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THE LORD'S-DAY Evening ENTERTAINMENT,

Containing Fifty-two

Practical Discourses

On the most Serious and Important

SUBJECTS in DIVINITY,

Intended for the

USE of FAMILIES.

In FOUR VOLUMES.

By JOHN MASON, *A. M.*

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THE

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SERMON I.

The Duty of an inoffensive CONDUCT.

1 COR. X. 32.

Give none Offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of GOD.

THE Apostle, in the latter part of this chapter, is giving his Opinion upon a point of Controversy which was warmly debated in his day; *viz.* "whether or no it was lawful for Christians, on any Occasion, to eat of that "Meat which had been offered in sacrifice "to Idols."

This some denied; supposing that it gave countenance to the pagan Idolatry, was in-

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consistent with a worthy partaking of the Lord's-Supper, and might be a means of drawing back some weak converts to their heathenish Superstition.

Others affirmed it to be lawful on the following principles. —— That the meat itself could not defile their Conscience, provided they had no superstitious view in eating it; that the christian state into which they were entered, gave them a liberty of eating any thing, provided they received it with Sobriety and Thanksgiving; and that it was not fit that this part of their christian liberty should be abridged by the weakness or unreasonable scrupulosity of another Man's Conscience.

The Apostle stands as Umpire or Moderator between these two different parties; and does not absolutely decide the point in favour of either of them: but here, as well as in the fourteenth Chapter to the *Romans*, where he handles this matter more at large, he steers a middle course; and tells both parties that in such a matter as this, which was not essential to Christianity, they might each of them pursue their own way, and act according to their own judgment; provided that herein

herein they had a particular regard to these three things; 1. Not to act contrary to their Conscience, or the persuasion of their own mind concerning the lawfulness of the thing they allowed. 2. Not to disturb the peace of the Church, which they should endeavour by all means to maintain; and 3. To give no just offence to others: *For*, says he, *if thy Brother be grieved by thy meat, thou walkest not charitably (a)*. So in the Text, *give none Offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of* GOD; that is, to no one person in the World: for the Jews, the Gentiles, and Christians (which last are here meant by the Church of GOD) comprehended at that time all mankind.

In treating of these Words, I propose,

I. To open to you the nature of the Duty here recommended.

II. To enforce it with some proper heads of Motive.

1. I am to open to you the nature of the Duty here recommended. Wherein I shall shew you,

 1. What

(a) Rom. xiv. 15.

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1. What we are to underſtand by the word *Offence.*

2. With what reſtrictions the Precept in the Text muſt reaſonably be taken.

3. What is the proper latitude and extent of it in a few particulars, wherein men are moſt apt to forget it.

1. What are we to underſtand by the word *Offence.*

This word is taken in two ſenſes. The Scripture acceptation of it is very different from that in which it is commonly uſed.

In the ſacred Writings it generally ſignifies a *Stumbling-block*; or whatever is the occaſion of another's Fall. Thus it is uſed *Rom.* xiv. 20, 21. *It is evil in that man who eateth with Offence*, (that is, though eating this kind of meats be in itſelf an indifferent thing, yet if a man, by uſing this Liberty of his, be the occaſion of drawing another to act contrary to his Conſcience, his eating in that caſe is no longer indifferent, but ſinful;) *for it is good neither to eat Fleſh, nor to drink Wine, nor any thing whereby thy Brother ſtumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.* In this ſenſe it is explained *ver.* 13, of that chapter, *Judge this rather, that no Man put a Stumbling-*

bling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his Brother's way. To *offend* a Brother, in this sense, is to cause him to offend; and to *give him Offence*, is to be the occasion of his Sin; and to draw him on, by our Example, to act contrary to his own Conscience.

But the word *Offence*, in the common acceptation of it, is taken in a very different sense, to signify an occasion of *Anger*, *Grief*, or *Resentment*. Whoever finds these passions stirring in his mind, is said to be *offended*; and whatever be the Incentive or Cause of them, is called the *Offence*. — And this distinction ought carefully to be remembered; because an inattention to it hath created many needless scruples of Conscience, and been the ground of much confusion in our Ideas concerning the just nature and extent of the Duty here required.

But in this latter sense we sometimes find the word used in Scripture, as well as in the former. As *Psal.* cxix. 165. *Great peace have they that love thy Law, and nothing shall offend them*; that is, nothing shall greatly interrupt that Peace. *Mat.* xvii. 27. *Nevertheless, lest we should offend them, go thou to the Sea, and cast an Hook, and take up the Fish*

that

SERM. I. *that first cometh up*; that is, that we may not give them any just cause of Anger or Resentment against us; or let us wave our Privilege at present for Peace sake.

It is this latter sense in which I intend to open and improve the words of the Text; and consider them as a Precept, to *follow after things that make for peace*, and to *keep our Conscience void of Offence towards all men*. In which sense I proceed now,

2. To consider with what restrictions this Precept must reasonably be taken.

For there are certain limits within which it is circumscribed, and beyond which if it goes, it is no longer a Virtue. The Apostle's Exhortation is, — *If it be possible, and as much as in you lies, live peaceably with all men*. But that very command implies, that sometimes the thing is not possible. There are indeed a great many things which a wise man would sacrifice to peace; but there are some things which a good man cannot. The rights of conscience are sacred, and the obligations of Religion inviolable. And whilst a Christian stedfastly resolves at all times to keep them so, it is not possible but he must give Offence to some. The bright-

est

est pattern of inoffensive meekness, *Jesus Christ himself*, with all his gentleness of Temper and prudence of Conduct, could not *live peaceably with all Men.* His Fidelity to his Father's cause, and the Interests of Truth and Righteousness exposed him to a torrent of Envy, and brought upon him all the malignity and malice of the Jewish Priests and Rulers, who took great Offence at the testimony he bore against the Iniquity of their Conduct.

1. Then, when peace with men stands in competition with our duty to GOD, we should not be afraid of giving them Offence. This is an adjudged case, a plain determined point; that *we ought to please* GOD *rather than Man*, or chuse to offend Man rather than GOD, when we are so unhappy as to be in such a situation, wherein the offending one of them is unavoidable. These circumstances the Apostles were in when they were charged by the *Sanhedrim* never more *to preach or teach in the Name of Jesus.* To comply with this command would be a great Offence to GOD; not to comply, a great Offence to Man. But they made no difficulty of the Alternative; being determined at once to obey GOD

rather

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rather than Man; wherein they have laid down a rule for us to act by in all like cases (*b*).

Nay, in such a case, we should not only be constant to risk the Displeasure of men, but to suffer the utmost efforts of their malice, rather than deliberately offend the GOD that made us, as *Joseph* was, who dared to disobey the wicked command of his Mistress; and the three children that of *Nebuchadnezzar*. And to this Principle the Martyrs constantly adhered, and chose to endure the greatest sufferings rather than violate their Conscience, and to renounce their Lives before their Religion.

2. Not only the honour of GOD, but the rights of Conscience, must be maintained as sacred, in opposition to all that would invade them, however that opposition may offend them. By the rights of Conscience I mean that power which GOD and Nature have given to every man, to act and think in all matters that concern Religion and his Soul, not according to the authoritative decrees and decisions of men, but according to the dictates and determinations of his own Conscience;

(*b*) Acts v. 29.

ſcience, Reaſon and Judgment. Conſcience is not to be controuled by any human Authority. The very attempt to controul it is inſolent and impious. It is flying in the face of the Almighty, and counteracting his own work; who hath given to Conſcience this inviolable prerogative, to be uncontroulable by any thing but his own Almighty Power.

As nothing is more glorious than to ſuffer Perſecution in the Cauſe of God and Conſcience, ſo nothing is more wicked than to excite it. Nor is it leſs ridiculous than it is impious. Methods of violence are a very ſilly way of confuting an Error, as if cruelty were the Parent of Truth; corporeal Puniſhment the cure of mental Infirmities; and a man's mind could be enlightened by the flames that conſume his Body. Where-ever we ſee then any marks of ſuch a perſecuting ſpirit (which is ever the off-ſpring of Superſtition and Bigotry, as *they* are of Pride and Ignorance) we ſhould readily oppoſe it; and dare to be advocates for the ſacred Rights of Conſcience, where-ever we ſee them arrogantly trampled upon, however we may incur the diſpleaſure of men thereby. For herein we are Advocates for GOD, for his own

Wiſ-

SERM. I. Wisdom and Workmanship; and for that which is the very foundation of all sincere and acceptable Religion; which would be entirely at an end if the Consciences of Men were to be dictated to, domineered over, and trampled upon, by the Arrogance and Superstition of their fellow-creatures, as liable to mistake and error as other men.

3. Nor are the perverse and unreasonable humours of men to be *always* submitted to for fear of giving Offence. Where Religion and Conscience are out of the case, there ought indeed to be great Condescension and Compliance for the sake of Peace: nor would it be either wise or charitable to provoke a man of a perverse spirit by a stiff opposition in little things, even where fact and truth may be against him; which might probably kindle those flames of Contention which we should afterward find extremely difficult to extinguish. For *Solomon*'s Observation is very just, *that the beginning of Strife is as when one letteth out Water*; and the Advice he gives us thereupon is exceeding wise; *therefore leave off Contention before it be meddled with* (c). But still I say, I see no obligation

(c) Prov. xvii. 14.

gation a man is under to suffer his reason to be always controuled, and his understanding to be insulted by a proud and petulant Humour. The Truth (especially if it be very plain and important) ought to be sometimes boldly asserted, strongly proved, and closely urged; and the Vanity and Ignorance of the conceited Humourist mortified and exposed. This we sometimes owe to the cause of Truth and common Justice.

Nor ought an uncharitable and superstitious spirit to be always indulged, by our abstaining from things in their own nature innocent and indifferent, purely because some persons of that cast are pleased to censure and take Offence at them: I mean provided those things give no *real* Offence, by becoming the occasion of Sin to others. There is no reason, and no end, in being very solicitous to please those who are displeased without reason. If persons will take Offence where none is really given, it is their own fault. It is they that violate the Precept in the Text. For to *take* Offence unreasonably is to *give* it.

4. It is lawful sometimes to give Offence to others for the sake of their good. That is, when

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when that good we are able to do them cannot be done without it. This eſpecially takes place in caſe of Reproof; where a perſon's Intereſt and Wiſdom render him capable of giving it, and his Station and Character make it his Duty ſo to do.

This, it muſt be owned, is a very nice and delicate Affair: for Reproof may be given by ſome perſons in ſuch a manner as to adminiſter juſt cauſe of Offence; whereby, whatever views they had therein, they really do more harm than good. For inſtance, when a perſon takes upon him this Office, for which he hath neither Intereſt, nor Authority, nor Wiſdom to qualify him: or when the Reproof is ſo ſevere, and the ground of it ſo trifling, that it plainly appears to proceed from Pique or Pride in the perſon that gives it, rather than from any Fault in him that receives it. But if a Perſon be authoriſed to give Reproof, is capapable of it, and is ſenſible of the neceſſity of it, for the Advantage of him to whom it is owing, ſuch a one ought not to be deterred from giving it on proper occaſions, through fear of giving Offence. A Parent would tye up his hands from doing many things

for

for the real Good and Benefit of his Children, were he always to act upon this Principle, never to do any thing which may grieve or displease them. The same maxim (which is not founded on Meekness but excessive Tenderness or Timidity) would deprive some of our best Friends of an opportunity of doing us the most signal service; and indeed is a quality which one would not wish for in a Friend; and is seldom found in a real one.

5. Nor should we be afraid of giving a private Offence when it is necessary to the public good. Otherwise Magistrates would not be faithful to their Trust; nor could penal Laws be executed, nor Criminals detected; who doubtless are very much offended and displeased with those who are the instruments of bringing them to Justice.

6. We should not be too scrupulous of giving Offence in justifying an injured Character, or in vindicating the Honour and Reputation of an absent person, when aspersed or abused by the petulance of an unbridled or malicious Tongue. For, this is nothing but common Justice due to injured Innocence; and what Humanity dic-

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tates. And ſurely they who are unreaſonably ſevere on the Characters of others, can with no face of reaſon reſent a juſt and ſeaſonable animadverſion upon their own; or be offended with us for telling them a plain Truth to their face, who are guilty of a much greater Indecorum, in reporting perhaps a notorious falſhood of others behind their back.

Laſtly, When the Honour, Intereſt and Credit of Religion are manifeſtly concerned, they ought not to be meanly proſtituted for the ſake of peace; but defended with a force of Reaſon and Remonſtrance becoming the Importance of the Subject, whatever diminution it may be to our own Character in the eſteem of the perſons we oppoſe. Let them call us Bigots, if they pleaſe; we are not to betray the cauſe of common Chriſtianity in compliment to their Infidelity.

Theſe then are ſome of thoſe reſtrictions and limitations with which the Precept in the Text muſt be taken and guarded.

3. I am now to conſider the proper Latitude and Extent of it, in a few particulars wherein men are moſt apt to forget it.

And

And the particulars I mean are with respect to men's Opinions, Practices, Conversation, Commerce, Tempers, Talents, and Relations in Life.

1. We should take care we do not give a needless Offence to others in matter of *Opinion*. Especially in subjects of mere speculation; which are commonly not of importance enough for a wise man to expend his Zeal upon, much less to lose his Temper for. And yet so it often happens, that things of the smallest moment are zealously defended as essentially necessary, whilst matters of the highest concern are neglected as indifferent.

To prevent giving Offence in matters of Opinion, let us often think with ourselves thus. —— "It is reasonable to suppose, that "how much soever others differ from me, "they have the same Zeal and Fondness for "their Sentiments as I have for my own; "and are no less assured that the Truth lies "on their side, than I am that it lies on "mine; to what end then should we make "our different Opinions (of which we are "both equally tenacious) the subject of De-"bate; when there are so many other things

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" of more Importance, on which the Con-
" verſation might turn to mutual Advantage?
" To ſay, it is their Ignorance and Obſti-
" nacy that they do not think as I do,
" is great Weakneſs; becauſe for the ſame
" reaſon they may ſay, it is *my* Ignorance
" and Obſtinacy that I do not think as they
" do. Whereas the true reaſon why we do
" not ſee things in the ſame light is, becauſe
" we ſee with different Eyes, and through a
" different Medium. To brand another
" with Hereſy and Schiſm, becauſe he does
" not come up to my Standard in any par-
" ticular Modes of Faith or Worſhip, is the
" Characteriſtic of a little, narrow, proud
" Spirit. It ſavours too much of youthful
" Heat and Confidence, and goes off in pro-
" portion as we advance in Wiſdom, Grace,
" and Self-acquaintance. It is indeed genu-
" ine Bigotry,; the true Offspring of Igno-
" rance and Pride united; which I clearly
" ſee hath been the ſource of the greateſt
" Offence and Miſchief to the Church of
" Chriſt in all Ages. — What follows then,
" but that I be content that others differ
" from me as much as they pleaſe? All I
" deſire is, that I may be permitted to differ

" as

"as much from them in Peace and Cha-
"rity."

2. In like manner we ſhould take care how we give juſt Offence to weak Chriſtians in matters of *Practice*. This now is a caſe *in point*; or that to which the words in the text directly and immediately refer. In all indifferent points of Practice, (ſuch as *eating, or not eating meats offered to Idols*, was in the Apoſtle's time, in ſuch points, I ſay) we ſhould always chuſe the moſt charitable ſide as the ſafeſt. If any particular practice of our's be a means of drawing others into ſin, or encouraging them to act contrary to their own Conſcience, it is no longer an indifferent thing whether we continue in it or no. Though it be in itſelf indifferent, yet if it give real Offence to weak and ſcrupulous Conſciences, *that* is a good reaſon why it ought to be diſcontinued. This is a rule the Apoſtle hath often laid down in this caſe, and by which he was determined to form his own conduct. *If*, ſays he, *the eating meat make my Brother to offend, I will eat no more meat whilſt the world ſtands, leſt I make my Brother to offend (d).*

 3. We

(d) 1 Cor. viii. 13.

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3. We ſhould take care not to give Offence in our *Diſcourſe* or *Converſation* with others. To which end we ſhould avoid all needleſs and poſitive Contradiction; which is commonly diſguſting, eſpecially when it appears to proceed from pride and affectation; and ſometimes is the beginning of much uncharitable Contention. As we often find that they who are moſt ready to contradict are moſt impatient of Contradiction, ſo in general we may obſerve, that they who are moſt apt to give Offence, are leaſt able to bear it. Not that we are bound to indulge the Caprice of every conceited Humouriſt; but it will be often found the wiſeſt way to let ſuch have their Humour, rather than by a ſtiff Oppoſition to inflame them. A prudent, peaceable and inoffenſive Chriſtian will do what he can to render himſelf agreeable in all companies, and procure the eſteem of men by all obliging Compliances conſiſtent with thoſe few Reſtrictions I have before mentioned.

4. We ſhould take care to give no juſt Offence in our way of *Commerce* or *Dealings* with men. Either by Exaction and Oppreſ-

ſion;

sion; or by rigorous and exorbitant Claims, beyond the Rules of Equity and Mercy, where there is but small ability to answer them. This the Prophet calls *grinding the Face of the Poor (c)*: — Or by methods of Fraud, in order to secure a Profit to ourselves by the Loss and Damage of another; or by taking advantage of his Ignorance, to over-reach and deceive him. For there is but little difference in the eye of GOD and court of Conscience, whether we injuriously deprive a man of his property by *Fraud* or by *Force*. The Injustice in the former case is equal to that in the latter, though the Villany appear not so flagrant in the Eye of the World.

These things cannot fail to give great Offence, and that very justly; and especially when practised by those who profess to be governed, all the while, by the strictest principles of Christianity. The only general rule applicable to all particular cases of this nature, in order to avoid giving just Offence to any, is *that* which our Saviour hath laid down for us, and by which he requires every Christian to direct his Conduct, *viz.* "to

(c) Isai. iii. 15.

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"do to others that which, upon a change of "circumſtances, we ſhould judge reaſonable "others ſhould do to us. That is, to put "ourſelves into another's place, and to do "nothing to him but what in that caſe we "ſhould be willing to receive from him."

5. We ſhould take care not to give Offence to others by our *Tempers*. In ſome tempers there are many things very diſguſtful and offenſive, which tend very much to diſturb the peace of Society, and diſſolve the Bonds of chriſtian Love and Friendſhip. I ſhall but juſt mention two or three.

1. A vain and oſtentatious temper: when a man appears to centre all his views in himſelf, and to be ſo full of ſecret pride and ſelf-applauſe, that it is continually running over his Lips. This Temper prompts a man to make himſelf the frequent ſubject of his own Diſcourſe, to hint at his own excellencies, and to poſſeſs others with a high Idea of whatever he values himſelf moſt upon. It is eaſy to obſerve how hard ſuch perſons will labour and beg, in an oblique way, for a little Incence to their own Vanity; which if they cannot obtain from others, they ſeldom fail of ſetting them an example

by

by sprinkling it themselves. This Temper, if it prevails, is nauseous and offensive enough. But not near so bad as,

2. A rigid, censorious, and detracting Spirit, which often proceeds from the same original as the other, *viz.* secret Pride and excessive Self-love. Such men seek to raise their own Reputation for Wisdom, Wit, or Piety on the ruins of another man's: and sensible that *their* Character will make but a poor figure in the midst of others that outshine it, eclipse *them* to make their own conspicuous; hoping to appear more illustrious in proportion as they make others appear less so.

3. A passionate and revengeful Temper is a very offensive one. And not only so, but a most mischievous and hurtful one; and the fartheſt from the right Christian Temper of any whatsoever. This gives very just and universal Offence. And so does,

4. An arbitrary, over-bearing, and imperious Temper; which tyrannizes over ingenuous Modesty, and thinks to carry all before it by mere dint of Noise and Confidence. And,

Lastly,

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Lastly, A mercenary and selfish Temper; which shews a little, narrow, contracted Heart, wrapped up in itself, and (Urchin-like) shut fast to all the World beside; whereas the Heart of a good man is open and generous, dilated with universal Benevolence, and longs to diffuse Joy and Gladness all around it.

Such dispositions as these are universally odious and offensive, and lead to actions that are much more so; and therefore ought carefully to be guarded against and avoided by every one that would *keep his Conscience void of Offence towards all men.*

6. We should take care to give no Offence to others, by the abuse of those *Talents* which we enjoy more than they. If we have more Health, Understanding, and Learning, better Parts, and a better Estate than others, and grow vain and arrogant, self-sufficient and capricious on account of these, and undervalue and despise others merely for the want of them; this gives just and great Offence, and shews, that we are very unworthy of the Talents we thus abuse.

Lastly, We should take care how we give Offence in any of those several *Relations* in Life wherein Providence hath placed us, whe-

whether they be superior or inferior ones; but by a conscientious regard to the Duties and Obligations of our respective Characters, seek at once to conciliate the Favour of Men, and secure the Blessing of GOD, which he hath pronounced on those that *study the things which make for Peace.*

And having thus opened to you the nature of the Duty commanded in the text, and shewed you with what Restrictions it must be taken, and in what Latitude it is to be practised, I shall conclude now,

Lastly, With a short Exhortation to it.

Unhappy it is, and a flagrant proof of the degeneracy of the present Age, that the greatest Glory of a Christian's character should ever be mentioned by Christians themselves in a way of contempt. *An honest, quiet, inoffensive man*, is an expression often used, at once to denote and excuse some supposed intellectual Defect. Which, I think, infers too great a Compliment to Pride and Villainy; as if there could be no good sense without them. However, notwithstanding the abuse of Language, and the force of false Names, let us but adhere to the sentiments

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of Scripture, Reaſon and common Senſe, and we ſhall ſoon be convinced, that the craftieſt Villain is the greateſt Fool, and the meek and harmleſs Chriſtian the wiſeſt Man. It is true, Inoffenſiveneſs and Prudence do not always go together; no more do Wit and Wickedneſs: but ſtill a Man of the loweſt Talents, with a pure and honeſt Heart, will always be eſteemed (degenerate as the World is) a more valuable Perſon than one whoſe Abilities are much greater, but whoſe Honeſty is much leſs.

I ſhall recommend this duty of an inoffenſive Conduct from two conſiderations, and ſo conclude.

1. The firſt is from the Example of our great Lord and Maſter, *Jeſus Chriſt*. Which is not only our greateſt Motive to it (for as his Diſciples we profeſs to imitate him) but at the ſame time will be our beſt Direction in the Practice of it. In his Life and Temper we ſee it ſhine in all it's perfection; and under all thoſe due Reſtrictions beforementioned. He was not aſhamed to maintain the Cauſe of GOD and Truth at the expence of his own Peace and Fame; nor afraid to oppoſe and reprove the proud Prieſts and bigotted

gotted *Pharisees*, though he knew he should give them Offence and incur their Hatred by so doing. Here he shewed the Courage of a Lion; in other cases all the Meekness of a Lamb: and hath taught us, by his great Example, to temper the wisdom of the Serpent with the innocence of the Dove, without the Venom of the one, or the Sillinefs of the other.

And what! have we no Abmition to be like our divine Master, in his wise Temper and Conduct? Shall we be for ever imitating the Follies and Foibles of weak, deluded men, which will lead us wrong, and never regard that perfect pattern which we know will lead us right? Is this wise or reasonable? ——and when he so often calls us to imitate him——calls us with the voice of a Friend, and the bowels of a Saviour, to give him this testimony of the Love we so often profess to bear him!

When we see others then acting contrary to the Life and Temper of Jesus, and we find ourselves inclined to imitate them, let us conceive him saying to us, as he once did to *Peter* ——*What is that to thee? follow thou Me.*

2. He who makes no conscience of offending Men, will make no conscience of offending

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ing GOD. Nay, herein he actually does offend him. A juſt occaſion of Offence given to *them*, is a real Offence offered to *him*: becauſe it is a wilful violation of his Laws, which in the moſt expreſs manner have forbidden it. *To keep a Conſcience void of Offence towards* GOD, *we muſt keep one void of Offence towards man.* The only way *to grow in favour* with both.

To conclude——this character of a Chriſtian is ſo frequently recommended in the Goſpel of Chriſt, ſo ſignally exemplified in the Life of Chriſt, contributes ſo much to our preſent Peace and future Hopes, and is in itſelf ſo excellent and beneficial, and withal ſo eaſily attained by the help of a little common care and circumſpection, that nothing but an Ignorance of, or Inattention to, theſe things, can be the reaſon that ſo little ſtreſs is laid upon it in proportion to its great Importance. As we deſire then to be conſiſtent Chriſtians, and have a further evidence of our Sincerity, let us reſolve, by the grace of GOD, to make it one conſtant Rule of our future Practice.

SER-

SERMON II.

SIN the SICKNESS of the SOUL.

LUKE V. 31.

And Jesus answering said unto them, they that are whole need not a Physician: but they that are sick.

THESE Words were spoken by our Saviour in vindication of one part of his conduct, which the envious Scribes and Pharisees had unreasonably impeached. The Case was this.

Levi the Publican, or Roman Tax-gatherer, who was also called *Matthew*, Matth. ix. 9. (and was afterwards an Evangelist and Disciple of Christ, being the same with him who

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who wrote the Gospel that goes under his Name) sitting at the *Receipt of Custom* or Toll-booth, and being called by our Saviour to be a constant Attendant on his Person, immediately *left all, rose up, and followed him*, ver. 27, 28. Upon this occasion *Levi made a great Feast at his own House*, ver. 29. and invited *Jesus* and his Disciples, and a great Company of Publicans, and other of his Friends, to the Entertainment. Our Saviour made no scruple to mix himself with such Company, but accepted the Invitation, and went. And this was the action at which the austere and over-righteous Pharisees took Offence: Not only that he should come to the Entertaiment, but into such a mixed Company, where there were so many Persons of ill Repute. This therefore they readily threw in the Teeth of his Disciples, as a thing scandalous in their Master, that he should so familiarly associate with Persons, whom *they* (the Pharisees) industriously shunned, as the chief of Sinners: *Ver.* 30. *But the Scribes and Pharisees murmured against his Disciples, saying, why do ye eat and drink with Publicans and Sinners?* In *Matth.* ix. 11. which is the place parallel to this, the Charge

Charge is levelled directly against Christ himself; *Why eateth your Master with Publicans and Sinners?* SERM. II.

This Charge (though it was the effect of Malice, yet having something plausible and popular in it) he thought himself concerned to answer; and therefore replies in the text and verse following, *They that are whole need not a Physician, but they that are sick; I came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance.* The plain Sense and Meaning of which words seems to be this. — "You "mistake the Case, if you imagine that I "chuse Persons of such exceptionable Cha-"racters for my particular and intimate "Friends. My View in conversing so freely "with them is, that I may have a fairer Op-"portunity of doing them good. I attend "them not as their Companion, but as their "Physician. And where should the Phy-"sician be but among his Patients? It is "therefore out of Compassion that I visit "and converse with *them*, rather than with "those self-sufficient and self-righteous Per-"sons, who from a fixed and fond Conceit of "their own Health and Soundness, imagine "that they stand in no need of such a Phy-

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" ſician, *for I came not to call the Righteous,* " *but Sinners to Repentance.*"

The Words thus introduced and opened, afford us theſe two plain Obſervations, which I ſhall particularly treat and improve.

I. That Sin is the Sickneſs of the Soul.
II. That Chriſt is the Phyſician of it.

I. Sin is the Sickneſs of the Soul. It is a ſpiritual Malady which infects, diſorders, weakens, and (if not removed) kills the Soul as natural Diſtempers do the Body.

In treating this Obſervation, I ſhall,

1. Shew you what Sin is.

2. That it is the Sickneſs, Diſeaſe, or Diſtemper of the Soul.

3. Make Application of the Subject.

1. I am to ſhew you what Sin is.

I ſhall not be ſo particular and circumſtantial in this diſquiſition as the Matter will very well bear, (that I may not digreſs too far from the main Subject) but ſhall diſpatch it in as plain and conciſe a Manner as I am able.

If

If we would not then be mistaken in our Notions of Sin, let us attend to the Definition which the Apostle *John* gives of it, 1 *John* iii. 4. *Sin is a Transgression of the Law.* In general then, that which in any supposable Case or Circumstance is a plain and wilful Transgression of the Law of GOD is undoubtedly Sin, *for by the Law is the Knowledge of Sin, for I had not known Sin* (saith the Apostle) *but by the Law*, Rom. vii. 7. But this wants a more particular Explication.

The Law of GOD then is twofold: either *natural* or *revealed*; the Law of *Reason* and the Law of *Revelation*: the former is immutable, and written in the Heart of Man: the latter, though more particular and explicit, is in some Cases alterable; and hath been delivered to the World by holy Men and Prophets, whom GOD *at sundry times, and in diverse manners*, inspired for that purpose. But neither of them does or can contradict the other. Because upon that supposition GOD, whose Laws they both are, would contradict himself. Now that which is a known and wilful Transgression of either of

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these Laws, i. e. of the Law of Nature or Revelation, is Sin.

But now as the Law of GOD is two-fold, so is the Transgression of it. And a Law may be transgressed either by doing what it forbids, or by neglecting what it requires. Therefore if a Man does that which is forbidden either by Reason or Scripture, or neglects to do that which is required by either of them wilfully and allowedly in any supposable Circumstances, that Man sins. Because he is chargeable with a plain and palpable Violation or Transgression of the Law of GOD.

This then is the only Rule we have to go by in this Matter: And it seems so plain, that one would think there should be no danger of any one's mistaking it, either one way or the other: that is, that any one that does but impartially attend to this plain definition of Sin, should ever take those things to be Sin which are not, on the one Hand; or think those things to be no Sins which really are so, on the other. For it is only considering what one Law of Reason or Revelation does such an Action contradict or transgress, and the matter is decided. If upon a competent Acquaintance with those

Laws

Laws we find it contradicts none of them, the Action is no Sin, however ſome weak and uncharitable People may cenſure it; or if we find it certainly does contradict ſome one of them, it certainly is a Sin, however ſome ignorant and profane Men may pretend to juſtify it. And this I think is all that is neceſſary to be ſaid under this Head. However it may not be amiſs to ſubjoin two or three brief Remarks by way of Corollary or Inference. Hence then I infer,

1. That the Bounds between good and evil are not vague and uncertain, but fixed and determinate.

Though the loweſt degree of what is unlawful may not perhaps by ſome Perſons, and in certain Circumſtances, be eaſily diſtinguiſhed from the utmoſt of what is lawful, yet there are always certain fixed Limits or Boundaries which part the extremes of both: which will ſoon be diſcerned by every one that will but give himſelf Liberty and Leiſure ſeriouſly to attend to the Rule before mentioned: whereby no man of an honeſt and unbiaſſed Mind can be at a loſs to judge of, and diſtinguiſh between Good and Evil.

It is true, that may be Sin in one perſon that is not ſo in another. Becauſe that Ac-

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tion which is fit and right and reasonable in one Person may not be so in another. And the same Action may be lawful at one Time and not at another: because the Circumstances of Time and Place, *&c.* may render it unfit and unreasonable. But still the Rule holds universally; (*viz.*) "that whatsoever "Action, all Circumstances considered, at "any particular time appears to be contrary "to any part of the Law of Nature or Re-"velation, that Action is undoubtedly sin-"ful. And that Action in which there ap-"pears no such Contradiction or Contrariety "to any part of those divine Laws is not "sinful." And hence it will further follow,

2. That there is a great deal more Sin in the World than some People are willing to allow.

Men in general are apt to entertain too slight and superficial notions of Sin: both of it's Nature and Consequences; or what it is, and what it deserves: either not allowing many things to be Sin which, in the Sight of GOD, certainly are; or not imagining the Consequences of it to be so very fatal as they will hereafter be found to be. And all for want of judging of both by some fixed, right and certain rule: or owing to their forming

a Judg-

a Judgment by ſome wrong rule; either by the wrong Notions of others, or ſome falſe Principles of their own. And hence it is that ſome Perſons will juſtify thoſe things as innocent or indifferent, which to others who have a better Underſtanding in religious things, appear *exceeding ſinful.*

3. From this plain and ſhort Definition of Sin we ſee the Folly and Abſurdity of ſuppoſing that any do, or can, in this World, live entirely free from it. In direct contradiction to Scripture, which expreſsly declares that this is what no Man ever did, or can do *(a)*. Whatever Action in any Circumſtance or Perſon is contrary to any part of the Law of Nature, or the Word of GOD, *that* is Sin. And ſurely if we conſider but the great Extent of theſe Laws, (which the Pſalmiſt ſays, are *exceeding broad)* together with the Weakneſs of our Frame, the Corruption of our Natures, the Deceitfulneſs of the Heart, and the Temptations of the World and Devil, it could never enter into our Thoughts, that it was poſſible for any mere Man, in the preſent ſtate, and under his preſent diſadvantages, to come up

(a) See 1 John i. 8, 10. James iii. 2. 1 Kings viii. 46. Pſal. cxliii. 2. 2 Chron. vi. 36.

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fully to all that the divine Laws require of him; so as never to transgress any one of them, either in point of Omission or Commission. This is great Enthusiasm. And in short to assert it, is itself a Sin. Because it is to assert a Falshood; and that which evidently appears to be so both from Scripture and Reason.

And having thus shewed you what is Sin, I am now,

2. To consider it as the Sickness, Disease or Distemper of the Soul.

The whole, saith our Saviour, *have no need of a Physician, but they that are sick.* That is, (as he explains himself in the following Words) the self-righteous have no need (in their Opinion) of a Saviour, but the self-convicted Sinner, ver. 32. *I came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance.* Hence then it follows, *that Sin is the Sickness of the Soul.*

To illustrate which Proposition I need only draw a Parallel between *this* and the Sickness of the Body. Which will set the matter in an easy and familiar Light; and shew you the great Propriety of this Representation of Sin, as the Sickness or Distemper of the Soul,

And

And here I ſhall only mention a few obvious inſtances of Agreement, and take care not to torture or overſtrain the Metaphor by deſcending to low and imaginary points of reſemblance: a charge which is often brought, but too juſtly, againſt this method of Diſcourſe; which, however, when conducted with judgment, is very proper and profitable, and attended with theſe Advantages, that it is equally ſuited to all Capacities, conveys to the mind the moſt uſeful Inſtructions in the eaſieſt manner, and helps the Memory to retain them.

Now the Similitude between the Sickneſs of the Soul, and that of the Body, will appear very obvious, whether we conſider the *Cauſe*, the *Progreſs* or the *Effects* of both.

1. If we conſider the *Cauſe* of them.

Sickneſs is nothing but an ill Habit of the Body, either received from others or contracted by ſome irregular Acts of our own. So Sin is an ill habit of the Mind, either received from others, or contracted by frequent evil Actions.

1. Some bodily Diſorders are received by Infection from others. So the original Diſorder of our Minds we receive from the Contagion

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tagion of our first Father's Sin; which hath spread its fatal Taint through the whole human Nature. So that we are *conceived in Sin*, Psal. li. 5. *And who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* Job xiv. 4. As some derive an infirm and sickly Constitution from their Parents; so we all of us derive many spiritual Disorders, and a weak and depraved Nature from our first Parents. But,

2. Beside such hereditary Distempers there are many others which Persons contract themselves, by intemperate Gratifications or irregular Practices. So, beside original Sin, there are many actual Transgressions with which the human Soul is distempered, which it hath only to charge upon itself; and these are exceeding numerous and various, and what we have most reason to fear and lament. And the Case of that Man must be very dangerous, whose infirm Constitution, received from his Parents, is continually more and more weakened by constant Excess and Intemperance.

And as some Constitutions are more subject to some Distempers than others, so some Tempers are more subject to certain Sins than others. And a Man's peculiar governing Sin is oftentimes as visible as the predominant

nant Fault of his bodily Conſtitution. As ſome Conſtitutions are more ſubject to a *Fever*, a *Tympany*, a *Palſy*, or *Lethargy*, than others; ſo ſome Men's Tempers are more inclined to *Paſſion*, *Pride*, *Diffidence*, or *Lukewarmneſs* than others. Which Vices of the Mind bear a Reſemblance to the forementioned Diſtempers of the Body.——But the mention of theſe things may ſuffice.

2. We may obſerve a good Analogy or Agreement between the Diſtempers of the Mind and thoſe of the Body, if we attend to the *Manner in which they invade us, or the Progreſs which each of them make.* For Inſtance,

1. Bodily Diſtempers ſometimes *ſteal and grow upon us inſenſibly*; ſo do ſome Sins: Their firſt Aſſault is ſo imperceptible, and their firſt Progreſs ſo ſlow, that we are ſcarce ſenſible of them till they have gained a conſiderable head; and are at a loſs to think when and how they began at firſt to invade us; and ſurprized to find ourſelves ſo eaſily overcome by that Sin which perhaps we little thought ourſelves in Danger of. As we carry the Seeds of Diſtempers in our Bodies, ſo we carry the Seeds of Sin in our Souls: which though we may not be preſently aware of, yet when

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when the Sun-shine and Showers of Prosperity and Peace impregnate and cherish them, they soon shoot forth and discover themselves in the Life or Temper; and which (if they are suffered to take root and grow,) will require no small Pains to eradicate.

2. As bodily Distempers *gain Strength by Neglect and Indulgence*, or by our continuing in the same Course that brought them upon us; so do the Distempers of the Mind. The longer Sin is countenanced or let alone, the deeper Root it takes in the Heart; the more natural it becomes: So that to oppose it is like *repelling Nature*. It is a Maxim among Physicians, *Obsta Principiis:* Take care to stop the Beginnings of a Distemper. Nip it in the Bud. A rule that is of equal Use and Importance in the Distempers of the Mind. For it is not to be imagined how fast Sin grows upon us by Neglect, much more by Indulgence.

All Vice stands on a Precipice (*b*). And going on in a Course of it, is going down-hill. It will run fast enough of itself if we but neglect to stop it; much faster if we push it on by studied Indulgences. And, in pursuance of the

(*b*) Omne in Præcipiti Vitium stetit. *Juv.*

the ſame Metaphor, the further it runs the more Strength and Speed it acquires. Again,

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3. The Diſtempers of the Body *are then moſt dangerous when the Patient is leaſt ſenſible of them*; ſo are the Diſtempers of the Soul.

It is a ſign the Diſtemper is very high and raging when it hath ſeized the Head, and produced a *Delirium*. The Patient then, perhaps, is in moſt Eaſe, and thinks himſelf well; appears jocund and pleaſed; and talks apace of his worldly affairs, without expreſſing the leaſt Concern about his preſent Danger, which his Friends cannot perſuade him he is in. He thinks himſelf to be as well as they, but they know that now, in reality, he is worſe than ever, and in the greateſt Danger of Death.

In juſt ſuch a melancholy Caſe may we obſerve ſome to be, who are under the Power of their ſpiritual Diſtempers. When Sin hath got the whole poſſeſſion of the Soul, it often affects the Head, diſturbs the Reaſon, and diſorders the Powers of the Underſtanding. So that Sinners think themſelves well, when they never were worſe. Think themſelves and their Souls ſafe enough, when they never were in more Danger. There is

no

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no perſuading them that their ſtate is ſo bad as it is; that they are in great Danger of eternal Death. They will argue to the contrary. But their Reaſoning is only Raving. They feel nothing, therefore they fear nothing; and imagine that they are as well, and that they ſhall be as ſafe, as they who ſeem to be under ſo much apprehenſion and concern for them. When Sin thus proceeds from the Heart to the Head, ſeizes the Underſtanding, and makes a Man turn even his own Reaſon againſt himſelf, and the Salvation of his Soul, his caſe then becomes very deplorable, and almoſt deſperate.

When this is the caſe in bodily Diſtempers, the Patient is ſeldom brought to his ſenſes but by the ſevereſt and moſt ſmarting external Applications; and a Sinner ſo hardened in Sin as to become inſenſible of it, and of any Danger from it, is ſeldom brought to a right ſenſe of his ſtate, but by ſome very ſore continued Affliction or ſevere providential Viſitation.

Theſe few Inſtances may ſerve to ſhew the Similitude or Reſemblance between the Diſtempers of the Body and thoſe of the Soul,

Soul, with regard to their *Beginning* and *Progreſs.* SREM. II.

3. The Reſemblance is in ſeveral inſtances no leſs plain and natural with regard to their *Effects* and *Conſequences.*

I will mention but a few of the moſt obvious, that I may not ſeem to overſtrain the Metaphor.

1. Sickneſs *weakens* or *infeebles* the Body, and renders it unfit to diſcharge it's proper Functions: the ſame Effect hath Sin upon the Soul.

It obſcures the Underſtanding, ſenſualizes the Affections, perverts the Will, clouds the Memory, and debilitates all the rational and reflecting Powers. Preſſed with a Load of Guilt, it is unable to exert itſelf with it's native Force and Vigour in all it's moſt noble Operations.

The three great Exerciſes and Operations of the Soul, are *Reflection*, *Conſideration* and *Foreſight*. By the *firſt*, we look back upon what is paſt; by the *ſecond*, we form a Judgment of what is preſent; and by the *laſt*, we look forward to what is to come. All which were deſigned for the ſafety of the Soul; that we might grow wiſe by what is paſt,

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paſt, improve what is preſent, and prepare for what is future. But when Sin hath once got the aſcendant in the Soul, all theſe three Operations are ſtopped; at leaſt greatly interrupted, with regard to any Benefit the Soul can receive by them. It takes from the Sinner all Reflection, Conſideration and Foreſight, about the ſtate of his Soul, or the concerns of his Salvation At leaſt, his *Reflections* are ſo inaccurate and confuſed, that he takes no Warnings by his paſt Sins and Dangers; his *Conſideration* is ſo ſlight and ſuperficial, that he is ſeldom or very little touched with the Rebukes and Admonitions of GOD's Word and Providences; and his *Foreſight* ſo ſhort and ineffectual, that he is little concerned about what is to come; or what is like to be his future Condition forever. Or if he *foreſees* the Evil, he hath not the Power or the Wiſdom to *avoid it*.

Such miſerable Havock doth Sin make in the Soul in which it predominates. So ſadly doth it diſguiſe it, and diſorder all it's Faculties. A Man rendered weak and unfit for any Service, and pining away apace under the ghaſtly Symptoms of a haſty Conſumption, is but a faint Emblem of a Sinner whoſe

Soul

Soul lies in a weak, helpleſs, languid, dying Condition under the Power of Sin. SERM. II.

2. Sickneſs always *brings Pain and Suffering* to the Body; ſo doth Sin to the Soul. Which is another inſtance in which the Simile is very natural.

I need not deſcribe the Pains which bodily Sickneſs brings with it. We know them too well by Experience: only you may obſerve they are of two Sorts; (*viz.*) thoſe which it brings of itſelf, and thoſe which it occaſions by the means that are proper and neceſſary for it's Cure. And both theſe kinds of Pain doth Sin bring upon the Soul.

1. It often brings Pain and Suffering *immediately along with it.* For there are ſome Vices which in their own Nature give immediate Anguiſh to the Mind, and carry their own Torment along with them; ſuch as Paſſion, Envy, Malice, Hatred, &c. And almoſt all other Sins produce it as their neceſſary Effect even in this Life. So Avarice and Worldly-mindedneſs diſtract the Soul, and betray it into a thouſand Snares and Diſquietudes it might otherwiſe avoid. And Pride, Intemperance and Idleneſs have Mortification, Miſery and Diſtreſs following them

 cloſe

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close at their Heels. In short, Sin puts all the Passions of the Mind (as a Distemper does the Humours of the Body) into a Flame and Ferment, which create very painful perturbations there. Besides,

2. When Vice tyrannizes in the Heart, it lays the foundation of still greater Pain in those *bitter Remorses of Repentance which is it's only Cure.* What painful Operations and severe Mortifications is the sick Man often obliged to submit to for the Recovery of his Health! He sometimes feels more Pain from the Remedy, than he hath yet done from the Disease. And submits to it only to prevent the Disease from becoming fatal.

Just so it is with one who hath long accustomed himself to Sin, and lived under the power of it. Much hath he suffered from it already; but more must he suffer to be cured of it: which can only be by a sincere Repentance, which will cost him great Mortification, Self-denial and Sorrow.

And under this Head I shall just observe, that as no Distempers of the Body can be cured but by resolutely abstaining from those ill Habits of Excess and Intemperance which occa-

occaſioned them; ſo there can be no true Repentance (which is the only cure of the Soul) without immediately breaking off thoſe ſinful Practices and Cuſtoms which have brought it into ſo wretched a Condition. But to proceed with the Parallel.

3. The Diſeaſes of the Mind may be compared to thoſe of the Body, as they are what *we are not able of ourſelves to get rid off.*

We often know not the nature of our Diſeaſe; or what particular Diſtemper it is that raiſes ſuch a Diſorder in our animal Frame. Or if we do, we may not know perhaps what is proper to abate it's Force, or remove it. And the weak ſtate into which we are thereby reduced renders us, in a great meaſure, unable to help ourſelves: ſo that we ſtand in great need of the Advice and Aſſiſtance of others.

Into ſuch a ſtate now doth Sin reduce the Soul. It finds itſelf diſordered and weakened in it's ſeveral Powers and Faculties; incapable of exerting itſelf with it's wonted life and vigour in the duties and exerciſes of Religion; feels it's ſpiritual Strength decayed, and a ſad Languor attending it in

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all it's holy Functions: evident Symptoms that ſome way or other, it is become much diſtempered. And yet perhaps it may not be ſenſible of the nature of it's Diſtemper; or what particular Sin, or complication of Sins, hath occaſioned it; or what is the beſt way to be freed from it. Or if it does know this, it is ſo enfeebled that it can do but little for itſelf; and by many unſucceſsful Efforts is convinced that it ſtands in need of ſome more effectual aſſiſtance in order to it's Recovery. However,

4. I would further obſerve, that though a perſon labouring under a bodily Diſtemper is not able to do much for himſelf, yet *there are ſome things* which he may do towards his Recovery, and which, if he ſincerely deſires to be recovered, he will do.

He may refrain from that kind of Diet which inflames the Diſtemper, though it be ever ſo grateful, and take thoſe kind of Medicines which are proper to abate it's Force, though ever ſo diſtaſteful. He may apply to the moſt ſkilful Phyſician in his reach, and follow his Directions, and continue in the Courſe preſcribed by him till, by the

Bleſſing

Bleſſing of GOD, he recovers his wonted Health.

In like manner the Sinner; though he cannot effectually help himſelf, or deliver himſelf from the power of Sin, yet there are many things which, even in his preſent ſtate of Inability and Guilt, he may do in order thereunto; and which, were he but as ſenſible of the Sickneſs of his Soul, as he is of that of his Body, he readily would do. For inſtance, he may refrain from many open acts of Sin, and ſhun the known occaſions of them; he may abſtain from many criminal Gratifications, though ever ſo agreeable to his depraved taſte; and uſe many means proper for ſubduing his vicious Habits, though ever ſo repugnant to his corrupt Propenſions. He may attend the ordinary means of Grace, which GOD himſelf hath appointed for the Cure of his ſpiritual Maladies; and apply to the great Phyſician of Souls for his ſovereign Grace to make thoſe means effectual. All this he may do, and is required to do, and muſt do if he would have his Soul cured of the Diſtemper of Sin. And in this reſpect the Parallel is very juſt. I add,

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5. When the Body is perfectly recovered of a dangerous Distemper, it is commonly more strong and healthy afterwards than it was before.

By the means that had been used for it's Recovery, it is cleared of those gross and ill Humours which had been long contributing towards it's Illness, and so becomes more healthy and sound than ever.

So when the Soul, by the Grace of GOD. and a hearty Repentance, is recovered from some great and grievous Fall, it not only regains it's former Strength, but gains greater. Is more refined from the Dregs of Corruption, and becomes more watchful and cautious and steady in it's future Walk: more holy and humble and heavenly in it's Temper. Which is very observable in the Spirit and Behaviour of *David* and *Peter* after their Repentance.

Lastly, Sickness, if it be not cured, proves at last the *Death of the Body*: so Sin, if it be not subdued, at last proves the *Death of the Soul*.

The death of the Body is it's Separation from the Soul; and the death of the Soul is it's Separation from GOD. Because as the

Life

Life of the Body consists in it's Union with the Soul by certain Laws and Bonds to us unknown; so the Life of the Soul consists in it's Union with GOD by Faith and Holiness.

And having thus particularly considered Sin as the *Sickness* of the Soul, I should now proceed,

II. To consider Christ as the *Physician* of it.

But this must be the subject of the following Discourse. In the mean time I shall close all with a few Remarks upon what hath been said. And,

I. Having shewn you, in several instances, that there is a very plain and obvious Resemblance between the Sickness of the Body and that of the Soul, it is but just that I observe to you that there are some instances wherein there is as great a *Dissimilitude or Difference between them.*

I shall but just mention three.

1. Men are generally more sensible of their bodily Distempers than they are of those of their Souls.

Though the *latter* are really as much more grievous than the *former*, as Sin is a greater Evil than Suffering.

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2. Men are generally more willing and more heartily desirous to be delivered from their bodily Distempers than from their spiritual ones.

And the reason of this I have just mentioned; *viz.* because they are generally more sensible of them.

3. Some Distempers of the Body evade all the power of Medicines, and baffle the Skill of the most able Physicians, and are absolutely incurable: whereas under every Distemper of the Soul there are the most sovereign Remedies, and a never-failing Physician at hand who is always ready to help us.

What those Remedies are, and who that Physician is, will be seen in the following Discourse. In the mean time I proceed with my Remarks.

II. This Subject may suggest to us many useful Thoughts, and may be improved by us for our Comfort and Instruction under every Illness or Distemper that may hereafter befall us.

What a sad Variety of Pain and Sickness do we see Mortality subject to! and what kind or measure of them may fall to our

share

ſhare before *we are abſent from the Body*, we know not. However, as they are deſigned for wiſe Ends, ſo they are capable of being improved to very good purpoſes, whilſt we reflect with ourſelves thus:

"How grievous is this Affliction to my "Body! O that Sin were as grievous to my "Soul!——Alas! How much more ſenſible "am I of Suffering than of Sin! though the "*latter* is by far the greater evil: becauſe it "is the cauſe of the *former*; for had there "been no Sin, there had been no Suffering. "——This Diſeaſe of my Body, perhaps, "was ſent to cure the Diſeaſe of my Soul. "Lord, let that be the Effect. And I will "ſubmit to and bleſs the *Remedy*. The "moſt effectual Medicines are ſometimes "the moſt diſtaſteful.——How deſirous am "I to have this bodily diſorder removed? O "that I were as deſirous to have the Diſ-"tempers of my Soul cured! How aſſidu-"ouſly do I apply to a Phyſician for my "Body, and punctually follow his Preſcrip-"tions and Directions to regain my Health! "O that I could but as earneſtly by Faith "and Prayer apply to Chriſt, the ſovereign "Phyſician of Souls, and as carefully ob-

"ſerve

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"serve the infallible Directions of his Word "and Spirit."

I shall conclude all with one Remark more. And that is,

III. What hath been delivered upon this Subject does very happily illustrate one great Truth, which Scripture seems plainly to reveal, but which some have found it difficult to conceive of; and that is this, *That though a Sinner's Destruction be owing to himself, yet his Salvation is owing to the free Grace of* GOD.

I say, what hath been delivered illustrates this Principle, and sets it in a plain and easy Light. For when a Person, by applying to an able Physician, and carefully following his Directions, is raised up from a dangerous Fit of Illness, is he said for that reason to cure himself? No, next to the Blessing of GOD, his Recovery is justly attributed to the Physician to whom he applied; but, had he not applied to him, and used the proper means for his Recovery, he might be justly said to have cast himself away; especially if he had brought the Distemper upon himself. So when a Sinner, by applying

ing to Chrift by Faith and Prayer, and following the Directions of his Word and Spirit, is delivered from the power of Sin, which would otherwife prove the Death of his Soul, his Salvation cannot be attributed to himfelf, but to Chrift alone; whereas, had he not thus applied to him, his Condemnation and Ruin would have been owing to himfelf.

SER-

SERMON III.

CHRIST the PHYSICIAN of the SOUL.

LUKE V. 31.

And Jesus answering said unto them, they that are whole need not a Physician; but they that are sick.

IN these Words of our Saviour, I observed, there are two Propositions plainly implied, *viz.*

I. That Sin is the Sickness of the Soul.
II. That Christ is the Physician of it.

The first of these Propositions I have endeavoured to open and improve in the preceding

ceding Discourse, and shall now apply myself directly to the second, *viz.* SERM. III.

That Christ is the Physician of Souls.

Having viewed our Malady, let us now turn our Eyes to the Remedy. For though Sin be our Disease, Christ is our Physician. This is the character he assumes to himself in the text; and under this character we are now particularly to consider him. *The whole* (saith he) *have no need of a Physician, but they that are sick.* This is a character and office that as properly belongs to him, as those of *Prophet*, *Priest*, and *King*; though it be not so often taken Notice of.

My design at present then is, particularly to improve this Thought; to present it in various Views, and set it in a plain, familiar Light; in order to enhance our Love and Esteem for the great Redeemer, and convince us of our need of him. And here,

I. Let us consider how suitably this Office belongs to him.

II. What distinguishing marks of Preheminence are peculiar to him under this Character.

III. What

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III. What Regards are due to him from us as our spiritual Physician.

Lastly, I shall make a practical Improvement of the Subject.

I. Let us consider how suitably this Office belongs to him.

And that this Character properly belongs to him, appears from his very Name, *Jesus*, which signifies a *Saviour*; and from his great Design in coming into the World, which was *to save Sinners*, 1 Tim. i. 15. or *to save his People from their Sins*, Matth. i. 21. for he is their *Saviour* only as he is their *Physician*. By saving them from *Sin*, he saves them from *Death*. The Physician's Office, is to save the Body from Death; the Office of Christ, for which he came into the World, was to save our Souls from Death: To heal their Diseases, restore their Health, and recover them to Life and Happiness.

And this he does three Ways, *viz.* by his *Word*, by his *Spirit*, and by his *Grace*. By the *first* he convinces them of their need of a Cure; by the *second* he persuades them to accept it; and by the *last* he actually applies it.

1. Christ

1. Christ as their Physician recovers the Souls of Sinners by his *Word*. This is ordinarily the first means he uses for their Recovery. Whereby he convinces them, or makes them sensible of their Danger or Malady, and the need they stand in of his Grace for their Cure and Recovery. The Word of GOD is profitable for *Conviction* of Sin, as well as *Instruction* in *Righteousness*.

If we judge of Sin only by the common notions of Men, we shall be very apt to form a wrong Judgment of it. In that view it may appear to us a light and trivial, if not a harmless and inoffensive thing. And the frequent observance thereof in others, who live unconcernedly in it, is too apt to take off that horror of it from our Minds, which we should ever entertain.

Whereas the Word of GOD represents it to us in a very different Light; as exceeding vile and odious in it's Nature; infinitely destructive in it's Consequences; most hateful to GOD, and most hurtful to our Souls. It sets before us the ruinous tendency, the pernicious effects, and the dreadful demerit of it; And plainly shews the Sinner, that nothing but eternal Death and Misery can be the Conse-

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Consequence of his loving and allowing it. For however the World, and a Man's deluded Heart may flatter him, the Word of GOD will not. But tells him plainly, that *neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, nor Extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of* GOD, 1 Cor. vi. 9. *That Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, shall be rendered to every Soul of Man that doth Evil: That doth not obey the Truth, but obeyeth Unrighteousness,* Rom. ii. 8, 9. And, that GOD *will render to every Man according to his Deeds,* ver. 6.

These plain and absolute Warnings tend to awaken the Sinner's Conscience, and to convince him of the Need he stands in of divine Grace for his Help and Recovery. Just as a person languishing under a fatal Distemper, that is continually growing upon him, from a sense of present Pain, and a prospect of approaching Death, cries out, "O! what shall I do for Help? where shall "I apply for Ease and Health?" So the sensible Sinner, under a Conviction of his Guilt and Danger, of the unimagined Evil of Sin, and the infinite Misery it is bringing upon him,

him, cries out with the awakened Jailor, O! *what shall I do to be saved?* "How shall I "escape the Wrath of a justly incensed God, "which my Sins have provoked, and which "I now see pointed at my guilty Head ready "to blast me?" And this now leads him to the Remedy which the Gospel hath provided, and shews him his need of the Grace it freely offers for his Help and Recovery; to heal and save his Soul.

And it is with such a Conviction of Sin, and of the need of Grace and Pardon, that the Recovery of the Sinner usually begins. And this first step towards his Cure, *viz.* a thorough sense of his Distemper and Danger, Christ our spiritual *Physician* generally effects by his Word: by setting home upon the Conscience of the Sinner, with a divine Efficacy, some Portion of Scripture, either in hearing, reading or meditating, which is suitably adapted to the true state of his Soul; and thereby exciting in him a deep and durable sense of the greatness of his Danger, to which he never before attended.

2. Another means which Christ makes use of as the *Physician* of Souls for the Recovery of Sinners is, the *inward Influence and Opera-*

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tion of his Spirit. Whereby they are effectually perſuaded to accept of that Grace, which they were before convinced was ſo needful for their Salvation, and to comply with whatever is neceſſary in order hereunto. This now carries on the work a good degree further, and is another conſiderable ſtep towards the Sinner's Recovery. The former without this is nothing but a mere Conviction, ſuch as *Ezekiel*'s Hearers, *Herod* and *Felix* had, which ſoon decayed, and came to nothing; which ſtruck ſome Light into the Underſtanding, and made ſome Impreſſions on the Conſcience, but never gained the Will.

There are none, perhaps, if the Queſtion were put to them, *Are you willing to be ſaved by Jeſus Chriſt;* but would readily anſwer in the Affirmative. But were the Queſtion to be urged more cloſely; *Will you then comply with, and ſubmit to, thoſe things which are abſolutely neceſſary to your Intereſt in that Salvation?* Were they ſenſible what it is to be ſaved (as they who are ſeriouſly convinced by the word of GOD, as before mentioned, are ſuppoſed to be) they muſt directly anſwer in the Affirmative ſtill. But were the Queſtion to be preſſed home ſtill more particularly;

ticularly; *Will you resolve then, by divine Grace, immediately to break off that Course of Sin you have lived in, whatever Mortification it may cost you? and conscientiously practise those Duties of Piety and Virtue you have so long neglected, whatever Difficulties may discourage you? will you constantly oppose your darling Sin, and carefully avoid every Temptation that leads to it?* The Reason, the Understanding, and Conscience of the Sinner will still answer, YES. And there may be for a while, not only a ready Purpose, but some faint *Efforts* towards this; but as there remains still a secret Reluctance in the Will, and a carnal Bias on the Heart, *that* by degrees will gain the better of all the dictates of natural Reason and Conscience, and insensibly bring back the Soul to it's wonted Indolence, Stupidity and Neglect. So that the most hopeful Prospects, and the fairest Beginnings of Goodness, may be lost, and *like the Morning Cloud or early Dew* soon pass away; and all for want of the *Will* being gained over, and thoroughly wrought upon, by divine Grace, which is freely offered to Sinners by the occasional Operations and Influences of the holy Spirit upon their Minds:

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which if not rejected, but sincerely improved, will effectually correct this obliquity of the Will, and dispose it heartily and constantly to comply with every thing necessary to Salvation.

Lastly, The Sinner being thus made heartily willing to accept of the Grace of Christ, as necessary to his Recovery, *Christ then completes it by actually bestowing that Grace upon him:* which *enables* him to do what before he was so sincerely *willing* to do, in order to his Salvation. Whereby he finds most of the Difficulties that before threatened him, to vanish, and the rest to be much less than he apprehended.

And as this divine Grace which renews, sanctifies, quickens and confirms the Soul, is that to which the Recovery and Salvation of it from Sin and Death is supremely owing, and as this is the Gift of GOD, freely offered to all that will accept it; hence it is that our Salvation in Scripture is so often attributed to it. Eph. ii. 8. *By Grace are ye saved. I can do all things*, saith the Apostle, *through Christ which strengtheneth me*, Phil. iv. 13. *By the Grace of* GOD *I am what I am*, 1 Cor xv. 10.

Now

Now this Grace, as it is freely offered to all, ſo it may be reſiſted by ſome. And actually is by thoſe who *reject the Counſel of* GOD *againſt themſelves, and judge themſelves unworthy of eternal Life*; who perſiſt impenitently in their Sins, and refuſe to comply with the ſaving methods of the Goſpel.

And to this indeed, and to this only, is the Condemnation of Sinners owing; that they obſtinately ſtand out againſt the Admonitions of GOD's Word and Spirit: and refuſe the Grace that is freely offered to ſave them. Were it never offered them, they would indeed have ſomething to plead at the Bar of GOD in arreſt of Judgment. But the Conſciouſneſs of their having often rejected it, when it had been ſo freely and frequently offered, is that which will render them ſelf-condemned and ſpeechleſs there. Thus you ſee how the Salvation of Sinners is owing to the Grace of GOD; but their Condemnation to themſelves. When a Patient is raiſed up from a dangerous Diſtemper, by taking the proper Medicines adminiſtered to him, it is the Phyſician, not himſelf, to whom the Cure is to be aſcribed; but if he dies, by obſtinately refuſing to take

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his Remedies, his Death may properly be said to be owing to himself. So a Sinner that is saved by the effectual Grace of Christ hath no more room to boast that he saves himself, than a dying Patient hath that is wonderfully recovered by the Skill, Care and Kindness of his Physician. So that all *Boasting is excluded even by the Law of Faith*, as the Apostle tells us, Rom. iii. 27.

Thus you see in what manner Christ acts in quality of the *Physician of Souls*, and how properly that Character belongs to him. It arises from his Character of a *Saviour*. For his great Design in coming into the World, was *to save Sinners*. Which he does by *convincing them by his Word, persuading them by his Spirit*, and then *actually bestowing upon them that Grace which effectually recovers them*, and renders them meet to partake of that Salvation which he hath purchased for them. I now proceed,

II. To consider some of the peculiar and distinguishing Properties which belong to Christ under this Character of the Physician of Souls.

Which

Which are ſuch as theſe: He is the moſt *able* and *ſkilful*, the moſt *tender* and *compaſſionate*, the moſt *faithful* and *friendly*, the moſt *willing* and *condeſcending* Phyſician. — Of each of theſe briefly.

1. He is a moſt *able* and *ſkilful* Phyſician. The Skill of a Phyſician conſiſts in his underſtanding the nature of Diſtempers in their various Symptoms and Appearances, the Habit and Strength of his Patient's Conſtitution, together with an exact Knowledge of the virtue of his Medicines, the Manner how, the Quantity in which, and the Time when to apply them. If he does know the virtue of his Medicines, yet if he be ignorant of his Patient's Conſtitution, or miſtake the nature of his Diſtemper, he may kill, inſtead of cure. Or if he underſtand all three, the Diſtemper, Conſtitution, and Medicine, yet if he knows not how to compound, mix and temper it, or when is the propereſt time to apply it, he may do more Harm than Good. A miſtake in any one of theſe Caſes may prevent the deſired effects, and be attended with very bad ones.

But none of theſe Caſes now can be hid from Chriſt our ſpiritual Phyſician, who is

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the only infallible One. There is not a Distemper our Souls are subject to, but he knows it, with all it's concomitant Symptoms, and the various stages of it's Progress; and that much better than we do ourselves. From the exact Knowledge he hath of the natural Temper and Constitution of our Minds, he sees very well what we are able to undergo in the course of our Cure, and what Medicines are most proper to effect it: whether rough and severe, or mild and gentle methods are fittest to work upon us. He precisely knows the virtue of all the means he uses for our Recovery from Sin and Death, and what effect they have upon us; the true nature of all the Medicines he applies, and the critical Time to apply them. And from his most perfect Knowledge of these things, we have all the reason in the World to confide in him as our spiritual Physician, and trust our distempered Souls in his Hands. And may apply to him with the same Faith and Confidence the poor Leper did, *Mat.* viii. 2. saying, *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*

2. Christ is not only the most able and skilful, but the most *tender* and *compassionate* Physician,

Physician. When we send for a Physician for our Bodies we sometimes know not whom we trust. Or if we are satisfied of his Skill, we may doubt his Tenderness. He may prescribe the most severe and cruel Means and Operations, and those unnecessary too, without any regard to our Weakness, or exquisite Sensibility of Pain, so that the Distemper itself may be more supportable to Nature, than the terrible Methods that are used for the Cure of it.

But our spiritual Physician is most tender and compassionate; and hath this Property peculiar to him, that he exactly knows what we feel; knows every degree of Pain we suffer, either from the Distemper itself, or from the Means used to remove it. Nay, more than this, he feels it himself. His tender Heart is touched with a Sympathy, which makes him, in a degree, feel the Pain himself, which, as our Physician, he is obliged, from the Nature of the Distemper, to make us bear, in order to a Cure of it. So the Apostle tells us, *Heb.* iv. 15. that *he is touched with a feeling of our Infirmities*; that is, of our Weaknesses and Sufferings. Sure then we have no reason to be afraid to venture

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ture ourselves under his Hands, or to trust our Souls to his Care and Cure. Especially if we add,

3. That he is the most *faithful* and *friendly* Physician. One who hath an Interest in our Health and Recovery, and of all things most desires it. He not only takes care of us as a Physician, but loves us as a Friend; and frequently visits us under both those Capacities. He hath no sinister or mercenary views in his constant Attendance. It is not the Consideration of any Profit or Credit that may accrue to him from our Recovery, that makes him so assiduous and careful in waiting upon us. But it is his Love to us, his Friendship for us, his sincere Desire of, and the Interest he hath in our Recovery, as the Friend, as well as the Physician, of our Souls. And dare we not trust ourselves in the Hands of our Friend, our most faithful Friend? whose Fidelity is equal to his Ability! As our Friend, he comforts and assists us under our spiritual Weaknesses; whilst, as our Physician, he administers to the Cure and Removal of them. And therefore we may be sure he will use no Methods of Severity but what are most necessary,

ſary, and will never fail to adminiſter the moſt reviving Cordials when they are moſt ſeaſonable and needful. Again,

4. He is the moſt *willing* and *condeſcending* Phyſician. Which is a Quality not always to be found in ſome of the Faculty we are obliged to apply to for the Cure of our bodily Diſeaſes; but is evidently found in him, who is more ready and deſirous to heal us, than we are to be healed by him. He ſtays not for a formal Meſſage from us, but kindly comes and offers himſelf to us as the Phyſician of our Souls; and not only ſo, but entreats us to accept him as ſuch; becauſe he knows, that without his Help our Souls will periſh.

Nay further, when we profeſs to put ourſelves under his Care, and appear reluctant to his Preſcriptions, and backward to follow his Directions (which is too often the Caſe,) ſuch is his Condeſcenſion and Goodneſs, that he importunes and beſeeches us to make uſe of the Means which he ſees abſolutely neceſſary for our Recovery. And what is more, he hath not diſdained to ſtoop to the loweſt Offices, nay, to undergo the greateſt Sufferings, for the Recovery of our Souls

from

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from Death. Such is the Kindness and Condescension of our spiritual Physician. I will only add,

5. That such a Physician as this *is always at Hand.* The Physicians for our Bodies, be they ever so able, or faithful, or willing, may yet, at some times, be at a great distance from us, and cannot be had; or at the time of our greatest Extremity may be necessarily engaged in their Attendance on others. Or their Terms may be so high, that our Circumstances in Life will not permit us to make use of their Advice and Help. But Christ is a Physician *always at hand and not afar off*; always at liberty to attend our Complaints, and give us his Visits and Advice in every place and state of Life. Are our Circumstances and Situation in Life such, as necessarily deprive us of the Comfort and Presence of our earthly Friends and Physicians? they can never deprive us of the Comfort and Presence of Christ, who is at once the Friend and Physician of our Souls. The Distinctions of High and Low, Rich and Poor, Noble and Ignoble, which make so mighty a Difference among Men in the Eye of the World, are not to be found among

Souls

Souls as ſuch; and therefore our ſpiritual Phyſician makes no Difference in his Regards to, or Care of them. All Souls, as immortal Beings, are equally valuable in themſelves, and in his Eye. He hath the ſame Concern for the Soul of the pooreſt Peaſant, as he hath for that of the moſt potent Prince, and is as ready to help and heal it.

Theſe now are ſome of thoſe excellent and diſtinguiſhing Properties which are peculiar to Chriſt, as the Phyſician of our Souls; which, in proportion as they enhance that Character, ſhould increaſe our Value for him, and incourage our Application to him.

Sometimes the Diſtreſs and Trouble of our Souls may be ſuch, as that all our earthly Friends, however tender, compaſſionate and faithful, cannot adminiſter to us any Relief or Comfort. And we may have reaſon to ſay of them, as *Job* ſaid of his, *Miſerable Comforters are ye all; ye are all Phyſicians of no Value*, Job xiii. 4. But this can never be ſaid of the *wiſe*, and *tender*, *faithful*, *kind*, and *ready* Phyſician of our Souls, who is always as able as he is willing to heal and ſave them; and always

more

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more willing than we are to be healed and ſaved by him.

But as this Relation in which the Redeemer ſtands to us, requires a correſpondent Duty on our part, I ſhall now proceed, as I propoſed,

III. To ſhew what Regards are due to him from us, as our ſpiritual Phyſician.

This I ſhall briefly diſpatch under the following Heads. If Chriſt be the Phyſician of our Souls, then we are to *apply to him* as ſuch, *truſt his faithfulneſs*, *ſubmit to his Directions*, and *follow his Preſcriptions*.

1. We are to *apply to him* as the Phyſician of our Souls; which we ſhall readily do, when we are once ſenſible of their Malady. And that, upon ſuch an Application, he will as readily come to our Relief, appears very certain from what hath been already ſaid. Nay, he often prevents us, by freely offering himſelf to us as the Phyſician of our Souls. But then he will never come to any without their Conſent. He will not force himſelf upon them: nor ſave or recover any againſt their Wills. There muſt be a voluntary Application, or at leaſt a hearty

hearty Consent on our part, ere we can enjoy the Benefit of his healing Power. He often, as I observed before, uses many Instances and Persuasions, by his Word and Spirit, to make us willing to accept him (for in this Sense it is that he offers himself to us); but till we are willing, and in consequence thereof apply to him by Faith and humble Prayer, for his Grace and effectual Help, we have no reason to expect it. Nor can we think that he will ever be backward to come to us if we thus invite him, who hath condescended to invite us to come to him, *Matth.* xi. 28.

2. Is Christ so *faithful* and *able* a Physician as beforementioned, then we ought to *trust* him as such; securely venture our Souls on him, and commit all their eternal Interests into his Hands, and confide in his Care and Wisdom as an all-sufficient Helper.

Not that this supersedes our own Endeavours, renders our own Care needless, or will excuse the least Neglect on our part. No! there is no Physician on Earth that requires his Patient to trust him in this manner; but on the contrary, it is expected that he do all he can to help himself; take care

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he does nothing to increase his Disease, inflame his Distemper, or prevent the Effect of the Medicines prescribed him; but punctually observe the Rules and Orders given him for the Management of himself. Otherwise he may provoke his Physician to withdraw his Visits, and leave him to himself as one that obstinately resolves not to be cured. So, if from a pretence of trusting to Christ we take no care for ourselves; if under Colour of depending on his Grace, which is all sufficient to save us, we counter-act the Intention of it by continuing in Sin, which hath a direct Tendency to ruin us; instead of honouring his Grace, we abuse it: we *tempt*, instead of *trusting* him. This is not Faith, but Presumption. And hereby we may provoke him finally to withdraw from us.

In short, we are to trust Christ as our Physician in the use of his own Means, and not without them; to do all we can for ourselves, even whilst we look for the effectual Cure from him: shew our Trust in him by a diligent use of his means, and not by a Neglect of them. Thus would we trust the Physician of our Bodies; thus

we

we ſhould truſt the Phyſician of our Souls. Therefore,

3. If Chriſt is our Phyſician, we are then to ſubmit to, and follow his *Preſcriptions*, and readily comply with all the Methods he is pleaſed to make uſe of for the Recovery of our Souls to a ſtate of Health and Soundneſs. Some of thoſe Methods which are very neceſſary to this End, may be very diſagreeable. Afflictions are often a neceſſary Means to this End. And though none of them *are for the preſent joyous but grievous*; yet, being ſent to *work out for us the peaceable Fruits of Righteouſneſs*, they ought not only to be quietly, but thankfully ſubmitted to. Let us not refuſe the ſalutary Potion, becauſe it is unpleaſant. Whatever bitter Ingredients there may be in the Cup, which our divine Phyſician puts into our Hands, ſince it is he that preſcribes it, we may be ſure it is for our Good. And to refuſe it, becauſe of it's diſagreeable Reliſh, is to queſtion his Skill, or Kindneſs, or both; and to refuſe to take him for our Phyſician.

Laſtly, If we take Chriſt for our ſpiritual Phyſician, we are bound not only to follow his *Preſcriptions for the preſent*, but his *Di-*

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rections for the future: or those Rules he hath laid down for the future Regulation of our Lives. It is usual with all the Faculty, not only to prescribe for their Patients medicinal Remedies, but to lay them under a *dietetic Regimen:* that is, give them such Rules for the Management of themselves with regard to their Food or Diet, which may prevent the Return of their former Disorders, and preserve them in a state of Health and Vigour. Such Rules and such Directions hath Christ left us in his Word for the Preservation of our spiritual Health: which we are as much concerned to comply with to prevent a Relapse, as with the Means he prescribes to procure our Recovery.

Whoever then disregards the Rules and Directions of Christ's Gospel, or takes no care to regulate his Temper and Practice by them, he doth therein virtually disown Christ for his Physician; and discovers no proper Sense of his need of him under that Character.

And thus have I laid before you, in a plain View, several Thoughts which seemed naturally to rise from this Subject; which I shall

ſhall now conclude with a few Reflexions by way of Application.

APPLICATION.

We have been particularly conſidering the Character under which Chriſt hath been pleaſed to repreſent himſelf in the text, as the *Phyſician of Souls:* and have ſeen how properly and *eminently* that Character belongs to him; and what are the Duties and Regards we owe him *as ſuch.* And now from what hath been ſaid we learn,

1. The Reaſon why our Salvation in Scripture is made ſo neceſſarily to depend on Chriſt. His great Character is, *the Saviour of Souls.* And he is ſo called, becauſe he hath purchaſed Salvation for them by his Blood, and fits them for that Salvation by his Grace. Without the latter, their Salvation would be incomplete, or rather impoſſible. In the former reſpect, he is the Redeemer; in the latter, the Healer of their Souls. So that he muſt be our *Phyſician,* before he can be our *Saviour.* Or he is our Saviour by being our Phyſician. He firſt delivers us from the Power and Dominion of Sin, and

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then from the Guilt and Condemnation of it. Nor can any have an Interest in him, as their Saviour, who do not submit to him as their Physician. A Truth of unexceptionable Evidence and Importance; and deserves to be seriously attended to by every one who desires to understand and comply with that Method of Salvation which is constituted and revealed in the Gospel of Christ.

2. From what hath been said we see how vain a thing it is to expect Salvation from Christ whilst we continue in Sin, or take no care to subdue and mortify it. Those Persons shew themselves very ignorant of the Constitution of the Gospel, and the Method of Salvation contained therein, who desire only an Interest in the Blood of Christ for the Pardon of their Sins, without a hearty Concern for his Grace to subdue them. To take occasion to sin because Grace hath abounded, is to counter-act and reverse the grand Design of the Gospel; which was to make us holy, in order to make us happy. Nor indeed is it possible for Happiness to be attained any other way. The Body is as capable of enjoying Ease and pleasure under a griev-

a grievous and growing Diſtemper, as the Soul is of enjoying Happineſs whilſt it is under the power of Sin. No, let us ever remember it; whatever our Hope in Chriſt is, he muſt be our Phyſician before he can be our Saviour; and whatever our Notions of Sin are, it will be our Ruin if it be not ſubdued. It is of infinite Importance rightly to ſettle our Notions of theſe Things, in which our everlaſting Intereſts are ſo much concerned; and to determine our Practice, Views and Hopes accordingly.

3. What hath been delivered upon this Subject, may ſerve to reconcile us to ſome things that may at preſent appear difficult and diſagreeable, as our Natures now are, which nevertheleſs are neceſſary to recover them to a more perfect State. Patients muſt not expect to be always ſupported with high Cordials. The moſt diſtaſteful Draughts are ſometimes more neceſſary. Religion, eſpecially the firſt Entrance upon it, or the firſt Recovery of the Soul from a State of Sin, is not ſo eaſy a matter as ſome may imagine. From the nature of the Caſe it appears that many painful Mortifications muſt be endured, much Self-denial exerciſed, ere

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the Soul can be recovered from a state of Sickness to a state of Health. But such is the Gentleness and Fidelity of our divine Physician, that we may be sure he will use no Methods that are more severe than necessary, nor continue them longer than is needful.

4. From what hath been said, we see the true method of Salvation constituted in the Gospel: and have a plain answer to that important Question, *What must I do to be saved?* Our Souls can no otherwise be saved from Death, than by being cured of those Distempers which are the Fore-runners of it. And the ordinary way in which they are cured of those fatal Distempers is that which hath now been laid before you. That is to say, we must first be *thoroughly sensible of our Danger thereby*; for which the Word of GOD is given us: and then be *heartily willing to accept the Remedy offered*; to which end the holy Spirit is oftentimes at work on our Hearts: and then *actually accept the Grace of Christ, which is freely exhibited and tendered to us*: and by that Grace continue to *follow the Directions, and live according to the holy Rules of* GOD'S *Word*, which are pre-

prescribed us in order to perfect our Recovery, and prevent our Relapse.

If there be any Mortifications in this way, they are only such as arise from the Necessity of the Case. Whatever other Methods of Salvation some may fondly imagine to themselves, let me only say it is extremely dangerous to trust to them. And a Mistake here, as it is irretrievable, so it is of everlastlasting Detriment. The Soul once lost is for ever lost. And indeed if we consult the Word of GOD impartially, if we consider but the Reason of Things, the Nature of true Happiness, the Perfections of the divine Being, and wherein the proper Felicity of the Soul consists, we shall soon be convinced, that nothing less than the Remedy which the Gospel proposes, and of which I have just given you a short Abstract, can secure it's everlasting Salvation.

What remains then, but that whilst we contemplate this Character, under which Christ is pleased to represent himself, we esteem, honour, love and value him as the great *Physician of our Souls*; apply to him as such; trust our Souls in his Hands; follow the Directions of his Word and Spi-

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rit, in a constant Dependence on his Grace and Help; and we have then a solid Foundation on which to build our Hope. For our Recovery from Sin is our fitness for Happiness. And we have the Word of our great Physician for it, that if we thus *come to him, we shall not perish but have everlasting Life.*

SER-

SERMON IV.

The future HAPPINESS of the RIGHTEOUS.

PSALM XCVII. 11.

Light is ſown for the Righteous; and Gladneſs for the Upright in Heart.

THERE is a Force and Fulneſs in ſome Scripture Phraſes and Expreſſions that is not eaſy to be exhauſted; inſomuch that the more we attend to them, the more we learn from them; and diſcover ſomething new almoſt every time we carefully conſider them. An Excellency peculiar to the ſacred Wri-

tings,

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tings, and juſtly urged as a good Argument of their divine Authority.

For an Inſtance of this, I need only refer you to the *Lord's Prayer*; a Form ſo full and comprehenſive, ſo particular and expreſſive, that it is not in the Power or Wiſdom of Man to compoſe any thing like it; as any one may ſee who hath read a good Comment on that part of Scripture.

The Words prefix'd to this Diſcourſe is another Inſtance of the ſame kind; which contain in them a more full and fruitful Inſtruction than it is poſſible for any one to diſcern at firſt reading; which will be my Apology for inſiſting upon them longer than I uſually chuſe to do upon one Text.

They may be conſidered as an independent Propoſition, in which the following things are to be obſerved.

I. The Character that is here given of good Men, They are *Righteous* and *Upright*.

II. Their preſent ſtate implied, *viz. Darkneſs* and *Sorrow*.

III. Their future ſtate expreſſed, *viz. Light* and *Gladneſs*.

Laſtly,

Lastly, The Metaphor under which this is described. *Light is* SOWN *for the Righteous.* SERM. IV.

Of each of these particularly. Let us briefly consider,

I. The Character that is here given of good Men. They are *Righteous* and *Upright*.

Which Words may stand,

1. As Terms of the same Import and Signification. Every Righteous Man is an Upright Man; and the Upright Man is the only Righteous Man. Or,

2. They may be put as explanative of each other. The righteous and the upright Man is the *sincerely* righteous Man. Not one who is so in Reputation and Appearance only, but in *deed and in truth*; who (*esse quàm videri bonus maluit*) takes more care to *be* good than *appear* so; who is not only righteous in Life, but *upright in Heart*.

It is very possible for a Man to appear Righteous before some Men, who is not Upright before GOD. And it is as possible for one who is truly upright before GOD, not to appear righteous in the Eyes of all Men.

Because

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Becauſe all Men do not judge righteouſly; and no man infallibly.

The righteous and the upright Man then, is one who not only appears ſo in the Eyes of Men, but is ſincerely ſo in the Eye of GOD. One in whoſe Heart *there is no Guile*; no Deceit or Hypocriſy; no latent or allowed Iniquity; who takes as much Care to approve his Heart to GOD, as to approve his Life to Men; who hath Truth *in his inward Part*, as well as Righteouſneſs in his outward Conduct. This is that which forms the Character of a truly good Man at all Times, in all Places, and under every Diſpenſation. This is the Man, and this alone, to whom all the Promiſes of GOD's Word are made in general, and to whom that in the text belongs in particular.

I come now to conſider the next thing I obſerved in the Words, *viz.*

II. The preſent ſtate of good Men implied, *viz. Darkneſs* and *Sorrow.*

Which is the Reverſe of what is here promiſed them. The Promiſes of GOD's Word are all ſuitably adapted to the Circumſtances and Neceſſities of his Servants.

Nor

Nor can any thing be more ſuitable to them than the Promiſe of thoſe things which they moſt want; or of thoſe Bleſſings which are moſt contrary to their preſent Calamities. So that by conſidering the particulars of that Happineſs which GOD promiſes to confer upon them hereafter, we may learn the Circumſtances of their deſtitute Condition now. Thus, for Inſtance, does he promiſe them Perfection and Strength? we infer, that at preſent they are in a ſtate of Imperfection and Weakneſs. Does he promiſe them hereafter Glory and Honour? that implies that they are Strangers to theſe things now; and muſt for a while be content to put up with Ignominy and Reproach. And does he (as in our Text) promiſe Light and Gladneſs? we may infer then, that at preſent they are in a ſtate of Darkneſs and Sorrow.

Thus you ſee the Propriety of that Inference upon which this ſecond Obſervation is built; which I come now more particularly to conſider,

1. Then I ſay, that the ſtate of good Men in this World is ordinarily a ſtate of *Darkneſs*.

Their

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Their Light, indeed, will ſometime hereafter *break forth as the Morning*. But they muſt wait a while for it. During their preſent ſtate, they are in much Darkneſs.

Darkneſs denotes either Ignorance, or a ſtate of Doubts and Fears. In either Senſe it may be here applied.

1. Ignorance.

Alas! how little do the beſt and wiſeſt among us know of GOD, of *themſelves*, of things *preſent*, and things *future*? Some may imagine they know a great deal, who at the ſame time know nothing yet, *as they ought to know*. A Conceit of Knowledge is always a ſign of great Ignorance and great Pride united.

O, *who can by ſearching find out* GOD! They, who by Contemplation, Faith, and Prayer, and a diligent Study of the Works and Ways, and Word of GOD, have happily attained the beſt Acquaintance with that bleſſed Being, of any Creatures on Earth, are moſt ready to confeſs after all, that it is but *a ſmall Portion they know of him. Clouds and thick Darkneſs are round about him.* His Works and Ways, and Nature, are paſt finding out. What can we think of his

Eternity?

Eternity? or a Being that never had a Beginning? Of his Immensity? or a Being that fills all Space? Of infinite Perfections? that is, all possible Perfections united in an infinite Degree? These are Things far beyond the reach of human Minds. Yet such a Being is the great GOD whom we worship; who *inhabits Eternity*, is every where present, and infinitely perfect. *He maketh Darkness his secret Place, his Pavilion round about him are dark Waters and thick Clouds of the Sky* (*a*).

And where is the Man who hath a just Knowledge of himself? I do not mean of his animal Frame; of the Texture and Organization of his Body, and Laws of Union by which the Flesh and Spirit are tied together; of which it is certain the very wisest among us know but very little; and which perhaps is one of the greatest Mysteries in Nature; but how little does he know of his Soul? of it's Nature, Powers, Operations, Wants, Tendencies and Desires? How many do evidently shew that they *know not what Spirit they are of?* who perhaps are grievously lamenting their Weaknesses in some

(*a*) Psal. xviii. 11.

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some particular respect, when their great and most remarkable Failing lies quite another way; of which they do not appear to be at all sensible.

Again, how little do we know of *present* Things? the Works of Nature, and the Ways of Providence? which soon nonplus all our Reasonings, and confound and humble our Understandings. Let us look upwards, or downwards, above us, or below us, or round about us, or within us, we see little else than Mysteries and Miracles, which we cannot comprehend or explain with any tolerable Degree of Satisfaction to our inquisitive Minds.

And, O, how much less do we know of things *future!* An impenetrable Vail intercepts the other World from our Eyes. We must cease to be mortal, before we can have any satisfying Knowledge of immortal Things. Our Souls are often glancing a wishful Eye into that other World to which they are going. Fain would we know what kind of state it is; how we shall think, and how we shall feel, when stript of these Bodies; and converse with none but pure Spirits, for ever removed from all corporeal and sen-

ſenſible Objects. But we cannot—with all the Light of Reaſon and Revelation, we cannot give our anxious and enquiring Minds any Satisfaction in theſe Points. It is Darkneſs, mere Conjecture all. GOD hath been pleaſed to hide theſe Things from us, to exerciſe our Hope and Truſt in him, and our Faith in this important and general Truth, which he hath revealed to the higheſt Degree of Certainty, *viz.* that hereafter the Righteous ſhall be infinitely and for ever happy, and the Wicked extremely and for ever miſerable. But as to the kind or manner of the Saints Happineſs in the other World, as they know it will be ſomething very different from any thing they ever enjoyed here, ſo they are forced to ſit down contented with the Apoſtle *John*'s Account of it, *We know not what we ſhall be (b).*

Lay all theſe things together now, and you will ſoon ſee reaſon to conclude, that the ſtate of good men in this World is a ſtate of Darkneſs, that is, of great Ignorance, eſpecially if compared with the Light and Knowledge of the future ſtate; when theſe Clouds ſhall be all diſperſed; when the Eye

(b) 1 John iii. 2.

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of the Soul ſhall be clarified and ſtrengthened to ſee through the Myſteries which now confound it; when the Light of GOD's Countenance ſhall diſpel our Darkneſs. *For in his Light we ſhall ſee Light.*

The Body is often called the Priſon of the Soul. It may more properly be called it's Dungeon. As the Soul while it is joined to it, is not only in a ſtate of Confinement, but Darkneſs. And in this dark and uncomfortable State it muſt abide, till Death comes and burſts open it's Priſon Doors, and lets in the Light of the other World upon it.

But in the midſt of all this Darkneſs, there are two things which good Men have reaſon to comfort themſelves with the Thoughts of, *viz.* that the Darkneſs they are in is not *total* nor *perpetual.*—— It is not *total.* Some Gleams of Light are let into their Dungeon. And it's enough, conſidering the preſent Weakneſs of their Sight. As their Faith ſtrengthens, their Light ſhall increaſe. They have enough for their preſent Direction; though not enough to ſatiſfy their Curioſity and Wiſh. And they ſhould be thankful *they do not ſit in Darkneſs,*

neſs, and ſee no Light. —— Beſides, their Darkneſs is not *perpetual.* This glimmering Dawn will ſoon break out into open Day. And their Light is now increaſing; though it may be perhaps by imperceptible Degrees; like the tender Blade that riſes from the Seed. *For Light is ſown for the righteous.* But,

2. Darkneſs further denotes a ſtate of Doubts and Fears.

And ſuch very often is the ſtate of good Men in this Life; and this indeed is but the natural Conſequence of their Ignorance. Through their unacquaintedneſs with God, and themſelves, the ſtate of their Souls, and their fitneſs for Heaven, their minds are often troubled with Jealouſies and ſuſpicious Fears, leſt they ſhould finally fall ſhort of the Happineſs they hope for, by their not being qualified for it in the manner they ought to be. And theſe Fears are often greatly aggravated by the lively ſenſe they have of the Pollution and Guiltineſs of their own natures, and the perfect Purity and Holineſs of the divine, to which all Sin is infinitely oppoſite and odious. Indeed the Revelation of the Riches of divine Grace, and

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the infinite Merits of the Redeemer's Blood was deſigned to counterbalance thoſe Fears, and give the minds of Chriſtians a firm and ſtedfaſt Hope. But their Faith is often ſo weak, and their Knowledge ſo low, that they cannot derive that Comfort and Stability of ſoul from this Thought which they might and ought. They are apt to fear, leſt their Reliance on the Mercy of GOD, and the Merits of Chriſt, ſhould be Preſumption. Were they but ſure they had a Warrant to lay hold of this Hope; might they be ſo happy as to ſee their Intereſt in Chriſt, and Fitneſs for his Salvation, they ſhould be ſatisfied; they could then comfortably and calmly depend on his Atonement, and hope for Salvation through his Blood. But this is what they want to ſee. And their Uncertainty in this point is that which fills them with ſo much Fear. For they know that it is not a Man's ſaying that he depends intirely on Chriſt, that amounts to a ſaving Faith in him; becauſe he himſelf hath declared, that there are many who claim a Relation to him, and profeſs a Dependence upon him now, that will be diſowned by him hereafter as *Workers of Iniquity* (c). What they are

(c) Mat. vii. 23.

are most concerned about, is their Qualification for the Happiness promised to true Christians; which consists in the Sincerity of their Repentance, Faith, and Holiness. And as it is this they have their Scruples about, hence arise their Fears. Were they but sure of their Sincerity, and of the real Conversion of their Souls to GOD, they should be easy, and could gladly confide in the Merits of Christ, and the Mercy of GOD, in the darkest Day. "But so much Imperfection, "—— so many wilful Sins, both of Omis- "sion and Commission, — so long continu- "ed in, — so often repeated, — and so su- "perficially repented of!" — How can all this be consistent with Sincerity? And without Sincerity there can be no warrantable Hope of Salvation, or Trust in Christ. Without this, that which some call Faith, is mere Delusion. And they are afraid of this fatal Self-deception. —— And hence they live Strangers to heavenly Hope and inward Peace, and Slaves to anxious Doubts and distressing Fears.

And yet such a Christian may be truly sincere, though he does not know it; and may have a Right to more Comfort, than

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he will allow himself to partake of. And I am inclined to think, that there is no truly serious and conscientious Soul, however pious and sincere, that is entirely free from all such kind of Suspicions at certain times. Hardened Hypocrites and stupid profane Sinners may; but that is owing to their Insensibility, or want of Thought; which serves them a while instead of solid Hope. But it is a better sign, and shews a truer sense of things, to be rather too diffident, than too confident.

It would be foreign to my present Purpose to stay to offer particular Topics of Relief and Consolation to such doubting and dejected Christians; and which, after all, perhaps, they would not be persuaded to apply. I shall therefore only say, let such self-diffident Christians but take care, that their Conscientiousness and Fidelity in all known Duty keep pace with their Hope in GOD, and Trust in Christ, and that Hope and Trust will never deceive them; nor can they take too much Comfort from it. This Advice you have in those words, *Isai.* l. 10. which seem particularly adapted and directed to good People of this Complexion, *Who*

is

is there *among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the Voice of his Servant, that walketh in Darkness, and hath no Light? Let him trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon his* GOD.

2. Another thing implied in the Words is, that the present state is to good Men usually a state of Sorrow.

This stands in opposition to that Gladness which is promised them in the Text, As their present Darkness does to their future Light.

Indeed Gladness is *sown* for them, as well as Light. But they must wait for it. They find but very little of it at present. As for Joy and Gladness, we must look for it among Persons of a very different Cast and Character. The gay and vain part of the World, who generally discover the greatest Ignorance of GOD, and Neglect of Religion, commonly share the greatest part of the Pleasures and Delights of Life among them. As to good and upright Men, Oppression, Persecution, and Hardship commonly fall to their Share; and what from the World, and what from themselves, and from Satan the great Disturber of their Peace, they

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have often Sorrow upon Sorrow. So that if they had no Views beyond the Grave, if their Hopes terminated in this Life, they would be *of all Men the moſt miſerable.*

And indeed this inward ſtate of their Minds is but ſuitable to their outward State and Condition in Life. There cannot be much Gladneſs, where there is ſo much Darkneſs. Their Ignorance and Doubts will create them much Sorrow and Trouble. A Priſon, or a Dungeon, is but an unfit Place for Joy and Pleaſure. Not that it is always or altogether impoſſible to find it there. The Pleaſures of a good Conſcience, and the Satiſfactions of the divine Preſence, may follow a Man into the darkeſt Diſtreſs, and be his Support under the foreſt Calamity. For we are not to ſuppoſe, that the Righteous and Upright Man is altogether without his Joy. No, the Peace of a good Conſcience, and a contented Mind, the ſolid Comforts of GOD's Preſence, and the inward Satisfaction that ariſes from his future Proſpects, ſtick by him ſtill. Which render the *Ways of Wiſdom*, upon the whole, *Ways of Pleaſantneſs and Peace*, and afford him ſufficient Support under all his Sorrow.

But

But yet his outward Condition is for the most part full of Trouble, of one kind or other. For he not only meets with the common Calamities of Life which Mortality is Heir to, but his Fidelity to God and Conscience, and the deep sense he hath of his many guilty Defects and Errors, often create him many outward Troubles and secret Sorrows which others are Strangers to.

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Well, such then is ordinarily the state of the Righteous and Upright in this World. A state of *Darkness* and *Sorrow*. Which renders the Promise in the text peculiarly suitable to them. As it assures them that things will soon alter for the better; that whatever they *reap* in this World, Light and Gladness is *sown* for them in the other.

Which leads me to consider the next Observation I made upon the Words, *viz.*

III. The Happiness of the Righteous and Upright Man's State in the other World, expressed in the text by *Light* and *Gladness*.

I shall consider each of these Characters distinctly.

1. Heaven is a state of LIGHT.

And

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And as Darkness implies a state of Ignorance and Doubt; so Light implies a state of Knowledge and Assurance.

1. When the Righteous are admitted into the heavenly World their Knowledge shall be greatly increased.

In order to give you a more distinct View of this part of their Felicity, I would observe,

1. That their intellectual Powers will then be very much strengthened and inlarged.

The Body is a great Clog upon the present Operations of the Soul. Fleshly Appetites and Incumbrances blunt the edge of the Mind, and obstruct the proper exercise of it's Faculties. But when this Clog and Load of Flesh is taken off, the Soul will exert itself with an unknown Freedom and Vigour. It's Capacities will have room to expand and exercise themselves without Obstruction. And not only so, but those very Faculties will be *increased*. And by continual Exercise will be continually increasing; till they grasp in unknown degrees of new and surprising Knowledge, which will elevate and ennoble the Soul, and dispose it to the most ardent Adoration of the infinite and all-wise Creator.

2. The

2. The Faculties of the Soul will then not only be disincumbered and inlarged, but a great Variety of new and unthought of Objects will be continually offering themselves.

While we are in the present low and contracted State, things run pretty much in a Circle. The same scenes come over and over again, and in a few Years all their Variety is exhausted; insomuch, that *Solomon* says, *There is no new thing under the Sun (c)*. And this is what makes the present World so tedious a state to a Mind enriched with sublime Sentiments, and panting with a Thirst of Knowledge. But the Objects that will present themselves to our View in the other World, will not only be more noble and more suitable for the Exercise and Contemplation of an immortal Spirit, but will be always new, and therefore always delightful and entertaining. Many things shall we then undoubtedly see and know, of which we now form no Ideas at all. And our Acquaintance with Objects, Scenes, and Beings, perfectly new and unthought of, in that World of Light, will not a little augment our Wonder and Felicity.

3. We

(c) Eccles. i. 9.

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3. We shall then have a much more plain and perfect Conception of those things which we now think we do know.

I mean of those things which are worth knowing. For as for a good deal of our present Knowledge, *i. e.* that which is only subservient to the Amusements, the Pleasures and Profits of this World, it will then vanish as altogether useless. And if the Saints in Heaven are capable of blushing, they will be ashamed to think that they spent so much time and pains in the Acquisition of such false and unprofitable Knowledge. But as to those things which it becomes us to know, and the Knowledge of which will add to the Perfection and Happiness of the Mind, those things we shall certainly know in a much more perfect Manner than we do, or can do now.

The Apostle represents this in a very elegant and striking Manner, when he tells us that we now see but *through a glass darkly*; (we have but a faint glimmering, confused view of things; such as we have of very distant Objects through a Telescope) *but then we shall see face to face* (*d*). Our Knowledge

(*d*) 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

ledge of heavenly and divine Things will then be as much more diſtinct, clear, and perfect than it is now, as our Sight of Objects cloſe at hand is, than the view we take of them at a Diſtance through a Glaſs.

4. I would further obſerve, that the Facility with which this Knowledge ſhall be acquired will add not a little to the Pleaſure of the Acquiſition.

In the preſent dark and confined ſtate of the human Faculties, we are forced to ſtudy hard and take great Pains to attain a ſmall Portion of uſeful and ſubſtantial Knowledge. And after all we may loſe our Labour; and take up with falſe Knowledge inſtead of true. But what we then ſhall know, we ſhall not only know infallibly, but in a good meaſure intuitively, or by immediate Communication. The ſureſt and eaſieſt Way of attaining a true Inſight into any Branch of Science now is, by Sight, or by a free Converſe with thoſe who have a perfect Knowledge of the Subject we would be acquainted with, and a clear and eaſy way of communicating that Knowledge. In this delightful and expeditious way will moſt of our Knowledge hereafter be attained. A

good

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good deal of it will be intuitive. We shall then see what we now can but guess at; and clearly behold those things which with the utmost Efforts and Attention of our reasoning Powers we can at present but very imperfectly apprehend. And then the Angels, those glorious and benevolent Creatures, and the other celestial and perfect Spirits, with whom we shall freely converse, will very gladly communicate to us much of the Knowledge we want, and which they who have been so long the Inhabitants of that blessed World will have in a much greater Degree, than we at our first Entrance into it can be supposed to have.

And, *Lastly*, Let me add, that our Knowledge then will be perpetually progressive; or for ever increasing.

This is what cannot be said of our Knowledge at present. There is often such a Mixture of Error in it, that as our Faculties improve, and our Judgments ripen, we see a Necessity to unlearn a great deal of what we before learned; to take pains to divest ourselves of those Prejudices which led us into Mistakes; to retract our Steps, to go back the wrong way we have rambled into, in order

der to make any progreſs in the right. Or if this ſhould not happen to be the Caſe, our Knowledge will ſoon be at a ſtand. The Faculties of the Mind will grow dull and feeble through Age and Infirmities, and be able to retain but little, if any, of that Knowledge which it once took ſo much Pains to acquire.

But not ſo in that world of Light and Perfection to which the pious Soul aſpires. There it will not only retain the Knowledge it gains, but will be continually increaſing it. The Progreſs it ſhall make in the moſt ſubſtantial and felicitating Knowledge ſhall not only be moſt expeditious and delightful, but uninterrupted and perpetual. For ever growing!

And here indeed the Metaphor in the text fails us; and we eaſily ſee the Defect. The dawning Light which riſes out of Darkneſs is ſweetly progreſſive to a certain Degree, after which it proceeds no farther. It can riſe no higher than the meridian Luſtre, or the brightneſs of Noon, and then gradually decays. But the Knowledge of the Saints in Heaven, which is compared to it, is for ever growing; and will never know a

point

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point beyond which it cannot paſs. After Millions of Ages ſpent in thoſe happy Regions of Light and Pleaſure, there will ſtill be new Objects of Knowledge ariſing to entertain and raviſh the inquiſitive Soul; with which, notwithſtanding the full Draughts of it already imbibed, it will never be ſatiated. Becauſe it's Faculties to retain the Knowledge it has, and to acquire more, will be proportionably ſtrengthened; ſo as to give the Soul a conſtant freſh Entertainment. And to be thus ſpeedily and eternally advancing in the moſt delightful Knowledge,——O, how perfect, how happy muſt ſuch a Spirit be! Let us think of this, and be humbled for our preſent Ignorance.

Thus have I endeavoured to ſtrike out a ſhort Sketch of that *Light which is ſown for the Righteous*; as that implies their future Knowledge. But,

2. I would juſt obſerve, that as Darkneſs not only implies Ignorance but Doubtfulneſs, and Uncertainty, ſo Light implies not only Knowledge but Stability and Aſſurance.

"And O, thou righteous Soul, conſider how "well eſtabliſhed then will thy Felicity be! "All thy Difficulties and Dejections, thy "Jealou-

"Jealouſies and Surmiſes relating to the ſtate "of thy Soul, or any future Evil apprehend-"ed, will be vaniſhed and gone for ever; "and thou ſhalt never know the Diſtreſs of "a doubtful Thought more. Thou ſhalt "then have a moſt full and aſſured ſenſe of "the reality of thy Love to GOD, and of "thine intereſt in his; becauſe thou wilt be "for ever feaſting on the happy Fruits of it. "Never more will GOD hide his Face from "thee; but the Light of his Countenance "will be thine inceſſant Joy."

And if we but conſider into what Diſtreſs and Anxiety of Soul, the Chriſtian's Doubts and Fears, concerning his everlaſting ſtate, ſometimes throw him, we cannot look upon this infallible Aſſurance, that his Salvation is for ever ſecure, as the ſmalleſt part of his Happineſs. Angels indeed once fell from their heavenly Dignity; but the glorified Saints never ſhall. Becauſe they ſhall meet with no Temptations to Sin; their time of Trial is over, their State confirmed, and their Happineſs is always in Scripture ſaid to be everlaſting.

But not to inſiſt longer upon this, I ſhall conclude my Deſcription of that *Light which*

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is ſown for the Righteous, with thoſe Words of the Apoſtle *John*, Rev. xxi. 22,—27. *And I ſaw no Temple therein; for the Lord* GOD *almighty, and the Lamb, are the Temple of it. And the City had no need of the Sun, neither of the Moon to ſhine in it; for the Glory of* GOD *did lighten it, and the Lamb is the* LIGHT *thereof. And the Nations of them which are ſaved, ſhall walk in the* LIGHT *of it; and the Kings of the Earth do bring their Glory and Honour into it. And the Gates of it ſhall not be ſhut at all by Day; for there ſhall be no Night there. And they ſhall bring the Glory and Honour of the Nations into it. And there ſhall in no wiſe enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatſoever worketh Abomination, or maketh a Lye; but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.*

I ſhould now proceed to conſider the next Branch of the Saint's future Felicity comprehended in the text, under the word *Gladneſs. Light is ſown for the Righteous, and* GLADNESS *for the Upright in Heart.* But this muſt be the Subject of the enſuing Diſcourſe.

To

To conclude, let thoſe of us who have good Hope through Grace, that we are Heirs of this Light, take care to walk as *Children of Light*. — Let us bear our preſent Darkneſs with Patience. For our Light will ſoon *break forth as the Morning*. Death, that King of Terrors, will tranſmit us into immortal Joys, and the Valley of Darkneſs leads to eternal Light. Why then ſhould we fear that which will for ever free us from all our Fears? — Through all our preſent Darkneſs we have now been endeavouring to look into the Light of the upper World. And the ſhort View we have had of it, though very defective and confuſed, is enough to make us humble and aſtoniſhed at our Ignorance; and more aſtoniſhed that any, ſuch poor ignorant Creatures as we are, ſhould ever be proud of their Knowledge! than which nothing diſcovers a more miſerable Diſtance from true Knowledge. —— But let us bleſs God for that little Light we have, and for that greater we hope for; and make it our conſtant Care to perſevere in the way to, and be more and more prepared for, that happy World of Light and Immortality!

SERMON V.

The future HAPPINESS of the RIGHTEOUS.

PSALM XCVII. 11.

Light is ſown for the Righteous; and Gladneſs for the Upright in Heart.

IN theſe Words the following things are to be obſerved.

I. The Character that is here given of good Men. They are *Righteous and Upright.*

II. Their preſent ſtate implied. *Darkneſs* and *Sorrow.*

III Their

III. Their future Happineſs expreſſed. *Light and Gladneſs.*

Laſtly, The Metaphor under which this is deſcribed. *Light is* SOWN *for the Righteous.*

The two firſt of theſe have been conſidered in a former Diſcourſe; when I made an Entrance upon the third, *viz.* the Conſideration of the future Happineſs of the Righteous, as here expreſſed by *Light* and *Gladneſs.* Under the former of theſe Repreſentations I have already conſidered it. I come now,

2. To illuſtrate the other Branch of the Saint's Bleſſedneſs in Heaven denoted by the Word *Gladneſs.*

A Thing to which good Men are often great Strangers whilſt they are here. And indeed they are intire Strangers to that complete unmixed Joy, that full and ſatisfying *Gladneſs*, which is implied in this Promiſe. There is no ſuch thing to be found in this World. The Senſualiſt and Worldling drink of muddy Streams. Their Draughts of Pleaſure are polluted; and create but a more vehement Thirſt. And there is ſo much Worm-

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wood in their Cups of Pleaſure, as renders them nauſeous to perſons of a refined Taſte. And even the innocent Diverſions and Delights of Life are ſo dry and tranſient, ſo unſatisfying when preſent, and ſo uſeleſs when paſt, that a wiſe Man ſees no reaſon to be very fond of them. And a frequent Repetition quite exhauſts them. Nay, further, the very pleaſures of the Underſtanding, and even thoſe of Devotion itſelf, are ſo interrupted and incomplete, ſo rare and unconſtant, ſo hard to be attained and retained, that they ſeldom leave the Mind the Satiſfaction it deſires. They are indeed much more ſolid and ſubſtantial than any other kind of Pleaſures we know; yet there is a ſenſible Deficiency in them: and we want, what we can never have here, a full and durable Enjoyment of them. And, O! what long Intervals of Perplexity and Pain often come between theſe little lucid Moments of Pleaſure!

In ſhort, when we ſpeak of pure and perfect Joy, of complete and uninterrupted Pleaſure, we ſpeak of a thing we know nothing of; becauſe it is what we have been ever Strangers to. We can form no better Idea

of

of it than the blind Man with his half-recovered Sight did of external Objects, when he saw *Men as Trees walking*. But most satisfying and complete will be the Joy of Heaven, which in the text is promised to the *Upright in Heart*. *I shall be satisfied, when I awake in thy Likeness (a). In thy Presence is* Fulness *of Joy (b)*.

Vain then may it be thought for us to attempt a Description of what we confess we do not know. But we may, and ought to contemplate so much of it as we do know. And such properties of it hath GOD been pleased to discover to us in his Word, as may give the Mind a most sweet and noble Entertainment in the Contemplation of them. And the better to direct and assist your Thoughts on this elevated Subject, I propose,

I. To lay before you some of the chief Properties of that Joy and Gladness, which is promised to the Saints in Heaven.

II. Shew you the various Sources of it, or from whence it flows.

 I. I shall

(a) Psal. xvii. 15. (b) Psal. xvi. 11.

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I. I ſhall lay before you ſome of the chief Properties of that Joy and Gladneſs which is prepared for the Saints in Heaven. And,

1. To begin with the loweſt, it will be a total Freedom from every kind of Pain and Uneaſineſs.

This is what Men rarely find in this World. They may indeed by means of Recreation and Diverſion beguile the ſenſe of Pain a while, or by Opiates ſtupify it, but it ſoon returns with augmented Force; and ſometimes to ſuch an unſupportable degree that *their Souls chuſe Strangling and Death rather than Life.* O, wretched State! to be willing to fly to Delirium and Death, as a Refuge from Pain!

But, in Heaven, though the Faculties of the Soul ſhall be refined to the moſt exquiſite Degree of Senſibility, it will be a perfect Stranger to every thing that can give it the leaſt Diſquietude. This will evidently appear, if we examine the ſeveral Sources of Pain. For all our Pain and Uneaſineſs now ariſes either from the bad ſtate of the Body or Mind, or from the Diſappointments of

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the World, or the Sins and Follies of other Men. But all these Causes of Pain will be then removed.——The Spirit shall no more suffer from the Infirmities of the Flesh. For the Body to which it will be reunited shall be gloriously refined, and incapable of Disorder or Defect.——The Appetites and Passions of the Mind will be no more the source of Pain; because there will be nothing in Heaven to tempt them to an irregular Excess, or draw them towards a forbidden Object.——And this World and all the Wickedness of Men we shall be for ever removed from; and therefore shall never be capable of suffering any more from them. ——In short, there will be no Sin in Heaven, and therefore no Sorrow there. For when the Cause is removed the Effect will cease.

And is there not *Gladness* in this Thought? ——Sin is the righteous Soul's greatest Burden. He mourns over it more than over those Afflictions which he suffers as the Fruit of it. But into the *new Jerusalem* there shall *in no wise enter any thing that defileth*, Rev. xxi. 27. Then the Sin which now so easily besets us, and costs us so much

Pains

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Pains to watch and ſtrive againſt, and which with all our Pains we cannot entirely ſubdue, nay can ſcarce keep ourſelves from being conquered by it; this ſhall then tempt and grieve us no more. Death will make our Conqueſt over it complete; and by deſtroying this Body of Sin it will be the Deſtruction of Sin itſelf. But,

2. To riſe a Step higher, in Heaven there will not only be a perfect Freedom from all Pain, but an Enjoyment of the moſt ſolid and ſatisfying Pleaſure.

Which (as I obſerved before) is what we are now quite unacquainted with. Our ſweeteſt Cup hath ſome bitter Ingredient. Inſomuch that *Solomon* tells us (and no man underſtood human Nature better) that ſometimes *in the midſt of Laughter the Heart is ſorrowful*, Prov. xiv. 13. Here our

Roſes grow on Thorns,
And Honey wears a Sting. *Watts.*

But in Heaven there is unmix'd delight; no hidden Gall in the Cup, no inward Pang amidſt the outward Pleaſure. But the glorified Saint ſhall poſſeſs the ſincereſt Satisfactions; ſhall drink at the Fountain Head; and

and no longer at the diſtant Streams it did before, which were not only very ſhallow, but oftentimes very muddy.

3. The Saint's Pleaſures in Heaven ſhall be conſtant and uninterrupted.

The low Pleaſures of this Life are not only very unſatisfying, but very rare and uncertain. It is but now and then our Seaſons of Gladneſs return. And how ſoon are they interrupted with ſudden returns of Sorrow! ——And indeed were the Pleaſures of Senſe to become conſtant, they would become irkſome. A ſhort Enjoyment kills them, and rifles all their Sweets. They muſt be diſcontinued to keep up the Reliſh of them. And this Property, which invariably belongs to them all, ſufficiently ſhews their Emptineſs.

But the Pleaſures of Heaven are ſo ſubſtantial and pure that they will bear a perpetual Enjoyment. Every Interruption or Intermiſſion of them would be a real Unhappineſs; and therefore it is certain there can be no ſuch thing. Nor will the conſtant Enjoyment of them create in us that Satiety which ariſes from the perpetual Fruition of earthly Delights, which takes off the

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the Reliſh of them; for though the Pleaſures of Heaven will be ſo full and ſatisfying that we ſhall be ſenſible of no Defect in them, yet they are ſo pure and ſolid that they will appear ever new; and our Faculties will be ſo ſtrengthened, refined and exalted, that they will never be weary of taking them in. There will be no need of an Abſtinence from them to create an Appetite for them. The Purity of them would ſupply the place of Variety, were the Soul to be for ever feaſting on the ſame Pleaſures. But this will not be the Caſe. For,

4. Their Variety will be equal to their Purity.

This is another thing that will contribute to the Gladneſs of the glorified Saints in Heaven, of which we can form but a very low Idea whilſt we are on Earth. For our pleaſures here are not only very ſuperficial and ſcanty, but ſo few in their kind (at leaſt thoſe of them which any one Man is capable of poſſeſſing; for it is impoſſible for one Man in any ſtate whatever to enjoy all the pleaſures of Life. I ſay they are ſo few) that they are ſoon drained dry, and all their Sweets exhauſted.

Indeed

Indeed could a Man, when he had drained out one kind of Pleasure, be immediately supplied with another as suitable to his taste; and were his natural Strength and Capacities to continue always firm, and his taste for earthly Delights always the same; he would then have some reason to be fond of this World, and would meet with something like a Happiness in it. But, alas! this is not the Case; his natural Powers and Capacities are failing him, and his very Relish for most of the pleasures of Life is decaying. But if they were not, he is tied down to such a tedious Round of the same kind of Pleasures, that the Repetition of them grows dull. It is Variety only that keeps up their taste; but there are so few of them in our Reach, that *that* Variety cannot be had; and if a Man will have them he must have the same over again which he enjoyed before, and that without half their former Relish.

But infinitely different now from this is the property of heavenly Delights. Their Variety will be equal to their Purity. Were they to continue the same they would be ever satisfying, for the reasons before alledged; but they will

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will not only be moſt pure, but ſo various that the Novelty will be continually adding to the pleaſure of the Enjoyment. The new ſcenes of Knowledge which will be then opening to our Minds, I have before obſerved, will be unſpeakably aſtoniſhing to our Souls; and I may add, the new ſcenes of Pleaſure that will be continually opening to our View will unmeaſurably enhance our Felicity. New and unthought of Objects of Delight; new and ſtrengthened Faculties to enjoy them! For the Faculties will not then be languid and feeble as they are now; nor Pleaſures run in the ſame perpetual Round they do now; but the one will be ever freſh, and the other ever new. For the infinite Fulneſs of the Deity will ſupply the Soul that enjoys him with pleaſures of everlaſting Novelty. And it will not only enjoy what it never did here on Earth, but what it never once imagined itſelf capable of enjoying.

5. The Happineſs of the Saints in Heaven will be an unenvied Happineſs.

A ſmall degree of Eminence in this World, nay, a fancied Superiority may ſometimes make a Man the object of Envy, Detraction,

and

and Obloquy. Not that Envy itſelf at all hurts the Perſon that is the Object of it; unleſs it break out (as indeed it too often does) into ill Words and ill Actions. For it is a Viper, which, though it may hiſs at others, yet always turns it's Sting in upon itſelf. However, when it riſes to a great degree, it may occaſion Inconveniences, to the conſiderable Diminution of the Comfort of thoſe againſt whom it is directed.

But there ſhall be no ſuch Abatements to the Felicity of the heavenly Saints; who ſhall ever ſhine with unenvied Luſtre. Envy, Malice, and Malignity, the Brood of Hell, ſhall hereafter be confined to thoſe Regions of Darkneſs and Horror, from whence they ſprung, and can have no Entrance into that Land of Light and Gladneſs, where perfect Love and Joy, and Peace, for ever reign.

That there will be degrees of Happineſs in Heaven, is a point, I think, that cannot reaſonably be diſputed. But the higher degrees of Glory which ſome will then enjoy above others will be ſo far from raiſing a Spirit of Envy in the latter, that it will rather be an Augmentation of their Felicity.

They

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They will rejoice in the ſuperior Happineſs of their Fellow-ſaints, and partake of it themſelves.

This, perhaps, may ſeem ſtrange to us now, becauſe we ſee ſo little of it here on Earth. But it will, it muſt be the Caſe hereafter; and we ſhall be fully ſatisfied of it if we conſider——How perfectly every one will then be brought to acquieſce in the righteous Awards of the final Judgment; when *every one ſhall receive according to his Works*—— How impoſſible it will be for even the meaneſt Saint in Heaven to be obſcured or eclipſed by the ſuperior Luſtre of another—— How ſafe he is from being trampled upon, or deſpiſed by thoſe of ſuperior Rank; as the mean ones often are by the great ones of this World: which is often the chief cauſe of Envy——How infinitely ſmall the Diſproportion will be between the meaneſt and the higheſt Saint, nay, the higheſt Angel, in Heaven, in compariſon of the ineffable Glories of the great Redeemer and the ever bleſſed GOD, which will be always before their Eyes, and infinitely eclipſe and tranſcend them all——and, laſtly, how ſincere and ardent will be the Love, Friendſhip, and

Bene-

Benevolence which they will all have for one another. — Theſe things conſidered, I ſay, it will appear impoſſible that the ſuperioritity of the higheſt Saint in Heaven ſhould excite the leaſt degree of Jealouſy or Envy in the loweſt; but will rather be an Addition to his Happineſs.

And, bleſſed be GOD! degenerate as our World is, we have ſomething of this lovely Spirit ſtill left amongſt us; nor are there wanting Inſtances of ſuch entire Friendſhip, as diſpoſes a Man to be as well pleaſed with the Happineſs that befals his Friend, as if it fell to his own Share; and he enjoys himſelf the better for it.

Laſtly, To crown all, this Joy will be everlaſting.

It will never know a Period, becauſe it will be *the Joy of the Lord (c)*; and therefore will be as perpetual as the Fountain from whence it flows, that is, everlaſting. There will be no fear either of an Interruption, or a Period of it.

The Death of all our earthly Joys is, that we muſt ſoon part with them. This blaſts the Miſer's Hope; throws a Damp on all

(c) Mat. xxv. 21.

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all the ambitious Man's Wiſhes; and chills the ardent Deſires of the Voluptuary. That Thought, that *this Night their Souls may be required of them*, ſtrikes Thunder into their Hearts; and would make them cry out *Vanity of Vanities!* were they not themſelves infatuated with that Vanity.

But no ſuch Worm lies at the root of the Tree of Life, which bloſſoms in eternal Spring. Indeed the Thought itſelf would be intolerable. The very Poſſibility of being ever brought down from ſuch a Height of Happineſs, or the very Apprehenſion of it's ever coming to an end, would be a Thought they could not bear *(d)*. But their Happineſs is made ſure for ever by an immutable Decree ſtampt with the Seal of Heaven.

And O, what *Gladneſs* will ever ſpring from this Thought! ſo full of Rapture! which can only be heightened by this additional Conſideration, "that this Happineſs "which the bleſſed Saint is poſſeſſed of, "will

(d) O, ye bleſs'd Realms of permanent Delight!
Full above Meaſure, laſting beyond Bound!
Could you, ſo rich in Rapture, fear an End,
That ghaſtly Thought would drink up all you Joy;
And quite unparadiſe the Realms of Light. *Young.*

"will not only be for ever, but be for ever "growing." The longer it continues, the greater will it be; and will be thus expanding and increasing through all the Ages of Eternity. O, the immense Height then to which it will attain some Millions of Ages hence! Shall not this Thought fire all our Ambition? O, what a Bubble, what a mere Vanity is all the Happiness of this World put together, were it ten thousand times greater than it really is, in comparison of those Ideas which we are now able to form of the Happiness of the Saints in Heaven! And yet after all, our highest Ideas and Conceptions of it fall infinitely short of the Reality. With great Reason will the happy Souls say, when they enter on the scene of such consummate Joy, what the Queen of *Sheba* said of the Magnificence of *Solomon's* Court, that *the half had not been told* them. It hath never yet *entered into their Hearts*, the Scripture saith; and it never will, *till they are absent from the Body*. They may live and guess, but they must dye to know.

Thus have I endeavoured to assist your Thoughts in the Contemplation of that *Gladness* which is *sown for the Upright in*

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Heart; that *Fulneſs of Joy* which they ſhall poſſeſs at GOD's *right Hand for evermore*; by ſetting before you ſome of the eſſential and moſt obvious Properties of it.

But we muſt not part with ſo delightful a Theme ſo ſoon. Let us keep our Thoughts then intent upon it a little longer, whilſt we examine,

II. The ſource of all this Happineſs, or whence it flows

It is ſomething to which we are ſuch perfect Strangers here on Earth, that even this faint, defective Repreſentation which hath now been given of it, appears almoſt incredible; and we are tempted to look upon it more as Flouriſh than Fact. It is fit then it ſhould be demonſtrated, and made plain to your Reaſon and Underſtanding, that it cannot poſſibly be otherwiſe; by conſidering more particularly the alteration which Death will make in a good Man's State, and how many things will contribute to heighten his Happineſs afterwards.

1. Then, one thing which to be ſure will greatly contribute to this unſpeakable degree of Gladneſs and Felicity which the righteous

teous ſhall enjoy in Heaven, is their eternal Releaſe and *Freedom from a Body of Sin and Death.*

This Body, which we are ſo fond of, and ſo tenderly indulge, is the ſeat and ſource of moſt of the Maladies we now ſuffer; as appears from the many Pains, Temptations, and Sins to which it expoſes us: But when we are once happily ſtript of this, we ſhall be for ever free from the Uneaſineſs and Trouble it now creates us; and *the Fleſh will no longer luſt againſt the Spirit*, nor *the Spirit againſt the Fleſh*, as it now does.

We know not indeed what it is to ſubſiſt without a Body; but that we may live more happily without it, than with it, is certain, however ſtrange it may appear to us now. A Man muſt be almoſt all Body to think otherwiſe. The Soul is certainly debaſed and impriſoned, whilſt it is thus crampt up in Fleſh; it is then ennobled and enlarged when it is got free from it.

2. The natural Faculties and Powers of the Soul will be then ſtrengthened and preſerved in their full Vigour and Exerciſe.

Theſe at preſent are but feeble and confined at beſt; and, after a maturity of Age,

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are continually growing weaker and weaker. Or, to ſpeak more properly, are continually more and more obſtructed in their Operations through the Weakneſs of thoſe bodily Organs by which they act. For the rational and intellectual Powers of the Soul, I ſuppoſe, retain the ſame Vigour in themſelves, but are not ſo capable of exerting themſelves, by reaſon of the growing Imbecility and Decay of the animal Powers, and the Body to which it is confined. But in Heaven, not only theſe Fetters of Fleſh ſhall be taken off, and all the Impediments of Mortality be done away, but all the natural Powers of the Soul ſhall be ſtrengthened and enlarged, to take in a more comprehenſive View and Knowledge of things, in order to it's growing Happineſs.

3. Not only the natural, but the moral Powers of the Mind will then be in a ſtate of Perfection, and every Grace and Virtue be complete.

Perfection of Grace is what with all our Helps we can now never attain; but then we ſhall. And this for certain will make a great part of our Happineſs then. So true is that common Obſervation, "that Grace

"is

"is Glory begun, and Glory is Grace com-
"pleted." Then ſhall we be made perfect in Love, in Holineſs, in Zeal, in Knowledge, in Devotion; and ſhall never complain of Sin, or Coldneſs, or Corruption more. In Heaven there will be nothing to interrupt our devout Converſe with GOD, or check the moſt ardent Efforts of our Souls to praiſe him. Our Doubts, and Darkneſs, and Dulneſs, will all be gone, and we ſhall be (what we now ſo often in vain wiſh to be) all Life and Spirit and Fervour in the Contemplation of the divine Love and Excellence. Nor will the cold Fit ever return, or the Devotion ever flag. For it is only owing to the Weakneſs of the natural Faculties, or the moral powers of the Soul, and the Imperfection of our preſent Attainments in Grace, that it does ſo now. But we ſhall then be (ἰσαγγελοι) *like to the Angels in Heaven*, *Mark* xii. 25. for the Power and Purity of our Devotion, which we are unhappily ſuch Strangers to now, through the prevalence of Senſe and Sin.

4. Much of our Happineſs will ariſe from the Survey of the glorious Objects which will all around open to our intellectual

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View; and which we ſhall ſee, if not with bodily Eyes, yet with as clear and ſatisfying a Perception as that conveyed by the Organs of Senſe.

But we can but gueſs *now* at the celeſtial Glories which will, with unmeaſurable Delight, ſtrike our raviſhed Souls *then*. The Ideas of Light, Beauty, Order, and Harmony convey but a poor Image of them to our Minds. Only in general we may be ſure that nothing that is pleaſing and delightful will be wanting in the Palace of the King of Heaven for the Entertainment of his Gueſts, whom he hath invited and conducted thither.

5. Our perpetual Advances in Knowledge will be the perpetual Increaſe of our Happineſs.

What the former will be, I have endeavoured to repreſent to you in my firſt Diſcourſe from theſe Words. And if we but conſider that this is the proper Happineſs of a rational and intelligent Being, we muſt be ſenſible that this will open to us one of the chief ſources of our Felicity; eſpecially if we conſider the Nature of that Knowledge in which we ſhall be continually improving,

proving, it's Suitableneſs to the Deſires and Capacities of the Soul, and the eaſy and expeditious method by which it will be acquired; all which I have already endeavoured to illuſtrate; and therefore ſhall dwell no longer upon them now; and only mention it here as one very conſiderable Source from which the Saint's Happineſs will hereafter flow.

6. Joy ſhall ſpring up in their Souls from the immediate, free, and uninterrupted Efflux and Communication of it from GOD himſelf; whoſe Smiles ſhall inſpire them with heavenly Gladneſs, and fill them with Satisfaction unutterable.

That which we call here the gracious Preſence of GOD, and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt, though it may bear a Reſemblance to, yet is but a feeble Image of that Pleaſure which his neareſt Preſence, and the freeſt Manifeſtations of his Love afford. And though it be ſomething we cannot deſcribe, yet it is ſomething we cannot doubt of if we conſider, that it is the Fruition of the ever bleſſed GOD that creates it, *in whoſe Preſence is Fulneſs of Joy.*

Laſtly,

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Laſtly, If to this we add the Society to which the glorified Saints will be admitted, we have then all the principal Sources of their Happineſs in Heaven.

1. We ſhall then be intimately acquainted with all thoſe good and virtuous Men who are gone long before us to that happy World; whoſe Memories are preſerved, and whoſe Praiſes are recorded in ſacred and other Hiſtories; whom we have often heard, and often talked of; whoſe Characters we admire, whoſe Names we revere, and whoſe Virtues we are trying to imitate; and who, by the ſame *Faith and Patience*, which we are now called to the Exerciſe of, *are inheriting the Promiſes.*

2. Our dear pious Friends and Relatives, whom we loved, and with ſo much Pain parted from on Earth, we ſhall meet again; meet never to know the Pain of parting more; meet, and know, and enjoy them, to unſpeakable Advantage; ſtrip'd of all thoſe little Imperfections which were a conſiderable Abatement to the Happineſs we enjoyed in their Society on Earth.——And there, perhaps, we may meet with ſome whom we almoſt feared we ſhould never meet again; whoſe

whoſe great Failings, which we ſo often obſerved in them on Earth, are all mercifully forgiven and cancelled through the Merits of the Redeemer's Blood; and who might find a more eaſy Pardon from GOD than they did from Men; for his Grace often ſurmounts and covers thoſe Sins which Man's Charity cannot.

3. The holy Angels alſo then will be our dear and delightful Aſſociates. Full of Benevolence, Condeſcenſion and Goodneſs, will they welcome us to their happy Regions, and readily do all that their ſuperior Knowledge and exalted Station enable them to do towards the Increaſe of our Happineſs. But,

Laſtly, That which will crown all, and be the very Joy of all our Joy is, that there we ſhall ſee GOD.

That which is called the *Beatifick Viſion*, or the Viſion of GOD himſelf, wherein the Sum of the Saint's Happineſs is uſually ſuppoſed to conſiſt, we cannot indeed perfectly know. But this we know, that there will be ſome near and peculiar Manifeſtations which GOD will then make of himſelf, and that thoſe Manifeſtations will be accompanied with inexpreſſible Joy to the Soul.——

And

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And our glorious Redeemer we ſhall have a familiar Sight of, and an intimate Converſe with; ſhall behold him perſonally, and in that very Body in which he ſuffered to purchaſe all that profuſion of Happineſs for us, and in which every Eye ſhall ſee him when he comes to Judgment. And, O, the pleaſing Intercourſe that will then paſs between him and the *many Sons* whom his Grace hath *brought to Glory!* But this is a Subject to which no mortal thought is equal; and a Happineſs to which our higheſt Ideas of Delight and Pleaſure are infinitely inferior. I muſt therefore drop it, as out of my Reach to deſcribe, and yours to apprehend.

And now let us lay all theſe things together, and in our retired Minutes go over them again with ourſelves diſtinctly; and contemplate this future Felicity of the Righteous in Heaven as now faintly repreſented, both in the ſeveral Properties of it, and the various Sources from whence it flows, and we ſhall have ſome Idea of that *Gladneſs which is ſown for the Righteous*, and is now ſpringing up for them in the other World.

And, O, why do not theſe Thoughts make us weary of this World? And ſick of that

that Sin and Sorrow with which we are inceſſantly beſet?——How can we be contentedly Strangers to all that ſolid, conſtant Joy, which is the portion of the Bleſſed?——Have not the foregoing Thoughts warmed and animated us? Do they not even make us impatient of Earth and Fleſh?——But this is our time and ſtate of Suffering——Thoſe bleſſed Saints had theirs before us——A little more Faith and Patience will carry us through all to that unſpeakable Bleſſedneſs whereof we have now been entertaining ourſelves with an imperfect View; and of which they are ſafely and for ever poſſeſſed.——In the mean time we muſt continue working, waiting, watching and praying——and *we ſhall reap if we faint not.* Reap that full Harveſt of *Light and Gladneſs which is now ſown for the Righteous and Upright in Heart.*

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SERMON VI.

The future HAPPINESS of the RIGHTEOUS.

PSALM XCVII. 11.

Light is ſown for the Righteous; and Gladneſs for the Upright in Heart.

IN theſe Words the following things are obſervable.

I. The Character that is here given of good Men, They are *Righteous and Upright*.

II. Their preſent State implied, *Darkneſs* and *Sorrow*.

III. Their

III. Their future Happineſs expreſſed, *Light and Gladneſs.*

Laſtly, The Metaphor under which this is deſcribed, *Light is* SOWN *for the Righteous.*

The three firſt of theſe I have particularly conſidered in the two preceding Diſcourſes. I come now to the laſt thing propoſed, and that is,

IV. To examine into the Beauty, Propriety and Import of the Metaphor under which the Promiſe in the text is made, *Light is* SOWN *for the Righteous*, &c.

This is a Metaphor often uſed in the ſacred Writings. *Solomon* tells us, that *to him that ſoweth Righteouſneſs ſhall be a ſure Reward*, Prov. xi. 18. and, *that he that ſoweth Iniquity ſhall reap Vanity*, Prov. xxii. 8. In like manner the Apoſtle *Paul* tells us, *that whatever a Man ſoweth that ſhall he reap*, Gal. vi. 8.

Now by attending to the import of this Metaphor, ſo common in Scripture, we may be able to throw ſome Light upon the Subject in the text where it is uſed, and illu-

ſtrate

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ſtrate ſome particulars relating to it in a plain and eaſy manner. And it ſeems naturally to imply the following things.

1. That ſomething muſt be done by the Righteous now, in order to their being partakers of that Happineſs which is prepared for them in Heaven. The Huſbandman can never expect a Crop if he never ſows. If he neglects his Seaſon, in vain will he look for a Harveſt.

2. Though the future Bleſſedneſs of the Righteous muſt now be ſown by themſelves, yet it is nevertheleſs the free Gift of GOD. The Huſbandman can do no more than prepare his Ground, and throw in his Seed, the rich and plenteous Harveſt that enſues he owes to the Bounty of Heaven.

3. That the Saints on Earth ſhould patiently wait for their Glory in Heaven. So *the Huſbandman waiteth for the precious Fruit of the Earth, and hath long Patience for it*, Jam. v. 7.

4. That they ſhould encourage themſelves with the Hopes and Proſpects of it, and thankfully acknowledge thoſe Providences, and Diſpenſations, which tend to prepare and fit them for it; as the Huſbandman does

thoſe

those fruitful and suitable seasons which raise his Hopes of a plentiful Harvest.

Of each of these particularly;

1. Something must be done by the Righteous now, in order to their being Partakers of that Happiness which is prepared for them in Heaven. The Husbandman can never expect a Crop, if he never sows. If he neglect his Season, in vain will he look for a Harvest.

The Husbandman, you know, before he sows his Seed, takes care to prepare his Ground, by rooting out those noxious Weeds which would prevent the Growth of the Corn; and then, to get it into Heart and Order, he dresses and manures it in the best manner he can, and then after proper Tillage and Culture, he throws in the best Seed he can procure at the proper Season; and so leaves it with due Tendence and Watchfulness to the Blessing of Heaven. —— In this manner then must we proceed if we would sow to ourselves Righteousness.

1. We must endeavour to *root out* of our Hearts those sinful Prejudices and Affections, and those worldly Lusts and Cares

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which ſo plentifully ſpring up there, and which are ſo apt to choak the divine Seed that is ſown in the Heart, and render it unfruitful, *Matth.* xiii. 22. Whilſt thoſe are retained and harboured, this can never take the entire Poſſeſſion of the Heart. As well may a Man *ſerve* GOD *and Mammon*, be a Servant of Chriſt, and a Slave of Sin, at the ſame time, as pretend to cultivate that Righteouſneſs, which is the Principle of the heavenly Felicity, whilſt he indulges thoſe ſinful Affections that chain his Heart to Vanity. Beſides,

2. There is much Care and Pains requiſite in order rightly to *prepare* the Heart to receive the Grace of Life, by Contemplation, Meditation, and holy Thoughts; and by Reading, and Prayer, and ſuch devout Exerciſes, as tend to promote it's ſpiritual Strength and Vigour, and diſpoſe it to retain and cheriſh the divine Seed that is ſown in it. For without this it will be cold, and dead, and languid towards divine things, and be diſpoſed to entertain and cheriſh none but vain and unprofitable Thoughts, as the barren and uncultivated Earth does Weeds.

3. As

3. As the Earth muſt be often *tilled* and *ſtirred* to improve and mellow it, to fit it for the Reception of the Seed, ſo we muſt *ſtir up our Hearts* to fit them for the Reception of the divine Word; and call upon our Souls, and all that is within us, to ſeek the Lord, and praiſe his holy Name. For the human Heart is naturally ſo barren a Soil, that all the Pains we can take is little enough to cultivate it ſo, as that it may bring *forth Fruit unto eternal Life.*

4. As the Huſbandman is careful to provide the *beſt Seed* he can get, ſo we muſt take care to have the *beſt Principles* fixt in our Hearts; for we are commanded to take heed, not only *how* we hear, but *what* we hear *(a)*; that we do not mix Chaff or Tares with the Wheat, or receive thoſe Principles for the Truths of GOD which are only the Inventions of Men; and thoſe Notions as the Doctrines of true Religion, which may be deſtructive of the proper Influence and Power of it.

We muſt then receive the divine Word in it's Seaſon. A good Seed-time the Huſbandman looks upon as a great Bleſſing, and im-

(a) Mark iv. 24.

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improves it accordingly. And many ſuch Seaſons, in a ſpiritual Senſe, have we all received; many have we neglected, and miſimproved. But they are ſtill repeated; and we have ſtill the Warnings of GOD's Word before us, to take heed what we ſow; for according to that will be our future Harveſt. *If we ſow to the Fleſh, we ſhall of the Fleſh reap Corruption; but if we ſow to the Spirit, we ſhall of the Spirit reap Life everlaſting (b).*

Laſtly, As the Huſbandman then leaves all to the Bleſſing of Heaven, ſo after all our Endeavours to be meet for the future Glory, we muſt leave the Succeſs of them to the Grace of GOD.

This therefore brings me to the ſecond Obſervation I made on the Metaphor in the text, *viz.*

Though the future Bleſſedneſs of the Righteous muſt now be ſown by themſelves, yet it is nevertheleſs the free Gift of GOD. The Huſbandman can do no more than prepare his Ground, and throw in his Seed, the rich and plenteous Harveſt that

(b) Gal. vi. 7, 8.

that insues, he owes to the Bounty of Heaven.

Under this Head then I propose to illustrate and establish this great Doctrine of the Gospel, *that by Grace we are saved, through Faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the Gift of* GOD. As under the former Head I endeavoured to shew you, that before we can warrantably hope for Salvation, or the Blessedness of Heaven, there is a great deal necessary to be done on our part, I am now to shew you, that after all we can do, our Salvation is not to be ascribed to our own Works, but to divine Grace.

The Metaphor before us may serve to illustrate this to us very happily. The Husbandman cleanses, prepares, dresses, tills, and plows his Ground, and yet the Harvest he expects, after all is owing to the Bounty of Heaven; so the Christian reads, and hears, and prays, and meditates, and watches and uses his best Endeavours for the Interest of his Soul; and yet, after all, his Salvation is owing to the free Grace of GOD. If you ask, *how are we to conceive of this?* I answer; consider but the Case just before mentioned, and you will be able to answer that

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Queſtion to yourſelves. It is not the Labour of the Huſbandman that cauſes the Harveſt, though there can be no Harveſt expected without it; ſo it is not the Diligence of a Chriſtian that is the procuring Cauſe of his Salvation, though he can never hope for Salvation without it. Both are neceſſary to their reſpective Ends, only as ſubordinate Cauſes, *without which* thoſe Ends cannot ordinarily be attained.

But more particularly. There are two things to which the ſpringing and ripening the ſowed Corn, ſo as to produce a complete Harveſt, are immediately owing. And they are the *vegetative Quality* of the Earth, and *ſeaſonable Weather*.

The former of theſe is that Virtue of Power with which all kinds of Earth are endued, in a greater or leſs Degree, of diſſolving or digeſting the Seed thrown into it, or of ſoftening and opening the Root in ſuch a manner as to cauſe it to take in thoſe nutritive Juices of the Earth, which by their Circulation through the proper Veſſels are ſo maturated and refined, as to turn it into the ſubſtance of the Plant; and ſo promote it's Growth till it is brought to a

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ſtate of Perfection, wherein it ſheds a Seed like itſelf, to produce others of the ſame kind. But the Doctrine of Vegetation is ſo myſterious, that it very much checks and confounds all our philoſophical Enquiries. So that ſome have been inclined to cut the matter ſhort, and to ſolve all it's Difficulties in the ſame manner they do thoſe that attend the Doctrine of Gravitation, by attributing it to the immediate Agency of ſome inviſible Being, or the continual Impulſe or Impreſſion of the divine Power. Which is all that the Antients could mean by their *plaſtic Virtue*. But certain it is, that without this vegetative Quality of the Earth (which is a thing we know little of) there could be no ſuch thing as the Growth of Plants or Herbs, that being the immediate Cauſe of this.

The other thing which contributes to the Growth and ripening the Seed ſown, is *ſeaſonable Weather*; which is neceſſary to preſerve the due Temperament of the Earth and Air, that the former may have a ſuitable Degree of Moiſture and Drineſs, and the latter a proper Degree of Heat or Cold.

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Both theſe are univerſally allowed to be neceſſary to the Growth of Vegetables.

Now what I would obſerve here is, that anſwerable to theſe there are two things equally neceſſary to the Growth of the ſpiritual Seed ſown in the Heart. And they are *inward Operations* and *external Diſpenſations*. The former correſponding with the vegetative Quality of the Earth, and the latter anſwering to the Suitableneſs of Seaſons, ſo neceſſary to the Growth and Produce of the Plant.

1. Then, the firſt thing immediately neceſſary to make the divine Seed (that is, the Word of GOD) *take root downward, and ſpring upward*, is the ſecret Operation of the Spirit of GOD, anſwerable to the formentioned vegetative Quality of the Earth. And between theſe there is a plain Reſemblance in ſeveral Reſpects.

1. They are both of them Myſteries. And therefore the one can with no more reaſon be doubted or denied than the other. And to deny either purely becauſe it is a Myſtery, is to make it a Rule to ourſelves, both in natural and ſpiritual things, to believe nothing but what we can comprehend,

or account for by the help of our own Reason, which of all things is the most unreasonable. That the holy Spirit of GOD hath a free Access to, and exerts a powerful Efficacy on the Minds of Men, is certain from Experience. And that this divine Power is necessary for the Formation of the *new Creature*, or the spiritual Renovation of the Soul, we learn as certainly from Scripture, as we do, that the vegetative Power of the Earth is necessary for the Formation of the Plant, from Sense and Observation. Both the one and the other are as sensible in their Effects as they are secret in their Operation. It is the holy Spirit of GOD then, setting Home the divine Word with Life and Power, and convincing Force upon the Heart, which makes it effectual to the Conversion and Salvation of them that hear it.

2. The Operations of the holy Spirit upon the Heart are for the most part gradual and insensible, as the progress of Vegetation is in the Plant. You cannot see the Plant grow, but you may see it hath grown. So the Operations of the Spirit are often discernable only in their Effects. A Christian may not be able, perhaps, to determine for certain

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certain that at any particular time he is under the ſpecial Operations of the Spirit, but may think he is not ſo, when he really is; or, on the other hand, that he is ſo, when he really is not; by miſtaking the Impreſſions of a natural Imagination for thoſe of a ſpiritual Operation. But by the ſteady Piety, Devotion, and holy Temper of his Soul, he may with certainty conclude, that he hath been under thoſe gracious and divine Operations; and that to them he ought to aſcribe his habitual and growing Deſires and Diſpoſitions towards GOD and Heaven and Holineſs.

3. We may juſtly conceive a good Degree of Reſemblance between the *Progreſs* of Vegetation in the Seed, and that of divine Operations on the Soul. The vegetative Power of the Earth firſt ſoftens and diſſolves the Seed, then cauſes it to take Root, then to put forth a tender Blade, which inſenſibly improves to a ſtronger Stalk; after which it produces the Green Ear, then the ripened Ear full of Grain, and then it is brought to it's ſtate of Perfection. In like manner the divine Grace ſometimes proceeds with the Soul in bringing it to Glory. It firſt ſoftens

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the Heart by the Convictions of the Word, makes an inward Change in it not immediately visible in the Life; that spiritual Change (which, very pertinently to our Metaphor, is in Scripture called the ROOT *of the Matter*) is improved till it is plainly discerned in the Temper and Life; these Fruits of Holiness (as Grace grows stronger and stronger) are more and more apparent, till they issue in a fixed habitual Heavenliness of Temper, and are finally made perfect in Glory. Hence we see the Propriety of that common Observation, *that Holiness is Happiness in it's first Principle*, as the Seed contains in it the Principle of the future Ear; or Grace is Glory begun, and Glory is Grace in it's Perfection.

I do not say that this is always and invariably the Method in which the Holy Ghost proceeds in his Operations on the Heart of Man. No, he hath various Ways in bringing the Soul to GOD. But I believe this is the most usual Way in the present settled Times of the Gospel Dispensation. Instantaneous Conversions we find chiefly confined to the Age of Miracles, and may justly be reckoned among the extraordinary Effects of

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the divine Power; and therefore are not ordinarily to be expected now.

4. As it is uncertain at what particular Inſtant the Seed begins to take Root in the Ground, ſo it is no leſs difficult to determine for certain the preciſe time when the Heart is firſt effectually turned to GOD. If we ſee the Plant grows we know it hath taken Root, though we may not know the exact time when it firſt began to do ſo. In like manner, if the Fruits of Righteouſneſs appear in our Lives, we may be ſure the Word of GOD hath had a ſaving Effect upon our Hearts, though we may not know the preciſe time when it took that Effect. And without this we cannot be ſure it hath had any ſuch Effect at all; for if the divine Seed *take Root downward*, it will *ſpring upward.* And this is the only Rule our Saviour hath given us to judge by in this Matter, *By their Fruits ye ſhall know them*, Matt. vi. 20. —— But to proceed,

2. Divine Grace is planted and improved in the Soul, not only by inward *Operations*, but by means of outward *Diſpenſations*.

As the Suitableneſs of the Seaſon concurs with the vegetative Property of the Earth

to

to improve and ripen the Seed, ſo the *Ordinances* and *Providences of* GOD concur with the *Operations* of his Spirit to effect and perfect a ſaving Change in the Soul.

1. The *Ordinances* of GOD are often made uſe of to this End.

Theſe are commonly called the *Means of Grace*, becauſe they are not only the Means of obtaining Grace, but of ſtrengthening and improving it. And with this View it is equally the Duty of all, devoutly to attend them; that they who are as yet deſtitute of a ſaving Change of Heart may, by the Bleſſing of GOD, hereby come to a happy Experience of it, and that they who have experienced it may thus have it improved and cultivated.

And, O, how ſafely may I here appeal to the Experience of many a ſerious and ſincere Chriſtian! who have had their Hearts warmed, quickened, and refreſhed, their holy Diſpoſitions ſtrengthened and confirmed, and their Spirits made more ſerious and heavenly, by their diligent and devout Attendance on ſacred Ordinances; out of a dutiful regard to the Authority of GOD, who hath appointed them, as the proper and direct

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rect means for the Eſtabliſhment of their Grace and Virtue; and who hath promiſed his Bleſſing to render them effectual to that End. No Man, I am ſure, ever attained to a confirmed Degree of Grace, or heavenly Hope, or any Eminence in real Religion by a Neglect of divine Ordinances, or a formal ſpiritleſs Attendance on them. Many who attend them conſtantly and conſcientiouſly have been Perſons of eminent Goodneſs. And to the happy Effect of holy Ordinances (which, by the Bleſſing of GOD, hath been the means of gradually mending their Spirits) they ought to aſcribe it, that they are ſo. And their gradual Improvements in Grace is their growing fitneſs for Glory. Thus by the heavenly Dews of the Sanctuary the divine Seed is cheriſhed and improved, till it bring forth immortal Fruit.

2. The *Diſpenſations* of Providence is another means which GOD is pleaſed ſometimes to make uſe of for promoting the Increaſe of the holy Principle in the Heart.

Theſe are various; ſome joyous and pleaſing, others grievous and painful; but all happily conducive to the ſame End.

All

All Sun-ſhine is not ſeaſonable or proper for the Growth of the Corn. Stormy Winds, pinching Froſts, and chilling Snow, ſometimes have their Uſe. And the coldeſt Weather, though for the preſent it may check the Corn, yet may appear afterwards to have been uſeful to it, as it killed thoſe Weeds and Inſects which would otherwiſe have hurt it.

Thus uninterrupted Proſperity and Peace are not good for a Chriſtian, however they may be deſired by him. Carnality, Confidence, Pride, Security, and Idolence, often ſpring from thence, like Vermin bred in the Sun, which can only be deſtroyed by the nipping Blaſts of Adverſity. And when one and the other is moſt ſeaſonable for the Soul, and how long it ſhall continue, we muſt leave to the Will and Wiſdom of him who hath promiſed, that where the *good Work is begun in the Soul he will carry it to Perfection*; and that with the ſame perfect Acquieſcence and Submiſſion as we leave the Diſpoſition of the Seaſons and Weather with him, who hath promiſed, that *Summer and Winter, Seed-time and Harveſt, ſhall not fail.*

Thus

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Thus then, by the Diſpenſations of GOD's Grace and Providence, the *upright Man* increaſes in Righteouſneſs, and conſequently in a Fitneſs for the heavenly Light and Glory, as by ſuitable and ſeaſonable Weather the Corn that is ſown in the Earth is brought to it's proper Maturity and Ripeneſs; but both are under the Diſpoſition of the divine Wiſdom, and therefore the Effects of both are to be equally aſcribed to GOD.

And if we keep this Metaphor in mind, which we ſo often find in Scripture, and compare theſe two Caſes together, I cannot but think it would be a very good Preſervative againſt thoſe two Extremes into which different Perſons are very apt to run; that is, either of aſcribing Salvation intirely to the Endeavours of Men, as ſome do, or abſolutely and only to the Grace of GOD, without the Neceſſity of any ſuch Labour and Endeavour on Man's part, as others do. Both equally abſurd. For with the ſame Reaſon may the former be confident of a good Harveſt, be the Weather what it will) becauſe he hath taken care of his Ground, and the other expect a good Crop without plowing or ſowing. Whereas the Truth is

——the

—the Grace of GOD in the ſpiritual Life is as neceſſary as the Bleſſing of GOD in the natural Life, to crown our Endeavours with Succeſs; and without our own Care and Pains and Diligence we have no warrant to hope for the Grace of GOD in the one caſe, or his Bleſſing in the other.—I now proceed,

3. Another thing that we may learn from the Metaphor in the Text is, that the Saints on Earth ſhould patiently wait for their Glory in Heaven. So *the Huſbandman waiteth for the precious Fruit of the Earth, and hath long Patience for it*, Jam. v. 7.

And the Author to the Hebrews tells them they have need of Patience in this Caſe, *Heb.* x. 36. *Ye have need of Patience, that after ye have done the Will of* GOD *ye may receive the Promiſes.* That is, ye have need of Patience in waiting for the Accompliſhment of them. And the more joyful Proſpects they have had of the heavenly Light and Glory, and the more grievous Calamities they have ſuffered in the preſent ſtate of Darkneſs and Sorrow, the more need they have to fortify their ardent and longing Souls

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with this Grace, ſo proper to a ſtate of Suffering and Hope. For the ardent Hopes of a Chriſtian may create ſome tryal to his Patience, as well as his long and heavy Sufferings. And when they both meet, ſore and grievous Sufferings here, and bright and ardent Hopes of Glory hereafter, then it is that the Chriſtian ſtands in the greateſt need of Patience, both in bearing and waiting the Will of GOD.

Great was the Attainment of the Apoſtle *Paul* in this reſpect (which is not the leaſt eminent part of his Character) that though few Perſons ever endured more on Earth, or had more glorious Hopes and Foretaſtes of Heaven, yet he was quite reſigned as to the manner how, or the time when, he ſhould receive his Diſmiſſion out of this Life, and enter upon his Reward. *I am in a Streight* (ſaith he) *between two, having a deſire to depart, and to be with Chriſt, which is far better. Moreover, to abide in the Fleſh is more needful for you, Phil.* i. 22, 24. And to this he chearfully ſubmitted, with the Hope of being further uſeful to the Church of Chriſt, before he entered into his full Glory.

Chriſtians

Christians of a warm Spirit of Devotion especially should take care of an impatience of Expectation. As their Hope should support their Patience in suffering, so the Ardor of it should not transport them beyond the Bounds of Patience in waiting. As it did that good Man, who, upon his dying Bed, declared, *that he would not for a World be to live any longer; and the very Thoughts of a Possibility of Recovery made him even tremble*; which I think is mistakenly recorded to his Praise; such a strong Expression savouring too much of Impatience, and a want of that absolute Submission to the all-wise Disposals of Heaven, which is every Christian's Duty *(c)*.

Let Christians then learn of the Husbandman (as the Apostle *James* directs them) to wait patiently for their future Harvest of Joy and Glory. Now is their time of Suffering; their Day of Triumph is not far off. *Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.* Wait patiently then *all the Days of your appointed time*; and bear patiently all that may be appointed you

(c) Life of Mr. *John Janeway*, pag. 101.

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in the mean time, *and your Expectation ſhall not be cut off.*

IV. Another thing we may learn from the Metaphor in the text is, that true Chriſtians ſhould frequently encourage themſelves with the Proſpects and Hopes of their future Glory; and thankfully acknowledge thoſe Providences and Diſpenſations which tend to advance and promote it.

Thus does the prudent Huſbandman. Many Streights and Difficulties he may be in, but he hath a Proſpect of a plentiful Harveſt, which will ſoon eaſe him of them all, and amply recompenſe all his Pains. And hath not the righteous and upright Man much more reaſon to encourage himſelf with the proſpect of that Harveſt of Light and Gladneſs, which is ſpringing up for him in Heaven? Where no Fear ſhall ever more diſtreſs his Mind; nor a Thought ſhall ever enter there but what ſhall delight and elevate it.

And for this end it is, that the Happineſs of the Saints in Heaven is repreſented in Scripture under ſuch Figures as are moſt apt to charm and exalt the Mind, and invite it's

moſt

moſt delightful Contemplations. And for that End have I endeavoured in the two preceding Diſcourſes, to improve the Repreſentation of it in the text, under the notion of *Light* and *Gladneſs*.

And why ſhould you be backward to think of Heaven, you who hope for ever to dwell there? Why backward to ſolace and refreſh yourſelves with ſuch Views, under all the Fatigues of your earthly Pilgrimage; or why ſhould not the Sorrows of Earth drive you to that Reſource of Joy and Comfort, ever acceſſible, ever open? Eſtabliſh well but your Hopes of it, and you cannot too frequently enjoy thoſe Hopes. They will purify the Soul, and exalt it; and refine it from the Soil and Filth, which a too cloſe attention to the things of this World, is apt to leave upon it.

And thus have I endeavoured particularly to open and improve the Metaphor in the text, where the Happineſs of Heaven is ſaid to be SOWN *for the Righteous*. I ſhall now conclude all with a few ſhort Reflections upon the whole.

1. If the future Happineſs of the righteous and upright in Heart be *Light* and *Gladneſs*, what will hereafter be the Portion

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of wicked Men and Hypocrites? Certainly the reverſe of what is here promiſed to the righteous will be the Lot of thoſe who bear the reverſe of their Character. And what is that but *Darkneſs* and *Torment?* The very Terms by which our Saviour expreſſes the Puniſhment of the Wicked in the other World, *Mat.* viii. 12. *Luke* xvi. 28.

2. From what hath been ſaid on this Subject, we ſee how exactly the Felicity of the Saints in the other World correſponds with their Tempers and Characters in this.

GOD is a GOD of Righteouſneſs and Truth. In theſe things he doth delight. And therefore none but the righteous and the upright can be the Objects of his Love. And it is his Love that opens all the Sources of Bliſs in Heaven.—— Or thus; all the Happineſs of Heaven conſiſts in the Enjoyment of GOD. None can enjoy him but thoſe that are like him. But he is a GOD of Righteouſneſs and Truth; and therefore nothing but this can make us like him. Nothing leſs than this then can qualify us for Heaven, or fit us for the Happineſs of it. A ſolid Reflection, and ſubſtantial Truth! As certain from the very nature of things, as it is from the

Word

Word of GOD; and equally adminiſtering Comfort to thoſe who are conſcious of their Integrity, and Terror to thoſe who indulge Iniquity.

3. We hence ſee how unreaſonable it is for good Men to give themſelves up to Diſcontent and Melancholy, be their outward Circumſtances in this World ever ſo afflicted.

When a good Man droops and grieves and mourns and bows down his Head like a Bull-ruſh, and refuſes to be comforted, he does a mighty Diſhonour to his Faith. It looks as if he neither truſted the Providence, nor believed the Word of GOD; and that he doubted the Truth (or, at leaſt, that he ſeldom thought) of what he there reads, *viz. that the Sufferings of the preſent Life are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that ſhall be revealed; that theſe light Afflictions, which are but for a Moment*, are deſigned to *work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory*; and if *we are faithful unto Death, we ſhall receive a Crown of Life.* — A melancholy Chriſtian, with all the glorious Proſpects of the Goſpel before him, is a very inconſiſtent Character.

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4. What reaſon have we to be thankful that GOD hath been pleaſed to throw ſo much Light and Gladneſs into this dark and miſerable World, by the Diſcoveries which his Goſpel makes of the Glory and Happineſs of a better.

An impenetrable Cloud indeed intercepts our clear View of that heavenly Glory, yet ſuch a Glimmering of it ſhines through that Cloud as chears our Hearts, and animates our Hopes, and gives us ſufficient Light to guide us to it. Bleſſed be GOD, we are not left in total Darkneſs. The Goſpel hath brought the Life of Immortality to Light, ſo far as it is neceſſary for us to know it in the preſent State. And the more we ſtudy the Word and Perfections of GOD, and the nature of true Holineſs, the better acquainted ſhall we be with that World of Light, and Life, and Glory we hope to be for ever in.

Laſtly, We ſee how infinitely it is our Intereſt and Wiſdom to cultivate that Righteouſneſs and Integrity of Heart, which alone can fit us for the heavenly Happineſs, and on which all the Promiſes of it are ſuſpended.

Religion

Religion was ultimately designed to make us happy; but it was primarily designed to fit us for Happiness; to form in us that holy Temper which alone can qualify us for the heavenly Glory; to make us like GOD that we may be capable of enjoying Him. Whatever hath this Tendency and Effect, *that* is Religion; whatever hath no such Effect or Tendency may be called Religion indeed, but it is falsely so called. This is plain. What remains then, but that we all spend the future Part of our Lives in the Prosecution of that Holiness and Righteousness which alone will make us like to, and fit us for the everlasting Enjoyment of GOD? And *what God hath thus joined together let no Man put asunder.*

And now, *Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant Mercy, hath begotten us again to this lively Hope, through the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.* And may his Grace be more and more fitting us for that *Inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away; reserved in Heaven for them who are kept by his mighty Power, through Faith, unto Salvation.*

SER-

SERMON VII.

The INSTABILITY of a DOUBLE MINDED MAN.

JAMES i. 1.

A Double minded Man is unſtable in all his Ways.

MAN is a variable Creature. Every Man is ſo; and does not differ from every Body elſe more than he does, at ſome times, from himſelf.

This is a common Obſervation. But that which the Apoſtle takes notice of in the text is ſomething more, *viz.* that there are ſome who are not only in different *Tempers* at different Times, but are governed by contrary

trary *Principles*, and have, as it were, *two Minds* almost at all Times, which occasions great Instability of Conduct, and Inconsistency of Character. They have contrary Inclinations in their Hearts, by which they are drawn contrary Ways; and are so equally influenced by opposite Objects, that they cannot with the full Bent of their Minds pursue either the one or the other; but are continually halting, wavering, and vibrating between both; sometimes inclined to this, and sometimes to that, according to the last Impressions they received from either.

This Unsteadiness and Irresolution is a great Weakness in our Natures, and in nothing more visible than in our Regards to those very different Objects, the things of this World, and those of the other; under which View I shall now particularly consider it.

The Words contain a Proposition, whose Sense is independent of the Context; and therefore I shall take up no Time in a critical Examination of that.——The Proposition itself consists of two Parts.

I. The

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I. The Character of one who is irresolute and unfixed in his leading Views and Desires, He is a *Double minded Man.*

II. The Effect of such an unsteady, wavering Disposition, it produces a strange Instability and Inconsistency of Conduct. *A Double minded Man is unstable in all his Ways.*

These two things I shall particularly consider, and then shew you the practical Improvement that ought to be made of this Subject at large.

I. We have the Character of one who is irresolute and unfixed in his leading Views and Desires, He is a *Double minded Man.*

His Mind is divided between GOD and the World. He sacrifices both to GOD and *Mammon.* He aims at what our Saviour says is impossible; and would serve two contrary Masters. He loves this World most passionately and supremely, and would be thought to love GOD as much. He retains all his worldly Lusts, his Pride, his Passion, his Covetousness, his Self-sufficiency, his worldly

worldly Dependance, and his ſtrong Affection for Vanity. And yet he dares not caſt off all Regard for Religion neither. He dares not renounce Chriſtianity and his Conſcience; but would be thought to have as great a regard for his Soul as other Men. And ſome regard for it he has; and more eſpecially at ſome times. When his Mind is cool and ſober, and free from thoſe worldly Paſſions which ſo generally inflame it; when he is brought into a thoughtful Mood by reading ſome ſerious Book in private, or hearing ſome warm and awakening Diſcourſe in publick; he is then full of ſelf-reproaches; he ſeverely blames his Temper and Conduct; and calls himſelf a thouſand Fools for being ſo paſſionately fond of Vanity, and living ſo forgetful of Eternity and his immortal Soul. Then his good Purpoſes return, and he is all for God and Heaven, and Immortality. And *Vanity of Vanities* he pronounces upon every thing elſe.

And happy were it for him if ſuch a Frame continued, if he could preſerve this good Diſpoſition. But, alas! *like a Morning Cloud, or as the early Dew*, it is ſoon gone. The very next Morning, perhaps, (for we will ſuppoſe

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pose these good thoughts and purposes to return upon him in the Evening of the Lord's Day) as soon as he is engaged in the Affairs of the World, his Heart takes fire again, and all the unhallowed Passions are rekindled. The Prospect of Gain, or Pleasure, or Preferment transports him; he breaks through every Obligation of Reason and Religion, all the Restraints of Decency, Honour and Reputation, to gratify his governing Passion. His Conscience is silenced. He is now assured that worldly Gain is substantial Good. He sees, and feels it to be so; let weak Minds and speculative Men think and say what they will. The World is his GOD, and he will adore it.

And in this Idolatry he is very zealous and devout; till it be interrupted by the unwelcome Return of that holy Day, when he is again called off from the World to the Worship of the true GOD. And then, after the first Uneasiness, of having such a check put upon the Bent of his Inclinations is a little over, his Mind begins to be sedate and serious again. And then his Devotion and Self-reproaches return upon him together; till, as before, they both vanish

nish again at the very next Scene and Prospect of worldly Advantage that offers.

This is a brief and general Description of a *Double minded Man*. But more particularly, this Expression denotes a great Variation in all the three leading Powers of the Mind, the *Understanding*, *Will*, and *Affections*.

1. His *Understanding* is various. His Sentiments at one Time are very different from what they are at another. He sees things through a different Medium, and in a different Light; and therefore his Apprehension and Judgment of them is different at different Times.

Now he apprehends the Value of his Soul and the Vanity of the World; sees the Worth and Excellency of Religion in the clearest Light, and is convinced that nothing but Heaven ought to be Object of his chief care and main Pursuit. He readily falls in with, and feels the Weight of *Solomon*'s Sentiment, *Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*. And joins with him in *the Conclusion of the whole Matter*, that *to fear God, and keep his Commandments, is the whole of Man*, Eccles. xii. 13.

And

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And were this Frame to continue, what an excellent Christian would he be! How great an Alteration should we soon see in the Man! What Seriousness and Sobriety, instead of Sloth and Sensuality!——But, alas! he is presently another Man. He goes into Company and the World, and his Heart receives it's old Tincture. His Thoughts and Sentiments are quite altered. His Temper as vain, as light, as earthly as ever. He thinks he may and ought to love the World, and indulge his Passions and his Pleasures. And herein he does nothing but what he sees almost every Body else do. He looks upon those Ministers and Authors who speak and write so freely of the Vanity of these Things as too precise and stiff by far; and fancies it is only the Effect of Spleen and Envy, of a narrow Spirit, or an *Ignorance of the World.* "That it is talking in our own Way; and "he will bear with us because *we know no* "*better*. But Men of Genius, Wit, and "Spirit, talk and think in a different Strain." And therefore he concludes, that his former Thoughts of the Matter were only the Effects of a gloomy Imagination, or a melancholy turn of Mind.——And thus does he think

think about the moſt important Things as differently from himſelf, as if he had actually *two Underſtandings.*

2. The *double minded* Man moreover acts as if he had two *Wills.* For Inſtance, with regard to any particular Duty; ſometimes he finds himſelf readily enough inclined to it, at other Times he is moſt averſe and reluctant; and can ſcarce, with all the Command he hath over himſelf, perſuade his Heart to ſet about it. At one time he goes to it with Delight, at another time he can hardly drag his backward Mind, even to the dulleſt Performance of it.

So with reſpect to any particular Sin; at one time he can venture upon it without Scruple, at another time his Conſcience ſtartles and heſitates. Now his Will is ſet towards his Duty, now towards his Luſts. Now he minds *Carnal*, and now *Spiritual Things.* And thus he becomes a perpetual Contradiction to himſelf.

Nay, with reſpect to the ſame Action, or the ſame Object, his Will is often drawn two contrary Ways at the ſame time.

3. The *double minded* Man will find the ſame Diverſity and Contrariety in the other

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leading Power of his Soul, the *Affections.* Which are spiritual or carnal, serious or sensual, heavenly or worldly, just as the two contrary Principles of Flesh and Spirit prevail in him; which alternately sway the Mind; and of which alternate Sway this Variableness of Temper, I am now treating of, is the certain Effect.

How devoutly and heavenly are our Affections sometimes when we get nearest to GOD, and are carried in our Contemplations to eternal and invisible Things! After that we are ready to imagine, that nothing mortal could ever move us. But we soon come down to Earth again; when our Hearts presently begin to hover over the World, and cling, and clasp, and center to it again as closely as if it were indeed our Rest, and we regretted a short Absence from it.

Thus have we taken a brief View of the *double minded Man.* An unhappy Character; but none more common. Such an unsteady, wavering, inconstant, vague and variable Temper we observe and smile at in Children, who discover it in the lowest Things; but we neither see nor pity it in our-

ourſelves, who diſcover it more in the high- SERM.
eſt Concerns. But let us now, VII.

II. Conſider briefly the Effect of this unhappy Temper mentioned in the text.

This Variableneſs of Temper, the Apoſtle *James* ſaith, is always attended with an Inſtability of Conduct. *A double minded Man is unſtable in all his Ways.* That is, in all thoſe Inſtances in which his Heart is ſo divided, his Behaviour muſt be incoherent and various. His Conduct is as unſteady as his Temper. But as I have confined *this* to Things of Religion, I ſhall conſider *that*, which is the Effect of it, under the ſame Reſtriction.

Now this Inſtability of a *double minded* Man's Conduct, (though it be evident enough of itſelf, as the Effect of his Temper, yet) it may not be amiſs briefly to repreſent under three different Views.

1. He is inconſtant in his *Purpoſes* and *Purſuits*. This is a natural Effect of that divided Mind we are ſpeaking of. So it was with the revolting Jews in the Prophet's Time. *Their Heart is divided* (ſaith GOD,) *i. e.* between me and Baal; *therefore ſhall*

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they be found faulty; and are as an empty Vine, Hos. x. 2. Were the Heart once fixed to a Point, it would soon know what to purpose and prosecute; but having no steady certain Views, it must of Consequence be undetermined. What it desires at one time, it despises at another; soon flies from what it before pursued; and again pursues what it lately so industriously avoided.

Thus a double minded Man spends his whole Life, as it were, in doing and undoing; in sinning and repenting; till his last Summons comes, and then indeed he is determined. Death, or the near and certain Prospect of it, fixes his Views intirely for GOD and Heaven; but it is under the Amazement and Horror of this Reflection, *that he hath but a few Hours to do that in, which ought to have been the Business of his Life; but which he could never before fully find in his Heart to make so.* However variable and changing the Heart may be in Life, it will be fixed in Death. But then it may be too late.

2. Another Effect of such a divided Heart is, that it can seldom in good earnest *fall in with the Dictates of Conscience* in the plainest Instances

Inſtances of Duty. Be the Duty ever ſo important, the Call of Providence ever ſo loud, the Voice of Conſcience ever ſo ſtrong, there is ſomething within that draws him back, and makes him dull, cold and reluctant, where others are, and he himſelf ought to be, all Life, Spirit and Zeal. He drags heavily towards it, as if every Action that is ſacred to GOD, were a Clog upon his Life and Liberty; and Religion, which was deſigned to ſet him free from the Captivity of Sin, were itſelf his greateſt Chain. — Thus it is at thoſe Times when the carnal part of his Temper prevails, as it generally does.

3. The double minded Man is eaſily overcome *in an Hour of Temptation.* The faint Purpoſes of Mind, which he ſometimes hath for GOD and Goodneſs, are no Guard upon him againſt a ſudden Surprize. His good Impreſſions are all loſt; and have left nothing behind them to be an Anchor and Stay to his Soul, under a violent or unexpected Aſſault of the Tempter, ſo that he readily yields. Which he hath no ſooner done, than he repents. And under the very next Temptation ſins again. And then re-

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pents again. And thus *unstable is he in all his Ways.*

I might further illustrate this by considering his Behaviour in a time of Prosperity and Adversity, when the *double minded* Man is quite different from himself, and the Instability of his Ways is most apparent. But what hath been said already, I apprehend, is sufficient to explain that unhappy Weakness of our Nature, which the Apostle speaks of in the Text. I shall therefore now address myself to a particular Improvement of the Subject.

APPLICATION.

We have now had this unhappy Temper mentioned in the Text particularly described to us, together with some of it's mischievous Effects. It is what we are all of us in some Degree or other subject to, and we ought to be ashamed and humbled at the Thought; considering what infinite reason there is that the Mind should be fixed, intirely fixed, for GOD and Heaven, and the Concerns of Eternity.

There is indeed a more wretched Temper still than that I have described. And that

that is a ſteady Diſpoſition to Sin. Where the Mind is fixed, but fixed the wrong way, ſo that it hath ſcarce any Variation towards the Things of GOD, and another World. Such a Man indeed is not *unſtable in all his Ways*, but determined, reſolute, and unalterably bent and ſettled one Way, and that is the wrong. But as this is what my Text does not lead me directly to conſider, I ſhall take no further Notice of it.

But as that Variableneſs of Temper, and Inſtability of Conduct, with regard to Religion before deſcribed, are what we have all of us too much reaſon to complain of, I therefore propoſe, that I may apply the Subject in a proper manner,

I. To ſhew you to what Objects our main Views ought always to be determined.
II. In what Manner we are to fix them.
III. Conclude all with an affectionate Addreſs to the double minded Man.

I. Let us ſeriouſly conſider what are thoſe Objects to which our main Views ought always to be determined.

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And here, Reader, give me leave to address myself to you in the closest and plainest manner possible, as a *reasonable* Creature. For that which takes hold of our Reason, Understanding, and Conscience, sticks the longest by us. Whereas the Impressions that are made upon the Mind by an artful or vehement Address to the Passions only, are soon gone, and leave no good Effect behind them. And besides, they may be raised upon any Subject, may lead a Man any Way, and very often lead him the wrong Way. But the Convictions of Conscience and sound Reason will always lead him right. —— Thus then would I conduct you gradually, step by step, to that which is your great Duty and Concern in the present Affair. And I beseech you follow me with your Attention — Use your Understanding as an intelligent Creature, for the Interests of your immortal Soul, (you will readily enough use it for your lesser Interests) and often think on the following Considerations, and apply them.

1. Then, *there is no Man but what hath, and must have, some leading Views in Life*; some grand point at which he aims; and

to

to which he makes almoſt all his other Views ſubſervient. There is ſomething which he wiſhes to be or have above every thing elſe; which employs his Thoughts, animates his Hopes, excites his Cares, and governs his Conduct. For there is no Man ſo abſolutely indifferent as to live entirely at random, without having ſome great End in Eye, unleſs he be wrong in his Intellects, and bordering upon Ideotiſm.

2. *Common Underſtanding and Reaſon will lead a Man to examine what this great End is that he drives at.* Whether it be really worth the Drift and Labour of his Life; what it was that put him upon this purſuit at firſt, and how he came to be ſo ſteady and eager in it; whether it will lead him, and how it will end; whether it be a Courſe of Conduct ſuitable to the Choice and Character of a mortal Creature, placed in this World for a little while, and who is to live for ever in another; that is, in ſhort, whether his leading Views are right or wrong; and whether they will make him happy or miſerable in the End. For to be indifferent about this moſt material Point is to diveſt ourſelves of the Nobility of our Natures,

and

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and to act very unbecoming the Dignity and Character of reasonable Creatures.

When the Ship is in full Sail before the Wind, the Pilate must be a Fool or a Madman that never examines her Course, and is unconcerned whether she is making this Speed to the right or the wrong Port; whether she be in a safe Road or among the Shelves.

3. *Every Man then, as a reasonable Creature, endowed by his Maker with Reflection and Understanding, should take special Care that his governing Aims be right.* He should determine and fix his proper Character, and stick to that invariably; however variable his Situation and Circumstances in the World may be.

This is the first thing we are to do in setting out in Life, to consider with ourselves thus.——" What a vast Variety of Characters do I see in the World! How various and how contrary are the Dispositions and Pursuits of Mankind! And yet this busy Species of Mortals have all but one great End to aim at; and that is, *to be happy in another World.* But, O! how miserably do they appear in general to forget

" or

"or mistake that End, while they seem to "center all their Views in *this!*——Well, "I am one of these busy Mortals, placed "in the same Condition, and acting on the "same stage of Vanity. O, guard me, gra-"cious GOD, from the general Delusion! "Suffer me to pursue nothing as my great "End, but what will issue in my true Hap-"pineſs; to make nothing my main pursuit "in Life, but what will yield me solid Com-"fort in Death. Teach me the Way *in "which I should go*, and let me *never depart "from it*, till it conduct me to thy self, O "thou great Fountain of all Felicity and "Existence, and the Author of mine!"

4. *Before we can know what ought to be our great and governing Views, we must know what we are, and what we are designed for.*

1. *What we are.*——We are Creatures endowed with an immortal as well as a corruptible Nature, capable of spiritual Employments, and a spiritual Happineſs. Our Souls are the better part of us; whose peace and well-being therefore we should principally regard and provide for. We are to be as we are, but a little while. Death will soon dissolve this Frame, take down this

crazy

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crazy Tabernacle, and set the Soul at liberty; when we must for ever leave this World, for another we shall never leave.

Were this single Thought but to be familiar with us, and every Day recollected, it would be a happy Expedient to regulate and moderate our worldly Desires and Pursuits, and fix our governing Views aright. And there is no Thought can be more important, can concern us more, or that ought to be more frequently admitted.

2. *We should also frequently think with ourselves what we are designed for.* It is most certain we were not designed for a long Continuance in this World, or for Happiness in it. The present Circumstances of mortal Life, take them at the best, are incompatible with true Happiness. If *every Man in his best State* on Earth *is altogether Vanity*, how then can he be happy? We are designed for another State, into which we are every one of us soon to pass; and that State is eternal; and our Condition there will be according to our Behaviour here; if we behave well here, we shall be happy there: And it is the Favour, and Presence, and Love of GOD, that will be our Happiness there; for no Creature

ture can be happy but in the Favour of it's Creator. And this final, full, and everlasting Happiness we were designed for; and our gracious GOD hath given us the greatest Advantage, Helps and Opportunities to secure it; and nothing but our own wretched, foolish, wrong Choice, and wilful Perseverance therein, can rob us of it.

There is no one can deny the Truth, or the Importance of these Principles. And the reason they have so little Effect upon us, to make us wise and serious is, because they are too seldom attended to. But recollect and ponder them well and it will appear from hence with the highest Degree of Evidence.

5. *That to serve and please, and fear that great God that gave us Being, is our great Concern; and ought at all times to be our governing View, as reasonable Creatures born for Immortality.* This is the Result of all our Reasonings, concerning the proper Happiness of the human Nature; as it was of all the *Royal Philosopher*'s Experiments and Expedients in Search of it. When he had proved and pronounced every thing else to be *Vanity of Vanities and Vexation of Spirit, Now,* saith he,

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he, *let us hear the Conclusion of the whole Matter; Fear God, and keep his Commandments, for this is the Whole of Man,* Eccles. xii. 13. His whole Concern, the Point to which he ought to bend all his Thoughts, and Cares, and Desires; his whole Duty now, and his whole Happiness hereafter.——This then should be our governing View; this our grand Aim through Life; to be approved of our Maker, and to be happy in his Love; and to that End, to serve him with Fear and Fidelity all our Days.

Let this then be our steady and invariable View, this the great Principle by which we are acted in every Circumstance in Life, and this the Character which we will resolve to maintain and live up to at all times, *viz. a Friend, a Servant, and Lover of God.*

Thus shall we ever keep our final Happiness in Eye; be fixed to a Point, and no longer driven by every Wind of Opinion, or Impulse of Passion, or Blast of Temptation; no longer *double minded* in our Views, or *unstable* in our Ways, but steady, uniform and constant the right way. Which will be a wonderful Satisfaction to us, however

ever little Progreſs we make in it. Though we move but ſlow it is a Comfort to think we are right. And it is much better to be ſlow and cautious in the right way, than to be ſwift and confident in the wrong.

Well, thus far then I am ſenſible we are convinced. We acknowledge this is true. That thus the Mind ought always to be ſet and directed. That this is our grand Concern, and ought to be our leading Principle; and that we act not a wiſe and rational, but a moſt abſurd and inconſiſtent Part, unworthy our Name and Character as reaſonable Creatures, if we do not make it ſo. —— And this Conviction were ſomething, if it were laſting. But, alas! the very next Bait the World throws out, we greedily catch at, and quite forget again that we have immortal Souls, and have no Happineſs in this World, and are living for Eternity. This therefore brings me to the ſecond thing I propoſed in the Application of the Subject, *viz.*

II. *To conſider how this Conviction may be fixed.* Or what it is that is moſt like to engage us to make the Service and Honour of

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of GOD, and the Happiness of our Souls, our great and governing View through Life, and all other Ends subordinate to this; or what Considerations have most power to fix the Mind to this point, to prevent it's being so wavering and unstable as we too commonly find it is.

Now here I might mention many Directions and Considerations which might be helpful to you in this Affair. But I shall mention but one, for this reason, because if it hath no Force or Effect upon you, I utterly despair that any else will. And it is this, *Think every Day you live of that Eternity to which you are every Day hastening.*

This Thought well weighed, surely must make us serious, and awaken all the Powers of our Souls in good earnest to make our immortal Interests our chief Care. At least if this do not, nothing can. Nothing but an almighty and sovereign Act of divine Grace overpowering all Opposition, which we can never expect, if we will not, as reasonable Creatures, think and act for ourselves.

Think, I beseech you, what Eternity is, and how near you are to it. And be amazed that you have thought of your eternal Interest

Intereſt ſo little, and that you have neglected it ſo long. The World you are going into you muſt be for ever in; this you are now in, you are going out of, and muſt ſoon for ever leave. And to ſpend all your Time and Care to heap up Riches in it, or to enjoy the Pleaſure of it, is the vaineſt and very emptieſt Deluſion that ever the ſilly Heart of Man was cheated with, and ſhews an Inſenſibility ſhameful to the Dignity of a thinking Soul.

The Thoughts of Eternity will convince you of this Folly, and fix your Views for your beſt Intereſts, if any thing can. But theſe Thoughts muſt not be tranſient, cold, and deſultory, but fixed, intent, and frequent. The Soul muſt be wrapped up, and wholly poſſeſſed with the Contemplation, and be carried forward by it to infinite Ages to come.

Suppoſe now, Death hath done his Office, the Soul diſlodged and launched into the eternal World, Judgment paſt, and it's ſtate fixed for ever, ten thouſand Ages paſt and gone——ten thouſand Millions more——and Eternity but ſtill beginning——Ah, what will you think of the few Moments

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of busy Vanity which you must remember you once spent on Earth!——Shall you not many Millions of Ages hence even quite forget that little momentary Duration you had on Earth? forget that you ever lived here?——Or if you shall remember it for ever, what will you think of it? Shall you think of it in the same manner you do now? And think the things of it to be as important as you do now?——It is most certain you will not. No, no, your Eyes will be then opened for ever. And if you are happy, you will not help upbraiding yourself in the midst of all your Bliss, that you did no more for your GOD, and your dear Redeemer, and your immortal Soul, during that very little space of time which was allowed you on Earth to prepare for Eternity in. And if you are miserable, your incessant Self-reproaches will be insupportable, that with all your affected Wit and Wisdom you should still be that stupid Fool, to suffer yourself to be so gulled by vain Appearances and the false Images of Fancy, as to forget Eternity, and neglect your everlasting Interests; though you was often importuned, called upon, and

most

moſt earneſtly intreated to think of, and provide for them in time.

Reader, I know not how theſe Thoughts may affect your Mind; they have often affected my own: and have placed the vain Views and wrong Purſuits of Mankind in the moſt amazing Light. So that I am fully convinced, it is for want of admitting theſe thoughts more frequently, and more ſeriouſly, that Men are generally ſo divided in their Minds, and ſo inconſtant in their Ways; ſo hankering and ſuſpended between this World and another: and that nothing tends more ſtrongly to bring the Soul to a Point, and give it a right Bias, than frequently to think with ourſelves, what that other World is into which we are paſſing: and above all, that whatever it is, it will be eternal.

3. I ſhall conclude all now with a ſhort expoſtulatory Addreſs to the *double minded Man*; who hath hitherto been *unſtable in all his Ways*, or wavering and unſteady in his regards to his immortal Intereſts.

Haſt thou lived now like a reaſonable Creature? Can thy own Conſcience or Reaſon acquit thee?——For ſhame, never va-

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lue thyself upon thy Wisdom more whilst thy Conduct thus proclaims thy Folly.—— And canst thou not after all find in thine Heart to be in good earnest about thine everlasting Well-being? Are thy earthly Interests indeed of so much greater Concern to thee? And wilt thou, Man, stand by that Resolution at Death?—no, thou canst not. Why then, I beseech you, why will you chuse to live by those Principles, by which you know you dare not die? Is this to act like a Man? ——And yet thou hast the Understanding of a Man; and Sense and Reason, and Conscience too, which inform thee better; and the Word of GOD, and the Spirit of GOD, often call upon thee to chuse a better part. And shall not all this determine thee? Shall one Clod of this base Earth, outweigh in thy Esteem, or keep the Balance even against GOD, and Heaven, and eternal Happiness, in the opposite Scale?—Think with thyself: can any thing possibly equal such Stupidity? —Thou wilt soon be of one Mind. No dying Man is *double minded.* Be of the same Mind now as thou wilt be of then. And suffer thyself no longer to be divided and deluded by foolish Appetites and false Appearances. For thou

thou canſt not in thine own Reaſon believe that this vain and tranſitory World thou art going out of, ought to be held in equal Eſteem with that eternal Happineſs which GOD in his Word hath offered to thee.

I ſhall conclude all with *Elijah*'s Propoſal to the People of *Iſrael*, 1 Kings xviii. 21. *How long halt ye between two Opinions? If the* LORD *be* GOD, *follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.* Chuſe now the Alternative: determine one way or other. If you are reſolved for GOD, cleave to him then with all your Heart; if Heaven be your Aim, ſeek it in good earneſt. And learn to contemn the World, which hath ſo long divided your Heart, and been an unworthy Competitor with your Maker.—— But if you are determined for this World, and ſeek all your Happineſs here, throw off then the uneaſy Reſtraints and Obligations of Conſcience and Religion, which will but cramp and ſhackle you in your Purſuits of an earthly Felicity. And let not your Heart be any longer thus diſtracted and divided between GOD and *Mammon*.—But this latter Choice you cannot make. You tremble at the very Thought. What remains then, but that

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you make the former? and make it in good earnest, and stand by it for ever?

In fine then, let GOD have all our Hearts, and Eternity more of our Thoughts. And let the future part of our Lives shew, that we are in good earnest determined for GOD, and seek all our Happiness from him and his Love, as the Fountain of everlasting Joy. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON VIII.

The common SOURCE of false JUDGMENT.

JOHN vi. 24.

Judge not according to the Appearance, but judge righteous Judgment.

THIS excellent Piece of Advice was given by our Saviour to the *Jews* at the Feast of Tabernacles: and hath a particular Reference to two things (as you may observe from the preceding Context) *viz.* his Action of healing a Man on the Sabbath-day, for which the *Jews* reproached him; and the rash and wrong Judgment which they formed of his Character and Doctrine; for had they judged *righteous Judgment*, and not suffered them-

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ſelves to be governed by the mere outward Appearance of things, they would not have been ſo much offended at that Action of his, and would evidently have ſeen that both He and his Doctrine came from GOD.

From theſe Words of our Saviour then we learn theſe two things.

I. That Men are often deceived in their Judgment by external Appearances.

II. If therefore we would form a right or righteous Judgment, we muſt take care to diſtinguiſh between the Appearance and Reality of Things.

Had the *Jews* done this, they had not been ſo fatally miſtaken in their Opinion of Chriſt's Character in general, or of many of his Actions in particular. But their prejudices againſt him inclined them to catch at every ſlight Appearance, or minute Circumſtance, to form Arguments, or draw Concluſions to his Diſadvantage. Than which nothing is more commonly practiſed now by Men who ſuffer their Minds to be prejudiced againſt thoſe Perſons and Things about which they form their Judgment; which renders

it

it impossible for them, whilst they lie under that Prepossession to form a right one; for that will represent to them the weakest Probabilities as the strongest Arguments on the one Side, and the plainest proof as mere Fallacy on the other.

And as a prejudiced Man seldom judges right, so he always judges by Appearances; readily pronounces upon mere Probabilities, and believes or disbelieves a thing according as he would or would not have it to be true. Which is judging not by the *Understanding*, but the *Will*.

As Appearances then are so apt to deceive us, as Men are so prone to take the Shadow for the Substance, and are so often imposed upon by external Shew and superficial Views, the Caution and Precept which our Lord gives us in the Text appear to me in a Light of very great Importance, and as such demand our particular Attention. I shall therefore consider each of them distinctly.

I. Let us consider the Caution or negative Precept which our Lord gives us in the Text; *Judge not according to the Appearance.*

The

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The Uſefulneſs and Excellence of this Rule I propoſe to illuſtrate, by mentioning a few particulars to which it may be applied; and wherein Men are very apt to deceive themſelves, and form a wrong Judgment of things by truſting too much to external Appearances.

1. It is by truſting too much to Appearance that Men are ſo often deceived in their Opinion of *Truth* and *Falſhood*.

I ſpeak not here of natural Truths, or the *Phænomena* and Events we meet with in the World of nature; of which, if a Man were to judge only by Appearances he would ſoon be carried very wide of the Truth, and be led into very palpable and ridiculous Miſtakes. But what I mean is principally with regard to moral Truth; from which, if we take mere ſuperficial appearance for our Guide, we are in great danger of being led aſtray; for appearances may, and often do, lie on one ſide, and truth on the other. Truth often puts on the Appearance of Falſhood, and Falſhood the Appearance of Truth; eſpecially to haſty and undiſtinguiſhing Minds. I ſhall give you an Inſtance of each of theſe.

It

It is an allowed and eſtabliſhed Truth, that neceſſarily flows from the Perfections of GOD, as the righteous Governor of the World, that under all the various Scenes of his Providence he takes a ſpecial care of the Intereſt of his faithful Servants, and will order all things for their Good. This Principle, I ſay, muſt be true. And yet the Appearance of things oftentimes lies very ſtrong againſt it. Were we to confine our views only to the external Circumſtances and Sufferings of good Men, we ſhould be apt to think them deſerted of Heaven; it would ſeem as if GOD had forſaken them, had no regard to their Intereſt, nor cared how it went with them; ſince they are often plagued, oppreſſed and afflicted more than other Men. In this caſe then Appearance lies on the wrong ſide; and were we to judge by it, we ſhould receive that for Truth which the Word of GOD, and the Reaſon of things, concur to aſſure us, is a very great Miſtake.

And as Truth may thus put on the appearance of Falſhood, ſo Falſhood may ſometimes put on the Appearance of Truth. For Inſtance; it is undoubtedly a great Miſtake to ſuppoſe, that GOD will puniſh any one man

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man purely for the Sins of another. This never can be reconciled with the Attributes of his Nature; it repreſents him as an unrighteous Being, and *his ways as not equal*; and therefore it is impoſſible it ſhould be true. And yet, were we to be governed by Appearances only, *viz.* thoſe that offer themſelves both in the Providences and the Word of GOD, we muſt receive this Doctrine as certain Truth; for in the courſe of his Providence there ſeem to be many things that favour it, and in his Word many things that aſſert it; as *Exod.* xx. 5. *Puniſhing the Iniquities of the Fathers upon the Children unto the third and fourth Generation of them that hate me.* And, *Jer.* xxxii. 18. *Thou recompenſeſt the Iniquity of the Fathers into the Boſom of their Children after them.* Yet notwithſtanding theſe appearances of it's Truth, we are ſure that notion is abſolutely falſe; both becauſe it carries in itſelf a heavy Impeachment of the divine Juſtice, and becauſe GOD himſelf expreſly diſowns, rejects, and declares his Abhorrence of it, and aſſures us of the direct contrary, *Ezek.* xviii. 20. *The Soul that ſinneth it ſhall die, the Son ſhall not bear the Iniquity of the Father, neither ſhall the Father bear the Iniquity of the Son,*

2. We

2. We are in the ſame danger of being deceived by Appearances in forming our Judgment of *Good* and *Evil.* Children who are moſtly under the Government of Senſe and Fancy, we know, are often thus impoſed upon: preferring a natural Evil becauſe it has the Appearance of Good, and refuſing a real Good becauſe it appears to their Senſe or Imagination as Evil. The ſame childiſh and injudicious Part do Men oftentimes act with regard to moral Good and Evil: and from the ſame Inducement too, the mere Appearances of things; or the force wherewith ſome external Circumſtances ſtrike the Fancy or Imagination, and thereby pervert the Judgment. Hence it is that men ſo often miſtake *Evil for Good, and Good for Evil*; call *Bitter Sweet, and Sweet Bitter*; *put Darkneſs for Light, and Light for Darkneſs (a)*; become *wiſe in their own Eyes, and prudent in their own Sight (b)*; and whilſt they *think they know any thing, know nothing yet as they ought to know (c).*

I might eaſily multiply Inſtances under this head, but ſhall content myſelf with two very plain ones; one of which ſhews how common

(a) Iſai. v. 20. (b) Ver. 21. (c) 1 Cor. viii. 2.

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common a thing it is for Men to desire and pursue those things as good which are really evil, and the other how apt they are to reject and refuse those things as evil which are really good.

As to the first, what is a greater Evil than Sin; whether we consider it in it's Nature, it's present Effects, or future Consequences? and yet there is nothing in which some Men take more Delight. And what is the reason that they delight in so destructive an Evil? but that it puts on the Appearance of Good, and thereby deceives them. There is no man can chuse Evil for itself, or under the notion of Evil: when it is chosen it is always under the Semblance of Good: and it is only the false Appearance of things, so favourable in this case to our corrupt Inclinations, that thus imposes upon us, and leads us to this wrong and wretched choice. Take any one Sin, for instance, to which some Men are addicted more than others, whether Pride, Drunkenness, Sensuality, Avarice, or the like, and you will find that it tempts them with the promise of some imagined Profit or Pleasure; that is, it puts on the Appearance of Good,

Good, and thereby easily gains their Consent.

Again, deceived by the same false Appearances Men often reject that as evil which is really good. Else what is the reason that Multitudes so much neglect Religion, and some intirely reject it? when it is so certain that there can be no true Peace in this World, nor Happiness in the other without it: what is it, I say, but because it appears to their ill-biassed Judgment as evil? They take either a false or a partial View of it, look only on it's outside, or on some of it's Circumstances and Appendages, or on the wrong Representations which some Men make of it either by their Words or Actions; and from such false and disagreeable Appearances of it they become prejudiced against it. Whereas Religion, taken in it's proper nature, in a true and intire view, is the most delightful and most amiable thing in the World, and ought to be always so represented.

In like manner, take any particular Duty of Religion, as Prayer, for instance, whence is it that so many can content themselves to live in the neglect, or total disuse of so delightful

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lightful and neceſſary an Act of religious Worſhip, but becauſe their carnal Prejudices repreſent it to their Minds as diſagreeable and burdenſome; and ſo under a pretence of the Difficulty of it, their Unfitneſs for it, or Indiſpoſition to it, they ſatisfy themſelves to continue in a conſtant or frequent Omiſſion of it, to the danger of their Souls, the loſs of their Peace, and the ruin of their Hopes.

And thus by the mere force of falſe Appearances Men are apt to call Evil, Good; and Good, Evil; to form very wrong notions, and thence to fall into very wrong Practices in things of the greateſt Importance. Which ſhews of how great weight and neceſſity is the Caution which our Lord gives us in the text, *Judge not according to the Appearance.*

3. In all Points of *Controverſy* and *Debate* this Rule is of excellent Service. And indeed if it were univerſally followed, that is, if Men did not take up with ſuperficial views, were not too ſoon determined by bare Probabilities and Appearances, but would take pains and patience to go to the Bottom and ſearch the Foundation of things, it would go a good way to make us all of one Mind, and

and baniſh all diſputes out of the World. The cauſe and ground of our different Opinions then would be only the difference of our Abilities and Fitneſs for a critical Reſearch. But as the caſe now ſtands, it often happens that Perſons of the meaneſt Capacities by the help of a ſincere Enquiry and an honeſt Heart, come directly at the Truth, whilſt others of much greater Underſtanding and Knowledge, deceived by Prejudices and Appearances, wander fartheſt from it.

In all matters of Debate then we cannot have a more uſeful Motto to ſet before us than this of our text, *Judge not according to the Appearance.* Becauſe by the arts of Controverſy and falſe Colouring, Error may be ſet off ſo well, and made to appear ſo much like Truth, that it requires great Pains, Penetration, and Judgment, ſometimes to diſtinguiſh the one from the other; to ſtrip Error of it's falſe Ornaments, expoſe it in it's native Habit, and ſhew the real Difference between that and Truth. As on the other hand, Truth itſelf may, by the ſame artful Gloſſes and Miſrepreſentations, be made to look ſo much like Error, as to be often miſtaken for it; and by ſome weak,

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undiſcerning Minds, that judge only by Appearances, is ſometimes actually rejected as ſuch. And moreover either through Ignorance or Deſign, Truth and Error are ſometimes ſo equally blended and mixed together, like the Chaff and the Wheat, that it is extremely difficult to ſift or ſeparate the one from the other. Which ſhews how neceſſary great Caution, Penetration and Judgment are in the right management of intricate Controverſies; and how unfit they are to judge of, or decide them, who are unverſed in the arts of Diſputation, the nice methods of diſtinguiſhing, and the Rules whereby to judge between Argument and Sophiſtry. Every thing is not right, which, at firſt view, appears ſo to us; nor is every thing wrong which, at firſt ſight, we may think to be ſo. This we often find in matters of Fact. And it is as certain and as common in matters of Speculation; wherein if we ſuffer ourſelves to be governed and determined only by Appearances, we ſhall be as much deceived as the Boy was, who made haſte to the top of a diſtant Hill, hoping then to touch the Skies, which *appeared* to him to reſt upon it.

4. The

4. The same Rule is equally useful when we judge of the *Characters of Men.* For *here* also we are very apt to be deceived by Appearances; by which we are led to think too well of some, and as much too ill of others; according as external Appearances fall in with, and favour our Partiality for, or against the Person, whose Character we are judging of. For wherever there is this secret Bias of mind received before hand, it will readily catch at every Circumstance and Appearance to increase it: and by this means, without great care and guard upon ourselves, we may be led to form a very wrong Judgment of the true Characters of Men; than which hardly any thing is more common, whilst the reason of it is seldom attended to.

For instance, whilst we judge by Appearances only, we may be induced to entertain a less favourable Opinion of some than they really deserve. Some persons appear worse than they are; set the bad side of their Character most to view; whilst that which is truly good and valuable in them, lies more concealed, and hid from common Observation, and which (excepting some very inti-

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mate Friends) perhaps none are witneſſes to, but GOD and their own Conſcience. This Conſideration ſhould make us very cautious how we condemn Men in the groſs; in which we can ſcarce fail of being miſtaken. Not to ſay, that the miſtake may be ſometime owing to our own Ignorance or Prejudice. We ſoon ſee a Man's open Faults, but not ſo eaſily his ſecret Virtues; we know his outward Failings, but not his inward Sorrow for them; how much they are the Grief and Burden of his Heart, how much he mourns over them in the ſecret tranſactions between GOD and his own Soul; we abhor his Faults, but know not how much he abhors himſelf for them.

On the other hand, if we judge only by Appearances, we may be led to think too well of others. As the worſt of Men are not without their Virtues, ſo the beſt of Men are not without their Faults. Every human Character hath it's Qualifications. And as ſome Men ſet the bad part of their Character moſt to view, and appear worſe than they are, ſo others (and perhaps the moſt) put the beſt part of their Character foremoſt, and appear better than they really are.

are. We ſee their fervent Piety and ſtrict Profeſſion; we hear them expreſs the warmeſt Concern for the intereſt of Chriſt, and the Good of Souls; and to talk even with Rapture on divine things; we admire their unwearied and undiſcouraged Zeal in promoting a ſenſe of Religion amongſt men; and are ready hereupon to cry out,—— "Surely "there is ſomething apoſtolical, or even an-"gelical in ſuch Men." And doubtleſs there is a great Excellence and Beauty in a well-regulated Zeal. But ſtill let us remember our Saviour's Caution, *Judge not according to the Appearance, but judge righteous Judgment.* The moſt ſhowy things are not always the moſt ſolid: nor does Religion conſiſt altogether in Zeal and Affection. None of the Apoſtles had more Zeal than *Peter*, which did not ſecure him againſt the moſt ſhameful Fall. Let us conſider what Humility, Lowlineſs and Meekneſs of Spirit they diſcover; what Gentleneſs, Moderation and Forbearance; what Government of their Paſſions; what freedom from Self-applauſe, Affectation and Vanity; what Mortification and Self-denial; what Prudence, Wiſdom and Steadineſs in their Conduct; what For-

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giveneſs of their Enemies; what Patience, Reſignation, and Faith under Affliction; what fixed and ſteady regard to the Exerciſes of ſecret Devotion, and the Obligations of ſtrict Virtue, Honeſty, Juſtice and Charity in their Dealings and Converſes with Men. Theſe are ſome of the ſubſtantials of Religion; much more ſubſtantial than a flighty Zeal and warm Affections, which are oftentimes more owing to a natural Temper than a pious Principle. When theſe things attend a well-governed Zeal, they form a moſt excellent Character indeed, well worthy our Eſteem and Imitation. But if upon a cloſe view of things it appears, that the perſons we are inclined to think ſo highly of, for the more ſhowy parts of Religion are too defective (and perhaps more defective than many others) in theſe great, ſolid and ſubſtantial Branches of it, though they may in the general be good and well-deſigning Men, yet we may ſee reaſon to abate ſomething of that very extraordinary Opinion, which others may have conceived of them, by precipitantly *judging according to the Appearance.*

5. This

5. This Rule will be very useful for our Direction in judging of the *present State and Condition* of men; and when rightly applied will prevent or rectify many mistakes, which others are apt to fall into in this case, by judging only *according to the Appearance*. For instance, let us not call a man happy, purely because he is surrounded with Honour, Wealth and Affluence. His Pomp and Power can no more make him happy, than his laced Coat can make him healthy. If he lives under the tyranny of his Passions, and the Dominion of Vice, he is but a splendid Wretch; and notwithstanding all his gay and gaudy Appearance, is really miserable; and perhaps much more so than he would have been without it; because he is thereby exposed to more Temptations, Disappointments and Disquietudes than other Men are. For which reason it requires more Wisdom and Self-command to enjoy true Peace and Happiness in a high than a low Life.

On the other hand, let us not think that every man who makes a mean Appearance is miserable. We betray great Ignorance, if merely on that account we call him a *poor Wretch*. He may be poor, and yet not

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wretched; poor, and yet have Hope and Peace within; poor, and yet poſſeſſed of what the Apoſtle calls the greateſt Gain, *Godlineſs and Contentment*. And as theſe compoſe the trueſt Happineſs in this World, ſo they may be enjoyed in any condition of Life; and indeed are more likely to be found in a mean and low Station, than in the moſt exalted one; becauſe the former is ſubject to the feweſt Interruptions. Had Contentment and a good Conſcience any neceſſary Connexion with Wealth, Avarice were a Virtue. But, alas! they are Jewels too precious to be purchaſed with Gold, and too ſubſtantial to be loſt in Poverty.

That man then muſt be governed altogether by Appearances, and entirely neglect our Saviour's Rule and Advice, who eſteems a perſon happy purely becauſe he has a large poſſeſſion of thoſe things which can never make him ſo; and another unhappy, becauſe he wants them.

Laſtly, Let us remember to apply the ſame Rule in judging of our own *Character and State*. We are no leſs apt to be miſled by Appearances in judging of ourſelves than we are in judging of other men. It is ſeldom found indeed

indeed that men judge too ill of themſelves; though this has been the caſe of ſome meek-hearted, humble, timorous Chriſtians; who are apt to ſee things in the worſt Light, and to judge by the moſt melancholy Appearances. But the moſt common miſtake by far is, for men to judge too well of themſelves; to think they are ſufficiently good, if they be not worſe than ſome others, or than they themſelves have ordinarily been, if they maintain the ſhew of Religion, and attend the duties of public Worſhip, if they have a competency of religious Knowledge, and a Talent of diſplaying that to the beſt Advantage. And thus from theſe *Forms* of Godlineſs they conclude they have the *Power* of it, though the Apoſtle tells us they are two very different things *(d)*.

But theſe are only the Appearances of Religion: and if we take up with them, or judge of ourſelves only by them, we ſhall be in danger of forming a very wrong and unrighteous Judgment, and deceive ourſelves in matters of the higheſt Conſequence.

Let us take the ſame rule with us in judging of our preſent State and Happineſs. Hath

(d) 2 Tim. iii. 5.

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Hath Providence been pleaſed to proſper us in the World, and given us more than many others? Do we live in Eaſe and Plenty when others are oppreſſed with Want and Penury? Let not our fooliſh Hearts deceive us into a perſuaſion, that, on that account, we we are happier than our poorer Neighbours. Becauſe, for that very reaſon, we may poſſibly be more unhappy than they. We have certainly more to anſwer for. And grievous will be our Condemnation, if, the more we receive at the hand of GOD, we regard him leſs. On the other hand, hath Providence placed us in a lower rank of Life? Are we obliged to earn our Bread by the Sweat of the Brow? We miſtake, if we think ourſelves leſs really happy on this Score. We may fear, and ſerve GOD, and take care of our Souls with fewer Interruptions, and are expoſed to much fewer Temptations, than thoſe who make a greater Noiſe and Show in higher Life. We may be content with mere neceſſary Food and Rayment, and enjoy GOD, and Peace of Conſcience, in a Cottage. This is real Happineſs; all the reſt is but the Shew of it.

Thus

Thus in ſeveral Inſtances have I endeavoured to illuſtrate the negative Precept in the text, and ſhewn you the great Extent and Uſefulneſs of that Rule, which our Lord himſelf hath given us, for our guard againſt forming a wrong Judgment of things. That is, *not to truſt too much to external Appearances*. I ſhould now proceed to ſhew you what is comprehended in the poſitive Command, *but judge righteous Judgment*. But this I muſt reſerve for the Subject of the next Diſcourſe. And ſhall conclude this with two or three practical Remarks on what hath been ſaid.

APPLICATION.

1. The deſign of theſe words of our Saviour, and of what hath been delivered from them, is not to lead men to Scepticiſm, or to perſuade them to form no Judgment at all of things, but to put them on their guard againſt a prejudicate and raſh Judgment; or to induce them to judge cautiouſly, and without Prejudice. It is by Appearances that men are generally deceived in their Judgment of things; and Prejudice always magnifies thoſe Appearances; and ſometimes moſt enor-

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enormouſly, beyond all Bounds of Truth and Reaſon; and makes men judge of things juſt as a heated Fancy, a blind Appetite, or an ungoverned Paſſion repreſents them.

Prejudice is to the mind what a *Calenture** is to the Eye. It diſcolours every Object, or exhibits it in a falſe light. It is the diſeaſe of the Underſtanding; which makes it as unfit to judge aright of *Intellectual*, as a diſtempered Eye is to judge of *ſenſible* Objects. It creates falſe Appearances, and then judges by them.

The Mind without Prejudice indeed may be deceived in judging of Truths, as a ſound Eye may in judging of Objects, by reaſon of the Poſition wherein, and the Medium through which it views them; in which caſe we are obliged to call in the Aſſiſtance of our Reaſon and Underſtanding to correct it. So I ſay the Mind without Prejudice may be deceived by Appearances; becauſe from a certain Coincidence of Circumſtances things may appear to be very different from what they really are; or (as I obſerved before) Appearance

* A Diſtemper in the Eyes, ſaid to be peculiar to Seamen; whereby they imagine the Sea to be green Fields and under that Imagination will throw themſelves into it, if not prevented.

ance or Probability may lie on one ſide, and Truth on the other. But when Prejudice is added at the ſame time to magnify thoſe Appearances, or ſeeming Probabilities, and inclines the Mind immediately to judge by them, it leads it ſtill farther from the Truth, which ſhews how neceſſary it is thoroughly to examine Appearances before we truſt to them, and to diveſt ourſelves of all Prejudices in forming our Sentiments of things, in order to *judge righteous Judgment*.

2. We hence ſee one chief reaſon of that great diverſity of Sentiments there is amongſt Men concerning the ſame Objects of Judgment. Some are perverted by Prejudices, others deceived by Appearances; and ſome have more Ability and Penetration to guard againſt the undue Influence of both. And as this ariſes, in a great meaſure, from the original make of the Mind, it follows that this diverſity of Judgment hath it's Foundation in ſome degree in our very Nature; and that it is no more poſſible for all Men, ſtrictly ſpeaking, to *think the ſame thing*, than it is for them to write the ſame Hand, or ſpeak in the ſame Tone; and we can no more expect they ſhould have juſt the ſame

Set

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Set of Notions, than that they ſhould have juſt the ſame Set of Features.

But by the way, let it be remembered, that though we are all beſet with Prejudices and falſe Appearances, which are apt to bias and betray the Judgment, yet it is very weak and criminal for a man to ſuffer himſelf to be miſled and deceived thereby without any care to guard againſt them. Such Indolence is attended ſometimes with the moſt pernicious Effects; and was the ground of that fatal miſtake the *Jews* ran into with regard to our Saviour's Perſon and Doctrine. They were governed altogether by Prejudices and Appearances, took no care at all to arm themſelves againſt the Influence of the one, and the deception of the other, and ſo were led to judge the moſt *unrighteous Judgment*.

3. I cannot but think likewiſe, that we may from hence, in a good meaſure, account for that Spirit of Infidelity that prevails ſo much in the preſent Age. The Motives and Reaſons for which ſome Men reject the Goſpel of Chriſt now, ſeem to be the very ſame for which the *Jews* rejected his Perſon and Doctrine

Doctrine when he was upon Earth. I mean, because they will not be at the pains of examining matters impartially, but suffer themselves to be biassed by unreasonable Prejudices and superficial Appearances. Like the Jewish Priests, they scorn to think with the Vulgar; and seek to raise to themselves a Trophy of Wisdom on the Ruins of their Faith, and affect to be thought wiser than others, only on the merit of believing less: by which means they lose the Applause they laboured to secure, and diminish their Understanding just as much as they hoped to exalt it. So naturally does Vanity frustrate it's own End. However, under the Impulse of it, they readily imbibe every Prejudice, and fall in with every Appearance of Objection that lies against the truth of Christianity. Their Pride creates their Prejudices, and their Prejudices abuse their Reason. Hence they multiply Cavils against the plainest Principles, find Difficulties where others can see none, and magnify every Appearance of Difficulty into an unsurmountable Objection; upon which they triumph, and commence Champions in the Cause of Infidelity.

In

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In a word, juſt ſuch Tempers and Diſpoſitions had the *Phariſees* of old, as our preſent Set of Deiſts ſhew now. And had theſe lived at that time, they would doubtleſs have joined the ſame Cry againſt *Jeſus, crucify him, crucify him.* The ſame treatment he met with from *thoſe*, his Goſpel now meets with from *theſe*; Ridicule, Abuſe, and moſt unrighteous Outrage. To *thoſe* our Saviour immediately directed the Advice in the text, as the beſt means to correct their Miſunderſtanding and falſe Judgment, pointing out to them at the ſame time the true Cauſe and Source of it. With a peculiar Propriety then are the Words applicable to their Followers in Infidelity in our day. And of great Service might it be to them to take this for their Motto, *Judge not according to the Appearance, but judge righteous Judgment.*

Laſtly, As I have produced ſeveral Inſtances in which this Rule ought eſpecially to be applied, let us remember now to take it with us, and make uſe of it in all thoſe, and ſuch like Caſes. It is a Rule of greater Importance than we may at firſt imagine. And I am ſatisfied, the more we attend to it,

it, the more ſhall we be convinced of it's Excellence. To a neglect of it is owing the Prevalence of ſo many falſe notions and errors that ſpread abroad in the World, ſome of which have the moſt unhappy Influence on the Tempers and Practices of men. It is applicable in every caſe, and is of uſe in all. — How often have we been convinced of the neceſſity of it by Experience? How often have we found things to be otherwiſe than at firſt they appeared to be? And have ſeen reaſon to retract, and alter that Judgment which we have formed of things, by too raſhly truſting to external Appearances? Truth ſometimes lies deep, whilſt *Errors, like Straws, upon the Surface flow.* — Let us take care of being precipitant either in our Applauſes or Cenſures of men. If we judge by mere Appearances only, we may very eaſily be miſtaſten in both. — If it be aſked then, what muſt we judge by, if not by Appearance? That Queſtion I ſhall more particularly reſolve, when I come to ſpeak of the latter part of the Words, *Judge righteous Judgment.* In the mean time let it be remembered, that we are not hereby forbid to take any notice at all of Appear-

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pearances, but only not to truſt too much to them. — Let us remember the ſame Rule likewiſe whenever we are called to form our Judgment of things, eſpecially of things that relate to Religion. It will make us wiſer, more ſolid, ſteady and judicious Chriſtians. — Eſpecially if any Duty appears to us diſagreeable or difficult. If it be a plain, certain Duty, that is enough to determine us: the Appearance of things is not to govern us. — But what ſhould recommend it above all, is the expreſs Command of Jeſus Chriſt himſelf; whom we profeſs to obey in all things, after which I need add nothing further to enforce it.

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SERMON IX.

RULES to form a Righteous JUDGMENT.

JOHN vii. 24.

Judge not according to the Appearance, but judge righteous Judgment.

IN these Words we have a double Precept; one negative, and the other positive. The negative Precept is, *Judge not according to the Appearance.* This I have already particularly handled; and opened to you the excellency of this Rule, by shewing you in several instances, how apt we are to be imposed upon, and led to form a wrong

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Judgment by the mere *external Appearance* of things; and in what caſes this negative Rule is more eſpecially to be applied.

I proceed now to the poſitive part of the Injunction, *Judge righteous Judgment*. In treating of which I propoſe,

I. To conſider the Importance of this Precept.

II. What it contains; or how we are to form our Practice by it.

I. I am to conſider the Importance of it.

This Command of Chriſt equally concerns *us* with thoſe *Jews* to whom it was at firſt immediately delivered. And a Command of great Importance it is; whether we conſider the Authority of him from whom it came, the Circumſtances of thoſe to whom it is given, or the neceſſary Conſequences either of obeying, or neglecting it.

1. If we conſider the Authority of him from whom it came; *viz. Jeſus Chriſt* our divine Maſter, to whoſe Authority we are bound by the moſt ſolemn Obligations to ſubmit, and whoſe Laws we acknowledge ourſelves ready ſincerely to obey. This is implied in our

our Christian Profession. It is not a distant consequence, or inference drawn from the obscure Words of Christ's Apostles, but a plain and express Precept of Christ himself; and which therefore in Duty to him we are obliged to make a Rule of Life; that is, to take care how we judge rashly, or determine precipitantly in any case whatsoever, and especially in Affairs that relate to Religion. A wilful neglect of this Rule is a wilful Contempt of the Authority of him who enjoined it: nor do we act a part consistent with the character of his Disciples and Followers, if when we know it to be his express Command, we pay it no more regard than if it were the Advice of an equal, or an inferior, whose Authority we do not acknowledge.

2. The importance of this Duty further appears, if we consider to whom this Command is given. The Persons to whom this Advice was immediately directed most certainly stood in the greatest need of it. No Men were more apt to form a rash and wrong Judgment of things (especially of those that concerned Religion) or were more apt to be misled by their native Prejudices

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than the Jewiſh Prieſts and Phariſees. And if, by the Grace of GOD, and the Favour of Providence in diſpoſing of our Circumſtances in Life, and the manner of our Education, we have a better Temper and Underſtanding than they, yet there is in all of us ſomething of the ſame Pride, Darkneſs and Prejudice, the ſame Carnality, Paſſion and Perverſeneſs, which led them into the moſt fatal Miſtakes. Which renders the Advice given immediately to them exceedingly proper, and pertinent to us; and in this view it may imply in it a Warning to us all, to beware of thoſe evil Diſpoſitions of Mind which betrayed them into the moſt dangerous Miſapprehenſions and Miſtakes, concerning Chriſt's Perſon, Character and Conduct.

3. The importance of this Precept further appears by conſidering the miſchievous Conſequences of neglecting it. All the miſeries of Mankind ariſe from their Sin and Error; and all their Sin and Error from a wrong Practice, in purſuance of a wrong Judgment. Whence aroſe all that enormous Heap of Errors maintained at this Day by the Church of *Rome*, but from this Source? They

They first formed rash and wrong determinations in their several Councils (for all their boasted Infallibility could never yet prevent this) then stamped those Decrees with the Seal of *Orthodox Truth*, and established them as certain Rules of *Catholic Faith*, from which they were never to depart. And by this means the grossest Errors have been maintained and enforced as the greatest Truths, and the best Religion in the World perverted, disfigured, abused and transformed into the very worst. All which might with ease have been prevented, only by stedfastly adhering to our Saviour's Advice as their Rule, *Judge not according to the Appearance, but judge righteous Judgment*.

4. No less happy will be the Consequence, if we observe it, than miserable if we neglect it. It would preserve us from many false Notions and bad Practices which now obtain in the World. In short, were this Advice universally followed, there would be but few Disputes left among Christians. We should all of us most certainly unite in the great things of Christianity, and should differ very peaceably in those little things

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which it is no great matter whether we agree in or no. We ſhould live more comfortably and uſefully in this World, and have more ſettled Hopes of Happineſs in the other. For the common Source of our Doubts and Fears, is either a miſtaken notion of the terms of Salvation, or a wrong Practice ariſing from ſome other miſtake.

Of ſo great Importance is the Rule which our Saviour lays down in the text, I proceed now,

II. To ſhew what Uſe we are to make of it, or how we are to form our Practice by it.

Here I propoſe to lay before you ſeveral Directions that are either included in, or neceſſary to a right Application of it. And,

1. Before we judge of any thing, we ſhould conſider our own Ability to judge of it, whether it falls within the compaſs of our Underſtanding; or whether we have that previous Knowledge of other things which is neceſſary to qualify us to form a right Judgment. If not, the matter does not belong to us, it is not cognizable in our Court, and we have nothing to do with it. Or if we

we muſt needs ſettle our Judgment in ſuch things, we ſhould take our Sentiments from thoſe perſons who are moſt capable of judging of them, and who are men of ſuch approved Probity and Underſtanding, that it is not likely they ſhould either deceive us or be deceived themſelves.

There is a deal of this implicit or ſecond-hand Knowledge among Men. And it cannot be otherwiſe. But then perſons ſhould not be forward to boaſt or make a ſhew of ſuch kind of Knowledge, but retain it with modeſty and diffidence. Becauſe they ſtill lie liable to be confounded, if not confuted, by the Arguments of thoſe who have ſtudied ſuch matters more than they; and to be perplexed and non-pluſſed by Objections which perhaps they never heard of. This I think is a wiſe and right Conduct, and the beſt way to prevent a wrong and erroneous Judgment in thoſe things of which we are not capable of judging from our own immediate Knowledge. And if it would not prevent all Error in ſuch caſes, it would however prevent perſons from being poſitive and preſumptuous in their Errors, which is no inconſiderable Acquiſition. *Solomon* hath

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ſet a brand of Folly on that Man who exposes his own Ignorance, by his forwardneſs to give his Opinion in every point whether he underſtand it or not. *A Fool* (ſaith he) *uttereth all his mind, but a wiſe Man keepeth it in till afterward (a). Every prudent Man dealeth with Knowledge, but a Fool layeth open his Folly (b).*

2. If it be concerning an Action or Event related by another that you are to judge, be firſt ſure that it is matter of Fact. For if upon proper Search you find it hath no Foundation in truth, you have nothing to do with it; and if you are not ſure it hath, you ought to ſuſpend your Judgment, however ſtrong an Inclination you may have to believe and judge. But be ſure you never ſuffer either your Aſſent or Judgment to be biaſſed by the poſitive or dogmatical Airs of an uncharitable Tale-Bearer. Before we give Credit to a Report we muſt always examine the Authority on which it is built, and conſider the Character of him that relates it. If he is a Man of a weak and credulous Mind, of a ſuperſtitious or ſlanderous Caſt, he certainly deſerves not an equal degree

(a) Prov. xxix. 11. (b) Prov. xiii. 16.

degree of Credit with one of Moderation, Underſtanding and ſound Judgment. And a careful Attention to this ſingle Rule, to examine well the matter of Fact before we proceed to judge of it, would be a means of preventing much of that unreaſonable and unrighteous Judgment which ſome ſo readily paſs upon men and things, to the great Prejudice of Truth and Religion.

3. Before we can rightly judge of any thing, we muſt acquaint ourſelves with the true ſtate of the Caſe, and lay together all the material Circumſtances on both ſides, whether it be a matter of Fact or Sentiment. Unleſs we underſtand the true ſtate and circumſtances of the Caſe, it is impoſſible the Judgment ſhould determine any thing about it. Becauſe theſe are it's materials to work upon, or the Marks by which to trace out Truth.

For inſtance, if it be an *Action* about which we are to judge, we muſt conſider the Place where, the Time when, the Perſon by whom, the Manner wherein, and the Motives by which, that Action was performed. By a careful Attention to all which Circumſtances the Guilt of a bad Action

may

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may ſometimes appear to be really much leſs, and at other times much greater, than it is generally taken to be in the Opinion of ſuperficial and ill-judging Men. And by the ſame method, ſome good Actions may appear to be indeed much better than they are commonly thought; and others not ſo good. Thus the Contribution of the poor Widow's Mite, was a more heroic Act of Charity in itſelf, and in the Eye of our Saviour, than it was in the Eyes of others. But the long, formal Prayers of the Phariſees, and their punctilious exactneſs in Ceremonies, were much leſs eſteemed by *him* than other Men. The reaſon is the ſame in both caſes, they *judged by outward Appearance*, and he *judged righteous Judgment*.

But if it be a matter of *Sentiment* about which we are to judge, we muſt endeavour clearly to underſtand the Terms of the Propoſition in which it is contained, the nature of the Evidence on which it is built, the Arguments brought to prove it, the Objections made againſt it, and the difference between the Weight of the Arguments on one ſide, and of the Objections on the other. The difference, I ſay, of their *Weight*

not

not of their *Numbers:* For one weighty, ſolid Argument or Objection, which carrieth plain Evidence, or ſtrong Conviction with it, ſhould have more Influence upon us than twenty weak or diſtant ones, though dreſſed up with the utmoſt Art, or urged with the greateſt Zeal.

4. Would we judge *righteous Judgment*, we muſt by all means diveſt ourſelves of thoſe bad Diſpoſitions which lead us to form a wrong one. Eſpecially theſe three, *Pride*, *Paſſion*, and *Party-prejudice*.

Pride prompts us to adhere ſtiffly to all our preconceived Sentiments, right or wrong; blinds the Eye of the Mind, and bars the Heart againſt the Entrance of Conviction and new Light, under a falſe notion, that it is a ſhame for a Man to be found in an Error, and a ficklenefs to alter his firſt Judgment. This puts a ſtop to all Improvements in true Knowledge, gives him a contempt of all Opinions but his own, and renders him impatient of examining any to the Bottom.

Paſſion puts the mind into a Hurry and Ferment; and whilſt it continues under that diſorder, it is as incapable of judging or diſtinguiſhing

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tinguiſhing between Truth and Falſhood, Right and Wrong, as the Palate is of diſtinguiſhing Taſtes when the Body is in a high Fever. So that a Man in a Paſſion ſhould never believe his own Thoughts; becauſe they will always make a falſe Repreſentation of things to the Mind.

Party-prejudice is another thing that ſtrongly perverts the Judgment. For how can that man expect to form a *righteous Judgment*, who is reſolved to form none but that which his Party hath formed already for him; to which he is, at all Events, determined to adhere? This is ſo far from permitting him to *judge righteous Judgment*, that it will not ſo much as ſuffer him to *examine*, in order to form any Judgment at all; nor to conſider the Foundation of his own Notions, or of theirs who differ from him. Such a man, inſtead of *trying all things, and holding faſt that which is good*, tries nothing, but *holds faſt* that which he hath firſt ſeized on, good or bad.

Perſons that are governed by ſuch Diſpoſitions as theſe can pay no due regard to this Rule of our Saviour: And if we would put it into Practice, we muſt not only guard

againſt

against these irregular Affections, but endeavour to cultivate the contrary; Humility, Meekness, an Openness to Conviction, and a sincere Desire to receive and embrace the Truth *as it is in Jesus* where-ever we find it.

5. It may help us to form a right Judgment of things, to consider the natural Consequences and general Tendency of them. If, for instance, we find that any particular Practice we allow, be the frequent occasion of Sin, by leading us to a neglect of Duty, or Formality in it, or by tempting us to act out of Character, or by exposing us to bad Company, and bad Examples, which endanger the Peace and Purity of the Mind, that Practice, I say, if it be not unavoidable, appears by this it's bad tendency to be unlawful. So if any particular Doctrines are plainly dishonourable to some or other of the divine Perfections, or have a direct tendency to induce and countenance Licentiousness, Carnality, and Pride, we may be sure they are not the Doctrines of the Gospel, because these do all exalt the honour of every divine Attribute and tend to make us holy, spiritual and humble. But whatever

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ever Practices or Doctrines have a visible tendency to improve the divine Life in our Souls, and make us more holy, humble and heavenly, those we may safely pronounce to be right and agreeable to the Will and Word of GOD.

6. To form a righteous Judgment we must be sure to judge by a right Rule, and take care not to mistake it. In all matters of Religion, the only Rule we have to go by is the Word of GOD: To which all Parties refer as the Source and Test of their religious Principles; from whence they profess to take them, and by which they are content to try them. To this then must we steadily adhere in opposition to all other Tests and Standards devised by Men.

But we must not only adhere to it, but take care to understand it. For a Rule, though ever so good in itself, can be of no service to us till it be well understood; it may otherwise be the means of leading us out of the right Way; and not only so, but of making us confident in the wrong. We must therefore, according to our Saviour's own Direction, *search the Scriptures* (c); that

(c) John v. 39.

that is, diligently examine and compare one Scripture with another: a particular Advice very neceſſary to be followed, in order to practiſe that general one he gives us in the Text, to *judge righteous Judgment.*

And that we may come at a right Underſtanding of Scripture Phraſes, there is another Rule I would eſpecially recommend, *viz.* not to take up with any ſenſe that may *poſſibly* be put upon them, but to ſeek for that ſenſe or meaning that was *originally* intended by them; to which the Context, with the general Scope and Deſign of the Author's Argument, will for the moſt part readily direct us.

And whatever Doctrine we ſee to be plainly contained in Scripture, often inculcated there, and repreſented in various Lights as a matter of Importance, by *that* let us reſolve to abide as a principle of divine Truth, though undiſcoverable by the light of Nature, and denied and oppoſed by thoſe who have accuſtomed themſelves to go by other Rules, in matters of Religion, than that of the holy Scriptures.

7. After all this care and caution to trace out Truth, it becomes us at laſt to be very

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modeſt (eſpecially in matters that are intricate and difficult) and to give our Judgment with Diffidence, rather than Confidence. Becauſe, after all, we may poſſibly be miſtaken, by the force of ſome latent Prejudice, by a miſconſtruction of ſome ambiguous Word, or an Inattention to ſome important Circumſtance. Our own Experience may convince us that we are not infallible: We have been miſtaken when we have thought ourſelves very ſure; and that perhaps in matters of much leſs difficulty than thoſe we are now ſpeaking of; which ſhould teach us modeſtly to diſtruſt our own Judgment, and to guard againſt the ſame Self-deception for the future.

Laſtly, If we would *judge righteous Judgment*, we muſt be frequent and earneſt in our applications to the throne of Grace; that the *Father of Lights* would remove our Darkneſs, Prejudice, and Carnality; give us a ſound and regular Underſtanding in the things of GOD, pour divine Light into our Minds, rectify our Miſapprehenſions, lead us into a ſaving Knowledge of divine things, that we may receive *the Truth as it is in Jeſus*, and hold it faſt *in Love*, and not *in Unrighteouſneſs*;

neſs; and in *his Light we ſhall ſee Light.* For after all the Precaution and Care we can take, we are ſtill ſuch frail and fallible Creatures, ſo prone to Pride, Paſſion and Prejudice, that without his Illumination and Grace, we ſhall ſoon be loſt in Darkneſs and Error, receive falſe Impreſſions of him, and his ways, embrace wrong Notions for true, and perhaps pride ourſelves in them, to the great diſturbance of our Peace, and the prejudice of our Souls. However, if there be a ſincere and unfeigned Deſire to know and do the whole Will of GOD, he will not impute to us our involuntary Errors and Frailties, for he *conſidereth our Frame.*

Theſe things I apprehend, are implicitly contained in our Saviour's Precept: and thus muſt we act if we would, according to his Command, *judge righteous Judgment.*

Let us make hereupon the following ſhort Reflexions.

1. This ſame Rule which hath now been explained to us with reference to Religion, may be of great ſervice to us in common Life: *Judge not according to the Appearance, but judge righteous Judgment,* Appearances

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often deceive, and miſlead us in the ſecular as well as the religious Life. We do not always find things turn out as they promiſe, nor perſons always to be what they appear. Some we ſee are much better, others much worſe than we apprehended. There is a general Diſguiſe thrown on the Face of the World; we live among falſe Appearances; almoſt all Men have their Vails and Vizards, which they take off, or put on, in different Companies, and on different Occaſions; Characters are perſonated, Sentiments concealed, Words are ſtudied, Actions forced, and Paſſions guarded: So that very few Perſons really are juſt what they appear to be in the Eye of the World: The moſt free and open not excepted; who often conceal themſelves by acquired Eaſe and affected Franknefs; as effectually, though more agreeably, than others do by Silence, Reſerve and Stiffneſs. Which ſhews the Uncertainty of judging by Appearances only.

The ſame may be ſaid with reſpect to the Reaſons and Motives of our own Conduct in any particular Inſtance, which often appear to us much ſtronger, or much weaker, than they really are, according as we are biaſſed

biaſſed by ſome ſecret Principle or Paſſion to or againſt the Action itſelf.

2. We hence ſee one great Excellency of the Chriſtian Religion. It appeals to the Reaſon and Underſtanding of Men, as the divine Author of it himſelf did. It is not aſhamed to be ſearched and examined; it does not decline the ſevereſt Scrutiny. All it demands is a fair Trial: It calls upon Men to uſe all the Reaſon GOD hath given them to judge of it, and it's Doctrines. It only deſires them not to abuſe that Reaſon; nor ſuffer it to be impoſed upon, and deluded by external Shew and falſe Appearances, or cramped by Prejudice, Partiality and Paſſion. It ſpeaks to it's greateſt Enemies in the Words of the Text, in which Chriſt ſpake to his, — "*Judge righteous Judgment*, and "I am not afraid to ſtand by your Determi-"nations."

It is doing great Diſſervice to the Cauſe of Religion, to repreſent it at variance with Reaſon. Religion is the higheſt Improvement of Reaſon; and Chriſtianity the moſt reaſonable Inſtitution in the World. And there is no Man that impartially uſes his

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reaſon, but muſt be a Friend to it. And it is no wonder that they, who renounce or abuſe their Reaſon, ſhould be it's Enemies; becauſe it is that alone that diſcovers the Beauty, Harmony, and Excellency of it. Were but our modern Infidels for once to take our Saviour's Advice, and judge of his Religion in the ſame manner as he deſired the Phariſees to judge of his conduct, that is, to ſet aſide Prejudices and falſe Appearances, and impartially uſe their Reaſon, in order to form a *righteous Judgment*, I am perſuaded they would ſoon become it's Friends.

Let us not be afraid of Reaſon in Religion. Religion itſelf is not afraid of it. All that we have to fear is the abuſe or miſuſe of our Reaſon. And that is all that it cautions us againſt. Which Caution from our Saviour's own Mouth hath now been urged upon us. Rational Piety is the Beauty and Perfection of Chriſtianity. A regular Judgment, and ſerious Temper, make a finiſhed Chriſtian. Plainly to ſee the Ground we go upon, and keep it; rightly to know the Foundation of our Hope and Faith, and to re-

retain them; to have a clear Head and a pious Heart, diſtinct Conceptions of what we believe and profeſs, plain Evidence of the Certainty and Importance thereof, with a ſteady and inflexible Adherence thereunto. — This is the Beauty, this the Perfection of the Chriſtian Character.

3. We may hence diſcern the probable Source of moſt of that Uncharitableneſs and Cenſorioufneſs we ſee in the World. Superficial Judgment begets Error, and Error begets Bigotry, which always inclines Men to a bitter and perſecuting Spirit. The Romiſh Church, which is the moſt erroneous, is by far the moſt perſecuting Church in the Chriſtian World. Paſſion and Perſecution are always a ſign of a bad Cauſe. A good Cauſe wants neither of them: Religion and Truth diſclaim them both. Let us only take care to judge righteous Judgment, and that will diſpoſe us to a charitable Temper.

Laſtly, When by divine Grace, and the Help of the forementioned Rules, we come to form a better Judgment of things, let us immediately form our Practice by it. For

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Inſtance, If by this means we are more than ever convinced of the Vanity and Uncertainty of all our Earthly Comforts, let us be more careful to abſtract our Affections from them: If we find that we have hitherto entertained ſome wrong Sentiments of Religion, and the Ways of GOD, let us immediately quit them for thoſe which we now plainly ſee to be more agreeable to his Nature and Word: If we are now ſenſible of the Neceſſity and Importance of ſome one particular Duty, which we have too much neglected, let us, in the Name of GOD, reſolve for the future to be more diligent in the Performance of it: If we are now aware, that ſuch and ſuch Company, or Occurrences, are Temptations and Snares to us, let us as much as may be avoid them: If by being better informed in the nature of Religion, we ſee ſomething in our Temper or Conduct very faulty and inconſiſtent with it, let us forthwith ſet ourſelves, by divine Grace, to regulate and amend it.

Thus ſhall our Improvements in Goodneſs keep pace with our Progreſs in Knowledge;

ledge; thus ſhall we grow in Grace as we advance in Underſtanding; and by both be more and more prepared and fitted for that State of Light, Felicity, and Bliſs, which is the final Object of all our higheſt Wiſhes.

SER-

SERMON X.

The PRAYER of the PHARISEE and the PUBLICAN.

LUKE xviii. 10—13.

Two Men went up into the Temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself,—" GOD, *I thank thee, that I "am not as other Men are, Ex- "tortioners, Unjust, Adulterers, "or even as this Publican. I "fast twice in the Week, I give "Tithes of all that I possess." And the Publican standing afar off,*

off, would not lift up so much as his Eyes unto Heaven: But smote upon his Breast, saying,—"GOD "*be merciful to me a Sinner.*"

THIS Parable was spoken by our Saviour for the Instruction of a certain sort of Persons, *who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others*; as the preface to it informs us, *ver.* 9. The Design of it was to shew, that *every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*; as we learn from our Saviour's own Application of it, *ver.* 14.

Two Persons of very different Characters, a Pharisee and a Publican, addressed themselves to the Duty of Prayer, at the same time, and place, *viz.* the Temple. We are told in what manner each of them prayed, and the different Success they met with. The Parable itself is so plain, that, I think, nothing can be said to make it more so.

What I propose, is to make some general Observations on the different manner in which

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which these two persons prayed, and then improve this instructive passage of Scripture with some practical Remarks.

I. I shall make some general Observations on the different manner in which these two Persons prayed. And,

1. Let us consider the Prayer of the Pharisee. Which was this——"GOD, *I thank* "*thee, that I am not as other Men are,* "*Extortioners, Unjust, Adulterers, or even as* "*this Publican; I fast twice in the Week, I* "*give Tithes of all that I possess.*"

This Prayer, you see, (if we may call it so) is exactly in the Character of those Persons for whose Admonition this Parable was intended; that is, the Pharisees, *who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.* And that this Pharisee did so, appears from his very Prayer. "*I fast twice* "*a Week, I give Tithes of all I possess;*" there is his Self-righteousness, and his Boast of it. And, "*I thank* GOD *that I am not as other* "*Men, nor as this Publican,*" shews how much *he despised others.*

But to consider this Prayer of the Pharisee more particularly,

1. There

1. There is much Self-confidence in it. *He stood and prayed thus with himself.* Or, as some render it, *he stood by himself*, (at a distance from the profane Publican, in some conspicuous Place, where he might be seen by others) *and prayed thus.* "GOD, *I thank* "*thee, that I am not as other Men are.*" What a bold assuming Air is this, with which to come into the presence of the great GOD! And after this general Self-applause, he descends to particulars; that he was no *Extortioner*, no *Adulterer*, &c. Nay, his Righteousness was not negative only, but positive. And he mentions some particulars also of that sort. *I fast twice in the Week*; as the Pharisees were wont to do, *viz.* on *Monday* and *Thursday*. *I give Tithes of all that I possess.* Indeed he thanks GOD for this; but it is in such a manner as plainly shews, he thought the Thanks due to himself; and is a Language and Temper very different from that of the Apostle *Paul*, when he said, *by the Grace of* GOD *I am what I am.* His words express no real thankfulness of Heart for the Grace of GOD that had made the difference between him and others; but have evidently the Air of an arro-

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arrogant and oſtentatious Hypocrite. *I am not ſo bad as others, I thank* GOD. When at the ſame time, it is plain that all he meant was Self-applauſe.

2. There appears a good deal of ſecret Pride in this Addreſs.

He was fully perſuaded that he was more holy than other Men, and upon that grows mighty fond of himſelf. The particular Detail of his good Works ſhews the vanity of his Heart. He boaſts of this, and dwells with pleaſure on the Subject. As if all his Buſineſs at the Temple was, to tell Almighty GOD how good he was; like thoſe Hypocrites mentioned, *Iſai.* lviii. 3. *Wherefore have we faſted*, ſay they, *and thou ſeeſt not*. Here is not the leaſt Expreſſion of any ſenſe he had either of his wants or his Sins. His Pride had made him blind to both.

3. He not only diſcovers much Pride but great Ignorance.

For ſuppoſing all the many good things he here ſays of himſelf were true, it amounts to no more than this, That he was no profligate, or openly profane Sinner, but that he conformed to ſome of the

the external Modes of Religion. Which he might do, and yet be a bad Man; by indulging *Iniquity in his Heart*; as Malice, Envy, Pride, Covetousness, Hatred, Ambition, Hypocrisy, and Worldliness. And however fond he was of the *Forms*, he might still be a stranger to *the Power, of Godliness*. For it is great Ignorance to think, that Religion consists only in doing no Body any harm, and observing a few external Rites; in which this Pharisee placed all his Religion.

4. There is much Hypocrisy in this Prayer.

Hypocrisy consists in a person's affecting to appear more religious than he really is. And it is always a shrewd Sign of it, when there is an over-eager Zeal for the Formalities and Circumstantials of Religion; which this Prayer of the Pharisee shews to be exactly his Character.

5. It shews him to be at the same time very uncharitable and censorious.

There was but one Man in the World that he seemed to have a good Opinion of, and that was himself. *I thank* GOD, *that I am not as other men are.* He speaks indefinitely

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nitely as if he thought himſelf better than *any other Men*. How came he to know what other Men are? or even that poor Publican whom he marks as the particular Object of his Contempt. For by the Words *Extortioner*, and *Unjuſt*, he ſeems to caſt an oblique Glance upon this Publican's ſuppoſed Character. He knew him to be a Publican, and thence concluded that he was an Extortioner, an unjuſt Man, and all that was bad. But ſuppoſing it had been ſo, and he knew it, what occaſion had he to take notice of it in his Prayer? Could he not addreſs himſelf to his Maker without reproaching his Fellow-worſhipper? But he looked upon this Publican's ſuppoſed Wickedneſs to be a Foil to his own fancied Righteouſneſs. He therefore ſets them in Contraſt that the latter may appear with the greater Luſtre. So cloſely are Pride and Cenſorioufneſs linked together.

Laſtly, The laſt Obſervation I ſhall make on this Addreſs of the Phariſee is, that there is not one Word of Prayer in it.

He *went up to the Temple to pray*, but forgot his Errand. He was ſo full of himſelf

ſelf, and of his own Righteouſneſs, that he ſeems to think that he needed nothing; for he prays for nothing; not ſo much as the Grace and Favour of GOD, of his want of which he appears to be not at all ſenſible.

I ſhall conclude my Obſervations on this part of the Text with taking notice, how exactly this Prayer correſponds with the Character of the Phariſees, as delineated in other parts of the Goſpel; who loved *to pray, that they might be ſeen of Men*; *who devoured Widows Houſes, and, for a pretence, made long Prayers*; *who paid Tithe of Mint, Aniſe, and Cummin*; *but neglected the weightier matters of the Law*; *who ſtrained out (a) a Gnat, and ſwallowed a Camel*; *who appeared outwardly righteous to Men, but within were full of Hypocriſy and Iniquity*; as they are deſcribed by our Saviour in the xxxiii. Chapter of St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel.

Let us now turn to the Prayer of the Publican, which was juſt the Reverſe of this; as full of Humility and Self-abaſement,

(a) So the original Word (διϋλίζοντες, *percolantes*,) ſhould be rendered; to ſift or ſtrain out through a Searce or Cullender.

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ment, as the other was of Pride and Self-confidence.

He ſtood afar off, and would not ſo much as lift up his Eyes to Heaven, but ſmote upon his Breaſt and ſaid, " GOD, *be merciful to me* " *a Sinner.*"

1. We may obſerve the Serioufneſs and Humility of this Prayer.

This is expreſſed by the Geſture in which he addreſſed himſelf to this Duty. *He ſtood afar off.* The Phariſee ſtood, but crowded up as far as he could to the upper end of the Court. The Publican, from a ſenſe of his Unworthineſs to draw near to GOD, kept at a diſtance. And even there *he would not ſo much as lift up his Eyes to Heaven.* He lifted up his Heart to GOD in Heaven, but, oppreſſed with ſhame and ſorrow, he caſt down his Eyes to the Earth. His dejected Looks ſpake a dejected Heart. *His Iniquities had taken hold upon him,* as a heavy Burthen, *ſo that he was not able to look up (b).*

2. Obſerve the Earneſtneſs of this Prayer. It hath few Words, but much pious Fer-

(b) Pſalm. xl. 12.

Fervour. *He smote on his Breast, saying,* "GOD, *be merciful to me a Sinner.*" Such words, uttered with such an Action, and such an Emphasis as is natural to them, must come from a Heart filled with a deep sense of Sin, and an earnest Desire of pardon.

3. We may observe the penitential Sorrow and Compunction of mind denoted by these Words.

This Prayer of the Publican is very short. Sighs and Tears prevent his utterance, Grief and Confusion choak up his words. But what he did say was much to the Purpose. GOD, *be merciful to me a Sinner!* as if he had said, —— "*Behold, I am vile, what* "*shall I answer thee!* Yes, I am that great "Sinner I have been so often called. But, "O that I might obtain Mercy! This is all "I want and ask; and without it I am un-"done for ever."

The Pharisee knew not that he was a Sinner. He could see the Sins of others fast enough, but not his own. He was *clean and pure from Sin.* But the humble, self-condemning Publican could give himself no

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other Character than that of a Sinner; a criminal Convict at the Bar of GOD.

4. We may obſerve the Faith that was mixed with his Repentance and Humiliation.

Though he was ſenſible he was a great Sinner, yet not too great to be pardoned. His faith and hope in the pardoning Mercy of GOD, encouraged him to put up this Petition. And had he been acquainted with the great Doctrine of Atonement by *Jeſus Chriſt*, his Faith would doubtleſs have pleaded that with equal Importunity. The Phariſee pleads the Merit of his Faſting and Tithes; but the Publican depends only on free Grace. Flies to mercy as the *City of his Refuge*; as if he had ſaid, "The Law "condemns me, Juſtice purſues me, nothing "can ſave me but *Mercy*, *Mercy*."

Laſtly, We may obſerve the Comprehenſiveneſs of this Prayer.

In theſe four words (for there is no more in the Original) are comprized the three great parts of Prayer, *Invocation*, *Petition*, and *Confeſſion*. He calls upon GOD, confeſſes himſelf a Sinner, and then puts up an importunate Petition ſuitable to that Character.

racter. O GOD, *be merciful to me a Sinner!*

And having thus particularly considered the Difference between the Prayer of the Pharisee and that of the Publican, it remains now,

II. To make some practical Remarks on the whole for our own Improvement.

1. Then from what hath been said upon this Passage of Scripture, we see the reason why *the Sacrifice of the Wicked is an Abomination to the Lord.*

It is expressly said to be so, *Prov.* xv. 8. and especially his Prayers, *Prov.* xxviii. 9. And the reason of it is plainly this. Because he *offers it with a wicked Mind*; or a Heart in Love with Iniquity, and full of Pride, Hypocrisy, Malice, Self-confidence, Dissaffection to GOD, and Contempt of others. Which are sometimes discovered even in his very Prayers; as they were in this of the Pharisee.

When a person prays to GOD with a Heart habitually set against him, and fully bent on Sin, how can the pure and holy GOD, who sees through every Vail and

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Diſguiſe, but abhor ſuch hypocritical Offerings? Suppoſe ſuch an Addreſs were made to an earthly Prince, by a Subject known to be in open Rebellion againſt him; who, inſtead of confeſſing his Guilt, and imploring Pardon, ſhould preſent him with a petulant, haughty Petition, which either in the matter or manner of it, diſcovered that he ſtill retained and indulged a malignant, hoſtile temper againſt him; would not ſuch a Prince take it as the higheſt Indignity that could be offered him? And why ſhould Sinners imagine they may mock the Almighty with more Safety and Impunity, than they can their earthly Sovereign? This is the very ſame Remonſtrance which GOD himſelf made to his People the Jews in the ſame caſe, *Mal.* i. 7, 8. *Ye offer polluted Bread upon my Altar, and ye ſay, Wherein have we polluted thee? And if ye offer the blind for Sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame and ſick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy Governour, will he be pleaſed with thee, or accept thy Perſon? ſaith the Lord of Hoſts. If I indulge Iniquity in my Heart,* ſaith David, *the Lord will not hear me (c).*

This,

(c) Pſal. lxvi. 18.

This, like a *dead Fly in the Ointment*, spoils the Savour of all our most precious Offerings *(d)*.

That Scripture therefore, *The Sacrifice of the Wicked is an Abomination to the Lord*, is greatly mistaken, when it is supposed to mean, that all the best Services and Prayers, performed by Persons before they are actually in a state of *Conversion*, are abominable in the Sight of GOD. For, considering the great Difficulty of adjusting the exact point of Conversion, and the precise time of it, (both which, for the most part, are extremely uncertain) such a Construction of that Text would throw a mighty Burden on tender Consciences, and be a constant discouragement to them in the way of their Duty. Whereas the true Sense of it appears to be no more than this, that when there is a prevailing love for Sin in the Heart, and Men keep on in a Course of praying, with a secret and resolved purpose to keep on in a Course of Sinning, and even discover that Iniquity of their Hearts in their very Prayers; such Prayers for certain are, and cannot but be highly offensive and hate-

(d) Eccl. x. 1.

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ful to a GOD of Holineſs, Purity, and Truth. And ſuch was the Prayer of the Phariſee.

2. We hence alſo ſee the reaſon why the *Prayer of the Upright is* GOD's *Delight (e)*.

And this is as plainly exemplified in the Prayer of the Publican. Which was that INWROUGHT *Prayer which*, the Apoſtle *James* tells us, *availeth much*, *Jam.* v. 16. What ſucceſs it met with, we are told in the verſe immediately following the Text. *I tell you, this Man went down to his Houſe juſtified rather than the other.* And ſuch ſerious, humble, fervent, faithful, penitent Prayers will never fail of Succeſs. And the reaſon why they prevail ſo much with GOD, is, becauſe he taketh delight in them. And the Reaſon why he taketh delight in them is, becauſe they proceed from a humble, upright Heart. *The Sacrifices of* GOD *are a broken Spirit: A broken and a contrite Heart, O* GOD, *thou wilt not deſpiſe (f)*. This is a form of Speech in which much more is underſtood than expreſſed. *Will not deſpiſe*; that is, he greatly loves, eſteems, and

(e) Prov. xv. 8. (f) Pſal. li. 17.

and honours such. As he himself declares in *Isai.* lxvi. 2. *Thus saith the Lord, the Heaven is my Throne, and the Earth is my Footstool; where is the House that ye build unto me, and where is the Place of my rest? for all those things hath my hand made, and all those things have been saith the Lord; but to this man will I look, even unto him that is poor and of a contrite Spirit, and that trembles at my Word.* And to the same Purpose, *Isai.* lvii. 15.

So that it is the Humility and Sincerity of the Heart, that makes the Prayer of the Upright so pleasing in the Sight of GOD; and it is the Pride and Hypocrisy of the Heart that makes the prayer of Sinners an Abomination to him. This latter evidently appears in the Prayer of the Pharisee, and the former in the Prayer of the Publican. And therefore *this went down to his House justified rather than the other (g).*

Hence

(g) i. e. *And not the other.* For as an absolute Form of Speech is frequently in Scripture put for a comparative one (*Hos.* vi. 6. 1 *Cor.* vii. 7. 1 *Tim.* i. 9. 1 *Pet.* iii. 3;) so a comparative Form is often put for a negative absolute, *e. g.* Psal. cxviii. 8. *Prov.* xxv. 7. *Matth.* xviii. 8. 1 *Cor.* vii. 9. Vid. *Glassii.* Philol. sacr. pag. 465, 979.

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Hence alſo we may ſee the Difference between the Prayers which ſaint *Paul* put up when he was a jewiſh Zealot and that which he uttered when he became a chriſtian Proſelyte; and the reaſon why ſo much notice is taken of this in the *Acts* of the *Apoſtles*. For when the Lord ſent *Ananias* with a Meſſage to him, he ſays, *Acts* ix. 11. *Ariſe, and go into the Street which is called* Strait, *and enquire in the Houſe of* Judas *for one called* Saul *of* Tarſus, *for behold he* PRAYETH. *Saul*, before this, had been of the Sect of the *Phariſees*, who were famous for their long and frequent Prayers. But all that, we ſee, is placed to no account. He never prayed to any purpoſe, or as he ought, till now. Before, his Prayers were dead and formal; now, they are lively and fervent; before, he prayed to be ſeen of Men; now, to be heard of GOD; before, he prayed as a ſelf-righteous Bigot, now, as a ſelf-convicted Sinner; before, he prayed like the Phariſee, now, like the Publican.

3. We may hence obſerve, that amongſt the Worſhippers of GOD in his viſible Church here below, there is always a mixture of Good and Bad.

No

No two Characters can be more different than these which our Saviour hath here set in Contrast; by which a lively Image is formed of the true state of most worshipping Assemblies here on Earth. The Chaff and the Wheat are blended, and must lie together, till the great Distinction be made at last, when the one shall *be gathered in the Garner*, and the other *burnt with unquenchable Fire*. Both may now meet in the same place of Worship, may join in the same Acts of Religion, and appear equally devout therein; whilst nevertheless one may be at Enmity with GOD in his Heart, and the other one in whom *his Soul is well pleased*. So it was with this Pharisee and Publican; so it ever has been since *Cain* and *Abel* brought their Offerings to the same Altar; and so it will continue to be till the Wicked and Righteous appear before the same Tribunal. And then the great, the important, and the eternal Distinction will be made.

We now live in a disordered and promiscuous State of Things; where not only *all Things come alike to all, both to the Just and the Unjust*, but where studied Vails and Dis-

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Diſguiſes are ſo artfully put on, that the one cannot eaſily be diſtinguiſhed from the other. They may both appear equally *righteous before Men, but* GOD *knoweth the Heart.* For *there is no Darkneſs or ſhadow of Death, where the workers of Iniquity can hide themſelves* from his all-penetrating Eye. If *we* cannot make the proper Diſtinction, *he* can whoſe *Underſtanding is infinite.*

4. We may hence ſee, that ſome of the worſt of Men may, in their own Eſteem, and that of others, frequently paſs for ſome of the beſt.

As the Phariſees in general did among the *Jews.* It is ſurpriſing to obſerve with how much force the Shew and Form of Religion ſtrikes the Minds, and ſways the Judgments of Men, and how often it paſſes for (what is quite another thing) the Truth and Power of it. An evident Inſtance this of the great Weakneſs and Fallibility of the human Underſtanding, that Perſons ſhould be eſteemed, not only by others, but by themſelves, as eminent for Religion merely on the ſcore of thoſe things that have nothing of Religion in them, *e. g.* their Zeal, their Knowledge, their

their sound Faith, their strong attachment to a particular Set of Modes, Forms, or Party-notions. Could any go further in these, and such like Circumstantials, than the Pharisees did in our Saviour's time? and yet none were greater Enemies to him than they. And he declared that *Publicans and Harlots would enter into the Kingdom of* GOD *before them (h).*

And the same Spirit of Bigotry, Superstition, and blind Zeal, operates just the same way now as it did then. In the Church of *Rome* it reigns and triumphs. Did the Pharisees *trust in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others?* So do the Papists. Did *they* lay great Stress upon the Circumstantials, and neglect the Essentials of Religion? So do *these.* Did they make *void the Law of* GOD *by their own Traditions?* So do the Romanists. Did they *compass Sea and Land to make one Proselyte?* None more assiduous in this Affair than the Church of *Rome.* And the Proselytes of both had much the same Advantage. Were the Pharisees outragious against those that dared to oppose their cor-

(h) Mat. xxi. 51.

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corrupt Doctrines and Deeds? Not more so than modern *Catholicks.* Nay, did they think they did GOD good Service when they spilt the Blood of his Servants? Just so thinketh the Romish Church now. Both have acted the most villainous things under a pretence of Religion; have consecrated the worst of Crimes, and canonized the worst of Men; and yet, (what is strange) both have thought themselves, and have been thought by others, persons of singular Sanctity, and have looked upon the rest of Mankind as vile, impious and heretical.

The Parallel might be pursued in many more particulars. And all the use I mean to make of it is, to shew that a predominant Spirit of Superstition, and blind Zeal, acts just the same way now, it ever did. And may proceed so far as to make Men place Religion in those things that are not only foreign from it, but contrary to it; and to look upon themselves as some of the best of Men, when their true Character assigns them a place among the worst. So it was with the Pharisees in our Saviour's time, and so it hath been in the christian Church ever since.

But

But in the midst of all this confusion of Judgment, difference of Sentiment, and disguise of Characters, if we must judge of others, there is but one sure Rule that I know of to judge by; and that is, what our Lord himself hath laid down in this case, *by their Fruits ye shall know them (i)*. The true Characters of Men are only known by the Fruits they produce, whether those of the *Flesh* or those of the *Spirit*. And what those are the Apostle plainly tells us, *Gal.* v. 19—23. *Now the Works of the Flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanness, Lasciviousness, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Heresies, Envyings, Murders, Drunkenness, Revellings, and such like. But the fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance.*

5. We further learn from the Character of this Pharisee, that it is no uncommon thing for those who are devoid of real Religion, to place a great Esteem and Importance in the Appendages of it.

Thus

(*i*) Mat. vii. 20.

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Thus the Pharisees, whom our Saviour declared to be the fartheſt from the Kingdom of GOD, where however of all others the moſt zealous for the external forms of Religion. The reaſon of which it is no hard matter to account for. It is not a creditable thing in the Eye of the World to ſhew no regard to Religion in any ſhape. So that vanity itſelf may induce ſome Men to put on the Appearances of it, and come as far as it's outworks. But finding that real Religion itſelf is inconſiſtent with their Luſts, they care not to go any farther. And to go ſo far may ſerve their purpoſe very well with Men. But then, though by this means they ſtand well enough in the Eye of the World, yet they do not ſtand ſo well in the judgment of Conſcience, which upbraids them with their Sins, and declares them ſtill deſtitute of real religion, notwithſtanding the outward Shew they make of it. To ſatisfy or ſilence which they employ their Luſts to corrupt their Judgment, and employ their Judgment thus corrupted to give their Conſcience the Lie; and boldly affirm that religion (whatever ſome Preciſians may pretend) does actually conſiſt very

very much in these external forms of it, for which they have the warmest Zeal: and that they are of so great Importance that their Zeal for them may reasonably be allowed to palliate or extenuate some little Defects in their moral Character. And by this means they come in time to stand well not only with the World but with their own Conscience too, without one grain of real Religion in their Hearts. In short, they are great Zealots for Circumstantials and Ceremonials, because it being all the Religion they have, they are willing to make the most of it. Thus because they cannot come up to the Standard, they are for bringing that down lower. Because they cannot rise to that, they will force that to stoop to them; and make Religion to consist in those things in which it does not, because they have a Dislike to those things in which it really does. Which is the true reason that the warmest Zeal for the Forms of religion is often found in those who are the greatest Strangers to the Power of it.

6. From this Prayer of the penitent Publican we may learn, what it is that will render our Prayers acceptable to GOD.

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There were four things I obſerved in it eſpecially remarkable, *viz.* It's Serioufneſs and Humility, it's Earneſtneſs and Fervour, the penitential Sorrow it expreſſed, and the Faith and Hope that accompanied that Repentance.

In like manner then let us learn to addreſs our prayers to GOD.

1. With the greateſt Humility and Serioufneſs of Mind.

No Temper is more decent, or more becoming Creatures, in their Addreſſes to the great Creator. Did we but truely think who we are, whom we pray to, and what we pray for, it were enough to poſſeſs our minds with the utmoſt Reverence in this ſolemn Act of Worſhip. And moſt certain it is, that they who diſcover any ſigns of Levity, Irreverence and Vanity in this Duty, do not well conſider what it is they are about.

2. Let us learn to pray with the ſame Earneſtneſs and Fervour the Publican did.

We have many Examples of this recorded in Scripture, in the prayers of *Abraham*, *Jacob*, *Moſes*, *Nehemiah*, *David*, *Solomon*, and others, who diſcovered the cloſeſt Attention, and the warmeſt Engagement of their

their minds in this religious Exercise. Hence they are said to *wrestle with* GOD (*k*). To *plead with him* (*l*). To *pour out their Souls before him* (*m*). And the Apostle *James* tells us it is the *fervent Prayer of the righteous Man that availeth much* (*n*.) And how can we be indifferent when we consider that we are begging for the Life of our immortal Souls; for the Mercy which alone can save us from eternal Misery.

3. Let us also with the Publican pray, under a deep sense of our Sinfulness and Guilt.

With penitential Compunction he smote upon his Breast, stood afar off, and held down his Eyes through confusion of Spirit. The Consciousness of his Guilt overwhelmed his Mind, interrupted his Speech, and turned his Prayer into broken Sighs and unutterable Groans. But those broken Sighs will surely be heard if they proceed from a broken Heart. And even these, we are told, are not without the Assistance of the Spirit of GOD (*o*). Did we rightly know ourselves we should see reason to make a

(*k*) Gen. xxxii. 25. (*l*) Jer. xii. 1. (*m*) Psal. lxii. 8.
(*n*) Jam. v. 16. (*o*) Rom. viii. 26.

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humble Confeſſion of our Sins a great part of our Prayer, and go through it with that Self-abaſement and Remorſe the poor Publican ſhewed. And this will ſurely be accepted of him who hears the *Cry of the Penitent*, and *deſpiſes not the Sacrifice of a contrite Spirit (p)*.

Laſtly, Let all our Prayers be animated with Faith and Hope.

With Faith in the Merits and Interceſſion of Chriſt, and Hope in the Mercy of GOD, and his readineſs to forgive returning Sinners through him. This is that great and *bleſſed Hope* which the Goſpel hath ſet before us. An Advantage which the Publican had not, but which we who are favoured with the Light and Grace of the Goſpel do abundantly enjoy. And which may inſpire us with ſtrong Conſolation amidſt all that fear and ſorrow with which a Conſciouſneſs of Guilt may ſometimes oppreſs our Souls. For where *Sin hath abounded* the Grace of GOD in Chriſt hath *ſuper-abounded, which is of many Offences to Juſtification*, and *reigns through Righteouſneſs unto eternal Life, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.*

Thus

(p) Pſal. li. 17.

Thus then let us learn to pray. For such is the Prayer that Christ commends, and such the Prayer that GOD accepts. Thus let us come to the Throne of Grace, and we shall never go from it unheard, unaccepted or uncomforted.

I shall only add as a Conclusion of the whole, that this happy, pious, praying frame of Spirit, we should daily endeavour to improve and cultivate, and to carry it with us into all the varying Scenes of Life. And to retain such a Seriousness of Mind, a Reverence of GOD, and habitual Disposition to Prayer, is the full Import of that Precept of the Apostle, which requires us to *pray without ceasing (q)*. And happy were it for us, if we could more constantly preserve that calm and holy frame of Mind, in which we shall be always fit to pray, and glad to die.

(q) 1 Thess. v. 17.

SERMON XI.

The Principle and Practice of RELIGION, the WHOLE of MAN.

A SERMON preached to Young PEOPLE.

ECCLES. xii. 13.

Let us hear the Conclusion of the whole matter, fear GOD, *and keep his Commandments: For this is the whole Duty of Man.*

THIS is the practical Improvement of the best Sermon that ever was preached, on the most serious Subject that ever was handled. The Preacher was *Solomon*; the most renowned for Wisdom of all the Sons of Men; a great part of which he dearly bought

bought by his own Experience. His text was, *Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity (a)*. This Subject he treats of in a very lively, copious, and affecting manner, as every Preacher does that Subject, the Importance of which he hath had long experience of himself. And having fully proved and illustrated this Truth in the preceeding Discourse, he concludes all with this single Use by way of Application, *Let us hear the Conclusion of the whole matter, fear* GOD, *and keep his Commandments: For this is the whole Duty of Man.*

In the Original it is—*for this is the whole of Man*. A phrase of much greater Latitude than that which is used by our Translators, who by inserting the word *Duty* have too much confined the Sense.

These words contain a very comprehensive Duty enjoined, and the reason of it annexed. The Duty enjoined, or inferred from the whole Subject of the foregoing Sermon, is, *Fear* GOD, *and keep his Commandments*; the reason of it annexed is, *for this is the whole of Man*. I shall speak to each of these distinctly, and then conclude with an

(a) Chap. i. 2.

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Application ſuitably adapted to perſons in youthful Life, for whoſe benefit this Diſcourſe is principally intended.

I. In theſe words we have a very comprehenſive Duty commanded, or inferred from the Subject of the preceding Diſcourſe.

And that is, *fear* GOD, *and keep his Commandments:* The firſt containing the Principle, the other the Practice of all real Religion. Each of which I muſt explain as diſtinctly as my time will admit.

Religion conſiſts of two parts, the inward and outward, or that of the Heart and that of the Life; the Root and the Fruit; the one called the Principle, and the other the Practice of Religion.

1. We have here the Root or Principle of Religion; which conſiſts in the *fear of* GOD, from whence all true Religion in the Life muſt flow.

And ſince it is impoſſible the Fruit ſhould be good unleſs the Root be ſo, it highly concerns us to look well to this firſt Principle of all Religion; to ſee to it that the true fear of GOD hath taken poſſeſſion of

our

our Hearts: Becauſe there are ſome things that go under this name which are very different from what our Text intends.

There is a *tormenting* Fear of GOD; ſuch as the Devils have, who *fear and tremble.*

There is a *ſervile* Fear of GOD; ſuch as a Slave has of an unmerciful Maſter, or a Subject of a cruel Tyrant. Both theſe kinds of Fear are attended with a hatred of their Object; and a true Love to GOD intirely expels them, as the Apoſtle *John* tells us, 1 *John* iv. 18.

Again, there is a vain and *viſionary* Fear of GOD; ſuch as a ſuperſtitious man has, ariſing from a wrong notion of him as an arbitrary and capricious Being.

And in fine, there is an *occaſional* and *tranſient* Fear of GOD; which may ariſe in the Heart at certain times (for inſtance, under any threatening Providence) but is ſoon gone, and leaves no durably good effect behind it. And this a Hypocrite may have.

But that Fear of GOD which the text recommends is, in one word, a *filial Reverence*; a Fear tempered with Love; or ſuch a reverent regard to GOD as a dutiful

Child

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Child hath to a wiſe and tender Parent. And as we are all of us in the ſtricteſt ſenſe the *Off-ſpring of* GOD, it is therefore our moſt reaſonable and moſt natural Duty, thus to reverence him as our Father.

And the Sources from whence this filial Reverence flows will furniſh us with the ſtrongeſt Motives to it, *viz.* his Authority over us, his Preſence with us, his Intereſt in us, and his Concern for us. Theſe are the natural ſources of that filial Fear which is due to earthly Parents; and for the ſame reaſons ought we much more to fear the *Father of our Spirits.*

1. Becauſe of his Authority over us, which is much greater than that which any earthly Parent has over his own Off-ſpring. GOD's authority over us is ſupreme and unlimited: He hath an abſolute and independent right to us, for we are wholly his Off-ſpring, Soul, Spirit, and Body: We are intirely in his Hands, who can make us happy or miſerable beyond all that we are able to imagine. Whom then ſhould we fear but him? Therefore ſaith our Saviour, *fear not them that kill the Body, but are not able to kill the Soul; but rather fear him who*

who is able to kill both Soul and Body in Hell (*b*).

2. GOD's Presence with us is another proper ground and motive of our Fear of him. And his presence with us is perpetual: We are never from under his Eye, who observes not only our outward Actions, but our inward Thoughts, Purposes, Desires, Views, and Motives of Conduct; the secret Principles we are acted by, and whatever gives the Heart either pleasure or pain: Of all these things his Omniscience gives him a more intimate and perfect Knowledge, than our own Sensations give us. And should we not stand in awe of this all-knowing and omnipresent GOD? With what Reverence and Caution does the parental Eye inspire an ingenuous Child! How then should we reverence the Father of our Spirits, whose Eye is continually upon us, and who knows us far better than we do ourselves!

3. GOD hath an unalienable Interest and Propriety in us, and therefore we should fear him. We are more his than we are our own; and as we are intirely his, he lays a just claim to all the Reverence and Homage

(*b*) Matth. x. 28.

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mage of our Hearts: And not to fear him is virtually to diſclaim his right to us.

Laſtly, His paternal Concern for us demands our filial Reverence of him. No Parent on Earth hath ſo kind and tender a regard for the Intereſt of his Children as GOD hath for ours. He knows every degree and kind of Satisfaction we enjoy, and every inward and outward pain we feel; for it is his Hand which diſpenſes both, and his Providence which augments or leſſens, continues or removes both, juſt in ſuch a degree, and at ſuch a time, as he knows will be moſt for our Benefit. He is ſenſible of all our wants, though we are inſenſible of his Goodneſs in ſupplying them; he knows our weakneſſes, though we know not how much we owe to his Grace in ſtrengthening us.

In a Word, the true fear of GOD conſiſts in a deep habitual Impreſſion of his Authority over us, his Preſence with us, his Propriety in us, and his fatherly Concern for us.

This Sentiment of GOD we muſt not only admit, but endeavour to have it inwrought into the very frame and temper of our Souls,

ſo

ſo as to live under the conſtant Influence thereof; as a dutiful Child does, who is always under the prudent Father's Eye, and ſerves him with all his Heart, becauſe from his Heart he loves and fears him. This, I think, is the moſt clear and lively Image we can have of that holy Diſpoſition of Heart, which in the Text, and ſo many other places of Scripture, is called *the Fear of the Lord.*

I ſhall only further obſerve under this Head, that this *Fear of* GOD is not only the Principle, but the Perfection of all true Religion. For we are commanded by the Apoſtle *to perfect Holineſs in the Fear of* GOD *(c)*. And hence it is that the *Fear of the Lord* is ſo often put for the Whole of Religion.

So much for the firſt part of the Precept, *fear* GOD; which comprehends all the Religion of the Heart.

II. The other part of the Precept is, *keep his Commandments.*

This ſprings from the former, as the Fruit from the Root; and is comprehenſive of

(c) 2 Cor. vii. 1.

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of all practical obedience, or the religion of the Life: Which opens to us a very wide and fruitful Field of Contemplation, for *the Commandments of the Lord are exceeding broad (d)*.

What is it now *to keep the Commandments of* GOD? I anſwer in general, it is to do whatever we know will pleaſe him, or to comply with every notice of his Will. For whatever we know is pleaſing to GOD and agreeable to his Will, *that* we ſhould bind upon our Conſciences with as ſtrict an Obligation, as if we ſaw it expreſſed among the precepts of the Decalogue, or heard it proclaimed to us in the Thunders of *Sinai*.

Now there are two Ways by which GOD is pleaſed to manifeſt his Will to Man, *viz.* by the light of Reaſon, and that of Revelation; the former is called the Law of Nature, to ſupply the defects of which GOD was pleaſed to ſuperadd the latter. The heathen World had only the firſt of theſe to teach them the Will of GOD; which was but a very poor and imperfect Direction. The Jews indeed had a divine Revelation, but it was only a partial and limited one, and

(*d*) Pſal. cxix. 96.

and preparatory to that more complete and extenſive Revelation which we enjoy; by the reflected light of which the Law of nature appears as much clearer to us than it did to the Gentile World, as the chriſtian Revelation is more explicit and comprehenſive than that of the Jews. Or, to make uſe of the common Metaphor to which I have juſt referred, as the Light of Revelation is often compared to that of the Sun, and the Light of Nature to that of the Moon, we have both in a greater perfection than any before us ſince the Fall ever had; for the Light of Nature as it ſhines upon us reflected from the Goſpel Revelation, is as much ſuperior to that which the heathen World enjoyed, as the Light of the full Moon is to that which it gives juſt after it's Change: and the Light of the Chriſtian Revelation exceeds that of the Jewiſh, as much as the brightneſs of the Meridian Sun does that of the riſing Dawn. So that we have the Advantage of a clearer manifeſtation of the divine Will in both theſe Ways, than was ever made under any Diſpenſation that preceeded ours. A Happineſs! for which we can never enough be thankful.

And

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And to *keep the Commandments of* GOD, is to comply with whatever we learn from these advantagious Lights he hath given us, to be agreeable to his Will. And this implies two things, *viz.* a Care to understand the will of GOD by those Lights which we enjoy; and an impartial Performance of it when understood.

1. To keep the Commandments of GOD, implies a careful Endeavour to understand the will of GOD by those Lights which he hath given us. For notwithstanding all the superior Advantages which Christians enjoy to know the will of GOD, many have sadly mistaken it: And their mistakes have not only been the Source of much animosity and disorder in the Christian Church, but have often disguised the pure Religion of the Gospel under all the frightful shapes of Enthusiasm, Superstition and Bigotry.

But then what have those mistakes been owing to? Why to this one cause universally, *viz.* their not adhering invariably to the concurrent directions of Scripture and Reason, but following other rules and guides than those which GOD hath given them. A Practice, which if it does not lead them intire-

intirely to forſake the divine Rule (which is ſometimes the caſe) does however ſtrongly incline them to pervert it. One who reſolves to ſhut his Eyes may walk in darkneſs at noon-day.

But if we would not miſtake the Will of GOD, let us often pray, that GOD would direct our minds into the Knowledge of it: and guard them againſt thoſe Errors into which indulged Prejudice and Corruptions are ſo apt inſenſibly to betray us.——Let us make the beſt uſe of both our Rules, inſtead of deſpiſing either; and compare them together, becauſe they not only concur in the ſame Direction, but mutually throw a Light upon each other. We ſhould eſpecially take care we do not ſet them in oppoſition to each other, as ſome do. For inſtance, let us not under pretence of following *the leſſer light* of Reaſon, reject the peculiar Doctrines of Revelation; for an object may be diſtinctly diſcerned by the Sun, which cannot be ſo eaſily ſeen by Moonlight. On the other hand, let not our peculiar eſteem for the light of Revelation lead us to depreciate that of Reaſon. Much leſs ſhould we preſume (as ſome have done)

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to oppoſe the pretended dictates of Conſcience, and the *Light within*, to the plain declarations both of Scripture and Reaſon. But then,

2. When we have attained the certain Knowledge of the divine Will, our next care is *impartially* to perform it. Our performance of the divine Will, I ſay, muſt be impartial. By which I mean,

We muſt adjuſt our regards to the ſeveral parts of our known Duty in proportion to their importance. And not, as the *Phariſees* did, (and as ſome Chriſtians are apt to do now) lay a mighty ſtreſs upon the leaſt things, and very little upon the greateſt. If it be aſked, what are theſe little and great things in Religion, that we may proportion our regards to their reſpective importance? I anſwer; thoſe things which immediately and directly tend to mend the Temper, and make the Heart better, to form the mind to vital Piety, and make us more like to GOD, and fit for Heaven, theſe muſt always be reckoned among the great things of Religion, which have a claim to our firſt and chief regards. And thoſe which have only a remote tendency to theſe ends,

or

or none at all, are to be accounted among thoſe little things in which it would not only be weak, but dangerous, to place any great Importance; whether they be matters of Practice, Doctrine, or Ceremony. And for this reaſon we are required to pay a greater regard to Duties of a moral, than thoſe of a poſitive nature; becauſe the former are in themſelves, and in their effects, much more excellent than the latter.

We muſt alſo pay an equal regard to all Duties of equal Importance: And not lay a greater ſtreſs upon ſome than upon others, purely becauſe the former are more eaſy to us, or more ſuited to our natural Tempers. This is very wrong, but very common; for how often do we ſee ſome Chriſtians direct their Attentions to the duties of Piety much more than to thoſe of Virtue? Whilſt others pay a greater deference to the Obligations of the ſecond Table than to thoſe of the firſt. Some regard the Prohibitions of Scripture more than the Precepts, whilſt others are more afraid of ſins of Omiſſion than of thoſe of Commiſſion. But this is not conſiſtent with that

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Impartiality of obedience which GOD requires of us, and which *David* expressed when he said, *I have respect unto all thy Commandments; I esteem all thy Precepts concerning all things to be right (e).*

I will only add, that our *impartial* obedience to the whole Will of GOD, must proceed from the forementioned Principle of an habitual Reverence of him, and be performed in dependence on his Grace for our present Assistance, and on his Son for our final Acceptance. For as it respects Christians it certainly comprehends in it all those devout and religious regards to Jesus Christ, which the gospel Revelation requires as due to him under those several Characters and Capacities in which he is there represented.

Having thus briefly opened to you the nature and extent of the Duty which the Text enjoins, I am now,

II. To lay before you the Motive by which it is urged.

For this is the Whole of Man. That is, this is the whole Duty, the whole Happiness, and

(e) Psal. cxix. 6, 128.

and the whole Perfection of the human Nature.

1. This is the whole *Duty* of Man. It comprehends all the Duties of every particular Character, Station, Circumſtance, and Relation in life we can poſſibly be in; and will lead us to a right conduct in all. For it is only conſidering with ourſelves, "in "what manner am I now to act ſo as to "pleaſe GOD? What part of Conduct is "moſt agreeable to his Will, moſt conform-"able to his Word and the dictates of right "Reaſon, and which my Conſcience will "moſt approve upon a future Review? That "is undoubtedly the part I am now to "chuſe."

2. This conſtant regard to GOD, and ready diſpoſition to do his Will, comprehends not only all our Duty but all our *Happineſs*. It not only conducts us to Happineſs, but contains it. Even now, under all the Imperfections of our nature, and the Inconveniences of our preſent ſituation, the mind is ſenſible of no higher ſatisfactions than thoſe which ariſe from it's intent engagement in the Service and Worſhip of GOD, under

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the Influence of a right apprehenſion of him. What then will be the Happineſs that reſults from hence, when the Soul ſhall be quite free from all that Darkneſs, Diſtraction, and Diſorder, which ſo much mixes with, and allays the pleaſure of it's preſent Devotions! Then will our Felicity be perfect, when our Love and Fear of GOD, and our Obedience to his Will, are moſt complete. For *in keeping his Commandments there is great Reward (f)*.

3. It is not only all our Duty and Happineſs, but all our *Perfection*. It comprehends every valuable Accompliſhment of our Nature. It is the Dignity and Elevation of the Soul. And in proportion to the degree in which we love and fear the great GOD, and know and do his Will, we approach to the higheſt pitch of Perfection to which our Natures are capable of being improved.

I ſhall only further obſerve, that this is not only our whole Duty, Perfection and Happineſs *now*, but it will be ſo *hereafter*. It is all the Duty, Perfection and Happineſs

(f) Pſal. xix. 11.

neſs of the glorified Spirits in Heaven. It will be ours in the moſt exalted ſtate of our nature to all Eternity, and throughout the whole extent and duration of our Being.

What remains now, is,

III. To apply theſe plain and important Truths in a ſuitable Addreſs to perſons in younger Life, for whoſe Benefit they are chiefly deſigned.

My dear young Friends, you have now had laid before you, in a plain, familiar, and ſummary View, all that is required of you, to make you Happy in this World, and for ever. I would hope, that there is not much left for me now to do; and that your own Conſcience will make the moſt ſuitable Application of theſe important Truths to your mind upon a future recollection.——I know you deſire to be happy; I know you deſire to be eſteemed and loved both by GOD and Man; and to be plainly informed what you muſt do to be ſo. Why, of this you have now been plainly informed. And I flatter myſelf, that your own Reaſon, Underſtanding, Conſcience, and Conſent, have

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gone along with all that hath been ſaid. I appeal again to your own Judgment: Is it not the moſt reaſonable thing in the World, that you ſhould fear GOD? That you ſhould live under an habitual Reverence of Him who made you? Who hath an unlimited Authority over you; who is always preſent with you; who hath the higheſt Intereſt in you; and the tendereſt Concern for you! who made you to make you happy! But who is able (if you do not fear him) to make you unſpeakably and for ever miſerable!——Is it not moſt reaſonable, that you endeavour by all the means you can to pleaſe him? By ſtudying to know and do his Will; by attending to the Directions of his Word, the Light of Reaſon, and the Voice of Conſcience, which is no other than the Voice of GOD within you. Is it not gracious and kind in Him to afford you ſo many Advantages above others to know his Will? and is it not then moſt reaſonable that when you do know it, you ſhould readily and impartially comply with it? have reſpect to all his Commands; and always lay the greateſt

Streſs

Stress upon the greatest things? Especially as he himself expressly tells you, that this is all your Duty, Perfection and Happiness *now*, and is, and must, in the nature of things, be so, as long as you have a Being!

These things are so plain that they carry their own Conviction along with them: And therefore I will not presume upon your time and patience to urge them any further upon you. I have only two things to beg of you and I have done.

1. Let these plain, important Principles of Religion enter deep into your Mind, take possession of your Heart, and always influence your Temper. Think of them, and of their Importance, every Day you live. I cannot be satisfied with your bare Assent to them. O! that they were deeply inwrought into the very Frame and Temper of your Spirits! And if you frequently and seriously think of them, by the Grace and Blessing of GOD they will be so.

These are the religious Principles in which you are educated; and it is your vast Happiness that you are, when so many

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ny thouſands of young Perſons *periſh for lack of Knowledge*, and thoſe means of right Inſtruction which you enjoy. And theſe are the Principles which your pious Parents and Friends would fain have inſtilled into, and fixed in your Mind betimes; becauſe they would provide for your Happineſs in another World as well as in this. For their ſake then, for your own ſake, and for GOD's ſake, let me beſeech you to receive them into your Heart, and *let them never depart from you.*

2. Be ſure to retain them, and reſolve to live by them, in whatever ſituation or circumſtances of Life, Providence may hereafter diſpoſe of you. It is not long that you will enjoy the Benefit of thoſe wiſe Inſtructions and good Examples, under the Influence of which you are now ſo happily ſituated. You will, ere long, launch out into a World full of Temptation, Vice and Vanity; where you will, very probably, meet with many bad Examples and Allurements to Folly; where you will ſee (and, perhaps, be ſhocked at firſt, to ſee) a Multitude of reaſonable Men,

Men, who, inſtead of living under an habitual ſenſe of their Maker's Authority and Preſence, appear to have *no fear of* GOD *before their Eyes*; who, inſtead of making it their great Buſineſs to pleaſe him, ſeem intent on nothing but to pleaſe themſelves in contempt of him. O! do not follow that *Multitude to do evil*, but reſolve, in oppoſition to all the Importunities of Folly, ſteadily to adhere to the Dictates of ſober Reaſon, in conjunction with the Precepts of the divine Word, as your only Guide. This will (and, believe it, this only will) be your ſafe Guide through all your future Snares and Dangers. It will guard you from Deluſion and Superſtition on the one hand, and from Profaneneſs and Impiety on the other; will be your Clew to lead you through all the Labyrinths of Life, and your Pole-ſtar to direct your courſe to Immortality and Bliſs.

I will add but one thing more, and that is the Conſideration with which *Solomon* enforces the Advice he hath now been giving us, contained in the Words immediately

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diately following the Text, *viz.* that GOD who calls you to make his Fear your great Concern, and his Service your great Buſineſs now, will hereafter *bring every Work into Judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

SER-

SERMON XII.

HUMAN LIFE a PILGRIMAGE.

DEUT. viii. 2.

And thou ſhalt remember all the Way which the Lord thy GOD *led thee theſe forty Years in the Wilderneſs, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine Heart, whether thou wouldeſt keep his Commandments or no.*

THE moſt important part of the Hiſtory of the Old Teſtament is the Children of *Iſrael*'s Deliverance out of *Egypt*, their wandering forty Years in the Wilderneſs, and their

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their Settlement in the land of *Canaan*: A lively Emblem of a Chriſtian's deliverance from the bondage of Sin, his paſſage through this World of temptation and Trial to his Inheritance in Heaven, the ſtate of everlaſting Reſt. We wander at preſent in a wild and barren Deſert, tending to a better Land, the heavenly Canaan; which therefore we ſhould keep ever in our Eye (as the *Iſraelites* did their Earthly one) to animate and encourage us under all the Hardſhips and Troubles we may meet with by the Way.

The *Iſraelites* had already wandered forty Years in the Deſerts of *Arabia*, called *ver.* 15. *a great and terrible* Wilderneſs. This Year was to terminate their Pilgrimage, and put them into Poſſeſſion of the promiſed and long-expected Land of *Canaan*. But this year they were to loſe their faithful Leader and Lawgiver *Moſes*, who was not permitted to conduct them into the promiſed Land. This Chapter therefore, and indeed the greateſt part of this Book, (which contains a Repetition of their Law, together with many urgent Motives to Obedience) may be conſidered as *Moſes*'s dying Speech, and the laſt Advice he gave them

them before his Death. One important Part of which we have in the Words of the Text. *Thou ſhalt remember all the Way which the Lord thy* GOD *led thee theſe forty Years in the Wilderneſs, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine Heart, whether thou wouldeſt keep his Commandments or no.*

From which words I propoſe to handle theſe two Obſervations,

I. That the *Iſraelites* wandering through the Wilderneſs to *Canaan*, is a lively Image and Repreſentation of a Chriſtian's Paſſage through this World to Heaven.

II. That whilſt a Chriſtian is in this ſtate of Pilgrimage, it is his Duty often to remember, and conſider the various Ways of GOD, and the Diſpenſations of his Providence towards him, eſpecially thoſe which have been more extraordinary and remarkable; which is the Duty the text injoins.

I. The wandering of the *Iſraelites* through the Wilderneſs to *Canaan*, is a lively Image and

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and Representation of a Christian's Passage through this World to Heaven.

The principal Points of Resemblance between them I am now to lay before you; and,

1. The Passage of the *Israelites* through the Wilderness was a very *unsettled* State; so is ours through this World. For forty Years they dwelt in Tents and Booths (of which their feast of Tabernacles was instituted as an annual Commemoration) wandering from one place to another but fixing no where. Their several Encampments and Decampments were directed by the *Pillar of the Cloud*. When that arose from over the Tabernacle, and went before it, then all the Congregation decamped; that is, took up their Tents and followed it. When it stood still and rested over the Tabernacle, then and there the Congregation encamped, that is, pitched their Tents, and continued till the cloudy Pillar moved forward again. And thus were their several Stations determined by a constant Miracle.

Thus moveable and unfixed is our Situation in this World. If we do not continually wander about from place to place, as the

the *Israelites* did, yet we are far from having any fixed and constant Abode. The perpetual Alterations we see about us, either in our Friends, our Neighbours, or ourselves, our Persons, Tempers, Estates, Families, or Circumstances; and in short, the vast Change which the compass of a few Years makes in almost every thing around us, is sufficient to convince us that we are in no fixed or settled Condition here. It is only in Heaven we are to dwell in *Mansions*, that is, in abiding and resting places. Here we dwell, (like the *Israelites*) in weak and moveable Tabernacles *(a)*, that are soon taken down by Death, which determines our final and everlasting Settlement.

2. The Travel of the *Israelites* through the Wilderness was not only an unsettled but a troublesome and dangerous State. They endured many Hardships, Fatigues, and Inconveniences; made many a wearisome March through burning Sands, exposed to Heat and Thirst and Danger; not only from the wild Beasts which abounded there (hence called a *howling* Wilderness *(b)*,) but from those Nations through whose Borders

 they

(a) 2 Pet. i. 13, 14. *(b)* Deut. xxxii. 10.

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they were obliged to paſs and fight their way; ſuch as the *Ammonites*, the *Moabites*, and *Og* King of *Baſhan (c.)*.

Now here, methinks, is another fit Emblem of a Chriſtian's Pilgrimage through this world, which to him is not only a barren but a hoſtile Land. From the very nature of things, and the Circumſtances of his preſent State, he meets with many Inconveniences and Sufferings, and from the malice of his Enemies more. Setting aſide the natural Evils, which he bears in common with others, Sickneſs, Pains, Croſſes, Diſappointments, perſonal and family Afflictions, he is expoſed to many ſpiritual Evils and Dangers as a Chriſtian, which create him no ſmall concern; particularly, frequent Inſtigations to Sin, from a corrupt and depraved Nature, from an inſnaring and deluſive World, and from a wily and watchful Enemy, *going about* indefatigably *ſeeking whom he may devour*. Hence the Scriptures very properly repreſent the chriſtian Life not only as a ſtate of Pilgrimage, but as a ſtate of Warfare; as that of the *Iſraelites* was when they travelled through the

(c) Numb. xxi. xxii.

the Wilderness. Of consequence then it must be a very troublesome and dangerous one.

3. In the Wilderness through which the *Israelites* travelled to *Canaan*, there were many By-paths or devious Tracts, by which they might be in danger of going astray. It was not like a Journey in a publick Road, through a populous Country, where the way lies direct and plain, and open, but through intricate and perplexed Turnings, amongst which it usually requires no small Circumspection to chuse the right way.

And how much this resembles a Christian's Walk through this World is very apparent. There are many By-ways, and tempting Paths in Life, into which Multitudes, without fear or thought, boldly and readily run, and which lead them into inevitable Destruction. Our Saviour himself tells us, that the way which leads to Life is a *streight and narrow way*; little frequented, and thick beset with Thorns and Difficulties; and yet this, we are sure, is the right way, the way which *leads to Life (d)*. And the chief reason why so few enter upon it is,

(*d*) Matth. vii. 14.

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is, not that they cannot diſcern it (for it is diſtinguiſhed enough) but becauſe it is narrow and thorny; which diſcourages Men from entering upon or purſuing it. But,

4. Notwithſtanding all the By-paths and Windings in the Wilderneſs, the *Iſraelites* had an infallible Guide to lead them in the way they ſhould go. That was the *Shekinah*, or the glorious Emblem of the divine Preſence over their Tabernacle, by which they were conducted all the forty Years they travelled through the Wilderneſs, and by which their different Stations in it were determined. And had they refuſed to follow this divine Guidance, they had ſoon loſt and bewildered themſelves, and never reached the promiſed Land.

So notwithſtanding the danger we are in of going aſtray from the Path of Life, we have a certain Rule and Direction, which infallibly points it out to us, ſaying, *This is the Way, walk you in it.* And this direction is the Word of GOD, which, if we follow it, will as ſafely conduct us through all the Errors and Dangers of the World, as the Pillar of Cloud did the *Iſraelites* through thoſe of the Wilderneſs. This is our Map, by which

which we are to travel through this World to a better; and has this peculiar property in it, that it not only deſcribes to us the right Way, but tells us what we are to meet with in that way, by which we may know it to be right. And beſides this, it warns us of every By-path by which we may be tempted to go aſtray, and plainly tells us what will be the Conſequence if we do. So that if we keep cloſe to this divine Direction, we ſhall be in no Danger of loſing the right Way.

5. Though the *Iſraelites* travelled forty Years in the Wilderneſs, yet they were all that while not far from the Borders of the promiſed Land. It was only the Deſert of *Arabia* that parted *Egypt* from *Canaan*; which might be paſſed over almoſt in as many Weeks as they ſpent Years; which indeed was one great cauſe of their murmuring. And the reaſon why they were thus led about ſo long in the Wilderneſs we ſhall ſee by and by. In the mean time we have here another Circumſtance of Similitude to a Chriſtian's State in this World. If he be in the right way to Heaven, he is never far from it: He lives on the Bor-

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ders of it. A very little and unexpected Incident may let him ſuddenly into the eternal World; which ſhould every Day therefore be in his Thoughts. But if he is not permitted to enter into the Land of Reſt ſo ſoon as he could wiſh, he muſt fortify his Soul with patience to bear the remaining Labours of his Pilgrimage, be they more or leſs, till it pleaſe GOD to put a final Period to them all.

6. The reaſon why the Children of *Iſrael* wandered ſo long in the Wilderneſs before they reached the promiſed Land is given us in the Text, *viz. To humble them, and to prove them, and to know what was in their Heart, and whether they would keep* GOD's *Commandments or no*, ſo *verſe* 16. *That he might humble thee, and prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end.* So that their Wilderneſs-Life was deſigned for a ſtate of Diſcipline and Probation, to humble them for the Sins they had committed in *Egypt*, and after they came out from thence: And to put them upon another Trial, to ſee if they would give any Teſtimony of their Reformation. But as they ſtill continued in their Murmuring, Rebellion, and Idolatry, they

they were punished for these Sins by being detained so much longer from the promised Land.

Nay, for these Sins they almost all of them died in the Wilderness. *Heb.* iii. 17. *But with whom was he grieved forty Years, was it not with those that had sinned, whose Carcases fell in the Wilderness?* So that of the six hundred thousand Men that came out of *Egypt*, only two of them lived to enter the Land of *Canaan*, viz. *Caleb* and *Joshua*; all the rest that came out of *Egypt*, from twenty Years old and upwards, died in the Desert; and all that entered into *Canaan*, excepting those two, were either born in the Wilderness, or were Children when they came from *Egypt* (*e*).

But that which chiefly provoked the Lord to punish them with this wandering Life was, the false report which their Spies brought back, and which they readily received, when they sent them forth to descry the promised Land. They spent forty Days in this Business. And when they returned they so disheartened the Congregation by their Misrepresentation of things,

 that

(*e*) See Numb. xxvi. 63—65.

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that they fell a murmuring, and wiſhed to return back into *Egypt*. Only *Caleb* and *Joſhua* brought a different and true account of things. To theſe therefore it was promiſed that they ſhould enter into *Canaan*; but as for the reſt, GOD declared that not one of them ſhould ever enjoy the good Land they had deſpiſed: And moreover, that their Children ſhould wander forty Years in the Wilderneſs, according to the number of Days their Scouts took in ſpying out the Land. This happened on the firſt Year after they came out of *Egypt*; when they might have taken, and were juſt about to take poſſeſſion of the promiſed Land: But for this Sin they were made to wander nine and thirty Years longer; during all which time, excepting the laſt Year, we read but very little of them *(f)*.

Now, whether it be not ſometimes by way of Puniſhment, that GOD is pleaſed to detain ſome of his People from their ſtate of Reſt and Happineſs for a long time, as he did the *Iſraelites* from the Land of *Canaan*, I will not take upon me to ſay. But without all Doubt, this World is a ſtate of Trial

(f) See Numb. xiv. 26. and following.

Trial and Temptation to them all; in which they are detained the longer, that they may be more fit for, and more ardently desirous of the heavenly *Canaan*, when they are well wearied with the Labours and Difficulties of this their earthly Pilgrimage. And there are three Graces which the Trials of Life are very proper to cultivate, and to the Exercise of which the *Israelites* were more especially called, during their passage through the Wilderness. And they are Faith, Hope, and Patience: All proper to a state of Suffering, and mutually subservient to each other. *Faith* keeps it's Eye on GOD in all we suffer, looks beyond the Agency of second Causes, views the Direction of the divine Hand and adores it. And thus is very subservient to the Support of Patience. *Patience*, under the Influence of Faith, submits to the Hand of GOD in all, saying, *It is the Lord, let him do with me what seemeth good in his sight.* And *Hope*, enlivened by Faith, and confirmed by Patience, looks beyond all to that future and better state of things, where we shall meet with an unspeakable Recompence for all we can go through to obtain it.

This

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This was that good frame of Spirit which the various Hardſhips of a Pilgrimage-Life were deſigned to cultivate in the *Iſraelites*; and this that happy temper of Mind which all the Tribulations of the preſent World are intended to improve in us; in order to prepare and qualify us more for a ſtate of everlaſting Reſt. Not but there are other reaſons for which good Men are ſometimes long detained from their final Happineſs: *e. g.* To be ſhining Examples of Goodneſs, to be ſerviceable to their Friends, and Inſtruments of promoting the Cauſe of GOD, and Intereſt of Religion in the World. But this, doubtleſs, is one great and general reaſon, *viz.* to *humble and prove them*, to make *them* more fit for their heavenly Reſt, and *that* more welcome when it comes; and anſwers to that for which the *Iſraelites* were ſo long detained in the Wilderneſs, and which, at the ſame time, gives a ſatisfying account of that extraordinary Providence.

7. In order to keep up the Faith, Patience, and Hope of the *Iſraelites*, full and frequent Deſcriptions were given them of the Goodneſs of that Land to which they were travelling. They were often told that it was a good

a good Land, *flowing with Milk and Honey*, the ordinary Food in that Country; *a land of Brooks of Water, and of Fountains, and Depths that ſpring out of the Valleys and Hills; a land of Wheat, and Barley, and Vines, and Fig-trees, and Pomegranates; a land of Oil-Olive, and Honey; a land wherein they might eat Bread without ſcarceneſs; a land whoſe Stones were Iron, and out of whoſe Hills they might dig Braſs (g).* That is, abounding with every thing neceſſary to the comfortable Accommodations of Life.——Moreover, they might have a fair Proſpect of it from *Piſgah*, a Mountain ſituated on it's very Borders, from whence *Moſes* ſurveyed it's whole Dimenſions *(h)*. And more than this, they had a ſenſible Specimen of it's Fertility in the largeneſs of the Grapes, Pomegranates and Figs, which they, that went to ſpy out the Land, brought back with them (*i*). All which were great Supports to their Hope and Patience.

Nor are our Faith, and Patience, and Hope, without the like Supports, in reſpect to the Heavenly *Canaan*. O! what great and glorious things are told us of the City of

(g) Deut. viii. 7—10. *(h)* Numb. xxi. 20. (*i*) Numb. xiii. 23, 24.

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of the living GOD, the Metropolis of the universal King! What ravishing Descriptions does the Word of GOD give us of Heaven! Enough, one would think, to make every good Man impatient of Earth, and *long to be dissolved.*——We have indeed no visible prospect of it but what we have by an Eye of Faith. An impenetrable Veil of Flesh intercepts it's Glory from our natural Sight. But the Satisfaction and Joy we feel from the prospect of it by an Eye of Faith, is as great as that which was raised in the Hearts of the *Israelites* by a sight of the promised land from the Top of *Pisgah.*——And as for the sensible Pledges and Foretastes of the Happiness of Heaven, we have many such in this state of distance from it. I mean the pleasures of Communion with GOD, the sweet Satisfactions of a good Conscience, and the overflowing Joys of that Soul in which the Spirit of GOD resides with all his gracious and comforting Influences.——Nay more, there lived one Person on Earth who had actually been in Heaven himself; and hath told us what a Place it is; hath discovered to us that happy Land, and brought a better

better report of it than either *Caleb* or *Joſhua* did of the Land of *Canaan.* I mean our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* himſelf, who came from Heaven to Earth, to ſhew us the way from Earth to Heaven, and who is himſelf *the Way, the Truth, and the Life.*

Laſtly, When the *Iſraelites* were come to the End of their Pilgrimage, before they could enter the promiſed Land, they were obliged to paſs over the River *Jordan* which ſeparated the Wilderneſs from *Canaan.* Here lay their greateſt Difficulty at the very end of their Journey. A deep, unfordable River, which at that time too was ſwelled above it's Banks, which the whole Multitude with the Ark and Tabernacle, their little ones and all the Carriages were to paſs over, whilſt the Enemy ſtood on the the oppoſite ſide; this was a Difficulty which one ſhould have thought would fill them with great Uneaſineſs and ſet them a murmuring again; eſpecially as their Strength and Spirits were now well nigh exhauſted by forty years travelling; a leſs matter than this had oftentimes done it before. Nay, when they met with the like difficulty

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difficulty at the red Sea, when they were but just entered on their Journey, they were very distrustful and tumultuous. But what is very remarkable, we read nothing of their murmuring now; nor do they seem at all disheartened at the difficulty. Either because it was the last they should go through, or they remembered the Miracle wrought at the red Sea, and confidently expected the same again; or being inured to hardships so long in the Wilderness, (all the murmuring Generation being cut off) and being carried through so many dangers and difficulties by the immediate and miraculous hand of GOD, they were come to a better temper, and a fuller Reliance on GOD in this their time of need. Nor was their Hope or Expectation deceived: for as by a Miracle they were let out of *Egypt* into the Wilderness by the parting of the red Sea, so by the same Miracle were they let out of the Wilderness into *Canaan* by the parting of *Jordan*, *(k)*. And then they entered into, and took possession of the long expected Land of *Canaan*.

Now

(k) See a particular Account of this matter. Josh. iii.

Now to apply this part of the Hiſtory to the Chriſtian's Life and Pilgrimage. The laſt Enemy he is to overcome his Death. And as it is the laſt, ſo to ſome Chriſtians it is the moſt terrible of all their Trials: And what all their Faith and Hope and Patience is little enough to ſupport them under. But there is no arriving at the heavenly *Canaan* without firſt paſſing through this fatal *Jordan*. And as the *Iſraelites* by the long and frequent Exerciſe of their Faith, and Hope, and Truſt in GOD, were better prepared for this laſt difficulty of paſſing over *Jordan*; ſo the more theſe Graces are wrought into a lively Habit, the more compoſed will the Soul be under the Apprehenſions of approaching Death. The Chriſtian has recourſe to his paſt Experience of the Power, the Grace, and Goodneſs of GOD; remembers what he hath often done for him, and in dependence on that Promiſe, *I will never leave thee nor forſake thee*, commits his Soul to GOD, as *into the hands of a faithful Creator*; ventures on the dark paſſage without diſmay, and ſoon arrives at the Land of everlaſting Light.

Thus

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Thus have I gone through the firſt Obſervation I made upon the Words, and in ſeveral Inſtances ſhewn how fitly the Paſſage of the *Iſraelites* through the Wilderneſs to *Canaan* repreſents the Chriſtian's Pilgrimage through this World to Heaven. The other Obſervation was this —— "That "whilſt we are in this Pilgrimage-State it "is our Duty often to recollect, remember "and ſeriouſly conſider the ways of GOD "and the Diſpenſations of his Providence "towards us, and eſpecially thoſe that have "been very extraordinary and remarkable." This is the Exhortation in the Text, immediately directed to the *Iſraelites* whilſt they were in the Wilderneſs; and the Similitude of our Circumſtances to theirs muſt convince us that the Duty here enjoyned does no leſs concern us than it did them. ——This will be the Subject of the next Diſcourſe. I ſhall now conclude this with a few reflexions. And,

1. Let theſe Thoughts then be improved to abate our deſires after the pleaſures of the preſent Life, and excite them after thoſe of a better. What has a Pilgrim's Life in it that

that is ſo deſirable? What is there in a Wilderneſs, that we ſhould be ſo much in love with it? Or in the Labours, Hardſhips, and Perils of it, that we ſhould be ſo loth to part with them? Are all the Pleaſures which the greateſt Senſualiſt ever enjoyed, ſufficient to counterbalance the Pains and Perplexities with which they are purchaſed?——Nay, thoſe very pleaſures are often painful; and ſuch as a Perſon of a better and more refined taſte can never reliſh, hardly endure. None are very fond of theſe things, but thoſe who have never taſted better. Had we ever known the Joys of Heaven, we ſhould give thoſe of Earth another name, and ſhould need the greateſt patience to remain tolerably contented with them. The higheſt Delights of ſenſe would be ſo far from captivating our Heart, that we ſhould diſreliſh them; as one, who had taſted the Elegance of a Royal Table, would overlook the Poverty of a Cottage.

But though we have never taſted better pleaſures than thoſe of Earth, which are too groſs and dreggy to ſuit a Soul whoſe taſte

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is refined, yet are we not capable of better? Do we not find ſomething within us that craves after higher Enjoyments? Something that never was, and never can be ſatisfied with mere earthly Bliſs in all it's higheſt Improvements? And ſhould not this convince us, that there are much better things for us in reſerve if we belong to GOD; and excite our moſt ardent Deſires after them?

Let us make but a true Eſtimate of this world, and we ſhall ſoon ſee that there is nothing in it that is very engaging, and that our Situation here is but like a reſtleſs wandering in a dry, inhoſpitable Deſert; where we have nothing to do but to make the beſt of our way through it, ſo as to arrive ſafely at the Land of everlaſting Reſt.

2. What reaſon have we to be thankful, that we have ſo ſure a Guide through this dangerous Deſert! The *Iſraelites* themſelves had not one more ſafe. For the Word of GOD is to us what the cloudy Pillar was to them. We have not indeed the attending Miracles which they had; nor do we need them. For I am fully ſatisfied, that thoſe

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Prejudices that can ſtand againſt all the Light and Evidence of the Chriſtian Revelation, would bar the heart againſt all Conviction from Miracles. And as a plain, perfect, ſtanding Revelation, was given to us inſtead of all Miracles, and as this complete Revelation renders our Diſpenſation preferable to all thoſe that went before it, it follows, that in point of Evidence and Conviction it is ſuperior to all Miracles, and more adapted to work upon rational Minds, even in the Judgment of GOD himſelf, who gave it us. Otherwiſe the former Diſpenſations of Miracles would herein have the Advantage of ours. But there were Infidels under thoſe Diſpenſations as well as under this. So true is it, that he that believeth not *Moſes and the Prophets*, *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles, *would not believe*, the greateſt of all Miracles, *one riſing from the Dead*. Let us be ſure to keep cloſe to the word of GOD, our only ſafe Guide through all the dangerous and devious Ways of this wild and barren Deſert.

3. Though our State and Condition in this World be much the ſame as that of

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the *Israelites* was in the Wilderness, let us however take care that our Temper and Disposition be not the same. *Let us not murmur as they murmured*; nor repine or fret at every adverse Occurrence or Difficulty we may meet with, as they did. And especially, let us beware of that Unbelief, for which they fell short of the promised Land. The same Unbelief that excluded them from *Canaan*, will exclude us from Heaven. They are set up as our Warning, not as our Pattern. See this Caution given us in particular by the Apostle, *Heb.* iii. 8. and following, *Harden not your Hearts as in the Provocation, in the day of Temptation in the Wilderness: When your Fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my Works forty Years. Wherefore I was grieved with that Generation, and said, they do alway err in their Hearts, and they have not known my ways. So I sware in my Wrath, they shall not enter into my rest. Take heed, Brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living* GOD.

Lastly,

Laſtly, Whilſt we are in this Wilderneſs, let us keep the heavenly *Canaan* always in our Eye. Let us not forget whither we are tending; the happy Land for which we are bound. The frequent Thoughts of it will ſpeed our progreſs towards it, quicken our preparations for it, and be a ſovereign Support under all the Trials we may meet with in our way to it; will ſoften our Sorrows, and reconcile us to all our earthly Diſappointments. And indeed, what is there which a Man need call a Diſappointment whoſe Heaven is ſecure?

We may, for ought we know, be juſt on the Borders of that happy Land. And let not the *Jordan* that parts it from us diſcourage us. Our great Redeemer, by paſſing over it before us, hath aſſuaged it's ſwelling Floods; and hath made a ſafe and eaſy Paſſage through it for them that follow him, and walk in his Steps. Let but our Faith and Hope, and Patience, hold out a little longer; and our heavenly *Joſhua*, the Captain of our Salvation, will ſafely conduct us to our *everlaſt-*

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ing Rest; who hath promised, that *where he is, there shall his Servants be, to behold his Glory*; to live and reign with him in Heaven at his Father's right Hand, *where there is fulness of Joy, and Pleasures for evermore.*

SER-

SERMON XIII.

The WAY to improve past PROVIDENCES.

DEUT. viii. 2.

And thou shalt remember all the Way which the Lord thy GOD *led thee these forty Years in the Wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine Heart, whether thou wouldest keep his Commandments or no.*

FROM these words I made two Observations, *viz.*

I. That the wandering of the *Israelites* through the Wilderness to *Canaan*, is a

natural and lively Emblem of a Chriſtian's Paſſage through this World to Heaven. And,

II. That whilſt we are in this ſtate of Pilgrimage, it is our Duty often to recollect, and ſeriouſly conſider the ways of GOD, and the various Diſpenſations of his Providence towards us, eſpecially thoſe which have been more extraordinary and remarkable.

The former of theſe Obſervations I have already handled; and proceed now to the immediate Conſideration of the latter. In treating of which I propoſe,

I. To ſpecify ſome of thoſe providential Diſpenſations which we ought in a more eſpecial manner to recollect and conſider.

II. To ſhew how they are to be remembered. And,

III. What are thoſe Conſiderations that ſhould principally induce us hereunto.

I. I am to ſpecify ſome of thoſe providential Diſpenſations which we ought in a more

more eſpecial manner to recollect and conſider.

And this Review ought to be univerſal. We ſhould not willingly let paſs any of the ways and diſpenſations of Providence towards us without a ſerious Remark. But as we cannot remember them all, we ſhould take the more Care to retain the Impreſſion of thoſe that are more remarkable, as a teſtimony of our dutiful Acknowledgment of GOD, and our Dependence upon him in all our ways. For thus to think upon, and improve the ways of Providence, is a ſign of a ſerious and devout Mind; as on the contrary, it is mentioned as a mark of a very ſtupid and ungrateful People, that *they regard not the Work of the Lord, nor conſider the Operation of his Hands* (*a*).

All the moſt extraordinary Providences of GOD then, whether afflictive or merciful, temporal or ſpiritual, perſonal or family, private or publick, late, or long ſince paſt, are to be faithfully treaſured up in our memory, and at certain times ſeriouſly reflected upon, for the confirmation of our Hope and Faith, and Truſt in GOD. This is the Duty

(*a*) Iſai. v. 12.

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Duty commanded the *Israelites* in the Text, and is of no less concern to us, whose state in this World is so much like what theirs was in the Wilderness.

1. Then we should often call to mind GOD's afflicting and humbling Providences. Have we been afflicted in our Bodies; let us remember how it was with us in our low Estate; what thoughts we then had of our Souls and another World; what serious Impressions were made upon our minds, which we should endeavour to renew and retain. Let us consider with ourselves, what *fruits of Righteousness* those Afflictions have *wrought out for us*; in what Instance or Degree they have been sanctified; how far the good Ends of them have been answered: For the greatest Affliction of all is to lose the Benefit of our Afflictions; to come out of the Furnace of Affliction unhumbled, unmortified, unrefined; which may justly provoke GOD to throw us into the same again, and to make it still *seven times hotter*.

Again, have we been afflicted in our Spirits? By sore Temptations, grievous Dejections, severe Conflicts with Sin and Satan, little Hopes, great Fears, dreadful Doubts, and

and terrifying Apprehensions concerning the state of our Souls, and what is like to become of them hereafter. These kind of troubles ought by no means to be forgotten. And when they are remembered, our proper Enquiry is, How we got rid of them? For there is a very wrong and dangerous way of getting rid of such spiritual Concern of Mind. If Stupidity and Indolence, Neglect or Worldly-mindedness, carnal Security, or prevailing Vanity, have contributed to over-bear and drown those Convictions, and banish that serious Thoughtfulness and religious Sorrow we once had, our State is really worse than it was then; and we have more reason now to be concerned than we had before. But if it hath made us more humble and watchful, more observant of GOD and our Duty, in every Branch of it, more dependent on his Grace to strengthen us against Sin; and if in this way the Comforts of Religion, Peace of Conscience, the Joys of the Holy Ghost, and the Hopes of our Sincerity, have been recovered and established; then, to be sure, such Providences of GOD ought never to be forgotten, but to be always remembered with the most grate-

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grateful Diſpoſition of Soul to the honour of his Grace.

Again, have we been afflicted in our Family or Friends, by the Death of ſome, or the Sickneſs and Diſtreſs of others, (and O, how deeply does the Heart ſometimes feel the force of reflected Sorrows!) let us not ſoon forget theſe kind of Afflictions when they are paſt. It is poſſible we may know very well from what immediate Cauſe they flowed, yet let us not overlook the ſovereign Hand of GOD therein. And if they have in any degree been owing to ſome neglect or fault in us, they ſhould eſpecially be remembered, to humble us, and make us more wiſe and cautious for the future.

Or have we been involved in a more general Calamity, and ſuffered with the Publick; whatever others do let us take care not to forget the Hand of GOD in his judicial Viſitations. For as their Sufferings were no Abatement to ours, ſo their forgetfulneſs of them ſhould be no Example to us.

Or have our Afflictions been long ſince paſt? why ſtill they ought not to be forgotten. But by a ſerious Recollection we ſhould

ſhould endeavour to revive the good Impreſſions they once made, that they may increaſe our Caution and Gratitude ſo long as we live.

2. We ſhould likewiſe remember the merciful Providences of GOD towards us. Which, it is to be feared, we are as apt to forget as his afflicting Diſpenſations.

For Inſtance, our temporal mercies ſhould be frequently remembered. The Health, the Peace, the Proſperity, and the worldly Advantages we enjoy above ſo many others; which the Diſtreſſes of the many poor Objects we meet with ſhould bring to our minds; eſpecially any ſignal or diſtinguiſhing Mercy paſt, which laid the Foundation of moſt of our preſent Comforts; or any eminent Deliverance from paſt Dangers or Evils, which might have made all the future part of Life unhappy.

Again, our ſpiritual Mercies and religious Advantages ſhould be thankfully recorded by us; and eſpecially that invaluable one of a good and pious Education: That we were not born among Heathens, or trained up among the moſt profligate and ignorant ſort of Chriſtians; but were early

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instructed in the Knowledge of GOD and our Duty; and have enjoyed those valuable Advantages for securing our future Happiness which by far the greatest part of Mankind; nay, even of Christians, never had. And if, by the Grace of GOD, these Advantages have been improved to the effectual Conversion of our Hearts to GOD, so that we have a well-grounded Hope of our Interest in Christ, and the Acceptance of our Maker, this, the greatest of all Mercies, ought never to be forgotten by us.

Again, Family-mercies should be often remembered by us; Family-health, Peace and Prosperity; the Comfort of Relations, the Blessing of Children; especially if they *be found walking in the way of Truth.* And so should publick Mercies: Especially the signal Interpositions of Providence in preserving us from our Enemies, and restoring to us the Blessings of national Prosperity and Peace.

And the Blessings we have long enjoyed should no more be forgotten by us than those we have lately received. But upon recollecting the variety and suitableness of them we should take up the Psalmist's pi-

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ous Resolution, *Long as I live I will praise the Lord, I will sing Praises to my* GOD *whilst I have a Being (b).*

Thus should *we remember all the way the Lord our* GOD *hath led us so many Years in this Wilderness*; his afflicting and merciful Providences, both temporal and spiritual, private and publick, and even those which are long since past. The pious *Jews* had a way of preserving the Memory of any signal Providences, whether prosperous or afflictive, by giving such names to certain Places, or to their Children, as were significative of those providential Events which they desired never to forget. Thus significant were the names of all the twelve Patriarchs. And most of the proper Names in the Old Testament have some such religious Reference. Which shews the devout regard they had to the Duty recommended in the Text; and how mindful they were of the ways of GOD, of which they thus endeavoured to perpetuate the Memorial. And so far they are fit to be our Patterns, who are equally obliged to the same Duty now. But,

II. Let

(b) Psal. civ. 33.

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II. Let us now consider in what manner the past Providences of GOD are to be recollected and considered by us. And,

1. We should review them very intently and seriously; call to mind as many particulars as we can, reflect upon them, dwell upon the Reflection, till the Heart be deeply impressed with it.

"Such a Providence, says the pious Soul, "I desire never to forget. O, how did that "threatening Affliction mollify and melt "me! How serious were my Thoughts! "How sincere my Prayers! How penitent "my Heart! How fervent my Devotions! "What low thoughts had I then of this "World, and what awful views of Eternity! "How anxiously did I then cast about in "my mind, for some sure Evidence of "my Sincerity, and my interest in the di-"vine Favour, without which nothing then "could give me peace! What Vows did "my Soul then make, that if it should "please GOD to spare me once more, my "Life should be wholly devoted to him! "He hath taken me at my Word, and "once more given me a Reprieve. Forbid

"it,

"it, O my GOD, that I ſhould ever forget "what thou haſt done for me, or I have "promiſed to thee."——"At ſuch a time, "may another ſay, I loſt the greateſt Com-"fort of my Life; a dear and valuable "Friend, whom I loved as my own Soul! "how ſevere that Stroke was, GOD knows. "I then ſaid, *Lord, how frail is Man! be "thou alone my Truſt.* And ſhall I ſoon for-"get what I then ſo readily acknowledged "and ſo deeply felt! The Remembrance of "it indeed is like tearing open a Wound that "is juſt healed, and makes the Heart to "bleed afreſh. But if by ſuch a Remem-"brance the ſame ſerious Impreſſions and "holy Purpoſes are again formed in my "mind, as were at that time, this renewed "Advantage will more than compenſate the "renewal of that Pain; and make what is "my Duty turn to my Benefit and Com-"fort."——And this indeed is the chief Advantage that ariſes from ſuch a Recollection of Providences long ſince paſt; it ſerves to revive good Thoughts and Purpoſes in the mind, and ſo promote an habitual ſerioufneſs of Temper.

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2. We ſhould review paſt Providences with thankfulneſs. We are commanded to *give thanks always and for all things*, Epheſ. v. 20. What, are we to give thanks for Afflictions, Pains and Croſſes? For thoſe grievous and humbling Providences under which we weep and mourn? Yes, there is no Providence though ever ſo adverſe, in which a Chriſtian may not ſee much of the divine Goodneſs, and for which, upon the whole, he will not ſee abundant cauſe to be thankful. He hath reaſon to be thankful that his Afflictions are not greater; that when ſome of his Comforts are gone, he hath ſo many others left; that ſome Honey is thrown into his bitter Cup; that there is ſuch a mixture of Mercy with Judgment; that his Supports are ſo ſeaſonable and effectual; that under theſe Strokes he can eye the Father's Hand, and look upon them as the Effect of his Love, for *he chaſteneth every Son he loves (c)*. And if by ſuch Afflictions ſome great and good Ends have been actually produced; if we are become more watchful, ſerious and devout, more mortified to the World, more thoughtful of

(c) Heb. xii. 6, 7.

of Futurity, more humble in our Hearts, more diligent in our Duty, and more sensible of our dependence on GOD; If, I say, our Afflictions have *wrought out for us these peaceable Fruits of Righteousness*, though they were *grievous* once they are *joyous* now; are to be numbered amongst our most valuable Mercies, and ever remembered with the greatest thankfulness.

But especially are kind favourable Providences to be gratefully recorded. And if we turn our Thoughts back, and *remember all the way the Lord our* GOD *hath led us in this Wilderness*, it is not to be supposed but that every one of us may call to mind many a merciful Providence which have contributed greatly to the Comfort of our Lives, and laid the Foundation of our present Happiness and future Hopes. Some of these are common to us all. Such as the Benefit of a religious Education, the light of the Gospel, the opportunities of stated Worship, good Instructions, good Examples, and the like. O, how many great and extensive Evils have these common mercies prevented! and what woful and lasting Misery have many poor wretches run into for the want of them!

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And more especially should our Thoughts dwell upon great and extraordinary Mercies; and if we reflect at the same time, that GOD, the sovereign Disposer of things, hath bestowed those Blessings upon us which he hath denied to others, we must be stupid Creatures indeed if we do not find our Hearts strongly disposed to Thankfulness.—— "How kind a Providence was it, may one "say, that delivered me from such and "such a Danger; which this time, or that "person or place now brings to my mind! "The Distemper prevailed above the force "of Medicine, defied the Physicians skill, "and my case appeared hopeless. I had "the Sentence of Death within myself, and "that Sentence confirmed by the weeping "Eyes, and sorrowful Looks of all my "Friends around me, but GOD was pleas-"ed to repeal it! *He sent his word and "healed me!* O, may I never forget that "Mercy as long as I live!"——"I this "Day reflect with thankfulness, may ano-"ther say, upon such a merciful and kind "Providence that smiled upon my worldly "Affairs, crowned my temporal views with "Success, and brought my Concerns to so

"happy

"happy an Issue. The Hand of GOD directed that Affair; and may I never forget "what I owe it."——"Blessed be GOD, "says another, that brought my Soul out of "Darkness, and cheared it with the Light "of his Countenance; who dispersed my "dismal Doubts, and caused his Gospel to "shine into my Soul with Evidence and "Comfort: that now, instead of dreadful "Suspence and anxious Fears, I have *good* "*Hope through Grace* that I am sincere, "and accepted through the atoning Merits "of the Redeemer, though my unwilling "Frailties, which I continually mourn over "and strive against, are many."——Thus should the past Providences of GOD be remembered with *Thankfulness*.

3. Our Remembrance of the past Providences of GOD should be improved for the Confirmation of our Hope and Trust in him. And this is one principal Advantage that results from the Duty I am now recommending. By what GOD hath done for us we see what he is able to do. Our Experience then should support our Hope; and past mercies establish our Trust in GOD for future. It was thus the Apostle *Paul*

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improved them. *We would not, Brethren,* (says he) *have you ignorant of our Trouble which came to us in* Asia, *that we were pressed out of Measure, above Strength, insomuch that we despaired even of Life. But we had the Sentence of Death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in* GOD *that raised the Dead. Who delivered us from so great a Death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us* (*d*). It was thus also that *David* argued; *thy Servant* (saith he to *Saul*) *slew both the Lion and the Bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, seeing he hath defied the Armies of the living* GOD. David *said, moreover, the* LORD *that delivered me out of the Paw of the Lion, and out of the Paw of the Bear, he* WILL *deliver me out of the Hand of this Philistine* (*e*). So may the pious Christian say, on a review of some Providences past; "By the Grace of GOD I was supported "under such an Affliction, and carried "through such a Trial; and I hope he "will still proportion my Strength to my "Burden, and that whatever Evil befals "me,

(*d*) 2 Cor. i. 8—10. (*e*) 1 Sam. xvii. 36, 37.

"me, *his Grace will be sufficient for me.* "My *faithful* GOD hath not yet *suffered me* "*to be tempted above what I am able*, and I "hope he will for the future *make way for* "*my Escape (f).*"

The same Improvement should we make of our Reflexions upon GOD's merciful Dealings towards us.——"The great things "which GOD hath already done for me, I "hope are Pledges of good things to come. "If I have improved them to his Glory, I "have reason to hope they are so. For the "best Assurance I can have that my mer-"cies will be continued is, that they are "sanctified."

Lastly, When we call to mind the past ways of GOD towards us, we should seriously reconsider in what manner we behaved under them, and what good we have gained from them. Every Providence hath a Voice: some a very loud one (if the Ear of Reason be but open) calling us in a more especial manner to practise some particular Duty, or forsake some particular Sin. Have we attended to the Voice of Providence, and fallen in with the Design of

(f) 1 Cor. x. 13.

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it? Have merciful Providences made us more active, diligent and ſtedfaſt in the Service of GOD? and together with greater Power given us a better Heart to do good? Does an acceſſion of Wealth increaſe our Uſefulneſs; and with more frequent Opportunities have we a more ready Diſpoſition to *ſerve the Will of* GOD *in our Generation?* If ſo, they have been double Mercies, and we ought to be doubly thankful. If not, we have a great deal more to anſwer for than we had before, and how it fared with that Servant who *neglected his Talent*, deſerves our moſt ſerious Conſideration.

Again, what effect have providential Afflictions had upon us? and all Afflictions are to be deemed ſuch, excepting thoſe that are the genuine effects of our own Sin and Folly. Have they humbled us? mortified our Worldly-mindedneſs? checked our falſe Ambition? or ſubdued any ſecret Luſt that before too much prevailed? Have they fixed our Hope and Dependence on GOD? and made us think more ſeriouſly of Death and another World? And, in a word, been the means of making us more circumſpect and better Chriſtians? Then, "Bleſſed be

"GOD,

"GOD, may we say, that ever those Af-
"flictions befel us. Now I see, what be-
"fore I could not, that they were all the
"Effects of his Love and gracious Intenti-
"ons towards me."——But on the other hand; "Am I the same vain, carnal, stu-
"pid, worldly Creature I ever was? Have
"I the same unsubdued Corruptions and
"sinful Habits in their full force? and, not-
"withstanding the good Impressions I then
"felt, and the good Purposes I then formed,
"am I *returned as a Dog to his Vomit, and*
"*as a Sow that was washed to her wallowing*
"*in the Mire?* This incorrigible Temper
"is aggravated Guilt: And if I have not
"been yet sensible of it, it is high time I
"were, lest I provoke GOD, at length, to give
"me over as reprobate and irreclaimable."

In this manner then are we to reflect on the past Ways of GOD towards us. And having thus considered the Duty injoined in the Text, and how it ought to be performed, I am now,

III. To lay before you some of those Considerations that are most proper to induce us hereunto. And,

1. The

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1. The expreſs Command of GOD ſhould be a ſovereign Motive to this Duty. We cannot think the Command in the Text is to be reſtrained to the *Jewiſh* People, to whom it was primarily and immediately directed. That which comes recommended to us, not only on the divine Authority of Scripture, but from the Fitneſs and Importance of the thing itſelf (as this does) muſt be of equal Concern to all. Not to ſay, that we have the ſame Duty implicitly contained in many other Scripture Precepts. It is neceſſarily implied in the Command we have to *remember* GOD, and *to acknowledge him in all our ways*. For how can we be ſaid to *remember* GOD, if we forget his Providences, and the moſt remarkable Diſpenſations thereof towards us? or *acknowledge him in all our ways*, when we neglect to acknowledge him in his own?

This Duty was deemed of ſo great Importance among the *Jews*, that they not only gave memorial Names to Places and Perſons, to perpetuate the Memory of any particular Mercies they had received, but their three great Annual Feſtivals were inſtituted for the ſame purpoſe; as a ſolemn Commemoration

memoration of three extraordinary Dispensations of GOD's Providence to that People. Thus their Feast of *Passover* was intended to keep up the Remembrance of their wonderful Deliverance out of *Egypt*: their Feast of *Pentecost* was in memory of the promulgation of their Law from mount *Sinai*; which was fifty days after their Deliverance from *Egypt*: and their Feast of *Tabernacles* was instituted in Commemoration of their dwelling forty Years in Booths and Tabernacles, during their Travels through the Wilderness to *Canaan*.

2. The Duty recommended in the Text is necessary, as subservient to the great End for which such Providences are intended; *viz. To do us good in the latter End.* So that if we seldom or superficially reflect upon them, we frustrate the chief Design of them, and lose the Benefit and Advantage intended thereby.

3. This is a very pleasant as well as useful Employment of the Mind: and a very happy way of filling up those leisure Minutes, which through the Vagrancy and Dissipation of Thought do so frequently run

to

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to waste. To sit down and engage our Thoughts to take a serious Review of all the most memorable Events and Turns that have befallen us in Life, through the several Stages of Infancy, Youth, Manhood, and Age, to recollect our disposition and deportment under them, and then to set up our *Ebenezer*, saying, " *Hitherto the Lord hath helped me*; " through all those varying Scenes of Life " my Father's Hand hath safely conducted " me;" this, I say, will afford us a much more sensible and solid Entertainment than the common Amusements of Thought, or the Remembrance of those light, low, fantastick Pleasures, which served only to fill the Mind with Froth and Vanity.

4. Such a serious Reflexion on past Providences may be of use to direct us in our future Conduct. For let us consider with ourselves thus, " Amidst all the Tumult " and Concern of Mind I felt under such " an afflicting Event, what were the " Thoughts that gave me most Relief " and Comfort? What part of my past " Conduct did I think upon with the great- " est Satisfaction? What duties gave me the " greatest

"greatest Pleasure in the Review? In those "Actions and Duties then may I be still "more diligent, as I desire to lay up a Stock "of Peace and Comfort against the time I "shall stand in the same need of it." For every intelligent Christian knows there is a wide difference between the Satisfaction of mind that naturally arises from a conscious sense of Fidelity in Duty, and that false hope that flows from a Dependence thereupon as the matter of our Justification.——On the other hand, "What Sins lay then with the "greatest Weight upon my Conscience? "O, let me especially beware of those Sins "whatever they be, as I would not feel the "dreadful Sting of them under the future "Apprehensions of Death." We generally have the truest Sentiments of things under the Awakenings of some grievous Affliction: and therefore the Judgment we then form of ourselves, our State and Life, should regulate our After-conduct.

More particularly, such Reflexions on past Providences, and on our Behaviour under them, will be a great Help to us to behave aright under future Providences of the

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the like nature. For inſtance, do we remember we have been fretful, impatient, and unſubmiſſive, under former Corrections, let that be our Burden now; and let us learn to bear our Father's chaſtening Hand with better Temper. Were we contented, meek, reſigned, and humble; we know then by Experience, that this is the beſt way to bear Afflictions; and therefore ſhould endeavour to cultivate ſuch a Spirit with the greater care to make our future Burdens lighter.—— In like manner, have we been unmindful of former Mercies? Let us ſhew our Repentance by being more thankful for thoſe we now enjoy. And let our Thankfulneſs be increaſed with our increaſing Comforts.

Laſtly, The ſhortneſs and uncertainty of Life makes this Duty more eſpecially neceſſary. What is paſt we know, what is to come we know not. For any thing that we know, by far the moſt important Periods and Occurrences of Life may be paſt with us. If the Hand of Providence therein hath not yet been properly attended to, and improved by us, it is high time it were. Which can only be done by this ſe-

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rious retrospective view of the Ways of GOD towards us which hath now been recommended. Time past, indeed, cannot be recalled, but Providences past may still be improved. Which is the only way we have of living our Lives over again *(g)*: and should therefore be more especially attended to by those of us who have but a little time more to live.

To conclude, let us all then take the Counsel given us in the Text; and *remember all the Way the Lord our* GOD *hath led us these forty*, fifty, sixty Years and upwards (may some of us say) *in the Wilderness* of this World, *to humble us, to try us, and prove us, and see whether we will keep his Commandments or no.* The great Design of GOD in all his various Dispensations towards us, was the same he had in leading the *Israelites* through the Wilderness; *to do us good in the latter End.* Let us not be wanting then to concur with this his gracious Design towards us: But by a careful Improvement of his past, present, and future,

(g) ——————— Hoc est
Vivere bis, vitâ posse priore frui.

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future Providences, may we learn a more intire dependence upon him, that we may have peace and hope *in our latter End*; and under the Conduct of his Grace be finally led to the everlasting Enjoyment of him, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord; *to whom be Glory for ever and ever.* Amen.

The END of the SECOND VOLUME.

ERRATA.

PAGE 8. line 5. for *constant* read content. p. 9. l 14. after Error put a *Colon*. p. 146. l. 17. f. *of* r. or. p. 171. l. 20. after *be* add the p. 190. l. 1. f. *must* r. just. p. 214. l. 7. dele *we*.