainly true, that *to*
whomsoever we yield ourselves Servants to
obey, his Servants we are to whom we
obey, whether of Sin unto Death, or of
Holiness unto Righteousness.

Our blessed Saviour has given us an ex-
 traordinary Example of universal Love and
 Benevolence, *in laying down his Life, not*
only for our Sins, but also for the Sins of
the whole World: And as far as we are for
 promoting the same Love, so far we follow
 his Steps; but when we turn that Love into
 Hatred, even unto Death, we shew that we
 belong to another Master, *viz.* the Prince of
 Darkness, and follow his Steps, in endeavour-
 ing to prevent and frustrate the inestimable
 Benefit of Christ's Death, by destroying them
 for whom Christ died.

Axes and Halters are unanswerable Ar-
 guments indeed, but then 'tis for this Rea-
 son, because they put an End to the Dis-
 pute and the Disputer too. But one would
 think that every one must know, that it
 must

must be a bad Cause that stands in need SERM.
of such Arguments as these. As for Chri- VI.
stianity, 'tis directly opposite to this Spirit 
of Cruelty; even Nature itself abhors it:
And yet it seems it must be kept up to do
God good Service. But for God's sake,
how? Where is there one Text of Scrip-
ture that says, a Man must be destroyed
for the sake of Religion? Does not the
whole Tenor of it run the contrary way?

But 'tis the everlasting Plea of the Ad-
vocates for Persecution, that we, and all
but themselves, are Heretics: And suppose
it were so, tho' there is no reason to sup-
pose any such thing, for there are a great
many Things to be made out first, where
is there one Text of Scripture that says,
a Heretic must be destroyed? Has not our
Blessed Saviour determined this very Thing
already with relation to the *Samaritans*,
who were not only Heretics but Idolaters?
And yet when the Disciples *James* and
John were for calling for Fire from Heaven
to consume them, he turned, and rebuked
them, and said, *Ye know not what manner*
of Spirit ye are of: For the Son of Man

SERM. *is not come to destroy Men's Lives but to*
 VI. *save them.*

But if others think, that tho' our Saviour did not come to destroy Men's Lives, yet that they have a Right to do such Things, then I think too, they ought at least to be so fair as to make no Pretensions to Christianity, since they are as contrary to it as an evil Spirit is to a good one. So that upon Supposition we were Heretics, in the Sense they are willing to understand it, yet Persecution is a manifest Breach of Christian Charity, which is employed, and delights in doing good to Men, and not in destroying them; and therefore, if it were to be put upon that Footing, they are in a much worse Condition than we, as being guilty of the great Sin of Uncharitableness, which is so much worse than Heresy, as Charity is greater than Faith.

But further, let us pursue the Consequence of this persecuting Spirit, and see where it will end. Suppose then all that can be desired, that Persecution is a Christian Principle, and that there is sufficient Warrant for it from Scripture; let all this
 for


for once be granted, and what are we now the better? Can this alter the Nature of things? or make Hatred and Ill-nature be otherwise than they are? As long as things are what they are, it will still be a Moral Crime; and Human Nature, upon Supposition that it is what it is, can never approve of it, unless it be strangely byass'd by other Considerations. What then will an Argument drawn from hence prove? If it prove any thing, it will prove too much. For was there but one Text of Scripture that would justify Persecution, that would be sufficient to prove the Christian Religion to be false, and not to come from God; For that would be to make Christianity destroy its own End, as well as confound and destroy the eternal Differences and Relations of things. Accordingly we find the Deists have made this Use of it: And indeed were it not for the Hatred and Cruelty that has been so often found among Christians, a late Author, that has appear'd at the Head of their Cause, would have very little to say. This is what He, and all the Enemies of Reveal'd Religion have found their Advantage

SERM.

VI.

S E R M.
VI.

vantage in, and have triumph'd so much upon; and indeed this is a thing never to be got over. I don't mean that it affects Christianity at all, for that teaches other things. A good Christian is taught to be an Enemy to no Man; He is peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated; His Charity forbids him not only to do, but to think evil; He pretends to judge no Man's Conscience, but leaves that to Him who searcheth the Hearts, and knoweth the Thoughts of Men; He prays for all Men, which certainly is very far from hating them, and shews every Man that Love and Benevolence, which he would desire of him in a like case. So that Christianity is not at all concern'd in it, but only those who have abus'd it to such vile Purposes; and therefore I leave it to them to get rid of this Objection, if they can. See then what this persecuting Spirit ends in, nothing less than in the Ruin and Destruction of that Religion it would be thought with so much Rage and Fury to defend. I should not dwell so long upon this, but that the Text naturally leads me to shew, that an uncharitable persecuting
Spirit

Spirit is a vile and scandalous Abuse of SERM.
Christianity; and the Church of Rome, VI.
being the only Christian Church in the 
World, that keeps up this unchristian Spi-
rit, by claiming a right of judging them,
who are not their Servants, but their Bre-
thren, I think it my Duty, in order to pro-
mote the true Spirit of Christianity, to
shew the dangerous Consequence of it,
that we may not run into the same Incon-
sistency with those I have been already
speaking of.

Every one must know, at least they
must who have the use of their Bibles,
that all Hatred and Uncharitableness is ut-
terly inconsistent with Christianity: For
however we may err in other Matters, we
can never be ignorant of this, that the
Gospel is calculated to promote Peace and
Love in the World. A Man may be mis-
taken in a difficult Point of Doctrine, and
his Mistake may be very innocent and
blameless, because it being not sufficiently
reveal'd, a Man can't be blam'd for not
knowing what he had it not in his Power
to know; but a man can never be igno-
rant,


SERM. rant, that it is the Design of the Gospel to
 VI. inculcate a greater Degree of Love and
 Charity than the World had practis'd before. For hence it is that it is call'd a New Commandment; *a New Commandment*, says our Blessed Saviour, *give I unto you, that ye love one another.* And therefore however People may be mistaken, and differ about other parts of Scripture, yet they must all acknowledge, that the whole Scope and Design of the Gospel is Peace and Love; and that the Precepts that relate to this are absolute and positive, and must supersede whatever seems to interfere with it, that has not an equal Degree of Clearness and Certainty.

And yet notwithstanding all this, it is an Observation that has too much Truth in it, that we have Religion enough to make us hate, but not enough to make us Love one another. But let them look to it, who turn this Love into Hatred, since their Crime, according to St. *John*, is of a very dreadful Nature; for, says he, *He that hateth his Brother is a Murderer; now ye know that no Murderer hath eternal Life:*
 The

The Prophet pronounces a Woe to them SERM.
that put Light for Darkneſs, and Dark- VI.
neſs for Light; and Good for Evil, and E-
vil for Good: And St. Paul tells the Ga-
latians, that if an Angel from Heaven
ſhould preach any other Goſpel than what
they had receiv'd, let him be accuſed.

What then will be the Punishment of thoſe
who do what they can to deſtroy it, and
even break down the great Partition-Wall
of Right and Wrong? The Goſpel, as
well as the Bleſſed Author of it, has been
betray'd, but woe to them by whom it is,
or has been betray'd. Which brings me,

Thirdly, to ſhew, That we ought all of
us, who have any Value or Eſteem for the
Chriſtian Religion, to uſe our beſt Endeavours
in our ſeveral Stations to reſtore it to
its primitive Beauty and Comelineſs, and
make it appear to be, as it is in itſelf, a
Religion of Peace and Love. They
who have taken upon them the Chriſtian
Profeſſion, for of ſuch only am I now
ſpeaking, muſt know, that they have ta-
ken upon them to follow the Doctrine and
Example of the great Author and Found-
der

SERM. der of it, who was not only a Preacher of
VI. Peace and Love, but was Love itself; and
 as this peaceable Spirit, which our Blessed Saviour came to establish in the World, has been abus'd by some, and turn'd into a Spirit of Hatred and Discord, it concerns them in a particular manner to remove this Scandal, that has been thrown upon Christianity, and demonstrate by their own Practice, that a true Christian, or a Disciple of Christ, is to be known now, as well as of old, not by his Hatred, but by his Love. The true Professors of Christianity must, and will do this; for to suppose a good Christian can be an uncharitable Man, is to say a Proposition may be true and false at the same time: And as for Others, who are only Nominal Professors, they ought in Justice to the World and the Religion they profess, to throw off the Mask, or become real ones, that Religion might not be wounded thro' their sides. And indeed there is the more Occasion for this now in these Days, because the Enemies of Christianity are very industrious in hunting out the Faults and Blemishes of
Christians,

tians, and in throwing the Scandal of them SERM.
not where they should, upon the Persons to VI.
whom they belong, but upon their Reli-
gion to which they do not. Christians

should consider that they are set up as a City upon an Hill to be view'd by all Men, and the Light that was given them was design'd for the use of others, as well as themselves; *For their Light was so to shine before Men, that they might see their good Works, and glorify their Father which is in Heaven.* They are therefore to have more Love and Charity and universal Benevolence, as well as every other Virtue, than the rest of Mankind, otherwise they bring an Odium upon themselves, and their Profession too. For if Christians were to abound more in Hatred and Ill-Nature than the rest of the World, how contemptible must they appear in the Sight of the Heathen, and of all those who have not the Light of the Gospel for their Direction? May not they very justly say,

If to be a sound and orthodox Christian is to have a greater degree of Cruelty and Barbarity than the rest of the World,

Q

how

SERM. how is it that you are in a better Condition than we? Or wherein are we worse, or even so bad as You? For the better sort of us have always acknowledg'd our Obligations to the Law of Nature, of which you allow that of Moses and of Christ to be an Improvement, and yet you manifestly break them all.

If you have the same turbulent Passions, the same Spirit of Cruelty and Inhumanity with the worst of us, what is become of that Light you pretend to enjoy by the Gospel? In short, if you live no better Lives with the Gospel, than we do without it, wherein do you differ from us? And indeed I think, whatever Difference there is, the Heathens have much the Advantage of us. For if we are come to that Pass, that the Light that is in us be Darkness, how great is that Darkness? Shall we, who call ourselves Christians, and rest on the Gospel, and make our boast of God, and know his Will, and approve the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the Gospel, and are confident that we ourselves are Guides of the

Blind;

Blind, Lights to them which are in Dark-^{SERM.}
ness, &c. Shall we therefore, who think ^{VI.}
ourselves able to teach others, not teach
ourselves? Shall we, who say a Christian
should commit no manner of Violence
or Cruelty, be guilty of that very Crime
ourselves? Shall we, who make our Boast
of the Gospel, thro' breaking the Gospel
dishonour God? For the Name of God
is blasphem'd among the Gentiles thro'
such sort of Christians. For the Profession
of Christianity verily profiteth, if we live
according to the Gospel; but if we abuse,
and neglect it, our Profession becomes the
same, as if we did not profess it at all.
Therefore if He who does not profess
Christianity keeps the Righteousness of the
Gospel, shall not He be as acceptable to
God, as He who does profess it? And
shall not He, who has the Light of Na-
ture only to direct Him, if He fulfil the
Law, judge us, who by observing the Let-
ter only, and by regarding nothing but a
bare empty Profession, transgress it? For he
is not a Christian, who is one outwardly
by Profession, any more than that is true


Q 2

Circumcision

S E R M.
VI.

Circumcision, which is outward in the Flesh; but he is a Christian, who is one inwardly; and the true Profession of Christianity is that of the Heart in the Spirit, and not in the Letter, whose Praise is not of Men, but of God. But to this perhaps it will be objected, that this is putting Christians and Heathens upon the same footing; for if the Case be so, how is a Christian better than a Heathen. To which I answer, Not at all, but rather worse; he is better in no respect, that I know of, unless he leads a better Life. A Christian by having a better Light to walk by, and the Influence of God's Holy Spirit to direct him, has, no doubt of it, great Advantages above a Heathen; but unless he makes a good Use of it, 'tis no advantage to him at all: 'Tis the same thing to him, as if he had it not.

The ancient Moralists thought it to be the proper Business of a Philosopher to live well; and shall it be the proper Business of a Christian to live ill? Or shall we break all the Rules of Humanity to shew what good Christians we are? 'Tis
the

the Privilege of Human Nature above SERM.
Brutes, says *Antoninus*, to love those that VI.
disoblige us. (*Lib. 7.*) This is the Doctrine 
of an Heathen, and the Gospel teaches us
the same Lesson, when it bids us pray
for those that despitefully use us; and yet
the persecuting Christian is for hating
those, that do him no Injury at all. And
the same Author says elsewhere, that we
ought to be beneficial to others, as being
that which as Men we are bound to
do. (*Lib. 9.*) Take me, says he, in ano-
ther Place, under the particular Distinc-
tion of *Antoninus*, and *Rome* is my Town
and Country; but consider me as a Man
in general, and I belong to the Corpora-
tion of the World; that therefore, and
that only, which is serviceable to both
these Societies, is an Advantage to me.
(*Lib. 6.*) What a generous benevolent Tem-
per this is! Now which of these is the good
Man, he who without the Gospel practi-
ses a benevolent charitable Temper, or
he who with it an uncharitable persecu-
ting one? Such a one is so far from being
a Christian, that he is a Composition of
the

SERM. worst Part of Heathenism, as being made
 VI. up of a Spirit, that tends to destroy the
 great Law of Nature, which no Reveal'd
 Religion, nor even an Angel from Heaven
 can do, without altering the Nature of
 Things, and making Right and Wrong
 stand for other things than what they do
 at present.

But it is Time now to draw nigh to a
 Conclusion: And in order to make some
 Use of what has been said, let us all en-
 deavour to get more Love, and Charity,
 and universal Benevolence; and let us be-
 ware of rash Judgment, for it is a very na-
 tural and easy Transition from rash judg-
 ing to hating, and then there will be no-
 thing wanting but Power to make a com-
 plet Persecutor: Let us consider not how
 we differ from one another, but how far
 we differ from the Truth; and leave
 one another in the Possession of each others
 Right, considering that *One is our Master,*
even Christ, and all we are Brethren.
 Have we any Overflowings of Hatred or
 Ill-Nature, let us bestow it upon our Sins;
 and let us be sparing of our Fire-Brands,
 and

and leave such hot antichristian Work to SERM.
 that Church that deals in such things ; for VI.
 we read that *Michael*, tho' an Arch-
 Angel, when contending with the *Devil*,
brought not against him so much as a rail-
ing Accusation ; but said, the Lord rebuke
thee. Let us of all things beware of false
 Zeal, for that makes People Persecutors
 even against their Nature ; as is plain from
 the People of those Countries, where the In-
 quisition reigns, who are observ'd to shew as
 much Compassion as any People in the
 World for a Malefactor, who is to suffer
 for Murder, Robbery, &c. And yet when
 they see a poor innocent Person, dragg'd
 from a horrid Dungeon with trembling
 Limbs, and a meagre Countenance, and
 fastned to a Stake in the midst of a devour-
 ing Flame, for no other Crime than for
 not having the same Understanding with
 them, they shew all the Tokens of Joy
 and Pleasure imaginable. Good God!
 that ever People should come to such a
 height of Wickedness, as to look up to thee,
 whom they offend every Day of their
 Lives, and beg thy Mercy and Forgiveness,
 and

SERM. and yet at the same time delight in torturing their innocent Brethren! Where is the Reason, the Equity, the Justice of all this Enthusiastic Rage and Fury? If this be Christianity give us some better Scheme, or turn us back to the less injurious State of Heathenism!

In a Word, and to conclude. Tho' we all differ from one another in some respect or other, yet let us not imitate those whose Principles and Practices we condemn, by dealing about the unchristian Firebrands of Malice and Hatred, but shew that we are Christians, by extending our Love to all the World according to our Saviour's Command and Example. Then if our Faith, which is a dead Principle of itself, be thus enliven'd with Charity; then, I say, however we may be reproach'd, censur'd, condemn'd as Hereticks, by those who know no other Gospel, but an idle Jargon of School-Terms, yet we shall be found to be true Members of the Christian Church here, and of the Church triumphant in Heaven.

S E R,



S E R M O N VII.

ROMANS iii. 31.

Do we then make void the Law thro' Faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the Law.



THE Design of this Epistle SERM. VII.
to the *Romans* being to confirm them in their Profession of Christianity, and to preserve them from being seduced by the *Judaizers*; who stily adher'd to the Law of *Moses*, the Apostle, in the foregoing Chapters, gives them to understand, that God is the God of the *Gentiles* as well as of the *Jews*; that, as to the Method of obtaining Salvation, the Case is the same with the one, as it is with the other; for that the Righteousness accepted of God unto Salvation must be by Faith

R in

SERM. in Jesus Christ, both of the *Jew* and
VII. *Gentile*: And tho' indeed he is far from
acquitting the *Gentiles*, for he blames them
very much for their wicked Lives, and
says, that they stand in need of Justi-
fication by Faith for transgressing the Law
of Nature; yet to take down the Pride of
the *Jew*, he shews as plainly, that the
Jews could not be justify'd neither, any
otherwise than by Faith, because they
were Transgressors of the Law of *Moses*:
So that in this respect they were upon the
same Footing; and as to their Acceptance
with God, there was no Difference be-
tween the *Jew* and the *Gentile*; neither
of them being able to attain Justification
by their own Performances. The Apostle
goes on, to the great Mortification of the
Jew, who placed his Merit in outward
Performances, to shew the Insufficiency
of such Things; telling them that it was
the Purity of the Heart, which was only
acceptable with God. For he is not a
Jew, or at least such a one to whom the
Promises belong, who is one outwardly,
nor is that Circumcision, which is out-
ward

ward in the Flesh, but he is a *Jew*, who SERM.
 is one inwardly, and Circumcision is that VII.
 of the Heart, in the Spirit, and not in
 the Letter, whose Praise is not of Men,
 but of God. And if the *Jew* should
 reply, as *St. Paul* puts the Question,
 What Advantage then hath the *Jew*, or
 what Profit is there of Circumcision?
 Why, as the Apostle observes, much every
 Way; chiefly, because they were entrusted
 with the Oracles of God; but as to their
 Acceptance with God, they had no Ad-
 vantage at all; for both *Jew* and *Gentile*
 are concluded under Sin. And then he
 proceeds to shew, that the *Jews* had no
 reason to boast upon Account of the Law,
 since after all they were not to be justify'd
 by it; for that God will justify *Jew* and
Gentile the same Way, *viz.* by Faith.
 And in the Words of the Text he obviates
 an Objection, which he knew was natural
 enough for the *Jews* to urge from the
 foregoing Doctrine; as if Justification by
 Faith would make void the Law, which
 he denies with the greatest Abhorrence;
 shewing that it is so far from making void

SERM. the Law, that it is on the contrary an
 VII. Establishment of it. *Do we then made*
 void the Law thro' Faith? God forbid;
 yea, we establish the Law.

From the Words of the Text I shall
 beg Leave to prove two Things.

First, *That the Gospel does not make void*
the Law.

Secondly, *That it confirms and establishes it.*

First, then, I am to prove that the
 Gospel does not make void the Law. By
 the Law I understand not the *Mosaic*
 Law in General, but that particular Part
 of it, that is made up of a Body of Pre-
 cepts for the Regulation of the Life and
 Manners, which is call'd the Moral Law.
 The ceremonial Part being adapted to the
 particular Circumstances of the *Jews*, it
 could not be supposed to be obligatory
 upon Christians, or to extend further than
 the Reason for which it was first instituted,
 but to cease when the Gospel-Dispensation
 took Place, and become entirely null and
 void; because there was no longer any
 Reason

Reason for its Continuance. When God SERM.
 was pleased to establish his Religion among VII.
 the *Jews*, he gave them Laws suitable to
 the Weakness of their Capacities.

Sacrifices and outward Ceremonies were accepted, till they knew how to worship God in Spirit and in Truth; and all the legal Observances were only Shadows of what was to come, When God was known only in *Judab*, and his Tabernacle at *Salem*, Religion evaporated in Smoak, and spent it self in ritual Performances; but when the Fulness of Time came, that we should not say, Lo here, or Lo there, for that the Kingdom of God was within us, then the legal Ceremonies were abolish'd, the Hand-writing of Ordinances was blotted out, and gave Way to the Righteousness which is of God by Faith.


And in this Sense indeed the Law is made void thro' Faith: But the Moral Law, the Law here mention'd, which is a Transcript and Abridgment of the Law of Nature, did not cease with the *Jews*, but is binding upon all Christians.

For

SERM. For as it is a Law of Nature, no Circumstances can alter it ; but it must continue in full Force upon the whole human Nature, as long as there are such Things in the World as Right and Wrong ; and no Privileges of Christianity can possibly exempt us from our Obligations to it.

But for the better handling this Point, it will be necessary to consider well the true Nature and Design of the Gospel, and also the full and just Extent and Design of the Law, that we might not exalt the Gospel beyond its due Bounds, and so abuse that Liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, nor advance the Law beyond the true Intent and Design of it, and so make void the Gospel. When we have thus consider'd the Nature and Extent of each, how far they differ, and how far they agree, we shall find, that tho' the Law is not sufficient for our Justification, yet that there is no room to think, that therefore the Law is made void thro' Faith.

The Law consider'd as a Body of Morality,

rality, and so a Rule of Life, differs not SERM.
 from the Gospel, any further than as the VII.
 Gospel is an Improvement upon it: For it 
 claims the same God for its Author, and is
 founded upon the same eternal Truth and
 Reason. And this Law the *Gentiles* had
 as well as the *Jews*. Indeed the *Jews* were
 the first to whom it was made a Statute-
 Law, but that the *Gentiles* had it likewise
 is plain from St. *Paul*, who says of them,
These, having not the Law, are a Law
unto themselves. As to the whole Law
 taken together, which is call'd the *Mosaic*
 Law in opposition to the Gospel, as the
Jews held it, or in Contradistinction to it,
 as the *Jewish* Converts, it was very de-
 fective, and could not justify us, as being
 only a Covenant of Works; and therefore
 consisting only of Duties, which it could
 not enable us to perform, nor give us any
 Promise of eternal Life upon our Per-
 formance. (*For, as the Apostle says, if there*
had been a Law given, which could have
given Life, verily Righteousness should have
been by the Law.) It being thus a Covenant
 of Works enjoining strict Obedience, and
 there

SERM. there being no Hopes of Pardon or Justification from it but upon strict Obedience, VII. the Gospel steps in to supply the Defects of the Law, not to exclude the Morality of it, or make Good Works less necessary than they were before, but to make them truly useful by a Covenant of Grace; that makes large Allowances for the Infirmities of Human Nature, accepting of Repentance instead of Innocence, and so justifies us from all Things, from which we could not be justify'd by the Law of *Moses*: For Good Works were not more necessary under the Law, than they are under the Gospel; but there being no Provision made by the Law, as it is a Covenant of Works, to pardon our Infirmities, as there is in the Gospel, as it is a Covenant of Grace, therefore we cannot be justify'd by the Law of *Moses*.

The Law having two Acceptations, when it is opposed to the Gospel, it is not opposed barely as a Law, but as a Covenant. And the whole Design of it taken in its largest Sense being to bring us unto Christ, one Part of it ceased of Course

Course, when Christ, who is the End of SERM.
 the Law, was come; the other is to con- VII.
 tinue in full Force for ever. As to the
 Word Faith, taken in a Gospel-Sense, it is
 not to be understood only as a Belief of
 the Gospel of Christ, exclusive of good
 Works, such as *St. James* mentions, as
 availing to Justification, and such as *St.*
Paul, when he talks of a justifying Faith,
 comprehends under the Word Faith; but
 it is to be understood so as to be always
 join'd with Good Works; and so it includes
 the Doctrine of Faith or the Gospel.

The Law and the Gospel being thus
 stated, they don't differ as to Good Works,
 any further than as the one is an Im-
 provement of the other, nor do they op-
 pose each other as a Rule, but as these
 Works are made a Covenant, and are
 destitute of that dispensing Power of alter-
 ing the Conditions of that Covenant,
 which the Gospel is possess'd of. And
 therefore when we find Good Works men-
 tion'd in Scripture, as necessary to Justi-
 fication, as we do very often in *St. James*,
 we are not by him to understand those

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Works

SERM. VII. Works, which the *Jews* held in Opposition to Faith, or those which the *Jewish* Converts held equally in Conjunction with it, but those Works only, which are inseparable from it. Otherwise St. *Peter*, when he talks of St. *Paul's* Epistles, that there are some Things in them hard to be understood, which the Unlearn'd and Unstable wrest, meaning, as is supposed, the Doctrine of Justification, which was misinterpreted by some to be by Faith without Works, would be guilty of the same Fault, when he exhorts to add to Faith, as in sufficient of itself, Virtue, and to Virtue Knowledge, Temperance, Patience &c. and when he says, that by Good Works, we are to make our Calling and Election sure.

And therefore the Works of the Law, as it is made a Covenant, can't be those Works, which accompany Faith, which belong to a Covenant establish'd upon better Promises, and is therefore call'd a better Covenant; and so could not justify the Performers of them, and make them
that

that Seed of *Abraham* to whom the Blessing was promised.

SERM.
VII.

But tho' the Law thus consider'd can't justify us, does it therefore follow that our Obligations to the Moral Law are made void thro' Faith? God forbid. To object this is to shew an Ignorance of the Law and the Gospel too. For to say, that because the Law, consider'd as the whole Law of *Moses*, will not justify us, that therefore that Part of it, which is call'd the Moral Law, is made null and void; or else if we put it this way, to say, that because that Part of the Law of *Moses*, which is call'd the Moral Law, will not justify us of itself, that therefore it is not at all necessary towards it, is to argue very confusedly and inconsistently: For tho' the moral Law itself is not binding as a Covenant, as I have already proved, yet it will by no Means follow from thence, that it is not binding as a Rule of Life. It has still the Force of a Moral Rule, because there still remains the same Reason for it; and is the same in all Respects as before, except in this one, that an exact Obedience

S E R M. dience to it is not made a necessary Con-
 VII. dition of Salvation, but Repentance is ac-
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 cepted instead of it.

But however, if we are still bound to obey the Moral Law, very likely it may be objected, how then is the Gospel a better Covenant, or the Gospel Dispensation easier, since the Law remains in Force as much now as it did before? The answering this Objection rightly, I hope, will very much illustrate the Matter, and put it in a clear Light. If we consider the Gospel, as a Moral Rule, in the same Sense as we do the Law, it is not at all easier than the Law; because the same Duties are still binding upon us as before, and many more, as I shall shew under the next Head: For the Gospel is not under a Dispensation as a Law, or a Rule, but as a Covenant; and it is easier than the Law no otherwise, than as it is an easier Covenant; but if we consider it likewise as a Covenant, then it is of great Advantage to us, where the Law as a Covenant is defective, and has a dispensing Power which the Law has not,  
 and

and in that Sense only can be said to make void the Law. SERM.  
VII.

And indeed if the Law consider'd in this View was not made void thro' Faith, the Gospel could not be what it is. If Righteousness come by the Law, says the Apostle, then Christ is dead in vain: But further that the Gospel does not make void the Law is plain from hence; because by the same Rule it would make void itself; and so instead of setting up one Law upon the Ruins of another, would most effectually destroy both; and root out Law and Gospel too. To make void the Law thro' Faith is to make Christianity a false Religion; for the Law, as it is a Moral Rule, in which Sense only we are now concern'd to understand it, teaches us our Duty to God and our Neighbour, and it is the Business of the Gospel to do the same. It is not calculated to fill Men's Heads with thin metaphysical Notions, but with true substantial Religion: 'Tis to make Men more knowing in what they are most of all concern'd to know; viz. the Terms of their Acceptance with

SERM. with God. In short, the Gospel is calculated to teach Men to lead good Lives; and accordingly our blessed Saviour in the Doctrines he taught, and especially in his most admirable Sermon on the Mounts takes a great deal of Pains to fix in the Minds of his Hearers the Obligations they lay under to perform the Moral Law; and condemns the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* for transgressing that Law thro' their Traditions: And when one asked him, what he should do to inherit eternal Life, he told him, if thou wilt enter into Life *keep the Commandments*; and is so far from destroying the Law, that he expressly says, *that one jot, or one Tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law till all be fulfilled.* Our Saviour was so far from having any Intention to destroy the Moral Law, that he did not so much as endeavour to alter even the judicial Law of the Country where he lived; but left the Civil Government as he found it, in the Possession of its own Rights and Priviledges, without adding any Thing but Precepts of Obedience. For indeed Christianity

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no where meddles with the Civil Rights of Government, but only bids us be obedient to the higher Powers, without determining the higher Powers in any other Sense than the Powers in Being; which one might reasonably expect it should do, had it intended to have them appointed, not according to the different Constitutions of different Nations, but according to some other Rule.

SERM.  
VII.

But to proceed: Should the Gospel make void the Law, it would not only make void itself, as going contrary to its own Rule, but it would also make void the great Law of Nature; and so cut off likewise the only Rule of the *Gentiles*, by abrogating that Law, which God gave both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, to enable them to distinguish between Right and Wrong. And what sort of Religion must that be, that tends to destroy human Nature, and rase out all Footsteps of Good and Evil? Not that which comes from above certainly; and yet it must be the Religion of those, who make void the Law thro' Faith. 'Twere much better after this Rate to be left

SERM.  
VII.

left to a State of Nature, than to be cheated out of our Morality under the Pretence of a higher Dispensation. What would *Socrates* or *Plato* think of that Religion, that shuts out all good Actions, and provides nothing in their Stead, but a bare Assent of the Mind to a certain Set of Propositions, without being any further concerned about them. If the Gospel-Freedom were a Liberty not from the Bondage of the Law, but of doing what is right in our own Eyes, it would be such a Dispensation, as no good Man would think it worth his while to trouble himself about, or to exchange his Morality for: It being a Dispensation only to remove us from one Bondage to another, from the Bondage of the Law to the Bondage of Sin. A Religion, thus built upon a Defect of Moral Goodness, has no Foundation in Nature, or Reason to support it.

II. Having proved that the Gospel does not make void the Law, I come now, *Secondly*, to prove, that it confirms and establishes it.

Our blessed Saviour tells the *Jews*, who  
thought

thought He came into the World to be a temporal Prince; and therefore entertained little else in their Minds but Pride and Ambition, grounded upon their Expectations of a conquering Messiah, who should free them from the Bondage of the Roman Yoke, and make them Masters of the World, (which Thoughts must have been founded upon a Supposition, that they were to be dispensed with, as to their Obligation to the Duties of the Moral Law) I say he tells them, in order to root out all Thoughts of that kind, that *He was not come to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them.*

Our Saviour was so great an Encourager of the Moral Law, that almost every thing he said had a Tendency to advance it, but not in the least to exclude, or make it void. If under the Gospel-Dispensation the Law is not only preserved entire, but improved, and carried to a greater Height, and made more perfect than it was before; if the Gospel takes off the thin Cloathing of the Letter, and explains it in a Sense more worthy the Divine Legislator, and more agreeable even to it self, than the

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SERM.  
VII.  
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SERM. Interpretations of the Jewish Doctors  
 VII. would admit of, then it is plain, that the  
 Gospel does not only not make void the Law, but establish and confirm it. It comes not to us indeed, like *Bernice* and *Agrippa*, in great Pomp and Magnificence, as before; but when we have examined what Improvements the Gospel has made upon it, we shall see it in the more beautiful Garments of Holiness and Purity.

In the first Commandment, the Jews are taught to have the Lord for their God, and to have none other besides Him. The Gospel teaches us the same, but adds mightily to it, by informing us, that the putting too great a Value upon the things of this Life is a having other Gods besides Him; and therefore the giving up ourselves to the Love of Riches is called the serving of Mammon, which we can't do, and obey God at the same time, because it is a putting that Trust in Mammon, that is due only to the true God; and is as much a setting up of other Gods, as that was, when the *Israelites* worshipped *Baalim* and *Ashtaroth*, and the Gods of *Aram*.

*Aram and Sidon* Hence it is, that the Apostle calls Covetousness, Idolatry.

SERM.  
VII.

The Second Commandment teaches them what they are to observe, as to the Manner of worshipping God ; that they should not do it under any Representation whatsoever. This too is much improved by the Gospel, which teaches us that it must not be done in a ritual figurative Manner, which after all was the greatest Pitch of Worship they could attain to under the Law, but in Spirit, and in Truth ; and gives us a clearer Notion of the Divine Being, and of his wonderful Love to his Creatures, discovered in the surprizing Method of our Redemption.

The Third Commandment teaches them not to take the Name of the Lord their God in vain ; and is much established and improved by the Gospel, when it teaches us, not only not to take the Name of God in vain by swearing falsely by him, but that in our ordinary Communication we should not swear at all ; nay we are not so much as to swear by Heaven, for it is God's Throne, nor by the Earth, for it is his Footstool. And we are further told

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by

SERM. by our Saviour, that we are to give an Ac-  
 VII. count for every idle Word.



As to the Fourth Commandment, the Gospel clears it from the false Constructions, which the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* had put upon it, by condemning Acts of Charity and Beneficence on the Seventh Day, as a Breach of the Sabbath; and yet so great was their Hypocrisy, that they themselves would not, if an Ass or an Ox were fallen into a Pit, refuse to help him out on the Sabbath-Day.

The Fifth Commandment, which is very strict in enjoining the Duty of *Children* to *Parents*, is also established by the Gospel, which condemns the evil Practices of the *Jews*, as to that Matter: For they said, *Whosoever shall say to his Father, or his Mother, It is a Gift, by whatsoever thou might'st be profited by me, and shall not honour his Father, or his Mother, he shall be free.* Thus, says our Saviour, *have ye made the Commandments of God of none Effect by your Tradition.*

The Sixth Commandment forbidding Murder is fulfilled, and improved by the Gospel:



Gospel: For their Tradition ran thus, *It was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in Danger of the Judgment: But, says our Saviour, I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his Brother without a Cause, shall be in Danger of the Judgment, &c.* SERM. VII.

The Seventh Commandment prohibiting Adultery is confirmed and established by the Gospel, with this Improvement, that it adds the Adultery of the Heart.

The Eighth Commandment prohibiting Theft is fully confirmed and established by these Words of our Saviour; *All things whatsoever ye would that Men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them.*

As to the Ninth Commandment, the Gospel has improved it to such a Degree, that we are not only not to bear false Witness against our Neighbour, but we are commanded not to judge him, or entertain an evil Thought of him; *Judge not, that ye be not judged.*

The Tenth Commandment, which forbids us to covet another's Property, is fulfilled and perfected by the Gospel; which  
com-

SERM. commands us to drive away all covetous

VII. Thoughts and Desires, in that Prohibition  
 of taking no Thought for the Morrow.  
 Several other Passages might be produced,  
 would the Time admit of it, to shew, that  
 the Gospel confirms and establishes the  
 Law, either by making Additions to it, or  
 by explaining and clearing it from the  
 false Glosses and Traditions of the *Jews*;  
 so that the Gospel is so far from making  
 void the Law, that it distinguishes us from  
 all the rest of the World, by a greater De-  
 gree of Purity and Holiness, and by a more  
 steady Adherence to that Moral Law it  
 self, which some thought *Christ* came to  
 destroy.

How beautiful does the Gospel appear in  
 the lovely Ornaments of Righteousness and  
 Good Works; when we see her visiting the  
 Fatherless and Widow, comforting the  
 Broken-hearted, and dispensing universal  
 Love and Benevolence to all the World!  
 This is *the King's Daughter that is all  
 glorious within, who is fairer than the  
 Children of Men, because God hath blessed  
 her for ever.* 'Tis by the Gospel that we  
 know

know from what Slavery, what more SERM.  
than Egyptian Bondage, of Sin, we are VII.  
set free; which we could not possibly  
know any other Way: For as it is true,  
that we had not known Sin but by the  
Law, so is it likewise true, that we had not  
known the Goodness and Love of *God* in  
delivering us from it, but by the Gospel.  
—There are also greater Sanctions of Re-  
wards and Punishments under the Gospel,  
than there were under the Law; and it  
more clearly sets forth to us the Duty and  
the Nature of Repentance. It teaches us  
also the Insufficiency of our best Perform-  
ances, and tells us, that when we have done  
all we can, we are unprofitable Servants. To  
do a good Action, and not to put it down  
to the Score of Merit, would have been  
thought a hard thing under the Law; for  
they knew no other Condition of obtain-  
ing Happiness: But the Gospel teaches us  
better things; for there we are taught  
that *as by one Man Sin entered into the  
World, and Death by Sin, so Death passed  
upon all Men, for that all have sinned;*  
and therefore our Good-Works, imperfect

SERM. as they always are, cannot avail to the ob-  
 VII. taining Happiness; but the Gospel shews us  
 the only way to make them useful and ad-  
 vantageous to us, by supplying them with  
 the Merits of *Jesus Christ*. Not that those,  
 under the Law, were destitute of the Pro-  
 mise; for they had the same Promise, in  
 Substance as we; but then they had it  
 not, barely as under the Law, for it was  
 made to *Adam*, and delivered to *Abraham*,  
 tho' he was not yet circumcised; so that  
 still it signifies nothing to them, who were  
 the Children of *Abraham*, according to  
 the Flesh, and so only *Jews* by Birth, but  
 only as they were the Seed of Abraham,  
 according to the Promise. Therefore it  
*is of Faith, that it might be of Grace; to*  
*the End the Promise might be sure to all*  
*the Seed, not to that only which is of the*  
*Law, but to that also, which is of the*  
*Faith of Abraham, who is the Father of us*  
*all.* Having proved that the Gospel does  
 not make void the Law, but that it con-  
 firms and establishes it, I shall draw a  
 few Inferences from the whole, and so  
 conclude.

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Since then the Law is not made void through Faith, it is incumbent upon us not to act, as if it was. Let the Gospel establish the Law never so much, yet unless we do so too by our good Lives, it will be to no Purpose to us; for a wicked Life will make void both Law and Gospel too. And as there is one, who will accuse the *Jews*, even *Moses* in whom they trust, so there is one, who will accuse us Christians, if we think to make our Faith atone for our wicked Lives, even *Christ* in whom we thus vainly trust. If the Gospel is so great a Refinement upon the Law, as we find it to be, let our Lives declare that it is so; that we may not be reproached both by *Jew* and *Gentile*, who will be ready enough to say, that the Dispensation we are so fond of, is nothing else but a Dispensation for a wicked Life.

'Tis true, Sin shall no longer have Dominion over us; *for we are not under the Law, but under Grace: But what then? shall we Sin, because we are not under the Law, but under Grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield your*

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*selves*SERM.  
VII.

SERM. *elves Servants to obey, his Servants ye*

VII. *are to whom ye obey, whether of Sin unto Death, or of Obedience unto Righteousness? We were indeed made free from Sin, but it was to this End, that we should become Servants to Righteousness.*

We ought to consider the Law and the Gospel thoroughly; and if we do so we shall find no reason to think, that the keeping of the one will dispense with a Neglect of the other; nor that the Gospel is opposed to the Law as a Rule of Life; for the Rules are not opposed to one another, tho' the Covenants are. If we consider Faith as a distinct thing from Morality, we don't consider it, as it is; for Faith is not the same thing to a Christian, as it is to a Heathen: To him it is only an Assent of the Mind, but to the other, it is a great deal more; for it is always accompanied with Good Works. Had the *Jews* understood this, they could not have supposed, that St. *Paul* had set himself up in opposition to *Moses*; or that there was any Occasion for him to purify himself, to shew that he walked orderly, and kept the Law. 'Tis



'Tis easier to believe indeed than it is to SERM.  
practise; and many People think, that VII.  
if they have Faith all is well: And so indeed it is, if they have it; but unless it be attended with Good Works, the Misfortune of it is, that at the same time they value themselves so much upon their Faith, like an Argument that proves too much, it serves only to demonstrate, that they have believed themselves even into a State of Infidelity, for it is not Faith, but Confidence. It is not Faith, as it is described by our Saviour; and therefore it is no Faith at all, in the Gospel-sense of the Word.

'Tis certainly a Matter of great Concern to understand the true Design of the Law and of the Gospel, that we may know the Nature of that Slavery from which we are set free, and of that Liberty to which we are advanced. And since the Law and the Gospel agree so well together, we ought not to contribute any thing to make them disagree. Let us sanctify the Lord God in our Hearts; that if any, envying us the Liberty and Happiness of the

SERM. Gospel, should speak Evil of us, as of evil  
VII. Doers, they may be ashamed, that falsely  
accuse our good Conversation in Christ.  
This is to behave like the Disciples of  
Christ; to act agreeable to the Excellency  
of the Gospel, and the Dignity of the Law;  
and to mark out a strait and easy Path to  
that State of Happiness, where we may  
hope to sit down with *Moses* and the *Pro-*  
*phets*, and *Christ* and his *Apostles*, in the  
Kingdom of God for ever.






## S E R M O N VIII.

2 P E T E R ii. 19.

*While they promise them Liberty,  
they themselves are the Servants  
of Corruption.*

 I T has been the way of those, who have apostatiz'd from Christianity, to do it upon this Principle, in hopes of finding more Liberty on the other side of the Question; and it has been the constant Practice of those, whose Business it has been to make Profelytes that way, like the false Teachers in the Text, to promise it them; as if the Christian Religion was calculated to introduce Slavery, and the Professors of it were in a Conspiracy against the Liberty of Mankind; whereas this is so far from being true,

SERM.  
VIII.

SERM. true, that on the contrary Christianity  
 VIII. can no more countenance, or admit of  
 ~~~~~ Slavery, than any other Scheme can give  
 Liberty; nay, 'tis the only Scheme in the
 World, in which Liberty has any Place.
 All within this Circle is Liberty and Free-
 dom; all without is Bondage and Slavery:
 Accordingly, all good Christians are, and
 ever have been free, and all others are,
 and ever have been Slaves.

No doubt there will always be some,
 who will be forward enough to promise
 Liberty upon another Footing: the most
 profligate and abandon'd Part of Mankind
 will not be wanting in Pretences of this
 kind; but then the Performance will never
 come up to the Promise: There may in-
 deed be a Shew of Liberty, something
 that may look like it at first Sight, but a
 good Eye will quickly see thro' the thin
 Disguise, perceive the Chain that is con-
 ceal'd under it, and discover that they,
 who thus promise Liberty, are themselves
 the Servants of Corruption. But for a
 further Illustration of this Point, I purpose
 in my following Discourse to shew,

First,

First, *What Liberty is.*

Secondly, *That Christianity has the only Claim to it.*

SERM.
VIII.
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Thirdly, *That all Pretences to it from the Side of Infidelity are false and groundless.*

First then I am to shew, What Liberty is. And there is the more necessity for having a right Notion of this, because no Word has been more mis-understood, or occasion'd greater Errors and Mistakes.

By Liberty then, consider'd as the Privilege of Human Nature, (in which Sense only we now consider it) we are not to understand a Power of doing as we please, exclusive of all possible Motives of Action; a Power of doing Right or Wrong, Good or Evil: This is indeed an Opinion many have entertain'd of Liberty, who have accordingly represented Man, their Free-Agent, as a Being endued with a strange Sort of Freedom, a Freedom to do all this, or any thing else. But now to denominate a Man free, because he has Power to do Evil, is little else but an Abuse of Words: For the Question is not, whether

SERM. a Man can do Right or Wrong, Good or
 VIII. Evil, but in doing which he may be ac-
 counted free. Every Tendency to Evil is
 a Tendency likewise in exact Proportion to
 Slavery, because it is a Clog, and Incum-
 berance upon the Mind, that hinders it
 from exerting itself as it ought; and sure-
 ly no Man would think himself the freer
 for being bound or confin'd; but a Man
 would then think himself free, when he
 had it in his Power to renounce all Ob-
 stacles of that Kind.

Liberty then is not the having it in our
 Power to chuse Right or Wrong; for tho'
 we may do either of these, yet we can't
 be therefore said to be free, but when we
 chuse what is Right: for to be able to
 chuse Wrong implies a Defect, and every
 Defect is a want of so much Liberty.
 God to be sure is free, and if Liberty is a
 Privilege, he must have it to an infinite
 Perfection; and yet no one, I suppose,
 will say he has a Power to chuse Wrong,
 or do Evil. No. His Liberty consists in an
 infinite Remove from this: therefore Li-
 berty in the abstract Nature of it consists

in

in a Power of doing Right, and in a Re-
 moval of every thing, that stands in the
 way of it, either in thinking, believing,
 acting, or exerting any Faculty within us.

SERM.
 VIII.

Perfect Liberty is the Property of God
 only: But as we are his Image in this, as
 well as other respects, we have a Ray of
 it likewise in ourselves; only, as we are
 imperfect Creatures, and a want of Per-
 fection being a proportionable Want of Li-
 berty, we have it but in an imperfect De-
 gree; such a Degree, as Human Nature
 will admit of. Having thus shewn what
 Liberty is, I come now to shew,

Secondly, That Christianity has the only
 Claim to it. Liberty thus understood is
 to be met with only in the Christian
 Scheme, because there only, (supposing
 Christianity to be a true Religion; and
 whether it is or not must be determin'd by
 other Arguments: However this is no un-
 reasonable Supposition, if we will but al-
 low, that People had the same Use of their
 Reason and their Senses at the first Pro-
 pagation of it, as they have now, and that
 Tradition has at least the same Weight

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with

SERM. with respect to the sacred Writings, as it
 VIII. has with respect to profane;) I say, be-
 cause there only is a Provision made for
 the Imperfections of Human Nature;
 which, by the way, is a corroborating
 Argument of the Truth of it, no other
 Scheme of Religion in the World besides
 having ever propos'd such advantages to
 Humankind.

If we suppose Defects and Imperfec-
 tions in Man, we must suppose, at the same
 time, a Want of so much Liberty; and so
 if we suppose a Remedy for these Defects,
 we of course suppose a proportionable Ad-
 dition of Liberty. Now, I believe, it will
 be readily enough agreed on all Hands,
 that there are some defects in Human-
 Nature. They who carry Human-Reason
 ever so high will, I suppose, acknow-
 ledge there are some Bounds to it; that it
 is defective in some things: But how shall
 these Defects be remedied? Let us turn
 over the various Systems of Man's Wis-
 dom, and see whether any Assistance may
 be fetch'd from thence. Will any of the
 Gods of Human Imagination afford us any
 Help?

Help? Will the Idols we set up in our own Hearts relieve us? No. Could we indeed suppose the Reason of Man lengthen'd out to Infinity, we must then suppose him perfect, and consequently free: But the Possibility of this is not to be supposed of any Creature whatsoever; much less that it actually is the Case of Man, who we find is compass'd about with Infirmities of every kind.

But now the Christian Religion supplies the Want of this; not, as some think, by setting aside Reason, but, leaving to Reason all its Advantages, by assisting it with the Reason of God. For if we believe Christianity to be a true Religion, we have by virtue of that Faith, besides the Advantage of our own Reason, the Benefit also of the Reason of God. Thus a Christian, tho' of himself in no respect more excellent than another Man, yet by means of the Divine Reason, which is now by Faith become his own, is exalted to a superior Class of Beings, and shines with the Divine Splendor of this Heavenly Light, while the rest of Mankind are sunk
down

SERM.
VIII.

SERM. down an amazing Depth below, groping
 VIII. in the thick Darknefs and Obscurity of
 ~~~~~ their own Inventions. This Faith then is  
 not any thing besides, or opposite to Reason, but is itself a Principle, that procures us the Benefit of the highest, and most perfect Reason.

It also improves every Spring and Movement of Action within us to its utmost Perfection. The two great Springs of all Human Actions are generally thought to be Hopes and Fears. Now let us consider Christianity with respect to both these, as directing them to their proper Objects, to which they must operate in exact Proportion. Now as every thing in this Life is casual and uncertain, and consequently Good and Evil, Happiness and Misery are so too, the Hopes and Fears that belong to these must and ought to be proportionably small, languid, and feeble: For if they rise to any great Height, we lay out more upon these things than they deserve; but if we suppose Good and Evil, Happiness and Misery to be no longer casual but certain, which we must suppose in the  
 Christian

Christian Scheme; if we suppose them to be no longer temporal things, but carried out into all Futurity, our Hopes and Fears must and ought then to rise in Proportion, to receive new Life and Vigour, and be strong enough to influence a Set of good and virtuous Actions; and in a mind rightly dispos'd by Religion they will do so.

In short, as eternal Happiness and Misery is the Sum of all Happiness and Misery, so the Hope of the one, and Fear of the other is, or ought to be, the Sum of all Hopes and Fears. So that these Hopes and Fears, thus regulated by Religion, tho' they will still be employ'd about things in this Life, because Religion no way interferes in this matter, being not designed to destroy and root them out, but to direct and perfect them; yet still, if a Man acts right, they will be in exact Proportion, as the Good and Evil, Happiness and Misery, of this Life stands to the Good and Evil, Happiness and Misery of the next. We may indeed lay them out too much upon temporal things, but then

SERM.  
VIII.

SERM. then we are not free in doing this, but are  
 VIII. at the same time enslav'd to something or  
 other, that hinders us from giving them a  
 true Direction and their just Measures. And  
 as to every other Principle of Thought and  
 Action Christianity sets us free, by di-  
 recting all the Faculties of the mind to their  
 proper Objects. In a word, and to de-  
 scribe the whole Power of Christianity at  
 once. As the Devil is the great Enslaver  
 of Mankind, and Sin the Chain that ties  
 them down to Bondage, so Christ by con-  
 quering this Tyrant has loos'd the Chain,  
 and redeem'd us from the Slavery of it,  
 and so is truly and properly the Saviour,  
 and Redeemer of Mankind: So true is  
 that Saying of St. *John*, *If the Son makes*  
*us free, then are we free indeed:* But to  
 this Liberty we are entitled only by the  
 Gospel. I come now to shew,

*Thirdly*, That Pretences to it from  
 the Side of Infidelity are false, and ground-  
 less. And here let us see what Liberty it is,  
 that Infidelity pretends to promise. Is it  
 a Liberty that will free us from every In-  
 cumbrance? Will it deliver us from the  
 Dominion



Dominion of Sin, and make us free in all SERM.  
our thoughts and Actions? *i. e.* Will VIII.  
it remove every thing, that can hinder us  
from thinking, and doing right? For  
this I have shewn to be the Nature of true  
Liberty. If so, we have nothing more  
to do but to seek it out and embrace it:  
But who ever met with this inestimable  
Jewel in any earthly Treasure? We have  
often heard of Liberty indeed, and great  
things have of late been said of it. A par-  
ticular Set of Men, who have thrown off  
the Ties of Religion and Nature, and set  
themselves loose from their Dependance  
upon God and the World about them;  
how, under Pretence of doing Honour  
to Reason, have sap'd the Foundation of  
it, and instead of rooting out, and de-  
stroying all Faith, which, if they know  
their own Principles, is what they are  
concern'd to do, have set up a mon-  
strous and unnatural Credulity in the room  
of it; who have discarded Sense, and the  
Passions, and rob'd Human Nature of the  
kindest Impressions stamp'd upon it by  
the Divine Being; these have indeed talk'd  
of

SERM. of being free, *i. e.* free to do what is  
 VIII. right in their own Eyes; to do right or  
 wrong, just as it happens; free from all  
 Laws and Obligations whatsoever. Now,  
 if they could make it out, that they are  
 then indeed free, when they do whatever  
 they please, whatever Fancy, or Caprice  
 leads them to; that when they dispense  
 with the Obligations which the Wisdom  
 of God and Man has laid upon them,  
 they become then so free, as to be subject  
 to no other Laws, or Obligations, there  
 might be some Plausibility in it: But if, on  
 the contrary, when they thus do what is  
 right in their own Eyes, they are not  
 therefore free, but tied down and enslav'd  
 to some wrong Principle within: If  
 when they shake off all Religious Obliga-  
 tions, they are at the same time bound  
 faster with the strong Cords of Obstina-  
 cy, and Perverseness: If they despise and de-  
 preciate the Common-Sense and Reason  
 of all Men, and yet at the same time ido-  
 lize, and deify their own, and Liberty  
 is nothing else in fact but Licentiousness;  
 then they, that pretend thus to promise  
 Liberty,

Liberty, promise more than they can perform. Let us now see whether this be not the Case.

SERM.  
VIII.


And here, the first Step, that is taken in order to procure Liberty from the side of Infidelity, is that which most effectually drives Men from it; and that is, to shake off all Reveald Religion: For to set out upon this Principle is to set out upon a Principle of Slavery; it is to set out with a full Resolution not to give the Faculties within us their proper Scope, but to hinder the free Exercise of them by subjecting all to one, or by making one or two to govern the rest as for example, the making the Reason, which is but a single thing, and that too rather the Result of all the rest, than a leading Principle, predominant over every thing else. For if the Faculties had the Power to exercise themselves as they ought, Revelation must have a Weight with us in Proportion to its Truth; *i. e.* if we believe, and hope, and fear, &c. freely, Revelation must carry a Weight with it in Proportion to the Reason there is in it for so

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doing;


SE R M. doing; but if we allow either of these too  
 VIII. great a Weight, it will of course bear  
 down the rest in exact Proportion; and tho' a Man may do this, yet Obstinacy, and not Liberty, must be the Principle by which he does it.

But after all, let us examine a little more particularly how the throwing off Revelation sets a Man at Liberty. Does he by leaving this go over to some better Scheme? This is pretended, and in order to make it out, it is said, that Reason alone is a sufficient Guide, and in following that we follow Nature, and consequently Christianity, being by the Supposition unnecessary, becomes an Incumbrance, and must be taken off in order to be free, and at liberty. If by Reason was meant right Reason, this might be true enough, if we could but tell how to come at it: But this is not the Meaning of it, nor do they mean the Reason of Mankind, but only an infinitely small Pittance of it, the Reason of an Individual, which comes as short of right Reason, as finite does of infinite; and not only so, but is also as much below the  
 Reason

Reason of Mankind, as a Part is less than SERM.  
the Whole. Now besides the Absurdity of VIII.  
crowding the whole of Reason into a   
Part, that is not capable of containing it,  
this is to set up Mankind independant  
upon one another, every one an absolute  
Lord for himself, contrary to the Nature  
of his Condition and Make.


Besides, if this were the Case, that  
every one's own Reason were to be his Re-  
ligion, there must then be as many Reli-  
gions as there are Men in the World, or  
rather no Religion at all; for every one  
having by the Supposition as much a  
Right to a System of his own, as every  
other, there would never be a Public Ma-  
nifestation of any, because it would want  
a proper Authority to support it; which  
in this Case could not be had, no one be-  
ing of Importance enough to be a Center  
of Unity to the rest; and so every one  
would move round his own Axis with-  
out any Dependance upon, or Relation to  
any other, and would never unite in any  
regular System, but perpetually move on

SERM. in the utmost Disorder and Confusion.

VIII.  And indeed, to say the Truth with respect to all human Schemes whatsoever, how wise soever the Authors of them may be, yet if they have not infinite Wisdom, tho' it is right to put some Trust in them in proportion to their Knowledge, they can have no Foundation in them for an absolute Trust. This belongs only to an absolute Perfection.

But the Scheme I am talking of, does not suppose any Degree of Trust to be plac'd any where, but sets out in Defiance of all Faith: And in this respect modern Deism is worse than Heathenism, because that does not exclude Faith, but only wants to know how to make it compleat, Accordingly the true Deists, among whom we may reckon some of the best of the Philosophers, never made Unbelief a Principle; If they did not believe a Revelation, it was certainly not out of a Principle of disbelieving every thing, but because they were out of the Reach of it, and for want of having it rightly recommended



mended to their Faith. Besides, Faith SERM.  
 being a sort of an unknown Principle be- VIII.  
 fore Christianity, what there was of it,   
 as a System, being in the Possession of a  
 Handful of People in *Judea*, it would  
 not be so great a Surprize, if they had not  
 so easily embrac'd a Revelation, if it had  
 been offer'd them: But after Christianity  
 has been established for so many Hundred  
 Years, and Faith is known to be not only  
 a Principle in Man, but a reasonable one  
 too, to disbelieve now argues a great Sla-  
 very somewhere in Heart, or Mind, or  
 both.

But do they, who are for shaking off  
 Faith, do so in reality? Are they uni-  
 form, and all of a Piece in this Practice?  
 No, they shake it off only in Religion;  
 they are not Unbelievers, but only with  
 respect to Christianity; in no other Case,  
 but only where there is the greatest Foun-  
 dation for Faith: They believe still at the  
 same time that they profess not to do it,  
 and that too upon the smallest Grounds  
 without any real Reason at all: They  
 can believe, that the Reason of every sin-  
 gle

SERM. gle Man is equal to the Reason of all  
 VIII. Mankind; and not only so, but to the  
 Reason of God: They can believe, that  
 tho' God made Man a Creature com-  
 pounded of Sense and Passions, which  
 ought to have their proper Influence, to-  
 gether with a mind capable of Reflexion,  
 all which together make up what we call  
 a Rational Creature, yet that he ought to  
 tear this Composition asunder, render one  
 half of it useles, and set up the other to  
 act a Part to which it is not at all propor-  
 tion'd; for notwithstanding all the fine  
 Things, that some have said of Humane  
 Reason, and the extraordinary Compli-  
 ments that have been paid to it, as if it  
 really was right Reason, or Reason in Per-  
 fection, yet it is in truth a Composition of  
 all these, or very much influenc'd by  
 them; for let a Man endeavour to reason  
 ever so abstractedly, yet the Senses and  
 the other Faculties will steal in, if I may  
 so call it, insensibly into the Imagina-  
 tion, and give a Tincture to the Thought:  
 They can, I say, digest such Contradic-  
 tions as these: They can believe themselves  
 out

out of their Senses; nay, believe away SERM.  
their very Belief. But this is a very un- VIII.  
fair Practice; for Faith ought to be quite  
discarded, or else it should be shewn why  
Christianity is the only Scheme, that  
should be depriv'd of it.

But what, if after all, Reason itself  
should lead us to Revelation? Nay, that  
Revelation should be founded upon the  
highest Reason? 'Tis true it is an Object  
of Faith, but it is nevertheless reasona-  
ble for that, but on the contrary it contains  
in it the Sum of all Reason, it is the Rea-  
son of God Substituted in the room of  
the Reason of Man.

It appears then now that Faith is by no  
means contrary to Reason, but Reason  
sublimated, and carried to a higher Pitch:  
To shake it off therefore, when it has all  
the Marks of a Revelation come from God  
(which I shall now take for granted, be-  
cause this must depend upon some other  
Proof, which neither the Time, nor Subject  
will permit me to enter upon here) to shake  
it off, I say, under Pretence of being go-  
vern'd by Reason, as if Faith was some-  
what

SERM. what contrary to it, is a strong Symptom  
 VIII. of a slavish Mind, and argues the same  
 Weakness, as it would be to shake off Reason, or any other part of the Human Composition; nay more, for if any Principle is predominant in Human Nature, Faith is that Principle; for the World is govern'd by it, and they themselves too, who at the same time dispute against it, this being an Elasticity in the mind of Man, an Endeavour to recover its former State, however it may be depriv'd of it for a certain time. Religion, Philosophy, nay even Trade, and every Thing in Human Life turn upon this Axis; all secular and temporal things being carried on by Faith in Man, all religious and spiritual things by Faith in God; all the Knowledge we have from abroad depends upon a Faith in others, and we must likewise put a Faith in ourselves too, and give every Faculty within us Credit for so much Knowledge as we receive from thence. I do not say this to depreciate Reason, or make it less than it is, but only to shew that it is not greater, and that there are other  
 other


other Principles in Man, that put in for SERM.  
at least an equal Share with it. In Beings VIII.  
that are all Mind and Spirit, Reason may  
be the Sole Governing Principle; but  
where there is a mixture of Sense along  
with it, it must do as it can, and we  
ought to rest satisfied with that Share of  
it that belongs to such a State: However  
where it is defective, Faith is that Prin-  
ple that is to help it out, and give it all  
the Perfection it is capable of.

But it is said, that the Religion of Na-  
ture or Reason is a plain simple thing, cal-  
culated for the Benefit of all Mankind,  
which Revelation is not, but only some-  
what thrown in by the Craft of designing  
Men, to harass and perplex Mankind,  
and make them Slaves and Bigots; and  
that it is always universally the same,  
whereas Revelation is a precarious, change-  
able Thing, subject to Alterations, one  
thing in one Age, and another thing in  
another, and therefore cannot be suppos'd  
to come from God, who is infinite in  
Widom, as well as every thing else, and  
therefore would do nothing that should

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want

SERM. want any Correction, or Amendment.

VIII.  As to the first part of the Objection, that Reason is a plain simple thing, calculated for the Benefit of all Mankind, I do not know any one, who denies the Benefit of it, as far as it goes; but that it is calculated for so universal a Benefit as Revelation, is false. For the Bulk of Mankind are not provided for in the way of Reason, whatever some particular People may be, or rather fancy themselves to be; whereas in the way of Faith, where People find Employment for their Eyes and Ears, and the Faculties together, they are all equally provided for; all are capable of the Grounds of Faith, tho' they are not capable of abstracted Reason. As to the Purity and Simplicity of it, I think I have said enough already, and I will only add further, that whenever they talk of this, they must mean not Human Reason, but Right Reason, or the Reason of God, which is nothing at all to the Purpose.

Then as to the other Part of the Objection, that Reason is always universally  
the



the same, whereas Revelation is a changeable thing, it is readily granted, that Right Reason is so, but the Reason of Man is not: For the Reason of one Age and Nature is very different from the Reason of another Age and Nature; nay, the Reason of one Man is not the same at different Times. Now where is this Difference in Revelation? How does that alter, or vary? It is the same now, as it ever has been; only there are different Manifestations of it at different Times. The Faith of a Christian is not a different thing from the Faith of a Jew, or any other Faith, only as it comprehends, and swallows up all the rest; *i. e.* just as different as the Whole is from its Parts; which Difference is only this, that the Whole is not any one Part more than another, but all the Parts united: So that God did not mend his own Work by making Faith to shine out more at one time than another, for He perfected, and compleated it at once; but the Alteration is in Ourselves, and in our way of apprehending Things: For, being only Creatures of Time in this present

SERM.  
VIII.  


SERM. State, we see every thing by Succession,  
 VIII. and can see no more of any thing, than  
 the Portion of Time we take up will admit of.

The whole of the Matter in short is this: Liberty consists in a Power of thinking and acting right; and we are then most free, when nothing hinders us from it: But now Man, as he is an imperfect Creature, must of course, as far as he is imperfect, want so much Liberty; *i. e.* he must be in Proportion a Slave; and the greater this Imperfection is, the greater will be the Slavery of such a Being. The Scripture gives us an Account of the Original of this Imperfection, that it was brought into the World by Sin; which the Deist despises and ridicules: But then it is easier to laugh at Things than to disprove them; and this Account must be allow'd to stand good, till we have a better in the room of it. 'Tis plain, Man could not be made incapable of Error without being made a God at the same Time; and if he was capable of Error, who can take upon him to prove that he did

did not err? But however, be that as it SERM.  
will, Defects there are, and consequently VIII.  
a Want of Liberty: The Introduction of  
Evil, come which way it will into the  
World, being an Introduction of Slavery,  
the next Question then is, where shall  
we find a Remedy for it? What says Hu-  
man Reason to this? Why, nothing at all;  
but, conscious of her own Weakness, sends  
us to seek a Remedy from Faith: Accord-  
ingly, in all Ages and Countries of the  
World, Faith, of one kind or other, has  
ever subsisted, there being always a Ground  
and Foundation for it, arising from the  
Defects of Reason, excepting only among  
a few Advocates for Human Reason, who,  
carrying the Matter too far, would needs  
make it every thing, infinitely perfect, an  
absolute Guide in all things, &c. But in  
the mean time it is not so, it is not an ab-  
solute Guide in Philosophy, any more  
than in Religion. This Reasoning of  
theirs goes all along upon the Supposition  
that Men are otherwise than they are, like  
the Stoic Philosophy, which, mistaking  
the Nature of Man, was level'd against  
more

SERM. more than one half of the Human Com-  
 VIII. position, and calculated to persuade Men  
 out of their Senses, by directing them to regard nothing but Reason: But yet, notwithstanding this, we find that this was only thwarting Nature all the while; for the *Stoics* went on believing, hoping, fearing, loving, &c. as these Gentlemen, and all the rest of the World do: Thus, at the same time that they pretend to have disbanded all the Forces that come from any other Quarter but Reason, they are forc'd to call the Passions to their Assistance still; therefore it matters not how it appears in Speculation, since the Fact is otherwise.

They talk great things indeed of Uniformity, and Immutability of Reason, but the Fact wants to be prov'd, since it has not yet been able with all these Advantages to produce any one consistent Scheme. Morality and Virtue too are much talk'd of, as if they were to be found no where but in Deism, but they have there no solid Foundation to rest upon: For no Man has ever had Authority enough to settle

fettle the absolute Nature of it, nor to SERM.  
 give it a proper Sanction: So that this VIII.  
 Religion of Nature, or Reason, is no one  
 knows what, because it is to be found no  
 one knows where.

Now upon the Foot of Christianity every thing is clear and easy; here every thing goes on consistent with Nature. This Scheme considers Man, as being what he is, in a State of Corruption and Slavery by Sin; for of whom a Man is overcome, of the same is he brought in Bondage, and provides a Remedy for it by directing every Faculty within us to its proper Object. It destroys no Advantage to be had from Reason, but carries it on to greater Perfection: It destroys Reason indeed, when it becomes arrogant, and exalts itself into the Throne of God. In this Sense it is, that *it destroys the Wisdom of the Wise, and brings to nothing the Understanding of the Prudent*: For, as the Apostle further observes, *God hath made foolish the Wisdom of this World*. And we shall see a lively Instance of this, if we compare two Sorts of People together; they

SERM. they who rely entirely upon Philosophy,  
 VIII. and the Wisdom of Man ; and they, who,  
 knowing nothing of this, depend only  
 upon that Wisdom, which the *Greeks* call'd  
 Foolishness. It is very remarkable, that  
 a plain honest Man has a better Notion of  
 things than the other with all his Learning  
 and Philosophy: For such a one acts  
 more agreeable to the Simplicity of Nature,  
 gives his Faculties room to exert themselves  
 in a kindly Manner, and suffers them to  
 have their proper Influence: Whereas, on  
 the contrary, the Man of Reason is for ever  
 contradicting Nature; the Senses, the Pas-  
 sions are nothing in his Scheme; he be-  
 lieves nothing unless he sees the Reason of  
 it; accordingly Philosophy is bound to  
 give it him, which it does: And what is  
 it after all, but one Link of that grand uni-  
 versal Chain that is drawn over all Nature,  
 and reaches up to the Infinity of God.  
 How much wiser does he act, who, find-  
 ing the Impossibility of discerning the whole  
 of any one thing in Nature, *i. e.* the thing  
 with all its Relations, rests satisfied in the  
 Faith of God, who from an absolute  
 Knowledge



Knowledge of all Nature has furnish'd SERM.  
him with such Rules, as are the Result of VIII.  
the infinite Relations of Things, which  
is of the same Advantage to him, as if he  
knew all Nature himself?

Here then lies the Difference between  
the two Schemes: Philosophy refers all  
things to the Wisdom of Man, and Faith  
refers all things to the Divine Wisdom;  
that it may not stand, as the Apo-  
stle says, in the Power of Man, but in  
the Wisdom of God. In one Scheme all  
things are consistent, a Man acts agreeable  
to his Make, and does not labour under  
the Absurdity of contradicting Nature:  
In the other every thing is revers'd, it is  
all Confusion and Inconsistency, it is un-  
hinging the whole Human Frame, and  
rooting up the Foundations of Reason,  
Morality, Religion, and every thing; and  
is as contrary to true Philosophy, as it is  
to Religion: For to discard the Senses and  
the Passions, when there is a Use for them  
in Nature, and to reject Faith, when every  
thing offers that is proper to create it, is  
altogether as unphilosophical, if Philoso-

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phy

SERM. phy had a fair Hearing, as it would be to  
 VIII. refuse to exert any one Act of our Reason.

Now where after all is the Seat of Liberty? And who is the free Man? Does it consist in a Power of opposing the Truth, sitting loose to every thing, and in clogging the Wheels of the grand Machine of Human Nature? Or, is a Man therefore free, because he can, or will do so? No. Liberty is not a fluctuating thing, an Indifference to Truth or Falshood, but a happy Situation of the Mind to Truth only; and he is more or less free, whose Mind is more or less situated that Way. Philosophy cannot give us that Situation, because it cannot direct us to absolute Truth; but if we do not prevent it, it will lead us to that that can, which is to Faith, and this is all it can do.

Thus then it appears, that Faith alone can give us Liberty, and that they, who promise it upon any other Foundation, are themselves the Servants of Corruption. And thus does that Faith, which was to the *Jews* a Stumbling-Block, and to the *Greeks* Foolishness, and to every Unbeliever

never ever since, Nonsense and Absurdity, SERM.  
triumph over all the Wisdom and Philo- VIII.  
sophy of Man: And among the many great  
and excellent Advantages that attend it,  
this one is most remarkable, which is the  
redeeming the captivated World from the  
Bondage of Corruption into the glorious  
Liberty of the Children of God.

It only remains for us, who are thus  
call'd to Liberty, to take care not to turn  
it into Licentiousness; and to remem-  
ber what I have already often observ'd, that  
this Liberty does not authorize us to do  
Right or Wrong, Good or Evil: People  
may indeed call this Liberty, because they  
find in themselves a Power to do so, but  
the true Christian Liberty directs us only  
to what is Right and Good.

In short, Liberty is the Absence of Sla-  
very, of every thing that can lay an Incum-  
brance upon the Mind; and the more we  
enjoy of it, so much the more shall we be  
like that Divine Being, who is the Sum  
of Liberty, as he is the Sum of all things.




## S E R M O N IX.

P R O V. iii. 27.

*Withhold not Good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the Power of thine Hand to do it.*

SERM.  
IX.


 H O E V E R considers the true State and Condition of Man, how subject he is to an infinite Variety of Accidents in Life, and how liable to the Frowns as well as the Smiles of Providence, will not wonder at the Precept of the Wise Man in the Text, nor be at all surprized to find, that it is a Duty incumbent upon all Men to do all the Good they can, according to their Circumstances and Abilities in the World. For besides that kind of Debt, which by the Laws of our Country we are obliged  
to

to discharge, there is another Sort, which we are obliged to the Payment of, over and above what those Laws have made any Provision for; which is that of Charity. From the Words of the Text I shall endeavour to prove,

*First, That Charity is a Debt, which we owe Mankind.*

*Secondly, I shall bring some Arguments to persuade you chearfully to discharge it.*

First then I am to prove, that Charity is a Debt. To do good, and to assist and help our Fellow-creatures, which I here mean by Charity, and which I apprehend is implied in the Text, is no more than what we owe each other; as is plain both from the Old and New Testament. 'Tis what the Law teaches, and the Gospel excels in. To do good and to communicate forget not, is a noble Precept of Christianity; and to do unto all Men, as you would they should do unto you, is the Law and the Prophets. The Jews are commanded in *Leviticus* to be compassionate towards those that were in Distress. If thy Brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee

SERM. thee, then thou shalt relieve him ; yea,  
 IX.  tho' he be a Stranger, or a Sojourner, that  
 he may live with thee. And to take in a  
 still greater compass and extent of Charity,  
 they were to love their Neighbours as them-  
 selves. Now Self-Preservation, and a natu-  
 ral Care and Concern for ourselves, every  
 one knows, is one of the first things we  
 discover any Apprehensions of; and to owe  
 our Neighbour a Love like this, is a Debt  
 of no small Consequence ; a Debt it is,  
 which we shall always owe, as long as we  
 have a Being. For though there are some  
 Duties, such as the Relative Duties sub-  
 sisting between Children and Parents, Ma-  
 sters and Servants, &c. which upon the  
 Death of either do immediately cease and  
 become void, because the Reason of them  
 ceases with them ; yet as long as there are  
 any Men in the World, that have any  
 Wants to be relieved, so long will Charity  
 be a Debt by the Law of God. *St. Paul,*  
*teaching the Romans to render every Man*  
*his Due, tells them, that they should owe*  
*no Man any thing, but to Love one an-*  
*other :* So that after we have discharged all  
 other



other Debts, yet Love and Charity is a SERM.  
Debt we shall still owe. And our Blessed IX.  
Saviour puts it out of all doubt, in that remarkable Passage in St. *Luke*, where having been talking of the unjust Steward, he thus concludes, And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another Man's, who shall give you that which is your own? From which it is evident, that the good things of this Life are not properly our own; and that we are only Stewards, and are accountable for them to our Master, from whom we received them: For though that which is translated *another Man's*, is rendered by some, Things foreign, or without us, yet both Interpretations will amount to the same thing in this case; for it will follow from both, that we are not Proprietors of those good things, but are only entrusted with the Care of them, to dispose of them to those that want; the Neglect of which is here made a manifest Breach of Trust. And indeed this is the voice of Nature likewise, as well as Scripture: For what can be more reasonable, than that, as every thing we have comes  
from

SERM. from God (for what have we that we have  
IX. not received) we should be always ready

to make a grateful Return. As we have freely received, we should also freely give. Not that we can give any thing to our Maker, whereby he may receive any Advantage; for a Man cannot be profitable to God, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself; but we are to give it to the Poor, whom God has taken under his Protection, who are the proper Persons appointed to receive it. But further, it is certain that we were born for the mutual Help of each other, not to molest and disturb, but to aid and assist one another; and whoever does not do so, when it is in his Power to do it, acts contrary to Nature. So that it is plain, that Charity, or the assisting our Fellow-creatures, is a Debt, and that too by the Law of Nature, antecedent to any written Law whatsoever.

Tho it be certainly true, that Charity is a Debt, which we owe all Mankind, yet it is true likewise, that this, as well as any other Duty, how universal soever it may seem to be, is Subject to Limitations and

Re-

and Restrictions: One in particular is mention'd, and another implied, in the Text; that we have it in our Power to discharge this Debt, and that it is to be paid only to those to whom it is due. For whenever we are enjoined to do Acts of Charity and Beneficence, if it be not express'd, there is always implied an Ability of doing them: It being required of every Man in those Cases, according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not. And therefore, tho' we are not to withhold Good from them to whom it is due, yet this Precept is so far limited, as to suppose it to be in the Power of our hand to do it. But there are very few who act besides the Precept, by doing more than their Abilities will permit; the greatest Part will not do so much as they are able, but with poor Excuses and Objections, which are always ready at hand, when we have not a Mind to do our Duty, refuse to do that Good, which it is in the Power of their hand to do. But God, who knows the Secrets of all Hearts, knows also our Abilities and Wants, and

SERM. how far we are able to assist each other ;

IX. and however we may with false Excuses  
 impose upon Men, yet I presume we need  
 not be informed, how little they will avail  
 in the Sight of God. Those, who have  
 the Talent in their Hands, are certainly  
 accountable for the Mismanagement of it.  
 If we consider this as we ought, and re-  
 member likewise how uncertain all things  
 are, we should let slip no Opportunity of  
 doing Good, when it is in our Power to  
 do it. This is the Advice of the Wise Man  
 in the Words immediately following the  
 Text, *Say not unto thy Neighbour, go,  
 and come again, and To-morrow I will  
 give thee, when thou hast it by thee.*  
 And what can be more reasonable; for  
 (not to mention that whatever it is that  
 hinders a Man from doing Good To-day,  
 when he has it in his Power, will likewise  
 do so To-morrow,) how does he know,  
 what may happen To-morrow? How is he  
 certain what a Day may bring forth? But  
 why To-morrow, any more than To-day?  
 To-morrow we may die, and lose all Op-  
 portunity of doing Good: But supposing


we

we should not, yet as every Morning brings along with it a new Day, so does it also a Variety of new Circumstances and Revolutions. But should a Man live never so long, perhaps he may never meet with an Opportunity of doing so much Good any more: The Seasonableness of the Charity much increases the Value of it; for as a Word spoken, so also a Gift given in Season, how good is it? We must be careful how we say it is not in our Power to do Good, when we ourselves are the Occasion of it: For tho' this Debt is limited and restrained, and can extend only to those who are able to discharge it, yet they will by no means be excused from doing it, who put it out of their Power, and throw away their Abilities in idle and useless Diversions, when they have so many Opportunities of employing them to relieve the Necessities of the Poor, who are all the while perishing for want of the common Necessaries of Life: For indeed this is throwing away what is not our own; it is withholding Good from them who are the proper Owners of it, and to indulge

SERM. and recreate ourselves at the Expence of  
IX. others. And indeed this is a Custom too  
much observ'd, and which can never be too  
much lamented. People squander away  
that very often in unlawful, or at least, in  
vain and trifling Pleasures, which, by a  
well-timed Charity, would refresh the Spi-  
rits of the Needy, and save a Soul alive.  
There is another Sort of People, who if a  
Brother or a Sister be naked, and destitute  
of daily Food, will say unto them, Depart  
in Peace, be ye warmed, or filled, not-  
withstanding they will not give them those  
things, which are needful to the Body;  
and that, because they say, they cannot  
afford it, when perhaps their Income is  
much greater, and their Outgoings much  
less, than any of their Neighbours. I put  
it thus, because a Man may have a great  
Income, and yet may not be able to do so  
much Good as one who has less, because  
his Outgoings may be greater, upon the ac-  
count of a numerous Family and poor Re-  
lations, which we are preingaged to pro-  
vide for in the first Place, and other Cir-  
cumstances which demand greater Expences,



ces, according to the Station of Life he is in; but the greater a Man's Income is, and the less his Outgoings, the harder will it be for him to prove, that he cannot afford to do Good with it. But there are a Sort of People in the World, who think they were born for their own private Ends, and that a good or bad Life consists in the Quantity of Money they have scraped together; without considering they were born for the Good of Community; and that if God had not been more merciful to them, than they are to their Fellow-creatures, notwithstanding all their Endeavours, they would not have so great a Talent put into their Hands to do Good withal. However, in People of this Temper one thing is very surprizing, that as they withhold Good from others, so they do generally from themselves too, and out of a strange sort of Frugality, suffer themselves to want even for fear they should want; which is to run into Danger in order to avoid it, and to anticipate future Miseries, which are only possible, by making them certain and present; which is such an odd Mixture

SERM ture of Inconsistencies, and such a shameful  
 IX.  ful Mistrust of Providence, and Abuse of  
 Common-Sense, that barely to mention it,  
 is sufficient to expose it: And then these  
 very People, when they die, by as strange,  
 and undesigned a Sort of kindness, leave  
 their Substance to they know not whom,  
 for no other reason, than because they  
 cannot keep it any longer. But after all,  
 tho' we may not withhold Good from  
 them to whom it is due, yet we may  
 withhold it from them to whom it is  
 not due: For they who are able to help  
 themselves, and such there are, who ne-  
 vertheless refuse to do so, can never be en-  
 titled to that Good, which it is in their  
 own Power to help themselves to, and  
 which should they receive, they must of  
 necessity rob those, to whom the Scripture  
 has given a Title to it. The Rod of Jus-  
 tice is the greatest Charity that can be be-  
 stowed on them, who by their voluntary  
 Necessities impose upon Mankind, and de-  
 prive those who are truly necessitous of  
 that Help and Assistance, which they would  
 otherwise enjoy. They certainly are the  
 only

only Objects of Charity whose Necessities SERM.  
 are not of their own making, such as they IX.  
 could prevent, or can deliver themselves  
 from. The Impotence of Old Age, just  
 dropping into the Dust, and hastening to  
 put off its earthly Tabernacle, calls upon  
 us to supply the Defects of Nature, and if  
 possible, to give some Respite and Refresh-  
 ment to the short Remains of Life. They  
 who labour under any grievous Disorder of  
 Body, whether they be old or young, loud-  
 ly call for Succour; having besides their  
 Pain a pinching Necessity likewise to strug-  
 gle with: But more especially they whom  
 these Misfortunes have befallen in the Ser-  
 vice of their Country, have a just and  
 equitable Claim to our Assistance, and to  
 share with us in the common Blessings they  
 have been so instrumental in procuring us.  
 Nor are they to be forgotten, whom God  
 has afflicted with a troubled Mind, whose  
 Reason, if any there be, is kept under by  
 exorbitant raging Passions, and left to the  
 extravagant Guidance of unassisted Nature.

Since I am describing to you the several  
 Objects of Charity, indulge me a few  
 Words,

SERM. Words, while I recommend to you one  
IX. thing more, in which your Charity would  
be exceedingly well bestowed, I mean in  
the Education of Youth. Every one knows,  
and has seen, and some indeed to their  
Sorrow, the dismal Consequences that have  
attended the Want of Education in our  
Youth. Young People are prone enough  
to Vice, notwithstanding any Restraints  
that are put upon them, even under the  
Influence of Virtue and Religion; but  
when they are let alone to follow their In-  
clinations without Controul, they rush on  
adventrous in the Paths of Sin, till Old  
Age, if some unlucky Accident does not  
take them off before, hardens them into  
a reprobate and stupid Infidelity, so that,  
for want of remembering their Creator in  
the Days of their Youth, the Evil days  
come upon them, and the Years draw  
nigh; when they shall say, I have no Plea-  
sure in them: But when they are timely  
accustomed to virtuous Habits, and by  
good Instructions trained up in the way  
wherein they should go, they will not  
easily depart from it, but grow, as in  
Years,

Years, so in Grace, till they come unto a perfect Man, unto the Measure of the stature of the Fulness of Christ.

SERM.  
IX.  
~

Having proved that Charity is a Debt, and how far it is limited and restrained, I shall, *Secondly*, proceed to bring some Arguments to perswade you chearfully to discharge it.

And *First*, We should be always ready to help and assist our Fellow-Creatures in their Wants and Necessities, because it is what we would expect of them, if we were in their Condition, and they in ours; and therefore it would be unreasonable to deny them that, which we should think unreasonable for them to deny us.

*Secondly*, We should take Care chearfully to discharge this Duty of Charity, because we do not know how soon it may be our own Case to want Assistance ourselves. No one can tell how it may please God to deal with him, and what Condition he may be in before he dies, however prosperous and successful he may be at present; and then if he hath stopped his Ears at the Cry of the Poor, he also shall cry him-

C e

self,

SERM. self, but shall not be heard: For what  
 IX. can he expect of God in his Adversity,  
 who refused him any Acknowledgment in  
 his Prosperity? Or what can he expect from  
 Men, when he himself refused to grant  
 what he is now obliged to ask? But if he  
 hath been accustomed to Acts of Charity  
 and Beneficence, and hath not shut his Ears  
 upon the Cries of the Poor and Needy,  
 happy is he, the Lord shall deliver him  
 in the time of Trouble. A charitable  
 Man when he is under Afflictions is sure to  
 be pitied by all Men, and to draw Com-  
 passion from that stony Heart that sel-  
 dom shewed any before: For Nature is  
 not so far degenerated, but it must love  
 and admire that Divine Temper of Mind,  
 that delights in doing Good, and shew the  
 greater Compassion to it when in Distress.

*Thirdly,* A third Argument I shall make  
 Use of to perswade you to a chearful Dis-  
 charge of this Debt is the Encouragement  
 that attends it; for tho' Charity is a Debt  
 which we are obliged to discharge, yet  
 because it is always accompanied with such  
 a lovely Frame of Mind, such Pity, such  
 such

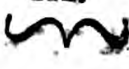


Such---what shall I call it, such a Temper, SERM.  
IX.  
as I hope you know and feel better than I am able to express, it has the Promise of many and great Blessings. The Psalmist, describing a good Man, makes it the top of his Character, that he hath dispersed abroad, he hath given to the Poor; and then he adds the Blessing that attends him, his Righteousness endureth for ever, his Horn shall be exalted with Honour. He that giveth to the Poor, says the Wise Man, shall not lack; but our Saviour carries the Blessing to the highest Pitch, even to a Reward in Heaven, Go sell that thou hast, and give to the Poor, and thou shalt have Treasure in Heaven. After all this Encouragement, it is very surprizing to find that People will trust their Substance with Man, upon the Strength of an Earthly Hope and Assurance, which they would not trust with God, tho' they have his Holy Word for their Security, and Heaven itself for their Interest and Reward.

*Fourthly,* The last Argument that I shall make Use of to perswade you to discharge this great Duty of Charity, shall

SERM. be drawn from the Love of God, who  
 IX. gave his only begotten Son to die for  
 our Sins, and not only so, but whatsoever  
 we ask of him as we ought, he giveth us.  
 If God then so loveth us, we ought also to  
 love one another; and as we expect the  
 Aid and Assistance of God, so let us aid and  
 assist each other; but let us not expect to  
 have our Petitions granted of God, and  
 yet at the same time to deny the Petitions  
 of our Brethren in Distress.

To conclude. Let it be our Duty at this  
 time more especially, to discharge this  
 Debt of Charity with a becoming Cheer-  
 fulness, not grudgingly or of necessity, for  
 God loveth a cheerful Giver. The Chil-  
 dren, who are your Petitioners, will abun-  
 dantly recompense you by their daily  
 Prayers for their Benefactors; nay, you will  
 abundantly recompense yourselves, by  
 procuring a Right to those Blessings which  
 God has promised to the good and mer-  
 ciful Man. Look down then with Pity  
 on your Petitioners, make the Fatherless  
 Children rejoyce, and the Widow's Heart  
 will sing for Joy. If Christ died for them,

as well as for us, let us not look upon SERM.  
them as Strangers and Aliens, but as Fel- IX.  
low-Heirs of the same Promise. They   
have the same bountiful Father, and the  
same merciful Redeemer with ourselves.  
Are we Christians? So are they. Have  
we, who were Aliens, receiv'd the Adop-  
tion of Sons? So have they. Are we in ex-  
pectation of everlasting Happiness in a fu-  
ture State? So are they. What should  
hinder then, but that they should partake  
with us in the Happiness and Comfort of  
this Life too? We all breathe the same  
Air, and enjoy the Light of the Sun alike,  
which God sendeth to shine on the Poor,  
as well as on the Rich. Let us not then  
withhold any Good which we have in our  
Power to do, but let our Charity be bright  
as the Day, and diffusive as the Light  
that shineth from one end of the Earth  
unto the other. Perhaps you may never  
have another Opportunity; be sure to  
do Good then while it is called to Day,  
and you have it in the Power of your Hand  
to do it; that our Sons may grow up as  
the young Plants, and our Daughters as  
the

SERM. the polished Corners of the Temple. Re-  
IX. member that God, who is present every  
where, knows what you are able to do,  
and will not forget your Works and Labour  
that proceedeth of Love. Therefore turn  
not away your Face from the Poor, and  
then the Face of the Lord shall not be  
turned away from you.





## S E R M O N X.

ECCLES. vii. 10.

*Say not thou, What is the Cause  
that the former Days were bet-  
ter than these? For thou dost  
not enquire wisely concerning  
this.*



HERE is nothing in which SERM,  
Mankind is so universally a- X.  
greed as in this, that every  
one desires to be happy; and  
did they pursue their Desires the right  
way, they would certainly be so: But  
there is nothing in which they are more  
mistaken than in the nature of true Hap-  
piness, and the right way to obtain it.  
And

SERM. And no wonder we are deceived, since  
X. we suffer ourselves to be governed more  
by our Senses than our Reason, and make  
Happiness, which is founded only in  
Virtue, subsist entirely in Opinion. Hence  
it is, that every thing in its Turn, how  
vain and trifling soever, puts in its Claim  
to be the chief Good of Man, tho' it  
continues only for the present Moment,  
and leaves us to seek it somewhere else.  
Thus do we make Happiness precarious  
and uncertain, by placing it in Things,  
which in their Natures are so. And if  
we are mistaken in the End, no wonder  
we are mistaken in the Means of obtain-  
ing it. While we place Happiness in the  
Gratification of our Passions, we shall  
certainly look out for such Means, as we  
imagine most proper for our Designs.

In the first six Chapters of this Book  
we find the Wise Man had been seeking  
after Happiness, and made an Experi-  
ment of every worldly Enjoyment, in or-  
der to find it, but all in vain, for he was  
as far from it then as he was before. But  
in the following Chapters he rectifies the  
Mis-



Mistake, shews what the Nature of true Happiness is, that it has no Foundation but in Virtue and Religion; and lays down many good Instructions in order to obviate some false Opinions which hinder'd People from finding it out. One of which he endeavours to obviate in the Words of the Text, by shewing the Folly of those, who are of a murmuring complaining Temper, and are always uneasy at the present Times, as if the former were better; which he shews is occasioned by a Want of a wise Consideration and Enquiry into this Matter: *Say not thou, What is the Cause that the former Days were better than these? For thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.*

In discoursing upon the Words of the Text I shall,

*First*, Enquire into the Ground of this Complaint, and shew, that to say *the former Days were better than these*, which is implied in the asking the Cause of it, is generally false, and proceeds from a want of considering wisely concerning this Matter.

D d


*Secondly*,

SERM. *Secondly*, I shall shew the Sin and Folly  
 X. of murmuring against the present Dis-  
 ~~~~~ penfations of God's Providence, even  
 upon Supposition that it was true.

Thirdly, I shall lay down some Rules in
 order to acquire a happier Frame and
 Temper of Mind.

First then I am to enquire into the
 Ground of this Complaint, and shew,
 that to say *the former Days were better
 than these*, which is implied in the asking
 the Cause of it, is generally false; and
 proceeds from a want of confidering
 wisely concerning this Matter.

However wise and bountiful the Dis-
 penfations of Providence are, there will
 never be wanting some to murmur and
 complain, as they have hitherto done in
 all the Ages of the World. As they say
 of *Alphonfus*, that he found fault with
 the Creation, and arraigned the Wisdom
 of God in the Natural World, so there
 are too many others, who take the same
 Freedom, and accuse the Divine Provi-
 dence in the Moral World, and both for
 the

the same Reason, *viz.* for want of en- SERM.
X.
quiring wisely concerning this. 

Complaints upon the Times are not more unjust than they are common; but to build them upon a Supposition that the former Times were all good, and the present nothing but Evil, is to suppose what is not true; 'tis to take that for granted, which is the Matter in dispute, and to argue from a Supposition, which is false in Fact, and wants to be proved. If the former Days were so very good in Comparison of these, it must appear by some Account of Persons, who lived in those Days. But how does that appear? Where have we any such Account? On the contrary, there were the same Complaints in former Times as there are now; and tho' this may not be allow'd by a wise Man, as an Argument of the Badness of those Times, yet it is at least an Argument, that the Complainers in those Days thought them so; and therefore must be allow'd to hold good against the Murmurers of these Days, even upon their own Principles. For if

SERM. they are willing to hear their own Com-
 X. plaints pass for certain Tokens of the Bad-
 ness of the Times, they must by the same
 Rule, and upon the same Principles, think
 the same of former Ages, and allow the
 Complaints of the People in those
 Times to have the same Weight.

Now it is well known, that the Poets
 many hundred Years ago feigned the
 World to be divided into three different
 Ages, the Golden, the Silver, and the Iron
 Age; the two former of these they ima-
 gined to be in a different Degree, very
 happy and prosperous, but the last they
 looked upon as very unhappy and misera-
 ble; yet they always took Care to place
 their own Times under the last, as if
 all before were Golden Days, and their's
 were the only unhappy and troublesome
 Ones; and the same Humour has pre-
 vailed ever since, and will continue to do
 so as long as we neglect to consider wisely
 concerning this. We find likewise from
 the Text, that there were the same Com-
 plaints as far back as *Solomon's* Days, and
 no doubt of it in all Ages of the World.

Now

Now either these Complaints were true or they were false. 'Tis all one, as to the Matter in Hand, which of these it be; for if they were true, the Point is gained; and if they were never so false and groundless, yet still they will serve the Purpose they are brought for; they are sufficient to shew, that whatever good Opinion the Complainers of latter Ages may have of the former Times, they that lived in those Times thought otherwise, and made that the Subject of Complaint which others have since made the Subject of their Approbation.

But the Truth of the Matter is this: The Times are generally the same, and I believe it will readily enough be granted, that they are always worse than a good Man could wish them to be; but then to ask why the former were better, generally proceeds upon a Supposition, that former Times were better purely because they are past, and therefore will serve no Manner of Purpose, but to prove the Folly of the Enquirer. It has been the Complaint of our Forefathers, says *Seneca*,

(De

SERM.

X.

SERM. (*De Ben. Fol. p. 268.*) that Virtue and
 X. Good Manners are rooted up and destroy'd;
 that all Manner of Wickedness prevails,
 and triumphs in the Room of them;
 and that the Times are worse than ever,
 we complain of the same Thing, says he,
 and our Posterity will do the same;
 whereas these Things are much the same
 now as they were then, and so they will be
 for the future: They only move a little to
 and fro, sometimes inclining to one Kind
 of Vice, sometimes to another; for Vices
 don't prevail always alike, and continue in
 one Stay, but are moveable, and as they
 differ widely, they become tumultuous,
 and drive and fly from one another: How-
 ever, this we ought always to say of our-
 selves, that we are evil, that we have been
 so, and I am unwilling to add, says he, we
 shall continue to be so.

We find in the early Ages of the
 World, that the Wickedness of Man was
 great in the Earth; and that every Ima-
 gination of the Thoughts of his Heart
 was only evil continually. *David* in many
 Places gives an Account of the Wickedness
 of

of the People in his Days; and St. *Paul*, SERM.
 talking of the People in his Days, tells X.
 the *Galatians*, that as heretofore, *he that*
was born after the Flesh persecuted him
that was born after the Spirit, even so it
is now. So that it is true enough, that
 the Times are wicked and bad, but then
 it is what they have ever been, and as
 long as bad Men live in them, it is
 what they always will be. There will
 be the same Rapine, Fraud, Injustice,
 and Oppression, as long as there are the
 same Passions to create them; for the
 same Causes will produce the same Ef-
 fects; and as long as we set up a false
 Happiness to ourselves, so long shall we
 cherish the same Passions, and keep alive
 the same Evils; and thus it has always
 been. Is there any thing whereof it may
 be said, See, this is new! it has been
 already of old Time which was before
 us. The Thing that hath been, it is
 that which shall be, and that which is
 done is that which shall be done, and
 there is no new Thing under the Sun.

But

SERM. But notwithstanding all this, every
 X. Age still sends us to the former for better Times, and that again to the foregoing; so that if the former Times were better, it is because they are past, and consequently that the present Times are worse for no other Reason than because they are present. And here lies the Mistake: The former Times we only hear of, or if we do happen to remember them, yet the Days of our Youth have little or nothing to do with the Troubles of any Age; that Part of Life is generally taken up with the Pleasures of the World, and therefore can't furnish a Man with Experience enough to draw the Comparison between Times of such a Distance. Whereas, when Age comes upon us, and our Views are enlarged, we have then a greater Knowledge of the World, and a more sensible Perception of the Nature of Human Life; for we come at that Time to share the Troubles likewise, as well as Pleasures of it. Things at a Distance always appear less than they really are, and we only see the
 the

the best side of them ; but when they are brought home to our Eyes, we see them with all their Defects and Inconveniencies. So that to insinuate that the former Days were better than these, most commonly proceeds from a want of enquiring wisely concerning this: For by the same Rule that we so much admire the former Times, will the present, when they are old enough, be the Envy and Admiration of the Age to come.

Indeed we need go no farther back than the last Century, and view the Troubles which this Day's Anniversary always puts us in Remembrance of, to prove what I have been saying under this Head ; and to shew the Mistake of those, who copy after the Murmurers in the Text. And as all the Outrages of these distracted Times were owing to this restless, complaining, turbulent Spirit ; so this Day may be a Warning to the Murmurers of our Times, how they indulge themselves in such a troublesome mischievous Temper ; since no one knows to what extravagant Lengths it may carry a Man, and what Evils it may

SERM. occasion. Tho' the first setting out of these
 X. Troubles was a Struggle for Liberty, which
 in a free Country is acknowledg'd to be
 lawful, and what a free People have a
 Right to ; and whatever occasion there
 was given for it by the Rashness and Inad-
 vertency of some People about the King,
 whose Business it was to know the Consti-
 tution of the Kingdom better ; yet it is
 well known, that it ran soon into another
 Channel ; for these Grievances were set-
 tled in a Parliamentary Manner before the
 War began ; yet by means of a murmur-
 ing Spirit, that then appear'd among
 some Malecontents, new Grievances were
 trump'd up, and what at first was only
 a Stand for Liberty, became afterwards a
 Struggle for Licentiousness : A Desire of
 redressing Grievances was succeeded with
 a Desire of making them ; and what was
 once thought a Crime in the King's Party,
 was thought very just and reasonable in
 theirs. This carried them thro' so many
 different Scenes of Strife, that they hardly
 knew at last what they fell out for : They
 seem'd to have forgot the first Quarrel,
 and

and turned the Remainder of their Resentment against one another. They were several times so non-pluss'd that, like Travellers who have lost their way, they did not know which Road to take. The wiser Part began to look upon one another as ashamed of having gone such extravagant Lengths beyond their first Intention, and were willing to bring Matters to a Pacification; and whatever Grievances they thought the King had been guilty of making before, yet they began now to look upon him as the greatest Sufferer, and shew'd a strong Inclination to restore him. And indeed the greatest Part had so poor an Opinion of a Change, fearing it might have been for the worse, that they would have return'd to their Allegiance again could they have known how to do it with Safety; while others, thinking they had sinn'd beyond a Possibility of Forgiveness, became desperate in their Designs, and resolv'd, at all Adventures, to push Matters to the utmost Extremity.

No doubt one great Addition to these Troubles was this; A great Multitude of

SERM. vile mercenary Wretches promoted the Animosities as much as they could, and kept up the Flame for their own Advantage; no matter where it burn'd and devour'd so long as they were sure to warm themselves by it. Such Fellows as these are common in Cases of this Nature, who make a Trade of building their own Fortunes upon the Ruins of their Neighbours. This, together with a multitude of concurring Circumstances, heighten'd with the Addition of a Multitude of Vices, hurried them on from one Pitch of Enthusiasm to another, till they inverted the very Nature of Things, call'd Evil Good, and Good Evil, made God the Author of all Wickedness, the Scripture a Cover for all manner of Knavery, and Grace a Plea for Sin; and so at length, after a long and tedious Rebellion, and the Calamity of a Civil War, to fill up the Measure of their Iniquity, they clos'd the horrid Scene in the Murder of the King, and the Destruction of the Church and State.

But *Secondly*, I come now to shew the Sin and Folly of murmuring against the present

present Dispensation of God's Providence, SERM.
 even upon Supposition that it was true, X.
 that the former Days were better than
 these. And this I shall shew from these
 two particulars,

First, As it is contrary to Reason.

Secondly, As it is contrary to Religion.

And *First,* As it is contrary to Reason.

Every one pretends to know what is Reason, and what is not, and would take it very much amiss to be thought not to know it; but when we come to put this Knowledge in Practice, for want of consideration we act as if we knew nothing of the Matter. We are ready enough to pronounce a thing reasonable or unreasonable, when we consider it only as a Proposition, or a Rule, not including ourselves in it; and therefore when a Friend seems under any Uneasiness or Discontent, we fall to considering the thing, and tell him the Unreasonableness of so doing; but when it comes to be our own Case, then we cannot see the Strength of our own Arguments; what we would have to be thought conclusive in one Case, we will not allow in a Case
 of

SERM. of the same Nature: But whether they
 X. will consider it or no, this Temper is very
 contrary to Reason. For if there was no
 such thing as Reveal'd Religion in the
 World, yet the Religion of Nature teaches
 us thus much, that however it goes
 with the World without us, we ought to
 keep the Mind calm and serene, because
 from thence proceeds the Happiness or
 Misery of this Life: For it will signify
 but little to us how the Times are without,
 if we have no Peace of Mind within.

But the Unreasonableness of this Temper
 will further appear, if we consider, that
 whatever happens in this Life is either
 what we can help, or what we cannot;
 both which it is equally unreasonable to
 complain of: For if we can help it, it is ve-
 ry unreasonable to complain, as if we could
 not; and if we cannot, it is very unreason-
 able to complain, as if we could. The
 Truth of it is, most of this is what we can
 help; and if so, why don't we do it?
 Why do we complain, when the Remedy
 is at hand, and in our own Power? We
 are apt to carry our Views too far; and

to look abroad for the Wickedness and Mischiefs that are in the World, when we may find them nearer home, even in our own selves; and a little consideration would shew us, that we ourselves are the very Men we complain of. Complaints of this Nature imply what is not true, that all are wicked but ourselves; for tho' the Age be as wicked as one can imagine it to be, yet we should consider, that we ourselves help to make it so; and therefore it is a great Folly and Absurdity to complain of that, which we ourselves occasion: This is to complain of a Conspiracy, when we ourselves are the Conspirators. 'Tis true it is hard to make a covetous Man believe when he is talking against Covetousness that he is talking against himself; but then it is nevertheless true, whether he believes it or no.

'Tis a Truth much to be lamented, that we are too blind to ourselves, and too clear-sighted to others: We look thro' a false Glas, that shews us the best side of our own Qualities, and the worst side of other People's; whereas we ought to view ourselves

SERM.

X.

SERM. ourselves and others in the same Light;
 X. and consider, before we complain of the
 Wickedness of other People, whether we
 have none of our own to be included; and
 if we have, then the Unreasonableness of
 murmuring at or upon the account of
 others plainly appears: For tho' we can-
 not help their Wickedness, yet certainly
 we can help our own; and it will be Time
 enough to murmur and complain, when
 we are found to be without Fault ourselves.

The Evils of Life, or what many Men
 call Evils, are for the most part imaginary;
 and have no other Foundation than in
 Fancy and Opinion: And yet Custom has
 made them look as frightful as if they
 were real. Hence every one is dissatisfied
 with his own Condition, because it is his
 own; and is for acting a Part that does
 not belong to him. One is much griev'd
 that he has not a plentiful Estate, another
 that he is not a Privy-Counsellor; the Me-
 chanick would needs be a Gentleman,
 and the Gentleman a King. In short,
 every one would be what he is not, with-
 out considering, that our Business is not
 to

to chuse what Part we will act in the SERM.
 World, but to perform that which is al- X.
 lotted us as well as we can. But when
 People give themselves up to Whim and
 Fancy, without being at the Pains to con-
 sider the Reason of Things, it is no wonder
 if they are always uneasy, and they may
 thank themselves for it; for if they would
 but think, and see Things as they are,
 these Evils would immediately vanish.

Whether the *Stoical* Opinion be right,
 that all Evils are imaginary, will justly
 admit of a Dispute; but that the ima-
 ginary are more than the real ones, I
 think is very certain. For tho' there be
 many things in Life, that have a Tendency
 to obstruct our Happiness, do what we
 will, yet we have no need to go out of
 our way for them; we have no occasion
 to add Evils of our own making, which
 we may avoid, to real ones, which can-
 not be avoided. We cannot chuse
 whether we will avoid real Evils, but we
 can chuse whether we will make them
 more Evils than they are: And this is
 the Case with the greatest Part of Man.

SERM. kind. Why is that Man unhappy, whom
 X. you see blest with a plentiful Estate? For
 want of more? No; for when he has it,
 he is still the same unhappy Man, as be-
 fore; and it is observable they generally
 complain most, who have the least Reason
 for it: It is not then for want of a
 greater Fortune, but a better Mind, which
 must be corrected, or else the Evils will be
 as many and great, as a corrupt Imagina-
 tion is able to make them.

But *Secondly*, If these things, which
 happen to us in this Life, be what we
 cannot help, to murmur and complain
 will be found, after a little Consideration,
 to be as foolish and unreasonable, as it is
 in the former Case, about things we can
 help. Indeed it may be objected by some,
 that this is the very Reason for complain-
 ing; what we can help they easily allow
 there is no reason to complain of, because
 the Remedy is at hand, and in our Power;
 but when a thing grows remediless, and
 not to be avoided, that is the very Reason
 why we are uneasy: We are not uneasy,
 say they, because it can, but because it can-

not

not be help'd. How plausible soever this SERM.
may appear, yet is it entirely false, even X.
upon a Footing of Nature. For, *First*, it
is the way to make a bad Matter worse,
and to run into the same Snare we would
seem to avoid. Things will go on in the same
Course, whether we are in Humour, or
out of Humour; and therefore since Com-
plaints won't alter the Nature of Things,
it is unreasonable to make them: For
this is making two Troubles where there
was but one; and the thing will remain the
same, altogether as remediless, as it was
before. Besides, this murmuring Tem-
per will be just what it is, whether we can
help these things or no: If it be a Vice,
nothing in the World can justify it, or
make it otherwise than it is. But it is
unreasonable, *Secondly*, because it implies
that we have Injustice done us: Now,
besides the Vanity of thinking so well of
ourselves, and so ill of the rest of the
World, this is setting up ourselves, who
are Parties, and that the worst Part of
ourselves too, as Judges in this Case; which
is very absurd and ridiculous.

F f 2

But

SERM. But perhaps it will be said, that tho'
 X. Complaints of this Nature may be allow'd
 to be unreasonable, yet that the bare Reasonableness alone of the thing is not sufficient to support us under all Troubles; our Passions will still have the upper Hand, even when we know it to be inconsistent with Reason. In answer to this, there is a great deal to be said for this Plea, upon account of the Weakness of Human Nature: And therefore in Cases of this kind, where Nature fails, we must have Recourse to Religion, as a better help: But then I deny this to be the Case; this is not what we are upon. The Point here is not whether it be a Folly to be uneasy about what immediately affects us, but whether it be not a Folly to be uneasy about what does not affect us at all. I am not talking of real Troubles, but of such as have no Ground nor Foundation. For what is it to us, what the World does, who are to be happy or miserable only for ourselves? Upon the whole then I hope it will be acknowledg'd, that to murmur against the present Dispensations of God's Providence

Providence is to shew, that we don't consider wisely concerning this, even upon the Foot of Nature. For we have made but a poor Figure in the World, if the Sum of all our Enquiries amounts to no more than this, that we live in a wicked World. This is a wonderful Discovery indeed! Why every Age before could tell us the same thing, and it may be true enough without being worse than heretofore. The Truth of it is, we may have as little Reason perhaps to compliment the former Times, as we have to complain of the present: Now the way to make a wise Observation of this, is not to fall a murmuring and complaining, but to consider what Method to take in order to secure the Happiness of our Mind: But see the ridiculous Consequence that People extort from this murmuring Proposition, The Times are bad, say they, therefore, what? Why, they will be bad too. I am sure this is a foolish Consequence, how just soever the Premises may be. No; a Wise Man would put the Argument thus, The Times are bad, and always were so; and therefore

SEMR.

X.

I'll

SERM. I'll do what I can to make them better;
 X. at least I'll do nothing to make them
 worse; but will take care, that they shall
 not make me part with my Reason or
 my Virtue.

I come now in the next place, to shew the
 Sin and Folly of this Temper, as it is con-
 trary to Religion.

Religion, whatever some People think
 of it, is not only a national, but a good-
 natur'd Institution: It tends to smooch
 the Passions, and to make a Man act up
 to the Perfection of his Nature. Christi-
 anity allows not its Professors to disfigure
 their Faces, much less their Minds: We are
 taught in the Scripture to possess our Souls
 in Patience, and not to murmur as others
 have murmur'd, and were destroy'd of the
 Destroyer. If we are weary of the World
 for so slight a Cause, we are to consider
 him, who endur'd such Contradiction of
 Sinners against himself, and then we shall
 see how little Reason we have to be weary,
 and faint in our Minds. 'Tis true, Nature
 can only furnish us with Arguments for
 the Reasonableness of the Thing, and the
 Advantage of a contented Mind in this
 Life;

Life; but then Christianity helps us in the Performance, by carrying the Argument into another World; and therefore if we murmur still, we contradict the Principles of our Religion; because we do it, as those who have no Hope: 'Tis indeed a kind of Atheism; for where is the Difference between doubting of the Being of a God, and questioning his Divine Providence? And who, after all, would think that these Murmurers should seek Shelter even in Religion; and yet they are many of them weak enough to do it; as if Religion oblig'd People to be ill-natur'd, and would never suffer them to be in a good Humour; and consequently that they were never more religious than when most out of Temper. What Religion this is, is not worth my while to enquire, because it is not worth your while to know: You may be sure it is not the Christian Religion, whatever it is. What an odd Figure now do you think Religion would make, if it really was as some People have dress'd it up; for as such, it is calculated for nothing in the World
but

SERM.

X.

SERM. but to do Mischief, to rob a Man of his
 X. natural good Temper, and to give him
 nothing in the room of it, but an unnatural hateful one; and so to make him more a Child of Wrath than he was by Nature. This cannot proceed from Christianity, but from something else; for the Christian Religion countenances no Murmurers and Complainers, nor encourages any thing that is sour or unnatural'd; the Fruits of it are nothing but Peace, Joy, Contentment, and all true Virtues.

He who thinks to meet with no Difficulties in the World upon account of the different Tempers of Mankind, is a Stranger to Reason; and if Christianity has not learnt him that Contentment of Mind, which the Heathens practis'd without it, he is a Stranger to Religion. The Christian Religion does not promise us any such thing, that we shall meet with no Troubles or Difficulties, but teaches us how to overcome them. Nay, it goes upon this very Supposition, that the World is wicked, that this Life is a State
 of

of Warfare; and accordingly has furnish'd us with many excellent Weapons, in order to encounter it with Chearfulness and Constancy, as faithful Soldiers of Christ; and not only so, but gives us Encouragement to expect Assistance, where the Work is too great for us to perform of ourselves.

If the World was to be governed according to every one's Humour, perhaps we should all be pleas'd; or it would be a wonder if we should not. But where's the Virtue of such a Contentment as this? No; this, as well as all other Virtues, is an active Principle, it must be a Work of the Mind, and must have some Difficulties to struggle with: For if a Man would be contented upon no other Terms, he would have made but a contemptible Figure among the Philosophers, and I suppose he would not be thought to make a better Christian for being a bad Heathen. Having thus shewn the Falsity of the Insinuation, that the former Days were better than these, and also the


SERM. Sin and Folly of murmuring and complaining, even upon Supposition that it was true, I come now in the

X.

Third and last Place, To lay down some Rules, by which we may acquire a happier Frame and Temper of Mind. Since the Happiness of a Man depends upon the Mind, and not upon the Things without him, it the more concerns us to keep our Minds in a true, sedate, and easy Posture: And in order to it, let us,

First, Endeavour to regulate our Passions; for we are reduc'd to the necessity of governing them, or of suffering them to govern us. Indeed this is a more difficult Task to some People than to others, according to the Nature of the Constitution, and therefore the greater Pains are requir'd; and when we have done this, but not till then, we shall be able to consider things to be what they are, and not what they are not; and look upon the World to be, not what it ought to be, but what he finds it to be. We found it to be as it is, when we came into it, and we shall hardly leave it better

OF

or worse, when we go out of it. If we SERM.
 would have every thing fitted to our Hu- X.
 mour, that would be again altogether as 
 displeasing to another, and so the same
 discontented Spirit would still be kept up.
 If we would shew that we consider things
 wisely, we should fit ourselves to our Con-
 dition. Whoever expects Happiness in this
 World is mistaken; he does not consider
 the thing wisely; it is not possible in the
 Nature of things that it should be so: But
 then we may be much happier than we
 are, if we will put things upon a right
 Footing. No Man has a greater Ene-
 my to fear than himself, nor is any thing
 truly and properly good but Virtue,
 or truly and properly evil but Vice.

Secondly, Another Rule in order to
 acquire a happier Temper of Mind is
 this, before we complain of other Peo-
 ple, to mend those Faults in ourselves;
 for it is unjust to complain of others,
 while we are guilty of the same Things;
 we should at least take Care to give
 others no Reason to complain of us; for

SERM. if we do, we shall expose ourselves
 X. to the Contempt of all Wise Men, who
 will say, It is Time enough for us to
 complain of others, when we are with-
 out Fault ourselves; and that we should
 not pretend to pull the Mote out of our
 Brother's Eye, till we have taken the
 Beam out of our own Eye. 'Tis an
 easy thing to say that no Times were
 ever so bad as the present, but then it
 is not so easy to prove it: Fact and Ex-
 perience are against it: But allowing it
 to be true, would not it prove too much?
 Would not it prove that we are bad too?
 But the Infatuation lies here. Every one
 makes this Complaint more or less: I
 would fain know then, who these Peo-
 ple are that we all complain of? Are
 they not our own selves? If the Times
 are bad, why do we not rather help to
 make them better? But it is a popular
 Subject: The Wickedness of the Age
 is a Topic that will be sure to please,
 because People are glad to have others
 thought worse than themselves. Some
 talk of it out of Heedlessness of Temper,

to shew how little they think, and how SERM.
 little they have to say, as People are wont X.
 to talk of the Weather for want of a
 more proper Subject: I would advise these
 People to stick to this last Old Topic
 till they can find a better.

Others exclaim against the Times out
 of a malicious Habit that they have got;
 not that they think what they say to be
 true, or that they are really sorry that the
 Times are bad, but that they are no
 worse. Thus are their whole Lives not
 only so many Years of Vanity, but of Dis-
 content and Ill-humour. Indeed they
 can hardly be said to live at all: But the
 the troublesome Hours pass dreadfully
 over their Heads while present; and as
 they roll off in the Tide of Time, they
 slide out of their Remembrance, and are
 succeeded with fresh ones still as trouble-
 some as the others.

Thirdly, Another Rule, whereby we
 may acquire a happy Frame and Tem-
 per of Mind, is to leave the Management
 of the World, where it ought to be left,
 in the Hands of God. Suppose the for-
 mer

SERM. mer Times were never so good, and the
 X. present never so bad, it is none of our
 Business to enquire into the Causes of
 these things. 'Tis not our Business to
 inspect Providence, but to submit to it.
 Shall Man, who is but of yesterday,
 who came a perfect Stranger into the
 World, he hardly knows how or when,
 no sooner come into the World, but
 immediately set up for a Judge, and
 claim the Dominion of it? Whatever
 the World does, or however it goes
 with it, we may be sure God knows
 it, and permits it to go on; and con-
 tinues to send his Rain on the Just
 and on the Unjust: And would we
 have him stop the Course of his Provi-
 dence, and work Miracles for nothing
 in the World but to keep us in Humour.

To conclude: Let us all endeavour
 to leave off this murmuring complain-
 ing Temper, which tends to nothing
 but to make bad Christians and bad
 Subjects. 'Tis an Argument of a weak
 Mind, a Mind not accustom'd to think-
 ing, and is a Disgrace to Human Na-
 ture

ture, as well as to Religion. 'Tis high SERM.
 Time now to exert the Dominion of X.
 Reason over Fancy and Opinion. How-
 ever it goes with the World without us,
 let us remember that we are Men and
 Christians. Let us not be such Cheats
 to ourselves as to make imaginary
 Evils real ones, but consider that we
 have a Mind to look after, which will
 determine our Happiness or Misery, ac-
 cording as we accustom it to a right
 or a wrong way of thinking. In a word,
 As long as we live in this World, let us
 endeavour to make ourselves and others as
 happy as we can. We have many Vices
 and Infirmities, as well as other People,
 and therefore we ought to bear with one
 another, and not conclude a Peace
 with our own Follies, and at the same
 time proclaim War against those of
 other People. In short, let us furnish our
 Minds with true Religion, which will
 give us such a chearful and easy Depart-
 ment in every Condition of Life, as will
 make us truly happy; *for her Ways are
 Ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths
 are Peace.* S E R-



S E R M O N XI.

G E N. iv. 10.

And He said, What hast thou done? The Voice of thy Brother's Blood crieth unto me from the Ground.

SERM.
XI.



IN this Chapter we have a short Account of *Cain* and *Abel*, and the first propagating the World after *Adam* and *Eve* were driven out of Paradise: It is very concise indeed, tho' it is as long as the Nature of the Thing would admit of: For it cannot reasonably be expected, that the Scripture should give, a particular Account of every thing; that would have been neither necessary nor useful: Not necessary, because the Intent and Design of it was not to teach
Men


Men Systems of History and Chrono- SERM.
logy, but just so much, as may help XI.
to promote and recommend a good ~~~~~
Life: Not useful, because it would
have swoln the Sacred Volume to too
great a Bulk for the Generality of Man-
kind to receive much Benefit from ;
especially, since for some of whom, it
is to be fear'd, it would be still too large,
were it less than it is.

Hence appears the Folly of those,
who require a particular Account of
every minute Circumstance of things in
Scripture; as where *Cain* could take a
Wife, when as yet the Scripture had
made Mention of no other Woman in
the World but *Eve*: Since an Account
of these things is neither necessary nor
useful, especially, if we consider, that
a little common Sense will naturally lead
a Man to fill up the Charm; for as to
this particular Case, the World being,
according to Chronologers, a hundred
and twenty eight, or a hundred and
thirty Years Old, when *Cain* slew *Abel*,
it must be suppos'd, that there were
People enough in it by that Time for
such a Purpose. The Truth of it is,
such Questions as these are as useless as
they are foolish and insignificant, and
argue a little Mind, and a trifling Un-
derstanding.

H h

But

SERM. But this only by the Way. Now
 XI. as to the Persons here concern'd in
 the Text, all that we need know is,
*that one was a Keeper of Sheep, and
 the other a Tiller of the Ground; and
 that they offer'd each an Offering to
 the Lord; Abel of the Firstlings of
 his Flock, and Cain of the Fruit of the
 Ground; but we find both were not
 equally accepted, for the Lord had Re-
 spect unto Abel, and his Offering; but
 unto Cain and his Offering, for want
 of a right Qualification, he had not
 Respect; upon which Account Cain
 was very wrath, and his Countenance
 fell, i. e. he did not only look dejected,
 and full of Sorrow, but full of Revenge
 too; though there was no manner
 of Reason or Ground for this Wrath
 or Sullenness; for it was not his God,
 nor his Brother, that was the Cause of
 his Offering's not being accepted, but
 himself; For, says the Lord to him, if
 thou dost well, shalt thou not be ac-
 cepted? And if thou dost not well, Sin
 lieth at the Door. And this is the Way
 of most wicked Men, who, like Cain,
 when they feel a necessary Remorse at-
 tending their evil Actions, discharge
 their Wrath upon any one rather than
 themselves, who are the Delinquents,
 and the Persons to whom the Wrath
 belongs;*

belongs; and not only but have Affu- SERM.
 rance enough to expect, notwithstanding XI.
 ing their wicked Lives and Actions, 
 which cut off all Ground of Expecta-
 tion of any thing that is good, the
 same Favour of God, as those who are
 never so righteous. Thus *Balaam*,
 who had liv'd the Life of the Wicked,
 had Confidence enough, notwithstanding
 that, to say, *Let me die the Death
 of the Righteous, and let my last End
 be like his.* However, *Cain* was so
 incensed at this, that his Offering was
 not accepted as well as his Brother's,
 that he took an Opportunity to slay
 him, thinking perhaps to ease his
 troubled Mind, by venting his Wrath
 upon a Person, whom his Envy had
 mark'd out, as a proper Object of it:
 But, alas! the dreadful Experiment
 would by no means answer the End
 propos'd: It was so far from remov-
 ing one Evil, that it created a thou-
 sand more, which now began to sprout
 from it, and spread abroad thier fatal
 Influences. The Blood which he
 thought was spilt upon the Ground,
 and which the Earth had opened her
 Mouth to receive, and would soon
 disappear for ever, now began to live,
 and call to Heaven for Vengeance.
 And he said, *What hast thou done?*

SERM. *The Voice of thy Brother's Blood crieth*
 XI. *unto me from the Ground.* Here we

are to observe, that God does not ask this Question with an Expectation of being inform'd, as if he was ignorant of what *Cain* had done, but only to make him sensible of the Heinousness of his Guilt. In discoursing upon the Words of the Text I will shew,

First, That all Sin, especially Sins of a heinous Nature, such as Murder, calls to Heaven for Vengeance.

Secondly, I shall make some proper Observations upon it.

First then, I am to shew, that all Sin, especially Sins of a heinous Nature, such as Murder, calls to Heaven for Vengeance. As God is the great Governor of the World, and a Being infinitely just, wise, and good, it is necessary to suppose, that he intends the Welfare and Happiness of the whole Creation; and that he will put a sufficient Check upon whatever would destroy it. Accordingly he has impress'd upon all Beings in the Universe certain Propositions of Action, as they stand to each other; and whatever Being acts out of this Proportion feels of Course an Inconvenience attending it; which Inconvenience is likewise impress'd

pref's'd upon all Nature, and a Sense of it SERM.
upon every Being in exact Proportion, XI.
as it stands in the Universe. For with-
out this it were impossible the World to
subsist: Evil, as it is in its own Na-
ture opposite to Good, would, if it were
not controul'd, certainly destroy it; God
has therefore sufficiently controul'd it.
In Beings that act necessarily, it is
controul'd by certain necessary Laws,
by which they are directed and go-
vern'd for the Good of the whole.
Thus the Sea ebbs and flows, and
the Ground sends forth Herbs and
Trees for the Delight and Use of Man;
and all this according to certain Rules
impres'd upon Nature: The heavenly
Bodies too move on in their appointed
Course, whereas were these subject to no
Laws, the Disorder, *i. e.* the Evil that
would ensue, would soon spread its
destructive Influences over the Face of
all Nature; but God has fixed the
Bounds of all Things, and therefore
they, as the *Psalmist* says, fulfil his
Word. To the Sea he has said, *Hi-
therto shalt thou go, and no further;
and here shall thy proud Waves be stayed;
and to all things else he has fix'd their
Bounds, which they cannot pass.*

In Moral Agents it is controul'd by
the Vengeance that is due to it, and
that

SERM that infallibly attends it: For to suppose
 XI. suppose Evil without this is to suppose
 ~~~~~ God not infinitely wise and good.

Now if there are the same Proportions between every two Men in the World, as there is between a Man and himself, as there certainly are, for what are all the Men upon Earth, but the General Man, or Human Nature, split abroad into Individuals, secondly, no one can offer any Injury to another without doing an Injury to himself; for Punishment, which is the natural Reaction to Evil, will of course operate back upon him. Thus Vengeance which is every injur'd Person's Right in a State of Nature, when Men are form'd into Societies, is lodg'd in other Hands, who deal it out as well as they can, in proportion to the Injuries or Evils committed. But because all human Knowledge is vastly imperfect, and therefore cannot allot to every Crime the specific Vengeance that is due to it; and because every Injury or Evil a Man does to another, not only operates back upon himself, but flies directly up to God, as hurting or wounding him in his Image, he has taken Care to supply the Defects of human Injustice by allotting to every Crime its due proportion'd Punishment;


Punishment; and he, who knows the true Springs and Movements of every Action, who knows every minute Degree of Good or Evil that is in them, knows how to deal out his Rewards and Punishments in exact Proportion: And because every Evil, as it endeavours to poison Good, is an Attempt to pollute the very Fountain of Good, hence it is, that God looks upon every Evil a Man does himself, or another, or the Society, as done to him, and will certainly punish it accordingly: And of this every Sinner is sensible, and is sufficiently inform'd by the Remorse that attends his evil Action, which is the Beginning of the Vengeance that will follow them; and which is a gracious wise Provision God has made to controul Evil, and at the same Time to make Reparation to Justice; for the Remorse that attends an evil Action is a Punishment of it, and from the Sense every one has, that there is a Punishment due to Sin, and will certainly one Time or other overtake him, if not in this Life, where he can have only his Proportion of Chance, yet in the next, where all Chance will be turn'd into Certainty, there arises a well-grounded Fear, which is a continual Check to the Evil, and keeps the moral World upon its true Basis. Thus you see the Con-

nexion

SERM.  
XI.

SERM. XI. nexion there is between Sin and Punishment; that Sin carries its own Punishment along with it. The Conscience as it is equal to a thousand Witnesses, so is it to a thousand Torments; and indeed, the Punishment that is felt here is very often so great, that People sometimes chuse rather to part with their very Beings than undergo it; and that over and above this, Sin will meet with Punishment from Men, as far as it comes within their Cognizance: But however this be, all Evil is Enmity to Good, so it is more especially to the Author and Founttain, and flies directly to the Throne of God for Vengeance.

But perhaps the Sinner thinks to escape the Punishment that is due to him: But how will he do this? Can he think of doing Evil to a Society, and not expect to be punish'd by the Society for it? And suppose he does, and by leaving it flies from Justice, yet how will he fly from himself? he may indeed leave one Country, and fly into another, yet unless he could leave his Mind behind him, he could never be the further remov'd from Punishment; for that will always hang as a dead Weight upon him, and accompany him in the remotest Climate: He has no Right to Joy, he is incapable of Happiness; for upon the whole Evil is  
due


due to him. In vain then are all the SERM.  
 beauteous Objects of Art or Nature pre- XI.  
 sented to his Sight, since the troubled   
 Mind, like the Jaundic'd Eye, paints  
 a false Colour upon them all; pleasing  
 Sounds are no longer grateful to the Ear,  
 nor delicious Meats to the Taste, it is all  
 horrid Discord and Confusion; every  
 thing without corresponds exactly with  
 the Mind within, and conspires to pu-  
 nish the Man. But suppose he could fly  
 from himself too, and that all within  
 was smooth and serene, yet how will he  
 be able to fly from God? Where can he  
 go, that he cannot find him out, to  
 whom all Hearts are open, and from  
 whom no Secrets are hid? *Will he*  
*climb up to Heaven, he is there; and if*  
*he go down to Hell, he is there also; if he*  
*take the Wings of the Morning, and re-*  
*main in the uttermost Parts of the Sea,*  
*even there also he shall not avoid his*  
*Presence; if he says peradventure the*  
*Darkness shall cover him, then shall his*  
*Night be turned to Day; for the Dark-*  
*ness is no Darkness with him, but the*  
*Night is as clear as the Day, the Dark-*  
*ness and the Light to him are both alike.*  
 So that tho' he could escape every thing  
 else, he cannot fly from a Being that  
 is every where present, nor from the Ven-  
 geance, which every Sin calls to him for,



SERM. and which he will certainly punish, as  
 XI. Governor of the Universe, to preserve the  
 due Order and Government of the whole,  
 and that Good may prevail, and triumph over Evil. For could we suppose Sin to go unpunish'd, and every Man, and every Action of Man, had not Justice done them, we no longer suppose God to be at the Head of things; or else that Justice and Judgment are not the Habitation of his Throne; for this one Irregularity argues a Male-Administration, and is inconsistent with all the Notions we have of infinite Wisdom, Goodness, and Justice.

*Thirdly,* But now, if every Sin flies to Heaven, and calls to God for Vengeance, Sins of a more heinous Nature, such as Murder, must do so in a more extraordinary Manner: That assumes of course a louder, and more importunate Voice; as it is in the first Place an Injury done to God himself; for it is killing him, as far as we are able to do it, *i. e.* in his Image; it is striking at the very Deity itself; and wresting that Vengeance out of his Hands, which belongs to him, as Governour of the Universe; besides the Injury done to Human Nature itself, and consequently to every one that partakes of it, to the Society especially, to which a Man belongs, by cutting off a Member of  
 it,



it, and vesting in himself the Power of SERM.  
 the whole Community, which every XI.  
 Murderer does, and likewise to the injur'd   
 Person himself, by depriving him not only  
 of all the Benefits of Society, to which,  
 as a Man, he has a Natural Right, till  
 he forfeits it to the Community, but also  
 of Life itself, which God only can give,  
 and he only has a Right, or the Magi-  
 strate who is his Vicegerent, to take  
 away. The Sin of Murder then is a  
 Sin of a complicated Nature, and has a  
 very great Malignancy in it; for as it  
 strikes at Human Nature itself, and even  
 at the Deity too, a Man cannot be sup-  
 pos'd to be guilty of it, till he has al-  
 most blotted out his Humanity, and  
 defac'd the Image of God within him.

And indeed the Remorse and Fear,  
 to say nothing of any other Punishment  
 that attends the Commission of this dread-  
 ful Crime, bears an exact Proportion to  
 the Guilt of it, which shews the dreadful  
 Nature of it in the most lively manner  
 imaginable. The Man, who has stain'd  
 his Hands with Blood, fears a Revenge  
 awaiting him from every Part of Nature;  
 and not without good Reason; for as the  
*Prophet* says, *The Stones shall cry out of  
 the Wall, and the Beams out of the Tim-  
 ber shall answer it.* Every Breeze of  
 Wind whispers a Memorandum of his  
 I i 2 Guilt,

SERM. Guilt, and breathes the Vengeance that is  
 XI. due to it: At the Rustling of a Leaf he  
 ~~~~~ pleads guilty, and passes Sentence  
 upon himself before he finds an Accuser; Every one that looks upon him his Guilt dresses up as a Judge and Executioner, and he reads his Condemnation in their Countenances; so dreadful is the Punishment of this Crime, even before it comes to be punished; and is only the Beginning of that Punishment, which he is to receive hereafter, and to which the Punishment, which Societies have allotted to this Crime, is but a present Relief. And indeed, if we consider the Remorse and Fear, which are the Seeds of Vengeance within, and the Punishment which is ripening from without, correspondent to it, we cannot well conceive a more melancholy State: And this *Cain* was very sensible of to his Sorrow: For when the Lord had pronounced Sentence upon him, *Now art thou cursed from the Earth, which hath open'd her Mouth to receive thy Brother's Blood from thy Hand: When thou tillest the Ground it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her Strength, a Fugitive, and a Vagabond shalt thou be in the Earth. He said unto the Lord, my Punishment is greater than I can bear: Behold thou hast driven me out this Day from the Face of the Earth, and from thy*

thy Face shall I be hid; i. e. from the im- SERM.
mediate Presence of God as heretofore, XI.
and I shall be a Fugitive and Vagabond ~~~~~
in the Earth, and it shall come to pass,
that every one, that findeth me, shall slay
me: But from this he was preserv'd, and
accordingly a Mark was set upon him,
lest any finding him should kill him.
What that Mark was, tho' there are
many Conjectures about it, which are
of little Use, unless it be to shew the Fol-
ly of those who make them, is not mate-
rial; whatever it was we find it was some-
thing that prevented People from killing
him; and this is all the Account we have,
or need have concerning it.

Having thus shewn, that every Sin
calls to Heaven for Vengeance; and that
the Sins that are of a Heinous Nature,
such as Murder, do so in a more extraor-
dinary manner, let us see now,

Secondly, What proper Observations
are to be made upon it. And *First*, we
may observe the Goodness and Justice
of God, in that he will not suffer the least
Evil to go without its Compensation;
that Punishment shall be the sure Conse-
quence of Sin, which if it does not over-
take a Man in this Life, upon account
of the many Imperfections and Chances
that attend the State of things, tho' it
will always have its Chance for being
punish'd

SERM. punish'd here, which is all that Time
 XI. can give it, and a Certainty of it in Eternity there will surely be; *and therefore tho' the Evil does go unpunish'd in this Life, tho' here below the Wicked triumph and the Ungodly prosper,* yet as this is not always the Case, so when it happens to be so, it is not the Consequence of any Male-Administration in God, but of the Imperfection of the present State of things, which cannot be perfected but in Eternity.

But there are some, who are so far from thinking that there is any thing wrong in a Sinner's not being punish'd in this Life, that they rather incline on the contrary to think it inconsistent with the Goodness of God to punish any Man at all, either here or hereafter; as if Justice was somewhat contrary to Goodness; and Goodness was bound to relieve the Punishment that Injustice did inflict; whereas these things are all one in God, and only become different, as they are by us differently apprehended. For to punish the Evil is to do it as much Good as belongs to it; as to reward the Good is to render it the Justice that is due to it. To an absolute Being these things are the same: To Reason, Truth, Justice, and Goodness are all one, and the same thing: And in this View to shew Goodness to a Being is to shew it Justice and Truth;
 and

and to shew Truth is to shew Justice and Goodness, and so on: To the Sense they are not so, for that represents them in different Lights, to one Faculty they are one thing, to another another, and so on. To Pity, a Man is an Object of Mercy; to Resentment, an Object of Justice; and to Love, an Object of Goodness: So that upon the whole it is not inconsistent with the Goodness of God to punish Evil, any more than it is inconsistent with his Justice to reward Good; if it was, then it would follow that there is no Difference in things, and that Good and Evil are the same.

Secondly, If every Sin calls to Heaven for Vengeance, this may teach us the Malignancy of it, and shew how cautious we ought to be of committing it; for tho' we may have a thousand Chances for escaping Punishment from Men, yet we have no Chance against God; it is all Certainty there. Let us therefore upon the Commission of it be sure to be early in seeking God by Repentance; for that, as it is a making Reparation to Justice, will stand between us and Vengeance, and take off the Violence of the Blow: It will plead for us as *Abraham* did for *Sodom*; whereas an obstinate Impenitency is not only a denying of all Justice, and the Truth of things, but also a deny-
ing

SERM.
XI.

SERM. ing of a Deity, or which is much the
 XI. same, denying that he has any thing to
 do in the Government of the World ;
 and because the Way to prevent great
 Sins is to avoid small ones, let us rather
 guard against that which we think the
 most minute and inconsiderable, lest
 for want of being kept under they bor-
 row Strength from Indulgence, and grow
 at last unconquerable. As to the parti-
 cular Sin of Murder a Man cannot come
 at it without wading thro' a deal of Ma-
 lice, Envy, Hatred, &c. These Avenues
 are therefore in the first Place to be taken
 Care of, as they deserve our most serious
 Consideration. That *Abel* found Favour
 with God, when *Cain* could not, was the
 first thing that stirr'd up his Envy, which
 for want of being check'd, soon took Ma-
 lice and other Companions to its Assistance
 and at length broke out into the
 deadly Crime mention'd in the Text. If
 at any time then we find this to be the
 Case, that things go better with other Peo-
 ple than ourselves, let our Anger begin
 at home, and be employ'd upon the Evil
 of our own Hearts, to which it properly
 belongs; and let us, before we envy others,
 deserve better ourselves. *Which that we
 may all do, God of his infinite Mercy grant
 for the sake of Jesus Christ, &c.*



SERMON XII.

ACTS XXIV. 25.

As he reasoned of Righteousness, and Temperance, and Judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this Time, when I have a convenient Season I will call for thee.



Righteousness, and Temperance, and Judgment to come, are very unwelcome Doctrines to a Sinner that has not lost all Sense of Shame and Remorse, and especially the last of these. For what Pleasure can he, who has been always accusom'd to indulge his Desires and Appetites, possibly take in hearing Lectures upon Temperance and Righteousness, that are so opposite to this. Certainly these Sounds must be very grating to a sensual Ear, especially since there is to be an After-Reckoning for these Things, where

SERM.
XII.

K k

Punish-

SERM. XII. Punishment, which is upon the whole due to Sin, will certainly overtake it, whatever it does in this Life. 'Tis no wonder then to find the Person in the Text set a trembling when *St. Paul* touch'd upon these Points. The greater Wonder is still behind, which is this; that, when his Conscience had represented these Things in so frightful a manner, he should notwithstanding put off the Consideration of them to another Time. And yet so great a Wonder as this is, it was not his Case alone, but the Case of many Sinners ever since, who are apt enough to be startled to hear of Virtues they never practis'd, and tremble at the Mention of a Judgment to come, which they hardly ever thought of. But then this is only a sudden Fit, too violent to last long, and therefore they soon get rid of it, as well as of the Occasion of it; and a Messenger of such unwelcome Truths is sure to be dismiss'd like the Apostle, with a *Go thy way for this Time; when I have a convenient Season I will send for thee*. In discoursing upon the Words of the Text, I will shew

I. That there is a Punishment due to Sin, and a Conscioufness of it at one time or other in every Sinner.

II. The

II. The Folly and Danger of refusing to give a proper Attention to the Suggestions of a guilty and terrified Conscience.

SERM.
XII.

The *first* appears from the Goodness of God, or, which is the same, his Goodness consider'd as exerting itself for the Good and Welfare of the whole Creation. For if God, as he is the great Creator, is also the Governor of the World, and intends the Happiness of it, 'tis necessary that something should be done for the Security of this Happiness; *i. e.* that a sufficient Controul or Check should be put upon whatever would destroy it. Now Evil is the only Thing that can obstruct the Happiness of the World. Some Constraint must therefore be put upon it to hinder it from doing so. Accordingly the great Governor of the Universe has thought fit to order that Punishment shall be the natural and certain Consequence of Sin or Evil; that every Degree of Evil should be attended with a Degree of Punishment proportionable; and the everlasting Laws of Righteousness, which are the Security of the Good and Happiness of the Universe, are bound to see this done. Nor is this any Argument against the Goodness of God, but a very strong one for it; for should Evil go unpunished, it would soon destroy the Happiness of the Universe, which

SERM. Goodness, by the Notions we have of it,
 XII. should prevent. To imagine therefore that
 Goodness should not punish Evil, is the
 same thing as to say that Goodness should
 not be what it is : For should Evil go un-
 punish'd, there would be a manifest Injury
 done the Whole, which Goodness is con-
 cern'd to prevent. To remit the Pain there-
 fore of Evil as such, must be inconsistent with
 all the Notions we have of Goodness. 'Tis
 to strike up a Friendship between two Op-
 posites, whose Nature it is always to oppose
 one another. So far as there is room for
 Pity, so far you conceive less Evil, and con-
 sequently there will be a proportionable A-
 batement of Punishment ; but to suppose in
 Evil, as such, that the Punishment of it can
 be remitted by Goodness, is an impossible
 thing. We are now got so far as to know
 that Punishment is due to Sin: And it will
 be no Objection to this, that the Sinner is
 often seen to enjoy the good Things of this
 Life, to indulge like *Felix* in unlawful Plea-
 sures, to revel in Bowls, and rejoice at the
 Sound of the Organ ; for these Pleasures are
 what he has no Right to, they don't belong
 to him ; he must therefore become Debtor
 for them, and pay them back with Interest ;
 for Punishment is due to him, which, if it
 does

does not overtake him in this Life, because, SERM.
XII.
considering the many Accidents that happen here, the Circle of Life is not large enough for it always to come round (tho' some he will alway meet with here) yet in the next he will certainly meet with it in its full Proportion; so that no Objection will lie against this from the Slowness of its Progress, as long as it is sure at last. Of a Certainty of Punishment due to Sin here and hereafter God has given every Sinner a Conscioufness, which, as it is on the one hand a terrifying Remembrance of past Guilt, so it is a most gracious Provision God has appointed to prevent future. So that God has not left himself without Witness in the Hearts of Men, where he has set up a faithful Monitor to enable us to distinguish between Good and Evil, and to chuse one and avoid the other; that all the World may be without Excuse, and that God may justify and clear himself when he is judged. And this Monitor which God has set up in our Hearts, is by no means an imaginary Thing; nor is the Remembrance that it gives us upon the Commission of Evil an artificial Fear and Sorrow, as Atheistical People think (if they do think so) a preternatural Fear infus'd into Men's Minds in their Infancy by Parents,

SERM. Parents, Masters, Guardians, &c. tho' this
 XII. is a great Addition to it, but a Thing which
 God himself has planted in the Hearts of all
 Men ; for we find it universally. 'Tis to
 be seen in those who have had little or no
 Instruction of any kind, as well as in those
 that have ; tho' not to so great a Degree,
 for want of such a proper Cultivation. And
 besides, from whence could these People,
 who are suppos'd to infuse this Fear into
 others, have it themselves ? Or where had
 they a Foundation for this ? A Thing so
 universal must be instill'd by the Hand of
 Nature. Besides, if it were artificial it
 could never last long, the Impression would
 in time wear out, and the Mind would at
 last recover its former State. But we find
 this is not the Case : For these Fears always
 remain, as long as there remains a Sense of
 Good and Evil, and there will continue for
 the Uses before-mention'd. Indeed this
 natural Fear may, if neglected, in time wear
 out too ; but then it is because 'tis sup-
 pressed, and not suffer'd to have its due In-
 fluence upon us ; whereas the other wears
 off of itself. Of this Remembrance we
 have many Instances in Scripture, a very
 remarkable one in *Belsazzar* ; I mean
 with respect to the Hand-writing on the
 Wall ;

Wall; for the *MENE TEKEL* fet him all a trembling. Nor was it all the Grandeur, Magnificence, or Luxury with which he was furrounded, that could administer any Consolation to a troubled Mind. And indeed what from without can give any Satisfaction when the Mind within is discompos'd? Many are the Amusements which the World affords, and which the Sense provides us with, to divert the Mind, and cheat it into Pleasure. Many the Devices and Experiments to disarm this inward Tormentor, and rob him of his Strength; but all in vain; there is no entring to *bind the strong Man*. What was it made *Felix* tremble but the Terror of Conscience, which the Apottle had awaken'd in him by preaching upon Temperance or Righteousness, to which he had been a great Stranger, and especially upon the News of a Judgment to come? And indeed when all the Avenues of Pleasure are stopp'd, and no Relief from without to the Misery within, how melancholy must be that State! So that well might the wise Man say, (*Prov. xviii. 14.*) *A wounded Spirit who can bear?* And also *Job* (*Job xxvii. 6.*) well knowing how dreadful the Sting of Conscience must be, resolves that *his Heart shall not reproach him.*

SERM.

XII.

SERM. *him.* And tho' the bare putting People in
 XII. mind of their Crimes may not always have
 a proper Influence, they may bully it out
 against such Remembrances as these; yet
 when a Judgment to come is press'd home
 to them, it seldom fails of making a deep
 Impression. The Consideration of another
 Life after this, where the Punishment that
 is allotted to Evil will be full grown, will
 awaken those Fears which no other Consi-
 derations could reach. And possibly the
 Apostle might have talk'd long enough of
 Righteousness and Temperance, tho' to lit-
 tle Purpose, if he had said nothing of a
 future Account, an After-Reckoning. But
 when he mention'd a Judgment to come,
 then, very likely, it was that *Felix* trem-
 bled. And indeed the Terror of that Day
 is beyond all Expression, *when we shall*
all appear before the Judgment-Seat of
Christ, to be rewarded or punish'd for the
 Things done in the Body; when the ever-
 lasting Volume shall be display'd, and every
 individual Sin, which lay concealed from all
 mortal Eyes, shall appear in its full Mag-
 nitude; and still more if we go a little far-
 ther, and view the Sinner receiving Sentence
 of Condemnation, and just ready to depart
 from the Presence of God for ever, into the
 Eternity

Eternity of Sorrow that was prepar'd from the Foundation of the World to receive him. These Things are enough to melt the hardest Heart, and make the bravest Sinner tremble: Which, by the way, is no small Argument of a future Judgment, since otherwise this Fear, which is plainly implanted in our Nature, would be planted there to no Purpose.

But what tho' after all God has implanted in the Heart of Man a Conscience of a Punishment due to Sin, if People will, notwithstanding, refuse to give a proper Attention to it? Now the Folly and Danger of this I come,

Secondly, to consider. This Conscience of Punishment due to Sin I have already shewn to be a gracious Provision to prevent Evil for the future. But if we refuse to give it a due Attention, we frustrate the Design and Intention of it. What will it signify for Conscience to call, if we will not hear? If it awakes us now and then from the Lethargy of Sin, and we, with the Sluggard in the *Proverbs*, require *a little more Sleep, a little folding of the Hands to Sleep*. But do we consider the Consequence of those Things? Are we sure that this Conscience,

SERM. which we so often stifle and suppress, will
 XII. always remain? That it will not grow hard
 and callous, and become at last insensible?
 And what can be a more melancholy State,
 than for Evil to increase, and Punishment
 hastening to overtake, and all that while
 no friendly Monitor to give us any Notice
 that we may avoid it? But let us examine
 a little into the Bottom of this Condition.
 Why do we refuse to give a proper Atten-
 tion to the Calls of Conscience? Will it be
 said, Because we can't? Would it not be
 truer to say, We won't? But perhaps it
 will be said, We can't do it now, but will
 certainly do it at some other Time. Very
 well; let this be the Case. And now to
 consider this a little more particularly; What
 Reason can we have, that hinders us from
 laying hold of the first Opportunity, that
 will not equally hold good at any other
 Time? The true Question is, Whether it
 is proper, or a Thing fit to do at all? If so,
 then certainly it is very proper to lay hold
 of the first Opportunity; for 'tis grown in-
 to a Proverb, To leave nothing till to-
 morrow which we can do to-day: And every
 one will easily grant, that whoever does so,
 does not act the Part of a wise Man, but is
 guilty of great Folly and Absurdity. But
 now

now there is no Absurdity on the other Side of the Question. 'Tis no Folly for a Man to hearken to the Dictates of his Conscience. Nay, this must be allow'd to be right, even by those who propose to do it some other Time ; for by so doing they don't disallow of the present Time, but only some Accident or other hinders them. They are for discharging their Conscience, as *Felix* did *St Paul*, with a *Go thy way for this Time ; when I have a convenient Season I will send for thee.* This may possibly be intended ; but when will this convenient Season come ? One Season goes, another comes, which is succeeded by another, and another ; but still 'tis not a convenient Season. When is it then, that it will be a convenient Season ? When we can sin no longer, or have nothing else to do ? We will take it in the most favourable Sense, and suppose it to be the next Opportunity. Very well : But now suppose this Opportunity never comes ; for 'tis altogether as reasonable to suppose this, as to suppose the contrary. What will be the Consequence then ? This is leaving it to Chance to make the best of it. For to leave a Thing to any future Time, is to leave it to all the Consequences that may happen in that Time.

SERM. XII. The Way that every wise Man takes in his Affairs, is to make a Provision against Accidents. He manages his Affairs in such a manner as to expect such things. 'Tis true, when this Opportunity comes, a Man may possibly lay hold of it, and improve it to his Advantage : I say, he may possibly do it ; but there is only a bare Possibility of it : For he can't be sure that what hinders him now will not do so then too. Yet, besides all this, as there is but a Possibility neither whether this Opportunity may ever come or no, (for what may be may not be too) 'tis very absurd to leave it to that, especially when on the other hand he may have a Certainty. Besides, what do we get by this Delay ? We get Time to sin indeed : But is not this adding still to the Account, and making the Sum larger ? We find it so in other things : The longer we defer a Work, the more it grows upon our Hands, and consequently the less able shall we be to accomplish it : For that which at first might be mov'd with one Finger, will, when the Weight is increas'd, require the Strength of the whole Body. But there are too many that think it is time enough to think of these Things when they are on their Death-Bed, that 'tis time enough to amend

amend their Lives when they are going to part with them, and relinquish their Sins when they can keep them no longer. But what ! is this a convenient Season ? Will a Day or a Week be time enough for a Work of thirty, forty, fifty or sixty Years ? We may make Resolutions indeed, and promise what we will do, but whether we shall certainly perform or not, will require Time to shew ; which in this Case is not to be had, and God only knows whether we should perform them if it was. 'Tis to be fear'd, it is more than probable, that Promises made in time of Danger or Extremity, by Fear, will be but little regarded when that Fear and that Danger that caus'd them are remov'd. Take away the Cause, and the Effect ceases of course. For if you suppose no Sense of Fear or Danger, or, which is the same, that these have not their proper Influence upon the Mind, you can't well suppose any Reformation. And that this might be the Case of a Person suppos'd to be on a Death-Bed, should he recover, is not impossible, because it certainly has been. How many do we meet with in the World, of whom one might truly say this is their Case ! Who have been in the same Danger, and made the same Promises, and what

SERM.
XII.

SERM. what has been extorted from them by Sick-
 XII. ness, has been forgot in Health ! I don't
 say that this is always so. But, however,
 there can be no sufficient Foundation for
 Dependence or Trust in such a Case.

Upon the whole then : If there is such a
 thing as a Punishment due to Sin, and if the
 Conscience informs us of this, let us give it
 a proper Attention. We allow the Gratifi-
 cation of our Desires, our Pleasures and A-
 musements their Season; let not then the
 Happiness and Welfare of another World be
 the only Thing that shall be depriv'd of a
 convenient Season. Let us consider, that
 if our Repentance reaches no further than
 the Design and Intention, if it is not to be
 set about at some certain Time in this Life,
 there is no doing it any where else ; *there*
is no Repentance in the Grave, whither we
are going. People of narrow Minds, who
 confine their Views within this Circle of
 things here below, may possibly think light-
 ly of these Things, who know no other
 Pleasures but those of Sense, nor any other
 Torments but the short momentary ones of
 this Life. But if we carry our Views be-
 yond the present State of things, and look
 into Futurity, however these Things ap-
 pear in this Life, there they must have an-
 other

other Aspect. When we consider Pleasure and Pain, not as precarious and momentary, but certain and eternal; whoever considers these things rightly, will give them their due Weight. And indeed People cannot want Motives to this; the Scripture abounds with a Multitude of Passages, that represent these Things in a true Light, and with a Multitude of Arguments and Persuasions to a right Conscience. It constantly teaches us that Vice is odious, paints the Deformity of it, and that it is attended with a certain Degree of Punishment here, but will be punish'd eternally in another State; that Virtue is attended here with a certain Degree of Happiness, and an Eternity of it hereafter, and Arguments drawn from the Nature of these things, from the Happiness on one side, and the Torments on the other. And can we now, after all, think that a few momentary Pleasures bear any Proportion to the Pleasures that are to have no End? Is an heavenly Felicity nothing? Is it nothing to see the Face of God, and enjoy him to all Eternity? To have our Hopes and Desires compleated and gratified to the utmost Perfection? If all this is nothing, is it also nothing to be evermore shut out from the Presence of God, and to live in
endless

SERM. endless Torments, and be for ever tortur'd,
 XII. without even the Hopes of any Relief?
 How should we then wish to begin again,
 and have a second Trial! How should we
 improve those Fragments of Time that now
 lie upon our Hands! *But, alas! there is
 a great Gulph fix'd so that there is no pas-
 sing from thence.* Now we have it in our
 Power to prevent these fruitless Wishes, let
 us prevent the melancholy Reflections upon
 what we would have done, by doing it. If
 Happiness and Misery are worthy our Con-
 cern, their being eternal does not make it
 less so, I suppose. Let our Regard to
 these Things be proportion'd to the Value
 Importance of them, that, when Time is
 swallowed up in Eternity, our Happiness
 may partake of the same Perfection, and
 continue without End. *Amen.*





SERMON XIII.

ACTS XXIV. 16.

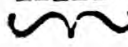
*And herein do I exercise myself,
to have always a Conscience
void of Offence towards God
and towards Men.*



THESE Words are part of the SERM.
XIII.
Answer which St. *Paul* gave to
the Accusation brought against
him by *Tertullus*. The whole
Case is this: When he was sent from *Je-
rusalem* to *Cesarea* for fear of the *Jews*,
who intended to destroy him, and his Ac-
cusers were come, they employ'd a certain
Orator, named *Tertullus*, to inform the Go-
vernor against *Paul*; who accordingly laid
many grievous Crimes to his Charge; a-
mongst the rest, that *he was a pestilent Fel-
low, a Sower of Sedition among all the Jews
throughout the World, and a Profaner of
the Temple.* But now to prove the Impro-
bability

M m

bability

SERM. XIII.  bability of this Charge, and how unlikely it was that he should raise any Tumults according to this Accusation, he shews, that it was but twelve Days since he went up to *Jerusalem* to worship, seven of which he spent there, until the Time of his Purification was accomplished, and the other five he had been in Custody, and at *Cesarea*; and, says he, *they neither found me in the Temple disputing with any Man, neither raising up the People, neither in the Synagogues, nor in the City, neither can they prove the Things whereof they now accuse me*; and then he goes on strenuously asserting his Innocence and Integrity, and gives a short Account of his Religion, shewing plainly that he worship'd no other God than the God of his Fathers, whom *Abraham, Isaac and Jacob* had worshipp'd, and that he profess'd no other Religion than what was taught in the Law and the Prophets, from whence they themselves had received theirs; *But this I confess unto thee, that after the Way which they call Heresy, so worship I the God of my Fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets, and have Hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a Resurrection of the Dead, both of the Just and Unjust:*

Unjust : And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Men ; i. e. upon Consideration of the Resurrection of the Dead, and that we shall be rewarded or punish'd, according as we have done well or ill in this Life, I accustom myself to live without Blame, without being conscious of having done any thing that shall be an Offence to God or Man. From the Words of the Text I will shew,

I. What it is to have *a Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Men.*

II. The Happiness that results from it, and the Misery that attends the Want of it.

III. I shall lay down some Rules and Directions in order to our obtaining such a Conscience.

First, I am to shew what it is to have a Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Men. Now Conscience is the Judgment of a Man's own Mind concerning the Morality of his Actions; and as all Actions are either good or bad (as they are either commanded or forbidden by God) or else

SERM.
XIII.

indifferent, as they are neither commanded nor forbidden, so it is the proper Business of Conscience to regulate them accordingly, and to approve or condemn us, according as we have observ'd or transgress'd the Law of God: And to have *a Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Men*, is to make our Actions conformable to the Law of God; which takes in a vast Compass of Duty, because it includes in it all the Duties we owe to God and our Neighbour. They can't be said then to have a Conscience thus void of Offence, who are very diligent and industrious in the Performance of some Duties, but are careless and neglectful of others; who will do only what is agreeable to their Inclinations, and hazard the Neglect of every thing else; observe one Duty, and compound for the rest: But they who observe a Uniformity in their Actions, and take care to perform their Duty in all things; who are as careful in keeping one Commandment as another; who think it as much a Sin to be uncharitable and censorious, as to rob or steal; to be an Extortioner or unjust, as to be a Sot or a Drunkard, &c. For indeed they who seem to be very conscientious in some things, and the reverse of it in others; who seem to be rigid and zealous in
the

the Performance of some few Virtues, and shew an Abhorrence of some particular Vices, which don't happen to be agreeable to their Constitution, tho' at the same time they indulge themselves in other Vices that are altogether as bad ; who can swear, lye and cheat, and yet at the same time thank God they are not as other Folks are, Adulterers, Drunkards, &c. I say, these have no Pretence to Conscience, because a truly conscientious Disposition would direct them to a Uniformity in their Actions, and lead them to a stedfast Adherence to all those Principles of Morality and Religion, which are either imprinted in them by Nature, or reveal'd to them by the Word of God ; it would direct them to the strait Paths of Virtue, and teach them to avoid all Temptations that lie in the way of it ; it would indeed teach them a general Rectitude, and a universal Obedience to all Parts of their Duty. But who, you'll say, is sufficient for these things ? Who can acquit and justify himself before God, as to the perfect Innocence and Integrity of his Life ? Who can say, I have made my Heart clean, I am free from my Sin ? Now, tho' it is not in a Man's Power to observe and do his Duty in all things, without some Deviations, some involuntary

SER. M.
XIII.

voluntary Mistakes, yet our Endeavours certainly are in our Power, and those it is expected that we make use of. God does not require any thing of us above what we are able, but then he requires what we have in our Power to do, and where we have not Power, he will supply the Want of it with his divine Assistance.

But let it be observ'd further, that to have a *Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Men*, will signify but little if it be put in practice only at particular Times, for 'tis necessary that it be so always. The Apostle's Conscience was not only void of Offence, but it was always so, 'twas what he exercis'd himself in the whole Course of his Life. This requires a constant, steady Temper of Mind; no sudden Flashes of Piety, that go off as soon as they come, and seem to be rather the Fever of Conscience than the natural State of it; no transient Thoughts, that die upon our Hands; no short Transports and Fits of Devotion, such as it is in the Power of every light Affliction to stifle and suppress, but an even, regular, uniform Course of Life. They are therefore very much mistaken, who think they have preserv'd a clear Conscience, and thoroughly discharg'd their
Duty,

Duty when they have perform'd some Acts of Religion at a few stated Times, and then give themselves the Loose, and undo every thing they had done before, as if the Obligations they are under to lead a good Life were not of equal Force and Strength one time as well as another. And yet there are many who, when they have perform'd their Duty at some certain Times, attended the Service of God in publick, and behaved themselves on such Occasions as every good Man ought, will sit down as well pleased, and rest as well satisfied, at least as to all outward Appearance, as if they had thoroughly discharged their Conscience; tho' perhaps they have scarce done a good Action at any other time in the whole Course of their Lives, but on the contrary have indulged themselves in all manner of Iniquity; who will lye, and cheat, and revile their Neighbours, and (as long as they can keep themselves within Covert, and screen their Immoralities from the Eye of the World, or the Law) commit the greatest Villainies imaginable. And this is most common among those who trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others; who when they have perform'd their religious Task of going to some public Place
of

SERM. of Worship at the usual Times for so doing; I
XIII. say, when they have performed their Task,
 (for such they make it, whose Lives are not
 of a piece with it) aim at nothing further;
 who can pray with their Mouth, and enter-
 tain Malice and Rancour in their Heart;
 who can lift up their Eyes to Heaven, and
 their Hands against their Brethren; such
 are apt to think all is well, they may do
 whatever they please, every thing in them
 is commendable and praise-worthy. This
 is a way of discharging the Conscience in-
 deed, if it will be so discharged. But this
 will not do; this will serve no Purpose but
 a bad one; for religious Duties must not be
 changeable, like the Weather, but constant
 and habitual; not by Fits and Starts, like
 so many Points at unequal Distances from
 one another, but in one regular Motion
 like a strait continued Line.

And, in order to it, we must not let any
 thing break in upon us, and engross too
 much of our Time; for the Time past can't
 be recall'd, the Time that is to come is not
 to be depended on, and we are only sure of
 that which is present. But to this, per-
 haps, it will be objected, that there is no
 living in the World without spending a
 great deal of Time in worldly Affairs; and
 that

that it would be impossible always to be employed about Matters of Religion. This is indeed very true, but 'tis nothing to the Purpose; for every one may follow his secular Employment without neglecting his Religion: Worldly Affairs are no further to be avoided than as they thrust out Religion, and those Things that are of a spiritual Nature. And indeed there must be great Caution used with respect to this; for if the World takes up a Month of our Time with our Consent, 'tis very much if it does not take up another without it; the giving up one Duty will lead us to give up another, and the more Concessions we make, the sooner shall we give up the whole. Temporal and spiritual Affairs will very well agree together, and may, with Prudence, join Hand in Hand for our future as well as present Happiness; for if a Man is diligent and careful in his Business, in such a manner as not to forget his Religion, he is serving God at the same time, because he is doing his Duty in that State of Life unto which it hath pleased God to call him. Having thus shewn what it is to have *a Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Men,* I come now,

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Secondly,

SERM.

XIII.

Secondly, To shew the Happiness that results from it, and the Misery that attends the Want of it. He who has a Conscience void of Offence, or, which is the same, who does every thing agreeable to the Will of God, and omits nothing that relates to the Duty we owe to our Neighbour, finds a comfortable Reflection arising from it, that affords him the greatest Happiness and Satisfaction under Heaven ; for such a Conscience is neither terrified with Guilt, nor leaves a Stain or Blemish on the Soul ; it must therefore be the greatest and most desirable Treasure we can have in this Life, and will be of the greatest Use to us in that which is to come ; it preserves a constant Ease and Serenity within us, and is more than an Equivalent for all the Calamities and Afflictions that we can possibly undergo. 'Tis this that makes a Man at Peace with God, at Peace with Men, and at Peace with himself ; for he that has a good Conscience, has nothing to affright, nothing to disturb him, no Midnight gloomy Thoughts to break his Rest, no dreadful Remains of long-contracted Crimes to sour his Enjoyments, nor any Loads of Guilt to sit heavy on his Soul. *The Lord is his Light and his Salvation,*
whom

whom shall he fear? The Lord is the Strength of his Life, of whom then shall he be afraid? In all Dangers and Distresses he has a sure Friend to depend upon; and tho' Storms and Tempests beat on every Side, yet within all is calm and serene. *A good Man, saith Solomon, shall be satisfied from himself,* and tho' the whole World should conspire against him, yet as long as his own Heart is not against him, he has inward Joy enough to make him a continual Feast. The pleasant Reflection that arises from a well-spent Life will support the Mind under all Calumny and Reproach, and defend *us from the Pestilence that walketh in Darknes, and from the Arrow that flieth in the Noon-day:* For as it is most certain that no Affluence of Fortune can keep a Man from being miserable when an enrag'd Conscience flies in his Face, so it is also as certain that no temporal Adversities can deprive a Man of those inward, secret, and invisible Supplies of Comfort which are the Result of *a Conscience void of Offence.* And this noble Frame and Temper of Mind, as it clears and delights us in the various Paths of Life, so it goes with us also to our Journey's End, and accompanies us in the very Agonies of Death; it stands by us at a Time

SERM.
XIII.

SERM. XIII. when we have most need of it, when Riches and Honour, and all worldly Comforts have left us, and nothing but Pain and Sickness come in their Room and take Possession; then the Conscience stands forth, and opens a delightful Prospect of Happiness to the departing Soul, just fluttering upon the Borders of Eternity.

'Twas this that supported the first Christians under all their Tribulations. *Our Rejoicing, says St. Paul, is this, the Testimony of our Consciences, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity we have had our Conversation in the World:* 'Twas this that comforted them under the most grievous Persecutions, and gave them Confidence towards God, because their Hearts condemn'd them not: 'Twas this that made them rejoice when they suffer'd for the Name of Christ, when they had Trials of cruel Mockings and Scourgings, yea, moreover of Bonds and Imprisonment, when they were stoned, and sawn asunder; when they were tempted, and slain with the Sword, and were tortur'd, not accepting Deliverance, that they might obtain a better Resurrection. But when This fails us; when our Hearts reproach us, and our Consciences serve only for wretched Remembrancers of
past

past Crimes, as they will always be to one whose Conscience is not void of Offence, at least in some good measure, both towards God and towards Men, then we shall be forced to sink under the heavy Burden of Sorrow that will necessarily fall upon us; for when that Conscience, that should help us to bear the Calamities and Misfortunes of this Life with stedfast Courage, and a well-grounded Resolution, is itself troubled and disquieted, where is the Man that can support himself under it? When our only Friend, or, at least, that which alone is capable of being so, is become our Enemy, and that, which ought to be our greatest Joy, is itself become our greatest Torment, who can endure it? Bodily Sickness, and outward Afflictions a manly Spirit will support us under; but when the Mind is cast down, and the Soul itself is oppress'd, it is not in the Power of a Man to raise and lift it up. *The Spirit of a Man will sustain his Infirmary, but a wounded Spirit who can bear?* Great must be the Torment of that Man who is for ever flying from himself, and whose Crimes are always staring him in the Face, like the Hand-writing upon the Wall: And yet such is, and must be, the Condition of him whose Thoughts are sad Anticipations of future Misery,

SERM,
XIII,
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SERM.
XIII.

Misery, and frightful Prefages of what will come hereafter; for his Life is now become a Burden too heavy for him to bear; and, which is the greatest Misfortune, it is not in the Power of Riches, Honour, or any thing in the World to do him any Service, to silence the Clamours of Conscience, or relieve a distracted Mind: And when he comes to depart this Life, and launch out into another World, to fill up the Measure of his Sufferings, Who can tell what Grief he must endure? what Pain? what Sorrow? what Reluctance? And yet he is equally frightened at the Thoughts of Life; he is afraid to live, and afraid to die; a whole Eternity of Sorrow lies before him, behind him is the ghastly Visage of Despair, and sad Remorse on either Side. In short, he dies in Distraction, and goes headlong into another World to receive the Remainder of that Punishment which he felt in this. Having shewn what it is to have *a Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Men*, and the Happiness that results from it, and the Misery that attends the Want of it, I come now,

Thirdly, To lay down some Rules and Directions in order to our obtaining such a Conscience.

Conscience. And here these two Things SERM.
 are most natural to be observ'd. *1st*, To XIII.
 endeavour all we can to understand our Duty
 right; and, *2dly*, To practise it.

First, then, We should endeavour to understand our Duty right; for he that does not endeavour to inform himself aright in the Nature and Extent of his Duty, must answer for all the Consequences of a misguided Judgment. A Man, indeed, is obliged not to act contrary to his Conscience, because that would be to act against the Light and Conviction of his own Mind, which being the Rule of his Actions, and the only Guide he has to walk by, it would be very sinful not to do it: But then it will by no means follow from hence, that he is not oblig'd to get what Knowledge he can of his Duty, and to take care that his Conscience be rightly inform'd; for as a Man is guilty of Sin, if he acts contrary to his Conscience, so is he equally guilty by acting according to it, if he refuses to make use of the Means of Information: Not that a Man is guilty of Sin by acting according to his erroneous Conscience, merely as erroneous, for he has no other Rule to act by; but because he has brought himself under a
 Necess-

SERM. Necessity of being in the wrong, and has
XIII. been himself the Cause of his erroneous Con-
science by refusing to use proper Means of
getting it rightly inform'd. Therefore, for
a Man to do a Thing contrary to the Will
of God, when, if he had made use of pro-
per Means, he might have prevented it, and
then to cry out, He has acted according to
his Conscience, and to think that that will
be an Excuse for him, is very absurd and
sinful; because, if he had us'd his Endeav-
our, his Conscience would not have direct-
ed him to the doing of it, but quite the
contrary. What a dismal Condition then
must a Man be in who has brought himself
to a Necessity of sinning do what he will,
whether he acts according to his Conscience
or against it! And this, by the way, is
one sad Effect of neglecting to inform our
Consciences aright; whereas he who does
his Endeavour to get the best Knowledge
and Information he can, and after all his
Care cannot get rid of his Error, will be
sure always to find this Satisfaction, that he
has done what he can to find out the Truth,
and tho' he is still in an Error, yet he is sure
it is not a wilful one, and therefore a good
God will not punish him for it. Now, in
order to help our Consciences to a true
Know-

Knowledge of things, we should take care to keep them clear from Scruples; for however some may flatter themselves with a too good Opinion of a scrupulous Conscience, and fancy themselves the better Christians for having such a one, yet it is certainly an Argument of a weak Mind. And here a Man ought to use his utmost Care and Diligence in this Matter, because without it his Scruples will remain, and the Fault will lie at his own Door. He should examine, whether these Scruples are not owing to Prejudice, or are cherish'd by an idle Humour of raising Scruples purely for the Sake of doing so; for these are not Scruples of Conscience, but downright Hypocrisy. Indeed one Man is not to be tied up to the Conscience of another, but then it is his Duty to keep his own as clear as he can; for tho' one Man may differ from another, yet every one must be persuaded of the Lawfulness or Unlawfulness of what he does, as much as he can. *One Man esteemeth one Day above another, (says St Paul) another esteemeth every Day alike; but then (says he) let every Man be fully persuaded in his own Mind.* But if a Man can't conquer his Scruples, tho' he's much to be pity'd for it, yet he must so far overcome them as

SERM. to make them give way to all positive **Laws**
XIII. of God, or the lawful **Commands** of his
 Superiors; for when a Man is convinc'd in
 general of his **Duty** in these **Cases** on the
 one Side, and has however a few **Scruples**,
 which will not on the other Side prove the
 contrary, if he does not incline to that Side
 that has the greatest **Evidence**, he makes
 his **Humour** the **Rule** of his **Actions**, than
 which nothing can be more absurd. Besides,
 'tis a **Rule** allow'd of in all **Cases**, that to
Demonstration on one Side, there ought
 not to be oppos'd any **Difficulties** on the
 other. But,

Secondly, After we have done what we
 can to know our **Duty**, we must be sure
 to be as diligent in the **Practice** of it; and
 the great **Motive** for doing so is, as **St Paul**
 tells us, *a Belief of the Resurrection*; for
 this will teach us to lead good **Lives** here,
 that we may be happy hereafter. The
Knowledge of our **Duty**, without the **Prac-**
tice of it, is of no **Use**, unless it be to make
 the **Omission** and **Neglect** of it the more
 sinful; but both together argue a good
Conscience, and make a **Man** perfect and
 compleat, as far as he can be so in this
Life.

To

To conclude. A good Conscience will be always our best Friend, and notwithstanding any Troubles or Misfortunes that may befall us at present, we may be sure That will bring us Peace at the last. *Mark the perfect Man, (says David) and behold the Upright, for the End of that Man is Peace.*

SERM.
XIII.

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed (as is most due) all Honour, Glory, Praise, Might, Majesty and Dominion, now, henceforth, and for evermore. *Amen.*





SERMON XIV.

2 TIM. iv. 7, 8.

I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course, I have kept the Faith : Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that Day.

SERM.
XIV.



ST. Paul being well assured that he was about to put off this earthly Tabernacle, and that the Time of his Departure drew nigh, was not at all uneasy under the Apprehensions of it ; but, having the Testimony of a good Conscience on his Side, declared his well-grounded Hope and Confidence in God, and, like a victorious Soldier of Christ, went off a Conqueror.

Indeed

Indeed the State of a Christian in this Life, is a State of Warfare. Christ is our Head, and we are to fight manfully under *his Banner against Sin, the World, and the Devil, and to continue his faithful Soldiers and Servants unto our Lives end.* Now the Apostle acquitted himself a faithful Soldier in these three respects.

I. He *fought a good Fight.* From his Conversion to Christianity he followed the Example of his great Master, entered the Lists, and bravely carried on the War with the Prince of Darkness, which our blessed Saviour had so gloriously begun. *For the Sake of the Gospel of Christ, he had been in Weariness and Painfulness, in Watchings often, in Hunger and Thirst, in Fastings often, in Cold and Nakedness.* He fought not only against Flesh and Blood, against human Violence, and corrupt Nature, but *against Principalities, against Powers, against the Rulers of the Darkness of this World, against spiritual Wickedness in high Places.* He knew that we must through much Tribulation enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; and accordingly he took up a Resolution to make all Opposition fall before him, *to take unto him*

SER. M. *him the whole Armour of God, that he*
 XIV. *might be able to withstand in the evil Days,*
 and having done all, to stand.

II. He also finished his Course. And this he did both as a Christian and an Apostle; as a true Disciple, as well as a faithful Ambassador of Christ. He did not begin and then leave off, when he found the Burden grow heavy upon his Hands, but persevered unto the End; knowing that if he was faithful unto Death, he should receive a Crown of Life.

He was so far from being weary of running the Race that was set before him, that he went through it with Constancy and Cheerfulness; and, as he himself assures us, he took pleasure in Infirmities, in Reproaches, in Necessities, in Distresses for Christ's Sake: *For when I am weak, says he, i. e. as to his outward State, then am I strong, viz. by the Power of Christ.*

He appeals to all the Churches, as well as to God, who were Witnesses of his Labours, to testify the Unblameableness of his Life and Conversation. *Ye are Witnesses, says he, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe; as ye know,*

know, how that we exhorted you, and comforted, and besought every one of you, as a Father his Children, that you would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his Kingdom and Glory.

He went about preaching boldly in Season and out of Season, and counted all Things but Loss for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus.

III. He also kept the Faith. And that he did pure and inviolable. He did not introduce the Doctrines of Men in the Room of the Doctrines of Christ, but faithfully transmitted the Doctrine of his Master to the Churches without Alteration: For, says he, *what I have received of the Lord Jesus I have delivered unto you.* And he received a Crown of Glory for his Pains. And indeed, if People will fight, and toil, and run the utmost Hazards to obtain a corruptible Crown, which they did in the *Olympick Games*, from whence this figurative Expression is taken, well might we join with the Apostle in doing greater things for an *incorruptible one, that fadeth not away.*

Thus have I explained the Text, and shewn how the Apostle has fulfilled it. I must now enter upon a melancholy Scene, and

SERM. and shew how the worthy Person deceas'd
 XIV. has also made it appear, by a Life of good
 and virtuous Actions, that he ~~he~~ *fought a
 good Fight, finished his Course, and kept the
 Faith*; and is gone where he will receive
 that Crown of Righteousness which is laid
 up in Heaven for him.

And here I am sensible of the great Difficulties I labour under, by endeavouring to do Justice to the Character of so good a Man, who is the Occasion of this melancholy Solemnity. As I shall certainly fail in painting that lively Image of him which is already so well written in your Hearts, I must intreat you to supply the Defect.

I am satisfied how unequal I am to so great a Task, and that you will now expect greater things than I am able to say; and I must confess, that a very strong Affection for the Deceas'd, now with God, whose Memory will always be dear to me, has in a great measure prevented me from saying as much as I was able: But I must depend upon you to supply what is wanting out of the Abundance of your Hearts.

And now where shall I begin? Which of the Virtues he was possess'd of shall I describe to you first, since he equally possess'd them all, and that to a Degree wherein

few

few others enjoy a single one? Whether we consider him as a Divine, a Gentleman, a Husband, a Father or a Friend, who can say in which of these he most excell'd?

SERM.
XIV.
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He had so sweet a Mixture of the Gentleman and the Divine, that every thing he said found an easy Passage to the Heart, and conquer'd the Prejudices of the most obdurate.

There grew up with him such a regular Piety, and such an unblemish'd Probity, that he shewed Religion in the Beauty of Holiness.

He made People in love with Religion; because they saw it in the Substance as well as the Letter, which he made appear by living over every Precept he taught others.

He had all the affable Sweetness and Humanity that Good Nature could give, and all the extensive Love and Charity of the Gospel. He was of a peaceable, lovely Disposition; easy in his Carriage, soft in his Address, tender in his Nature, and full of the greatest Mercy and Compassion.

He was an Enemy to no Man, but a Friend to all; for he was a Lover of Mankind, and endeavour'd, as much as it was possible for one single Man to do, to promote the Happiness of all Men.

P p

He

SERM. XIV. He was devout in his Prayers, and regular and constant in performing all the Duties of Religion. How constant, how laborious a Dispenser he was of the Word of God, you, who enjoyed the Benefit of his Ministrations, know full well ; and are Witnesses how faithful a Steward he was of the Work to which God had called him, even a Workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth. Let me appeal to you, to you his sorrowful Flock, to testify what Care he took of you, and how much he sought your Good, your Peace, your Safety.

You know he preached the pure and uncorrupted Word of God, and both preached and kept the Faith according to the Scriptures. *You, who are his Epistle, as St Paul speaks, known and read of all Men,* or rather the Epistle of Christ ministered by him, you know how he laboured abundantly, and instantly, not of Force, but of Choice. He did it willingly, not so much by any other Constraint, as that of Love to his Master and the Souls of Men. And when he stood where I have the Honour and the Sorrow now to stand, you are Witnesses of the gentle Words that fell from his Lips, comforting the Dejected, and refreshing

freshing the fainting Soul by all the Powers of Persuasion and Advice.

SERM.
XIV.

His Discourses were not calculated to tire the Patience, and bewilder the Understandings of his Auditors; but they were concise and pathetick. He was happy in the Choice of his Words, and not less so in putting them together. He affected no useless Redundancy, nor sententious Brevity. He avoided an extravagant Pomp of Words, as well as a Style that was mean and insipid. He kept a happy Medium between the two Extremes, and knew well what to say upon every Subject, and when he had said enough.

Such was he; but, alas! he is now no more! Those Lips, that were wont to pour out the Word of Truth and Righteousness, are now closed up in Death. Yet weep not for him, he is happy, but for yourselves, that you are deprived of so good a Pastor. I may say with the Prophet, *The righteous and merciful Man is taken away*; but I cannot say of his Departure, that *no Man layeth it to Heart*, since there is so much Weeping and Lamentation for the Loss of him.

Where now shall the poor Man find his Friend? To whom will the Distressed unfold their Trouble, and seek Relief? He is
P p 2 gone,

SERM. gone, and has left us here to mourn his
 XIV. Loss! And indeed 'tis hard to say which
 is greater, the Happiness he gave us while
 he was yet with us, or the Sorrow and
 Uneasiness when he left us.

But let us view him also in the domestic
 Relations of Life; and here we shall find
 him easy, gentle, and tender-hearted. He
 was a tender Husband, and an indulgent
 Father. And, as a Blessing consequent
 upon it, a mutual Return of Love and Duty
 was constantly paid him by a most tender
 obliging Partner, and most dutiful and love-
 ly Children. If we consider him likewise
 as a Friend; he had all the good Qualities
 that were necessary to do kind Offices, and
 to establish a firm and lasting Friendship.

One thing was very remarkable in him:
 He was always cheerful and in good Hu-
 mour; and never so easy and well pleased,
 as when he had been doing good,

His Conversation turned always upon the
 Agreeable; and he had an extraordinary
 Quality, very peculiar to him, of contri-
 buting, as much as he could, to the Hap-
 piness of those he conversed with, by say-
 ing every thing that was pleasing and ac-
 ceptable; and this he did to those who
 were prodigiously his Inferiors, as I myself
 have

have often experienc'd. By which means none ever went displeas'd out of his Company, unless it was that they were oblig'd to go out of it at all. And such a Quality as this must be founded upon a great deal of Judgment, as well as an extraordinary Degree of Humanity and Good Nature. He had a very good Knowledge of Men, and I should have thought him very little subject to Mistake, had he not pitch'd upon me to appear on this Occasion.

SERM.
XIV.

He was the most easy of Access of any Man living, because his great Candour and Charity dispos'd him to think well of all. No Man loved his Friends better ; and he would have rejoic'd to have forgiven his Enemies, had he any to forgive ; but none were Enemies to him ; even Envy itself found a Trumpet to his Fame, tho' it blasted the Character of every other Person. And however People disagreed and differ'd in other Matters, yet they all join'd in Admiration of him, and strove who could do the greatest Justice to his Character. In-
somuch as I have hardly ever heard him nam'd without being call'd a *good Man*, and Malice itself was forc'd to confess it.

How did all People make his Welfare their own Concern, and shew Sorrow in their
Counte-

SERM. Countenances during the Time of his Sick-
 XIV. nefs ! And sure if Prayers, and Tears, and
 ~~~~~ Wisheſ, or any thing that Man could do,  
 would have prevailed, he had never died.

He was wiſe without Affectation ; pious without Superſtition ; courteous without Diffimulation ; generous without Prodigality. Whenever he did a good Thing for any one, he ſeemed to be doing a Favour to himſelf ; and would never admit of any other Return than the Satisfaction of his own Mind upon the doing it. To ſee him was to love him ; and to converſe and be acquainted with him, was to be as happy as Innocence, and Goodneſs, and Virtue could make one. Upon his Face dwelt ſuch a Serenity and Chearfulneſs of Temper, that whoever wanted a Favour of him found it half granted in his Countenance even before it was asked ; and when it ſo happened that he could not grant it, I won't ſay his Denial, but his not granting was courteous and obliging, and made the Petitioner in a kind of Doubt whether he had it granted or no.

Such was his Humanity ! ſuch his Candour ! ſuch his-----what ſhall I call it ? Here I muſt beg Leave to put you in mind of the Indulgence I have deſired of you ; for I find I want Words to expreſs myſelf,  
 and

and can only say, that I would to God that only I, but all those that hear me this Day, were altogether such as he was. But why do I tell you of these things? You are beforehand with me in all this, and can testify the Truth of what I say, and a great deal more; for, lo! the one half of his virtuous Qualities has not been told you.

As for you, if any such are here present, who had not the Happiness to know him, I will tell you how you may know him yet; Think of every thing that is virtuous, lovely, and of good Report; abstract in your Minds all the amiable and desirable Qualities of a just and good Man, like the Rays of Light collected into a Point, and shining with the greater Lustre. Think of every thing that is apt to captivate the Affections, and to get irresistibly the Dominion of every Heart: In short, think of every thing that is good, and that was he.

Thus have I given you, tho' very imperfectly, the Character of this extraordinary Person, and shewn you with how much Lustre he shined in every Part of Life, with how much Honour he filled every Station of it. Some Acknowledgment indeed was paid to his Merit when he was advanced to a Dignity in the Church; and tho'



SERM. tho' he was not at all fond of Honour and  
 XIV. Greatness, yet every one was convinced that  
 he deserved much greater Things, and that  
 he would have done Honour to the highest  
 Station of Life in which he could possibly  
 be placed. And I believe by this time you  
 are satisfied that he has *fought a good Fight*,  
 in overcoming the World by a happy and  
 heavenly Temper, and that he has *finished*  
*his Course* in all the Capacities of a good  
 Christian and a Divine, and that he *kept*  
*the Faith* pure and entire. *For he never*  
*handled the Word of God deceitfully, nor*  
*of Men sought he Glory.* And you may be  
 also certain, that *henceforth there is laid up*  
*for him a Crown of Righteousness, which*  
*the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give*  
 him, as a Reward for all his Labours.

I see I need not ask your Tears, Sorrow  
 hath filled your Heart, and sad Affliction  
 hangs upon your Countenances, like the  
 Believers, who at *St. Paul's* Departure from  
 them, *wept bitterly, sorrowing most of all,*  
*that they should see his Face no more.* But  
 I forbear to open that Stream of Affliction  
 that flows so freely of itself. And now  
 what shall I say to comfort you? You have  
 nothing left to do now, I think, but to  
 consider which Way you may best do Ho-  
 nour



nour to his Memory; which, I think, will be in following his Example, and making that glorious Character, which I have been imperfectly describing, shine forth in every Action of your Lives.

SERM.

XIV.



You, who loved him (and who, that knew him, did not?) should make it appear by your endeavouring to be like him— You, who were his Flock, would do well to observe all the good Instructions he gave you. Let all his good and seasonable Admonitions sink deep into your Hearts; and remember the Words which he spake unto you while he was yet with you. And let us all endeavour to improve such Providences as these to our Advantage: Let it serve to shew us, that neither Wisdom nor Goodness can keep a Man from the Grave, nor cut off the Entail of Death. There is no Trust to be put even in the Lives of Kings, nor any Confidence in Princes, but all must sooner or later shake off this earthly Tabernacle: And then to whom shall we fly for Succour but to God, who is both able and willing to prepare a Place of Happiness for all such as put their Trust in him; and to grant, that after we have passed through all the Changes and Chances of this mortal Life, and that *when this Corruption hath*

Q q

put

SERM. *put on Incorruption, and this Mortal hath*  
 XIV. *put on Immortality, we may all meet to-*  
 gether in Heaven, and enjoy the unspeak-  
 able Pleasures of that celestial Paradise?

Till which happy Time, adieu thou good and pious Man ! adieu thou lovely Dispenser of God's Word ! adieu thou faithful Friend ! the Delight of Men, and the highly favour'd of God ! Thou art gone to happier Climes, to taste of the delightful Rivers of Pleasure, while we are left behind to lament thy Absence from us. We have thy Memory, and we give thee back our Tears. Thy Example shall always keep thee alive in our Hearts, and nothing shall blot out thy delightful Image there ; but, in spite of Death, thou shalt still live in our Affections, till by walking in the pleasant Path which thou hast marked out to us, we come at last to behold the Face of thee and thy God in the Kingdom of Heaven, and join with thee in singing *Hallelujahs to him that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever. Amen.*



## SERMON XV.

ACTS viii. *part of the 31st Verse.*

*And he said, How can I, except some Man should guide me?*



THESE are the Words of a Man SERM.  
*of great Authority, under Can- XV.  
*dace Queen of the Ethiopians,*  
*who had the Charge of all her*  
*Treasure, and had come to Je-*  
*rusalem to worship; and the Occasion of*  
*them was this: As he was returning and*  
*sitting in his Chariot, he read Isaias the*  
*Prophet. Then Philip, who had been di-*  
*rected by the Angel of the Lord to go to-*  
*wards the South, unto the Way that goeth*  
*down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, was order'd*  
*by the Spirit to go near and join himself*  
*to the Chariot: Accordingly he ran thither*  
*to him, and heard him read the Prophet*  
*Isaias, and said, Understandest thou what*  
*thou readest? And he said, How can I, ex-**

SER. M. *cept some Man should guide me? A modest*

XV. Answer, and very becoming an honest Mind dispos'd to find out the Truth, however unlike the Behaviour of our modern Infidels, who think themselves above Instruction, as being, in their own Opinion at least, wiser than their Teachers.

In my following Discourse, I propose to shew, 1. The Insufficiency of private Judgment in Matters of Religion. 2. The Necessity of a teachable Disposition, from the Example of the Person concern'd in the Text, and a proper Submission to the Judgment of others.

1. By private Judgment, I mean the Right which some claim of judging for themselves, exclusive of all foreign Aid and Assistance whatsoever. But this, if taken in a strict Sense, is not only insufficient, but also impossible; for no *Being*, but such as wants no Assistance of any kind, *i. e.* a *Being* infinitely perfect, is capable of doing this, because so much Perfection as any *Being* wants, so much Supply it must of course stand in need of to make up that Deficiency. God alone is then able to judge absolutely for himself, because he alone enjoys absolute Perfection, and nothing can possibly be suppos'd wanting to hinder him  
from

from doing it; so that Man, whatever Claim he may make to this Privilege, has no manner of Pretension to it; he may with equal Modesty and Justice lay Claim to infinite Perfection. But since there are some who have exalted Man to this high Station, let us see how they support him in it. Let us view this imperfect Creature, thus adorn'd with the Ornaments of the Deity, a silly Mortal cloath'd with Omnipotence, a Worm seated in the Throne of God. Well then, now he is invest'd with these absolute Perfections, is he become all-sufficient? Is he in the Possession of all Knowledge and Truth? No, his Knowledge is very small, confin'd within a narrow Circle, and, even when it is at the highest Pitch, serves only to make him the more sensible of his Ignorance. He is not thoroughly acquainted with the Nature of any one Thing in the Universe; he knows little of himself, and less of the Being above him; and even as to that small Matter he does know, he is indebted to a Multitude of People for it, small as it is, who are contributing to the little Stock. Of one he gets the Knowledge of one Thing, of another another, by which means there is something still contributing to make an Addition to his own

Discove-

SERM.  
XV.



SERM. Discoveries. From the Physician, the Lawyer, the Artift, the Husbandman, he is furnish'd with feveral good Rules and Observations concerning the Management of his Health, the Security of his Estate, and many other Neceffaries and Conveniencies of Life, which have been handed down from one to another, with perhaps some small Improvements, and they again from others before them, and fo on: For the first Beginnings of Knowledge are but small; by Degrees, as they have the Advantage of a Multitude of other Understandings from Time to Time, they grow larger, till at last they rife into Arts and Sciences.

This is the Way that Systems of Knowledge of any kind whatsoever are form'd, not by the Labour or Ingenuity of one Man, but by the Study of Thousands, and the Industry of Ages; for no Man can any more ascribe this Knowledge to himself, than a Part can call itself the Whole. The Case is this; Things are infinite, and are to be seen in infinite Views, and Men by the different Positions of their Understandings are differently situated towards them, by which means, tho' they see Things alike in general, yet, with respect to Particulars, they see them with some Difference, the Union  
of



of all which Differences makes the general Judgment, or the public Understanding; so that no one can have any more than a certain proportionate View according as he stands to Things, and this he must have; for the most inconsiderable Man upon Earth has his Point of View, as he stands to Things, and may yield Instruction of one kind or another to the wisest. Now the Case being so, that the Knowledge which a Man has, is not the natural Production of the Soil, but a Collection from Abroad engrafted upon it, 'tis a pleasant Sort of Vanity, when this becomes blended and incorporated with his own, to see a Man plume himself upon it, and place it to his own Account, as if it really was so.

Thus when a Man has got into his Possession a certain Degree of Knowledge, tho' it be indeed the Work of Ages to acquire, he cries out presently with *David*, tho' in another Sense, *I am wiser than the Aged, I have more Understanding than my Teachers*; whereas, were he stripp'd of his imaginary Superiority, and deprived of every foreign Assistance, he would have then less Understanding than the Foolish. The Knowledge that is of a Man's own Growth, abstracted from what he gets from the rest of  
the

SERM. the World, would make but an inconsiderable Figure, just as the Proportion of One to so many Thousands. And then as to Religion, 'tis just the same there as in civil Life; the Knowledge a Man has of that, over and above what comes by Inspiration from the Spirit of God, comes the same Way, by the Assistance of others. For how should we have known any Thing of Religion at all, if it was not for a Communication of Thoughts and Reasons one with another about it? Indeed, how should we know so much as that there is a God? 'Tis true, natural Reason would help us to this Discovery, and would also lead us further to this, That he must be worshipp'd, and so on to some Scheme of Religion: I say, natural Reason will do this; but what then? This natural Reason is not the Reason of an individual Person, but the Reason of Mankind, not that That would ever have made any great Progress in this Discovery. For as much as it wanted Perfection, so much of course it would want to make it compleat; it could not therefore be a sufficient Foundation to rest upon, something farther being still wanted to supply this Deficiency, which Mankind was sensible of; some Revelation from God, that might fill up the Vacuity of human Reason,



son, and be commensurate with the Hopes, Fears and Desires of every Faculty of Man. Accordingly, they always pretended to some Revelation, and whether their Pretensions were just or not, there was always a Foundation for them, as well from the Imperfection of human Reason, as from the Care and Superintendance which the Creator might be suppos'd to have over his Creatures, and from the Benevolence of his Nature, which the Excellency of their Nature might give them Hopes to confide in, whatever they might fear from his Justice. 'Tis no Wonder that this should be the Case, because it is by no means an uncommon Thing among Christians to meet with Persons, who are for resolving all the Attributes of God into that of Goodness: And not only Sinners do this, who have nothing to hope from his Justice, but even good Men themselves, who have thought, tho' not aright, that the Goodness of God had the Predominancy over the other Attributes. Indeed from his Dealings with Men, 'tis natural enough to think so, but then there is no arguing from what happens in a small Part of Time in this Life, to what will be in Eternity, where it will be seen, that God is infinite every Way, and that Justice will be done

SERM. to every Man, and every Action of Man,  
 XV. however they may escape it here in this  
 Life, through the Chance that belongs to  
 Time. But to proceed, There was always  
 I say, a Foundation for a Revelation from  
 God, to supply the Defect of human Reason,  
 and People always pretended to one,  
 and accordingly have ever appointed an Order  
 of Men to officiate in this divine Intercourse  
 between God and Man, and to set aside their  
 Time and Study to explain it to others. Now,  
 'tis monstrous to suppose, that the private  
 Judgment of any one Man could be of so much  
 Signification, where this Revelation has been  
 pretended, whether that of the *Jews*, or this  
 of the *Christians*, either to himself or to others,  
 as the united Judgment of a Body of Men,  
 whose whole Business it was (besides their  
 being Men of equal Parts, for this must be  
 supposed, where we talk of Bodies of Men,  
 and also the superior Assistance they are  
 justly, especially in the Christian Religion,  
 supposed to have,) to look into these  
 Matters, and stand in a better Situation for  
 it than any others can possibly do. If private  
 Judgment is not sufficient to carry a Man  
 any great Lengths in civil Affairs; if it will  
 not help him to attain any Art or Science  
 without

without the Assistance of those that have made such a particular Art, their Study (and he can only know his Proportion as he stands to it) much less can it do any great Matter in Religion; for we stand in no better a Situation in this Case, than in the other, nor in so good a one, because those who are appointed for Guides in these Affairs, besides, that this is their Belief and Employment, are suppos'd by the Christian Scheme to have a double Portion of the *Spirit* to assist them. And indeed, whoever considers the Importance of the Christian Religion, together with the Difficulties that must of course attend the Study of it, partly from the Language in which it was written, which has for many Years become a dead one, and partly from the Nature of the Writings themselves from particular Customs and Circumstances of those Times, so that a competent Skill in those Things is requisite, in order to the better understanding them, and explaining them to others, will see the great Reason and Necessity that a Set of Men should be employ'd about these Things, and the Necessity likewise of their being assisted by the Spirit of God. 'Tis true, the Precepts of Christianity are plain and easy, and for the most Part level to the meanest Capacities,



SERM. ties, but then a good deal is not so, a  
 XV. that which is, would have been a dead Letter still, had they not been translated from the original Language for the use of ordinary People. And besides, were they, as to the whole, ever so plain and easy, yet the wisest are so subject to the Infirmities of human Nature that they want frequently to be reminded of them, or else they would have but little effect, which also shews the Necessity there is for an Order of Men to be set apart for that Purpose, which I come now, 2dly to, consider.

It can be but of very little Signification, that there is this Provision made for Mankind, if they will not, like the Person in the Text, shew a teachable Disposition. What Use can a Guide be of to one, who thinks he wants none, who is in his own Opinion all-sufficient? To say now-a-days, how can I understand *except some Man teach me?* would pass among some for nothing but Banter and Grimace: The Language now is, I will learn of none, I have a Right to act and think for myself; and no one has any Business to deprive me of it by any Authority whatsoever, and to set himself up for my Instructor: But however this may prevail among some few conceited Men, and  
 what



whatever ill Opinions they may entertain of others, and good ones of themselves, yet it certainly argues a very degenerate State of Mind and Depravity, as refusing to suffer the Motives of Reason and Truth to have their due Influence upon us. For if it be a Truth that a Man may put Trust in his own Understanding, is it not equally so to put some degree of Trust and Confidence in another's? And if it be, how can he be in a right State, when every Truth has not its due Influence upon him. Indeed if a Man was conscious, that he was infinitely wise, and was really so, then it would be a Truth to give an absolute Credit to his own Understanding, because where no Knowledge is, by the Supposition, wanting, there no Degree of Trust should be with-held from it; i. e. if he were a God, he would have no Occasion to give any Understanding Credit but his own, for the Trust we put in others, is only to supply the Deficiency we find in our selves: But as he is but mortal Man with a limited Understanding like his fellow Creatures, so much Room there will be for a proper draw-back to this Trust, and an equal Occasion for placing a proper Degree of it in others; for God has given abroad Truth to Mankind (and not confin'd it to  
one

S E R M.  
XV.  


SERM. one Man only (for no single Man can have  
 XV. any more than a certain Proportion of it)  
 and especially to great Bodies and Societies of Men for the better Establishment of it in the World. It is right therefore to give them a proper Credit beyond a single Man ; for if it is right to give Credit to another as well as one's self, it is right to give them more in exact Proportion to their Number, their Abilities and Opportunities of finding out the Truth beyond our Selves. For tho' Number may seem to some of no great Signification in this Case, abstracted from all other Considerations, Number and nothing else ; yet if we consider it with an Addition of Judgment and Understanding, they must be of great Weight ; for if one is of any Signification, two is of double, three treble that Proportion, and so on. Suppose Men to be near upon a Par ; where they are not so, an Allowance must be made more or less in Proportion, but some Additional Weight in every Addition of Number there must be still. Indeed as long as we are Imperfect and subject to Infirmary, 'tis necessary there should be some Supply for this ; and so there is, for the Deficiencies are supplied by the Abilities of others, who according to the Differences of their  
 Genius,

Genius, Industry, Situation &c, will always warrant a mutual Trust and Dependence upon each other: Accordingly this will be always a Ground and Foundation for Humility and a teachable Disposition; and indeed there is no Way of arriving at Wisdom and Knowledge, but thro' the Gate of Humility. Pride and Conceit are the Paths that lead to infinite Error and Confusion. For the less Trust we put in others, the less Benefit can we have from them; and the less we make our Circle the smaller will our Circle be; and the more we admire ourselves, the less shall we see to admire in others, 'till at last we fancy ourselves all-sufficient. But there being no solid Foundation to support this imaginary Perfection, it commonly ends in infinite Doubts, Diffidence and Despair.

There is certainly nothing more amiable in the Sight of God or Man, than Humility and a Disposition to hearken to Instruction and Advice. 'Tis such a true Direction of the Mind, that it gains the Love of People at the same Time that it gains Instruction. And if, where there is Action, there is also necessary Reaction, 'tis the best Disposition imaginable for Instruction. For the good Opinion he entertains of others, operates

SERM.  
XV.

SERM.  
XV.

operates back upon himself with all the Advantage imaginable. In short, nothing can be wanting to such a Disposition to receive Instruction, or to create a Disposition in others, to give it. In the natural and moral World there is the same Resemblance and Analogy. Minds that are rightly dispos'd, do naturally attract each other, like natural Bodies, and when they don't do this, 'tis a Sign they are not right.

But perhaps it will be objected, that Men are fallible, and therefore can have no right to such a Trust or Credit, which it would be preposterous to give them, since they are fallible Men as our selves. 'Tis true, they are so, for which reason the Trust we put in them, is not an absolute one but limited accordingly. But after all, what if they are as fallible as we, are they not as wise too? therefore if we distrust others, should not we for the same Reason distrust ourselves likewise? But what does a Man lose by a proper Submission to Authority? Do we part with any Privilege by so doing, which we might otherwise have enjoy'd? Do we give up the use of our Understandings by giving a due Credit to the Understandings of others? Or have we less Understanding for so doing? Or rather

ther is it not demonstrably true, that by a proper Submission to the Understanding of others, you have not only your own, but the Benefit of others at the same Time? Whereas upon the other Hand, the Loss is very considerable, for the less Credit we give to others, the less Benefit shall we receive from them. And indeed a Man that will give no Man Credit but himself, ought according to his own Principles to relinquish all manner of Claim to any Benefit arising from the Maxims, Rules, Precepts, or any Sort of Knowledge whatsoever that comes from abroad. Let him give back all Conclusions, which the Industry of Ages has already form'd to his Hands, and see when he will be able to acquire the ten millionth Part of them by his own. A Being thus bereft of all his acquired Knowledge, cut off from all Benefit to be had from his Fellow-Creatures, left destitute of every foreign Help, would never arrive at any Truth, because that which could ascertain him of it, the concurring Judgment of his Fellow-creatures, would be wanting.

But perhaps it will be said, that tho' it be proper to submit to others, as to what we have to say, yet it will not be right to put a *Faith* in them, 'till they convince the *Reason*, i. e. tho' their Judgments shall be of some Weight, yet they shall be allow'd to weigh nothing at all. In answer to this, let it be observed, that when the *Reason* is



SÉR M. convinc'd, *Faith* has nothing to do, for  
 XV. 'tis Nonsense to talk of *Faith*, when we ex-  
 ~~~~~~  
 pect Demonstration. Indeed were we all
Reason, 'twould be right for all Applicati-
 on to be made to that Faculty, but since
 we are likewise compounded of Sense as
 well as Reason, and have a *Faith* also ari-
 sing out of it, and it was given us to supply
 the Defects of *Reason*; where there is a pro-
 per Demand for it, 'tis unreasonable not to
 comply with it.

If it be ask'd how far we must submit and
 give Credit: I answer as far as their Cha-
 racter requires, but to require the very
 Point is childish. You may as well ask,
 where one Colour begins, and another ends
 in the Rainbow. These are Points, tho' not
 to be fix'd by any Rule, yet Nature knows
 where to find that out, and after all the Stir
 that some make about these Things, every
 one does more or less submit, and the bet-
 ter his Disposition is, the nearer he comes to
 this Point.

The Child obeys his Parents, Governors
 and Masters, and, when he is grown up,
 sees the Reason for so doing, and enjoys the
 Benefit of it. The Man of Trade and Bu-
 siness gives Credit, well knowing that
 Trade cannot subsist without it, and the
 same holds good likewise in all other Parts
 of Life. And now shall every Thing have
 the benefit of *Faith*; but Religion? what-
 ever Reason will justify a Faith in any one,
 will

will conclude much more strongly in favour of those Doctrines that are manifestly revealed to us, and of consequence must be the Standard of divine Truth. From what has been said, it appears, that as they are Depths which the Line of human Reason is not able to fathom, every modest Searcher after Truth should take in all those Helps and Assistances, which the Goodness of God has offer'd, and every Man in Prudence must accept of, for we are not, according to *St. Paul, sufficient, of our Selves, to think any Thing of our selves*, so as to make our private Judgment an infallible Guide in matters of Religion, *but our Sufficiency is of God*, who hath abundantly provided for our Weaknesses and Wants. How preposterous and absurd is it then to *despise Authority*, or even to give up the general Judgment of Mankind to our own Fancies and Opinions. Those that will allow nothing to be put in the Scale against their Vanity and Presumption, must in justice to their own Principles expect but little regard to be paid to them, *the same measure they mete, will be measured to them again*. What will be the Consequence of such incoherent Systems of Divinity, where every Man must dictate, and judge as he pleases, according to his own Humour and Fancy? at this rate, every Thing that is useful and beneficial must be given up, to make room for *Confusion and every evil Work*. There

SERM.
XV.

is no Intent to debar Men the use of Reason in matters of Religion, as if they were inconsistent to one another ; neither is there any Occasion, that *the one shall be taken and the other left*, they both come from the same Fountain, derive their Being *from the Father of Light, with whom is no Variableness, neither Shadow of turning*. 'Tis a commendable Employment, and as such, is recommended by the Example of the *Bereans, to search the Scriptures, to see whether the Things were so*, as were represented to them ; and next to them, are *those able Ministers of the new Testament*, who without some Proof, ought not to be suspected of a Design to impose upon other People. Our Reason is scanty, and when we lean too much upon it, 'tis apt to deceive us, and as we have other Guides to come into our Assistance, can we in prudence turn our Backs upon them, or be so ungrateful as to say, *I have no need of you* ? 'Twas a Reflection of our Saviour upon the unbelieving Jews in his Time, and what he calls their *Condemnation, That Light is come into the World, and Men loved Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds were evil*.



T H E E N D.

