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9

A SERMON

Preached at the

ASSIZES

HELD AT

LEICESTER,

JULY xxii. MDCLXXXVI.

Before the Right Honourable Sir *EDWARD ATKINS* Lord Chief Baron, and Sir *CHRISTOPHER MILTON* Baron of the Exchequer.

By the Honourable *GEORGE BERKELEY*, A.M.

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MATTH. vii. 12.

—*Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

OUR Saviour, upon the close of his Sermon upon the Mount, doth in this Chapter forbid an affectation of Censure and Forwardness in Judging our Neighbour,

cautions us against the Prophanation and Prostitution of Holy things; exhorts us unto Prayer, with that persuasive inducement of God's Benignity and Goodness, compared with the tenderness of an earthly Parent, shewing us the disproportion of created and uncreated Goodness, to strengthen the Argument *à fortiori.*

After which, he descends to this Principle of Common Equity, *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you*, &c.

In which Words we may consider these following Propositions, as directly contained or implied therein.

I. That all men by a natural Principle, which flows immediately from the very frame of their Natures, are inclined to wish well to themselves.

II. That every particular mans happiness doth so much depend upon the general and common good of Society, that it cannot be separate therefrom.

III. A General Rule of Natural Justice and Common Equity to be observed by

by all men in Society and Converse with one another, *viz.* That *whatsoever we would that men should do unto us, we should do even so unto them.*

IV. Lastly, The Divine Authority and Sanction of this Precept, *For this is the Law and the Prophets.*

I. I begin with the first of these, *viz.* That all men by a natural Principle, which flows immediately from the very frame of their Natures, are inclined to wish well to themselves. That every man hunts after his own felicity, and is at all times a Well-wisher to his own good (however he mistaketh the thing, or the way to that good) is a Maxim so evident and clear, that no man in his sound wits can call it into question; it is derived from the very necessity of our Natures, men cannot do otherwise if they would. It is the very fundamental Law of our Being, and the very first Principle that God hath put into us: In other Creatures it is called Instinct, which God hath implanted in their Natures, as a power necessary for their support

port and preſervation. We can as ſoon ſtifle, or annihilate our very Beings, as deprive our ſelves of this motion and deſire after happineſs; which if we could take away, would deſtroy our Conſtitution as men, and quite unhinge the frame of our Natures. As we cannot but directly feel our own paſſions by a quick and immediate perception; ſo we applaud or elſe condole our ſelves, as the motions of Pleaſure or Pain do affect us, according unto that Scheme of Good and Evil which we have framed in our minds. For unleſs the mind be alienated through Phrenzy or other diſtemper of Body, 'tis not to be conceived, that we ſhould not ſeek and purſue after as good a condition as we can poſſibly be in, in our deſires and wiſhes at leaſt, if not in our practice and endeavour.

But this is a Point ſo very plain, that I ſhall no longer inſiſt thereon; but proceed to the next Particular, *viz.*

II. That every particular man's happineſs doth ſo much depend upon the general and common Good of Society, that it cannot be ſeparate therefrom. As God hath

hath given us no desire or natural inclination without sufficient power also of putting the same in execution; so in nothing more hath he put us into a capacity of pursuing our truest interest in this World, than by the constant exercise of Sociable Duties, and the good Offices of common Life and Conversation. This is apparent in the general Order of Providence: The lowest Creatures that partake of life, are sorted and combined together for their Common Good. In Bees we have a resemblance of Rule and Polity; Birds and Beasts accompany each other, and joyn in the respective Offices of their kind, and contribute their mutual Aid, unless of the most savage and wild Natures. And though we excel other Animals in a reasonable Soul, to study Nature and the Authour of it, and to pursue the ways of Happiness; yet this is so far from promoting solitude and a life unsociable, that it rather excites our inclinations and desires to a combination with one another under good and profitable Laws of Community. For no man hath that sufficiency in himself, as not to want the

assistance of others; no Creatures, not the Angels themselves, are absolutely perfect and completely independent, much less can any Mortal be sufficient of himself, without external Aid and foreign Supplies. Therefore since God hath appointed a Communion and Fellowship in other Creatures inferior to Man, how much more in us, who are Members of his Church Militant on Earth, that we may be the same in his Church Triumphant in Heaven? Now as our happiness under God is fundamentally seated in Society, to which many Vertues have an immediate respect and relative application; so he that will be happy in a well-disciplin'd and civilized Community, must observe the Laws of it, which are modell'd for the benefit of each particular Member, with a due regard unto the publick; without which Proviso, in tract of time, the Establishment would fall, and the Community be dissolved.

And thus I have briefly shewn the necessity of Society in general, as we are rational and discoursive Creatures. I come now in the next place to consider,

III. The

III. The General Rule of Natural Justice and Common Equity to be observed by all men in Society and Converse with one another, express'd in my Text, *That whatsoever we would that men should do unto us, we should do even so unto them.* As we are push'd on to the love of our selves by a forcible and controuling Instinct of Nature; so God hath made this the Foundation of Justice and Charity, the Rule and Measure of Domestick and Political Duties. He that watcheth and observeth the motion of his own mind, the inward frame of his own heart, can tell his behaviour to himself, and the various tendency of his passions towards whatever doth really, or is but supposed to concern him. As every man is tender of himself, so he also desireth and expecteth that other people should have regard unto him; should beware of incroaching upon his Person, or invading his Interest. Now if a man find these inclinations and propensions in himself, he should consider the same likewise in others, who are men of the same original Mould as he is, indued with like affections, and

correſpondent Principles of inclination and deſire; that ſo by containing his Paſſions within the Bounds of Reaſon and Religion, he may teach others to moderate the exceſſes of them, to prevent thoſe violent effects that iſſue from ſo predominant and boiſterous Principles. So that, the love of our ſelves is underſtood by all men, it needs no Paraphraſe or Explanation: Nature and Reaſon prompt us to it, and Religion recommends it ſo far as to make it the Model of our proceedings with one another. Now he that truely loveth himſelf is a Friend of Humanity, and loveth his common Nature in another man: for we are
1 Theſſ. 4. 9. not only taught of God to *love our Brethren in Chriſt*, but may be our own Inſtructors, only by obſerving the Rule of my Text, which is fitted and ſquared to all conditions of Life. For it preſerveth and maintaineth all eſtabliſhments of men; it juſtles out no Duty or diſtinction of Order amongſt us; it doth not confound the different reſpects due to men, as Morality enjoins, and Prudence points out and directs; it doth not overturn Communities by looſening the

the Bands of Authority and Subjection, or confounding the degrees and stations, which are necessary, whether in Oeconomical or Civil Societies.

To love our Neighbour as our selves is by Reduction and Inference, the love of Piety and God himself, according to the Dialect of Scripture-Phrase in Holy Writ. Saint *John* expresly joineth them together, *He who loveth God, loveth his Brother also; and if a man say, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a Liar: for he that loveth not his Brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* Should I speak of this Rule as it deserves, in what a plentiful Field of Arguments might I expatiate, what a multitude of Motives and forcible Perswasives might I produce, to oblige men to the practice of this so excellent a Duty? Do we not prize and value our selves amidst disgraces and misfortunes? and our frailties and weaknesses, do they not but very little depress us in our own opinion; nor, do we desire to be lessened in the esteem of others? Why then should we audaciously revile, inwardly despise, or scoffingly reproach

1 John 4. 20, 21.

proach our Neighbour? As we heartily covet our own welfare and profit, rejoyce in the ſucceſs of our own actions, and are hugely pleaſed when others bear a part in our Joy; ſo ſhould we congratulate our Neighbour on the like occaſion. As we are not Stoically affected in the caſe of our Safety, our Fortune, our Honour and Repute, nay our very Paſtimes and Diverſions, but require the aſſiſtance of others, and expect it from them; in the like manner let us be helpful to our Neighbour, and Promoters of his good. As we would not be ſhot with Envy in the proſperous circumſtances of our lives; ſo neither ought we to repine at another mans increaſe of Fortune, growth in Reputation, or Advancement in Power. If we find Delight and Complacency reſulting to us from a flouriſhing condition in Wealth or Repute, or any additional Ornament to our ſtate, are we not apt to communicate this ſatiſfaction to others, that we may augment our Joy by an acceſſion of theirs? Why then ſhould we be cloſe and reſerved to our Neighbour in like Caſes? Why ſhould

we

we not extremely rejoyce at the Temporal or Spiritual good of our Neighbour, especially the latter, which doth so infinitely outweigh and vastly transcend all other concerns? Alas! Do not our disgraces and misfortunes strike and pierce our very hearts? Doth not pain and sickness in us importune our Neighbours compassion, and intreat the relief and succour of our Christian Brethren? Doth not this then prompt us also to a fellow-feeling with, and commiseration of our Neighbour in his distress? There is none of us all that will not stickle earnestly for our selves; we manage our own concerns with vigorous and faithful industry, and we do all we can to prevent want and a destitute condition, the fears whereof do so disquiet and molest us; we are not satisfied with an empty wish, but put our invention on the Rack, in projecting our designs, and bringing to pass our desires; and if we are considerate and wise, with as much solicitude and carefulness we propagate the Honour of God in our lives, we impress an awe of Religion in our hearts, we supplant ignorance and

hurtful

hurtful errour in our minds, and do exterminate ſin and a bad conſcience in our ſelves: this inculcates to us how ready and diſpoſed, how officious we ſhould be in furthering our Neighbours good, in advancing and procuring his Benefit, in miniſtring to the wants and neceſſities both of his Body and his Soul. And as we do not uſually thwart and oppoſe our own eager propenſions, nor deſire that others ſhould contradict our fancy and humour; ſo we may learn hence what Equity and Moderation we ſhould exerciſe towards them, what a complaiſant and civil demeanour we ſhould bear towards all men, endeavouring to pleaſe them in all things *for*
Rom. 15. 2. *their edification.* Is any man eaſily incenſed againſt himſelf? or does he deſire to ſee others boil with indignation againſt him, or betray a ſpightful and haughty Spirit towards him? Then, let him alſo ſhew a frank and condeſcending meekneſs of Temper, ſuch as will ſoften the harſhneſs of bad Tempers; rather than inſult upon the frowardneſs of another, or exaſperate him with unſeemly reproaches, or libel him

him with harsh and bitter Invectives. As we have a natural fondness for our selves, and every man wisheth himself an increase of content and happiness; so this propension inclineth us naturally unto a Sociable Life, that we may in common partake of those Benefits which cannot be had in solitude. Now the Laws of Society require a mutual regard unto the Members thereof; for they are not calculated for the profit of one, but of many; and therefore he that wilfully oppresseth another is a Transgressor against the grand Law of our Nature, and by his practice would discard all humanity, and overthrow all helpful Society. *Alexander Severus* the Emperour had always this Saying in his mouth, *Quod tibi non vis fieri, alteri ne feceris*, Do not that to another, which in thy conscience thou desirest should not be done unto thee. This comprehends our deportment in all our words and actions, so as to carry our selves harmless and inoffensive to others, as we desire they would do to us. Now 'tis certain that no man is willing that his Neighbour should be rude in his address,

Lamprid. in Vit. Alex. Sev. c. 51. p. 577. Hist. August. L. Bat. 1661.

of a churliſh temper, of an untractable and refractory humour, of a crabbed and diſingenuous behaviour; of a Cynical diſpoſition on the one ſide, or of a gloſing diſſimulation on the other; that he ſhould be either a Blab, or a Sycophant. No man careth that his Neighbour ſhould be ſingular, wilful and teſty, humourſome and capricious; but rather gentle and converſable, frank and eaſie, complaiſant and obliging, in whatſoever things are honeſt and of good report. No man is willing to have an unjuſt Tyranny obtruded upon him in words and actions, by a troubleſome Lawgiver and Dictator in Diſcourſe, or a greedy Extortioner in Buſineſs and Dealing. No man is willing that his Neighbour ſhould treacherouſly collude with him in Promiſes and Covenants, or wickedly and deceitfully trepan him. We would all be gently accoſted, and favourably handled in word and deed. No Body is fond of ill-natur'd cenſure, of unworthy and baſe detraction. Who is there ambitious of being expoſed and Buffoon'd, to have his faults unravell'd with envy and ſpight,

spight, his imperfections publickly canvas'd as a common Theme of Discourse, an entertainment of laughter and malice? No Body careth to be wrongfully upbraided, unseasonably charged and rebuked; nor are we fond of being proudly overawed, insolently brow-beaten, or imperiously controuled. No man careth to be sawcily bearded, to be stubbornly withstood in a reasonable matter by a wilful and cross-grain'd opposition. Is there any man who is willing to have his words wrested, his sense misconstrued, or his actions misreported and traduced? Is there any one who is willing that his person should be vilified with open slander, nay with malicious truth? stabb'd *in effigie* by cowardly whispering, or griev'd with unmanly scoffs, with insupportable insulting Taunts? If it be true, that we are apt to wink at our own faults and conceal them, to colour our own failings, nay to make an Apology for our very Crimes, and grow angry that others will not bestow the Curse which *Isaiah* mentions, upon themselves, of calling *evil good, and bitter* Isai. 5. 20.

ſweet : is it commendable or honeſt then to diſcloſe another's nakedneſs, to aggravate all the miſcarriages of our Neighbour, and magnifie them beyond all modeſty and meaſure ? 'Tis certain we would not be hurt or prejudiced in Body, damnified in Eſtate, or deflowred in Reputation ; we have ſo delicate and nice a feeling in our own concerns, that we cannot bear a moderate reflection, but it ſhocks us immediately ; we cannot endure the Brunt of a falſe Story of our ſelves ; how doth it ſtagger and unſettle us, amuſe and affright us ? How eager are we to ſtop the mouths and ears of others againſt our ſelves, and ſtifle, as ſoon as poſſibly we can, the infection, and hinder it from ſpreading ? And this may be a Rule to ſquare our Deportment, and faſhion our Behaviour in whatſoever relates to Ingenuity and Candour, to honeſt and plauſible Dealing, to the ſweet and comfortable enjoyment of reaſonable Society.

For this is a Rule of unfailing Equity, of impartial Truth, and Godly Simplicity, *to do to others, as we would have them do to us,*

us, if we could exchange our persons with them: which in a Negative sense implies the forbearing what we dislike, and the declining such Proceedings with our Neighbour, as are hateful to our selves. And this removes an Objection which might perhaps be started, *viz.* That it seems an infringement of Order, and a relaxing of Society, for men of very different and unequal capacities, so far above or below one another, by natural or acquired Rights, to follow the strictness of this Rule; That it tends to the confusion and levelling of Persons, and therefore is impracticable. No certainly, this holy and wise Law hath a respect unto the Common Good of Mankind, and cannot overthrow that peace and settlement, which God, by writing it in the hearts of men, intended it should uphold and establish, although it had never been inforced by positive Institution and Command: no more being meant thereby than a commodious Rule ever at hand to adjust and temper all the Duties of Sociable Life; that every man would do by his Neighbour

bour that which his Reason and Conscience tells him he should expect from him in like circumstances; to fulfil the Laws of universal Justice, and to establish an equal and uniform Charity, which is the Bond of Perfection, and the Top of all humane Vertue.

I come now to consider the last Proposition in my Text, *viz.*

IV. The Divine Authority and Sanction of the Precept, *For this is the Law and the Prophets.* This is not only a Dictate of the Law of Nature, a Precept every way agreeable to our rational Faculties; but it is the very Basis and Ground-work of Legal and Prophetical Dispensations throughout the Book of God. What is the Second Table of the Decalogue? in what doth it consist, but in standing Rules of Direction concerning our Duty unto our Neighbour, in strict Injunctions of due Honour and Obedience to our Superiours, and of Justice to all men; in severe Prohibitions to be injurious to any in their Persons, their Property and Good Name, or any thing belonging to them? What

What are the Prophets, but inspired Commentators upon the whole Law of God, with extraordinary Commission to inforce Righteousness and Morality, nay and often to prefer it before Devotion it self, as more pleasing to God, for he *loveth mercy better than Sacrifice*, and the good we do our Fellow-Creatures that need it, better than his own Worship and Service; who though he infinitely deserves it, yet needs it not. Hos. 6. 6. Matt. 9. 13.

Now, as this Body of Institutes was given to *Moses* by the Ministry of Angels, and delivered to the People of *Israel*, the Seed of *Jacob*, God's peculiar Inheritance; so the Gospel of our Lord, the Covenant of Grace, hath exceedingly confirmed and strengthened this Second Table of the Commandments, by superadding eternal Rewards and Punishments unto all those who willingly observe, or wilfully transgress them. Doth not our Saviour assure us, That *with what measure we mete unto others, it shall be measured to us again* in our Accounts with God in the Journal of our Lives? when He that *sets Judgment to the Line, and* Isai. 28. 17.

Righteousness

Righteousness to the Plummet, will pronounce us everlastingly condemned or acquitted by the Rule of Charity. And therefore St. *Paul* exhorts us (for a Test of our Holiness,
Col. 3. 12. and Mark of our Election) *to put on Bowels of mercy, humbleness of mind*, to be *clothed*
Gal. 6. 2. *with meekness and long-suffering*; to *bear one an-*
Rom. 12. 3. *others Burthens, and think soberly of our selves.* In reference also to publick Establishments, how firmly doth the Apostle bind us to O-
Rom. 13. bedience? *Let every Soul be subject to the higher Powers: Render to all men their Dues, Tribute to whom Tribute, Custom to whom Custom, Fear to whom Fear, Honour to whom Ho-*
1 Pet. 2. 13. *nour.* So also S. *Peter*, *Submit your selves to every Ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.* And that we may not be blown and puff'd up with vanity (which renders us over-weening and conceited, imperious and
Philip. 2. 3. haughty) we are forbid *to do any thing, through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind to give preheminence to others, and esteem them better than our selves.* In another Text
1 Pet. 2. 17. we are bid to *honour all men, and love the Brotherhood*; that is, the intire Fellowship and Fraternity of Christians. Nor hath the Scripture

Scripture only secured Reverence to Authority in a Publick Station, and regulated our general converse; but it hath likewise stated the welfare of private Societies, by teaching the reciprocal Duties of each Member thereof, and their respective Obligations: *Husbands, love your Wives, and be not bitter against them. Wives, submit your selves unto your own Husbands, as unto the Lord; for the Husband is the Head of the Wife, as Christ is Head of the Church.* And for Oeconomical Provision and Care, *Whosoever doth not provide for his own, especially for them of his own houshold, is* in the Apostle's judgment, *worse than an Infidel.* Lastly, we have the mutual Offices of Children and Parents, Masters and Servants, specified and determined in the New Testament, as well as in the Old: That *Fathers should not provoke their Children, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*: That *Children should obey their Parents in all things, as well-pleasing unto God.* As also, That *themselves should not be provoked to anger*, lest they be discouraged and out of heart, and rendred thereby apt to go astray

Col. 3. 19.

Ephes. 5. 2.

1 Tim. 5. 8.

Ephes. 6. 4.

Ephes. 6. 1.

from their Duty. So in like manner, Servants are enjoined to *obey in all things their Masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God; to be subject with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but the froward*: and Masters are commanded to give their Servants what is just and equal, as knowing *they have also a Master in heaven, who is no Accepter of persons.*

Eph. 6. 5, 6.

Eph. 6. 9.

Here we see a Summary and compendious deduction of the several Branches of Duty, arising from this just and holy Precept.

It remains therefore that we apply it to our selves, that we should ponder it in our minds, and examine and sift our consciences, how far we have swerved from the Rule, how far we have crookedly and perversly carried our selves towards our Neighbour in every respect and circumstance; how indirectly and obliquely we have dealt with other men: yet on the contrary, with great fondness and doating partiality to our selves. For if all Commandments referring to Intercourse, and our

our Dealings with one another (as, *Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not commit Adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet*) be contained in this one Article of *loving our Neighbour as our selves*, as our Blessed Saviour tells us, and S. *Paul* also affirms and makes a particular recital thereof; if those Commandments are virtually comprized and summ'd up in this Precept of our Saviour, *That we should do unto others, as we would have them do unto us* (which is indeed undefiled and unspotted Religion, as including all the Duties of Society, without reserve, or distinction of partiality and prejudice) then let us bethink our selves and consider how faulty and unequal we have been in the Weights and Measures of our Justice and Charity to our selves and others. Do we not for the most part use a double Balance, weighing our own Interests and Concernments in the one, and those of our Neighbour in another; standing strictly upon the Equity of this Rule to our selves, but having little or no regard to it when others challenge the like from us? This is

Rom. 13.9.

certainly very great partiality and injustice. Since then we have so clear and certain a Rule, which is always ready at hand (because every man carrieth it in his own breast) it is a matter certainly of wonder and astonishment, that any one who calls himself a Christian, should not be extremely ashamed, not only to break and daily transgress this righteous rule of Justice and Equity, but even to fly out into those enormous Crimes of Murder and Oppression, of Subornation and Perjury, which an honest and sober Heathen would be ashamed and blush at.

We have therefore great and mighty reason to magnifie and extol the Providence of God, who hath ordained and constituted Magistrates as his and the King's Ministers of Justice, to *execute wrath upon*
Rom. 13. 4. *all those who do evil*; without which, the World would soon become a Wilderness, or a mere Shambles of Cruelty and Oppression, and Mankind only a barbarous Herd of Prey, the greater and mightier still devouring the lesser and weaker, and every one inhumanely striving to crush

his

his Neighbour. I beseech therefore Almighty God to prosper your undertakings, that Justice in an even Balance may be equally administred; that the innocent may be protected and relieved, whilst the wicked man is caught in the Snare which he laid for the intrapping of others. And I pray God we may all remember the great Account we must one day make at the one great general Assize, when an Arch-Angel shall sound a Trumpet before the Judge of the whole Earth, and *every man shall be recompenced according to his deeds, whether they be good, or whether they be evil.* Eccles. 12. 14. For which Great Day, God of his Infinite Mercy grant we may all prepare our selves, for the sake of his only beloved Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be given all Honour, Praise and Dominion, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

FINIS.

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