TWELVE
SERMONS
on
WILLIAM, LORD
SEVENTH
1737
TWENTY SERMONS.

The first Nine of them
PREACHED
Before the KING in LENT.

Of Superflition.
Of contending for the Faith.
Of Judging one Another.
Of the true Use of the World.
Of the Love of Pleasure.
St. Paul's Discourse to Felix.
Of Consistency in Religion.
No continuing City here.
Christ's Yoke Easy.
Of Persecution.
Of Zeal not according to Knowledge.
The Impossibility of serving God and Mammon.

The Ambition of Christ's Disciples reproved.
The different Characters of John Baptist and Jesus Christ.
The Extremes of Riches and Poverty.
The Good Samaritan.
Of our Duty under Afflictions.
The Christian Race.
The Best Christians unprofitable Servants.
The Nature of Christ's Blessing.

By Benjamin, Lord Bishop of Winchester.

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Pag. lin for read
4. 10. ever, still.
26. 11. such, Persecution.
30. 18. but that.
31. 6. dele what.
44. 13. dele is.
75. 3. seem.
132. 9. dele rather.
152. 23. uneasy, frequent.
197. 24. use in a such, treat in such a.
198. 17. which, as.
209. last, after when, add it.
211. 4. 5. for and the strong Lines of moral Duty, to which it always tends, read, or the moral Duties, which it always commands.
Ib. 13. They, the Jews.
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Of Superstition.

SERMON I.

Preached before the King, March 23, 1717-18.

Acts xvii. 22.

Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars-hill, and said, Ye Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things Ye are too Superstitious.

Supposing the Word Superstitious to answer exactly to the Word in the Original; yet, it does not seem rightly translated here by the Expression too superstitious: because this carries along with it an Implication that there is a Degree of Superstition, not at all blameable; and that St. Paul in this Passage allows it; contrary to the constant Use of that Word amongst Us, in a bad Sense. The Greek Word for that Temper of Mind, relating to Religion, from which the Athenians are in our Translation denominated Superstitious, signifies a Dread of some Superior Being, or Beings; and commonly, an Unreasonable, Blind, and Gloomy, Dread of such Beings, leading
Of Superstition.

Serving to great and various Absurdities, about the Methods of pleasing Them. And as the Word, used by St. Paul, implies in it a Comparison of the Athenians with Others; and therefore ought to have been translated, more Superstitious than ordinary; or the like: I think, the Apostle may be truly represented as speaking thus to These around Him,—"Ye Men of Athens, I perceive that you are more thoroughly possessed with the Fear of Invisible Beings Superior to Us, than I have found any Others to be. And this I conclude, from what I have observed of the public Marks of your Worship appearing in the City. For, besides your Altars to numberless Deities with Names to them, in which you agree with Others, all around you; I found an Altar inscribed to the Unknown God: which uncommon Appearance must be owing to a very extraordinary Degree of a dark, and uncomfortable Dread of some Superior Being, though you know not what: Whom you fear you may otherwise be thought to have neglected," &c.

But, as it is my present Design to take Occasion from the Words of the Text, as they stand in Our Translation, to speak in such a manner upon the Subject of Superstition, as may be of general Use, and Service, to All Christians, in the great Affair of True Religion; I shall not enter farther into any Critical Enquiries.
Of Superstition.

ries about the precise Meaning of the Words in the Original; or the whole Intention of St. Paul, in this Discourse: but shall endeavour,

I. To say Something about the Nature of Superstition, considered as a Vice, to be avoided by All.

II. To point out the True Remedy of it. And,

III. To apply what I shall have said, to Christians, and to the present State of Christianity in the World.

I. I will endeavour to give you some Account of the Nature of Superstition, considered as a Vice, to be avoided by All.

And, this having been much the same, both amongst Those who have not lived under any express Revelation from God, and Those who have; the General Account of it must, I suppose, be given, entirely with Relation to that Faith, that Worship, and that Practice, to which, both these Sorts of Persons might see themselves to be truly and strictly obliged, as their Religion, and Duty.

With respect therefore, to Heathens, the best Account I can, at present, think of, is this; That the Superstition of Heathens consisted in every Particular, which either their Fear, or their Folly; either the Strength of their Imagination, or the Weakness of their Judgment; or the De-
Of Superstition.

Sign and Artifice of their Leaders; taught them to embrace, in order to please any Being, or Beings, superior to themselves, whom they made the Objects of their Religious regards: Every thing, I say, of this Sort, whether relating to their Faith, or to the Nature or Manner of their Worship, or to the Practice of their Lives; which was contradictory or disagreeable to the just Notions in such important Matters, which were then, and ever are, and ever will be, the certain and plain Result of the Common Reason of Mankind, exercised upon such Subjects. This it was, that was to be their Conductor in Religious Affairs; and therefore, it is by comparing it with what their Reason ought to have led them to make their Religion, that you must judge what it was that the Superstition of the Heathens consisted in.

And thus it was that St. Paul judged of the Superstition of the Athenians, with regard to their Worship: as is plain from his Discourse to Them. He saw, amongst many others, an Altar dedicated to the Unknown God; and this he concluded to have been raised by their superstitious Fear, and blind Dread, of They knew not what: when, at the same time, They ought to have argued, from the Works of Nature, in every Year, and Season, and Day, That the Supreme God and Governor of the World, had made Himself Sufficiently
Of Superstition.

sufficiently known to Them, as the sole Object of Religious Worship, by these Works of his, which were always before their Eyes.

2. Agreeably to this, the Superstition of Christians, considered as Christians, the Followers of Jesus Christ, as a Teacher sent of God, must consist in every Particular, which any Persons, called Christians, have added, or may add, to the plain and express Declarations of their Lord and Master himself; under the Notion of something necessary to our pleasing and serving God: whether it respect the Object of our Faith; the Object or Manner of our Worship; or the Conduct and Practice of our Lives.

The Difference, in this case, with regard to Heathens and Christians, you will see, to be very small, in the End; because it was the Great Design of our Lord's appearing in the World, utterly to destroy the whole Fabric of Superstition; to restore the Dictates of Uncorrupted Reason to their Force and Authority; and, by calling the World to believe in Him, as sent by God, to replace the only Method of pleasing Him, upon that True Foundation, upon which it ought to have been placed, whether He had appeared amongst Men, or not.

So that the Difference between True Religion, and Superstition, seems to be this; that the Former is the Argument of the Judgment and Under-
Of Superstition.

Understanding, collecting, from the just Notions of a God, enforced upon Christians by the plainest Declarations of their Master, the only possible Method of pleasing Him: and the Latter is the Result of ungoverned Passion; either the Hope of pleasing God with something entirely distinct from, and contrary to, those Notions; or the uneasy Fear that He will not be pleased, without the Addition of something which has no Relation to them.

We may therefore, as we pass, observe that Superstition, in some Respects, is That to Religion, which, in common Life, the Flattery of a false Tongue is, to the Sincerity of Conversation and Friendship. Flattery takes the Place, and often the very Aire and Mien, of sincere Profession. It puts itself instead of Friendship; and hopes to be taken for it. It is made up of pleasing Sounds, and Expressions: and the Appearance is of something good. But then, it is founded upon a Baseness of Soul; hoping to please, or fearing to displease, without any thing within answering to those Professions. And, in the End, the Evil is, That, when the Masque is, by some Accident, taken off; the Reproaches which are due only to the Falseness of such Pretenses, are cast, by such as are not able well to distinguish, upon the sincere Professions of Friendship itself, which it only imitated.

And,
Of Superstition.

And, in the same manner, Superstition hath thrust itself into the Place of Religion; and is become an Idol, to which the greater Part of the World hath long continued to bow down: And, having usurped, not only the Place, but the Garb and Language, of Religion; no great wonder that, in all Ages, both in the Heathen and Christian World, the Scandals, occasioned by the Former only, have been put to the Account of the Latter; and the Evils which the Madness of Superstition alone hath produced, have been all, in general, charged upon Religion, which in its true Nature tends to prevent them: nay, that the very Word Religion hath come to stand for that System of Superstitions, whatsoever it be, which has prevailed in any Country, or Society. But to return,

The principal thing to be regarded, under this first Head, is, That every Particular, embraced as something necessary to the pleasing of God, which is not plainly declared to be so, either by the Voice of Reason, or the Words of the Gospel, is the Superstition of Men, and of Christians; whether it relate to Faith, Worship, or Practice. But the next great Point is,

II. To point out the true Remedy of this immense and deplorable Evil: an Evil, so much the more difficult to be cured, as it is
Serm. founded upon the Passions of Men; and flatters those Inclinations, which Custom and Education have made strong. This, it is plain, must be a Remedy, suitable to the Nature, and first Principle, of the Evil. And, the Evil consisting in departing from one certain steadie Rule; the proper Remedy must consist in the reducing Men to that Rule, from which they ought not to have departed. I shall now, therefore, propose what the Gospel, as it is represented by Christ and his Apostles, professes and designs to do, in order to this. And then we shall judge whether any thing can be more reasonable in itself, more beneficial to Mankind, or, consequently, more honourable to the Gospel itself.

You may easily see what this is, even by St. Paul's Conduct in this Chapter. At the 22d verse, he takes Notice of the Great Superstition of the Athenians; and, at the 23d and following verses, he proposeth to them, as the only Cure for it, first, the Knowledge of that One God, whom alone they ought to worship: Then, the Nature of that Worship which is due to such a Being, not confined to, or dependent upon, particular Places, or Circumstances; but suitable to the Nature of a Being, always and every where present with us: Then, the Necessity of Repentance, that is, of altering whatsoever was bad in the Conduct of their
Of Superstition.

their Lives; for which he urgeth this Argument, that the God, whom he preaches to Them, as known by his Works, is the same God, who will judge the World, by Jesus Christ, whom he raised from the Dead, as a sensible Assurance of this Truth. Here then St. Paul represents to them Religion, instead of their former Superstition, under the Notion of knowing, and worshiping, One God, the Maker, the Governour, the Judge, of the World; and of practising all that is good and praise-worthy.

You see, therefore, that True Religion, which is, in the Nature of Things, (and I wish I could say, in Time, a great deal) more antient than the Corrupti on of it, is, Virtue in all its Extent, regularly practise and pursued, under the Sense of the supreme Being, the Creator, Governour, and Judge, of the World. And this is That to which St. Paul, and his Fellow-Labourers, were constantly calling back the World of Unbelievers; and pressing upon Believers also.

And all this is perfectly agreeable to what our Saviour himself, in plain Words, proposed upon many Occasions, through his Life, with respect to Faith, to Worship, and to Practice. With regard to Faith; He declares, in one of his Prayers to God, his Father, that it was the Knowledge of Him, the only true God, which He
He was endeavouring to bring the World to, by calling them to believe in Himself, sent by that True God. With Respect to Worship, He had an Occasion offered, in his Conversation with the Woman of Samaria, to declare, that this Worship was not to be confined to any such Circumstances, as particular Places, or the like; but must be agreeable to the Nature of the Being worshiped; that the Father, (for he speaks all along of Him) was then seeking such Worshipers, as would not worship what they knew nothing of; or, would not worship Him any otherwise, than in Spirit and Truth. And then, as to the Conduct of Life, and Practice; his Declarations, in general, are all referred to the Nature, and Attributes, of the Supreme Father of all Things; to the doing his Will; to the imitating his Perfections; and to the practising every thing recommended by that Law of Reason, which He sent our Lord to revive and enforce.

For, in this last Particular of Practice, it is evident, that neither our Lord, nor his immediate Disciples, have framed any exact System of Morality, explicitly mentioning every particular Duty, or Sin; but have thought it better to appeal, in most Instances, to the Great and Universal Law of Reason, which they send every Christian to consult, with Sincerity and
and Uprightness of Heart, as he will answer it at the Great Day of Accounts.

But in the Case of Worship, in which the Inventions and Follies of Men had shewn themselves wantonly and infinitely various, to all the Degrees of Superstition; He took occasion to be a little more particular. In that Prayer which he taught his Disciples, He leads his Followers to the Object of their Worship, God, under the most easy, and the most intelligible, Notion of a Father: including every thing relating both to Authority and Goodness; and representing Him to us as our Great Maker, Governor, and Benefactor. He then goes on to the Matter of our Prayers, in a Manner so plain, and in Expressions so far removed from every Word, that either supposes any Passion within, or can be designed to raise one, that it is well worth while for Us all to consider, and imitate it, by speaking to God, agreeably to his Nature, and our Relation to Him; and expressing our Sentiments before Him, more with our Understanding, than with our Passions. And certainly, whatever is the Result of the Understanding is likely to last, and to have an Effect upon our Minds and Lives: But Passion, raised for a present Occasion, and then naturally ceasing, can hardly be thought to leave the Mind more
Of Superstition.

more guarded, and better armed, for the Conduct of our Practice, than it was before. And this I mention, and press, in a very particular Manner, because I think it of the utmost Importance, that the Duty of Prayer, which is the Worship of the Great God, should not, by the Operation of Superstition, become, in the Opinion and Practice of any Christians, the Art of raising a present Passion, upon a present Occasion; instead of the most likely Method of forming the lasting Habit of a Disposition to all that is Good; and the Expression of Those Sentiments, which alone ought to be expressed before God. But, to return,

As Worship, and Practice, must depend upon Faith, and Knowledge; and, as the Superstition of Worship and Practice must depend upon the Superstition of Faith; so the Cure of this must begin at the Foundation. And accordingly, the Design of the Gospel is to reclaim Men from the Superstition of Worship and Practice, by recalling them to the Belief of the One Supreme God, whose Nature shews both how He is to be worshiped, and how He is to be served. But, as I have observed, with regard to Practice in general, that the Gospel doth not draw up a Formal System of the Bounds and Nature of every Virtue and Vice; but sends all Men to the original Universal
Of Superstition.

sal Law; and refers them to the Imitation of God: so, it may be remarked, that in those Cases of Practice itself, in which Imagination and Passion might be supposed to have most Scope, the greatest Care hath been taken to guard against the ill Effect of them. For Instance, the Love of God, and the Love of our Neighbour, which are spoken of, in the New Testament, as Duties to which all Men, of all Tempers and Dispositions, are equally obliged; are so plainly described, that every Christian may see, that Whosoever keeps the Commandments of God, (which always supposes the Belief and Knowledge of his amiable Perfections,) will be esteemed by his Judge to love God truly; and that He who worketh no Evil to his Neighbour, but all the Good in his Power, is truly possessed of that Love of his Neighbour which is the fulfilling the Law, as far as Social Life is concerned: and may from hence make himself easy, if he cannot boast of those extraordinary Emotions, or Practices, which some Others speak of; but which, at least, cannot be said to be made the Duty of All, by their great Law-giver. This seems to have been designed against the Superstition of Practice; as it was taking the Workings of the heated Imaginations of Men, as much as possible, out of the Religion.
Of Superstition.

In some, the superstitious Hope of pleasing God with something, which He has never insisted upon; and in others, the superstitious Fear of displeasing Him, for want of it: And founding Religion upon something which all men can find their Part in; and not upon any Point, which the differing Tempers and Dispositions of men make impossible to all, in a Matter made equally the Duty of all. Nothing, indeed, in the Dispensation of Christ, relating to Practice, appears to be designed, or framed, to excite in the Soul, within, any Thought leading to Practical Superstition; but every Part of it conspires to form a regular Conduct of Life, without.

You see, then, how rational a Remedy the Gospel, in its Purity, proposeth, to cure the World of Superstition; by calling all men to a Worship, and to a Practice, worthy of God, and worthy of Man: and to rid the Minds of men of unconceivable Uneasinesses, by placing the Service of God upon Principles agreeable to the Judgment and Conscience, upon which alone inward Peace depends.

I know of nothing set up, in Opposition to this, but Atheism, or a total Infidelity. And this, if it be thoroughly imbibe, which is hardly
hardly possible to suppose, will indeed, rid the Mind of any Superstitions relating to the pleasing that Great Being, which it banishes out of the World. But then, there are two or three Considerations, which I have not time to enlarge upon, but which will be of great Force, at the bare Mention of them: viz. that Atheism is itself founded upon a Contradiction to all the Principles of Science, in the World: That, though it may rid the Mind of some Superstitions, yet, it gives no Support in the room of them: That it is, itself, where it is pretended to be, often seen to be accompanied with very odd and unaccountable Superstitions, of another sort; and some of them very uneasy ones: and, lastly, what is very material, That, in most Nations of the World, They, who seem to have Recourse to it for themselves, have so little Love to the Happiness of their Fellow-creatures, that they think Them fit for nothing but to be governed by the Tyranny of Superstition; and that, wherever it lies within their Reach, They are so far from any Willingness to enter into any Measures of abating the Terrors and Dreads of it, that they rather are induced the more to continue, and improve, the Force of those superstitious Terrors upon Others, by their own Atheism and Infidelity.
The Gospel, with a more generous and noble Spirit, labours with the Lowest as well as the Highest, the Meanest as well as the Brightest, Understandings, to bring Mankind, by a few plain, easy, general Principles, common to all, from the Oppression and Unhappiness of Superstition; both to know truly, and to practice constantly, what is necessary to their pleasing God. This is a Point, which it is evident, from the Experience of all Ages, and from the vast Variety of Inventions of Men upon this Head, of infinite Importance to the Ease and Quiet of their Lives here, as well as to their Happiness hereafter. And therefore, it was a Matter, worthy of the Son of God's Appearing in the World: and it is what He hath performed in a Manner agreeable to the Nature of God, and to the Frame of the Mind of Man. And now, as I proposed in the last Place,

III. I come to the Application of what has been said, to Christians, and the present State of Christianity. And this is too plain, and obvious, to need many Words.

It is an easy Matter for Men to see, and complain of, Superstition in Others. It is easy for the Church of Rome, loaded with the Foppery of Ceremonies without Number; distracted with the Variety of Objects of Worship; full of new-
new-invented Methods of pleasing God, by Iserm. I know not what Bodily Austerities, instead of the one Austerity of Virtue; and guarded round about with all the Allurements of this World's Pomp and Dignity, on one Side, and all its Terrors, on the other: It is an easy Matter, I say, for a Church, so at ease within its own Fences, to sit and make great Outcries against the Superstition of the Pagans; and to send out their Missionaries, to disturb and molest Them, only to engage them to exchange One set of Superstitions, for Another, I greatly fear, as wicked and as destructive.

It is easy, again, for Those who have reformed from that Church, to spend their Time and Breath, in Invectives against Roman Superstitions; or, amongst Themselves, in complaining of one another. But the true Point of Thought, in which every Christian, and every distinct Body of Christians, should fix, is, what is their own Case? and what is their own Conduct, with respect to the Three great Points of Faith, Worship, and Practice?

If they set up any Beings, as Objects of the same Faith, but That proposed by Christ himself, The One only suprime God; They do by this lay the Ground-work of Superstition, in themselves, and others. If they pay the same Worship to any Being, distinct from that same One
Of Superstition.

One Supreme Being; or, if they multiply the invisible Objects of any Degree of Religious Respect, beyond the Authority of what is written; leading Men to spend the Vigour of their Souls, due to the Worship of the One Supreme God, upon a Number of Objects, inferior to Him: This is the Superstition of Worship, from which their Master called the World. Or, if they confine the Acceptableness of the Worship of God, to any particular Places, or Ceremonies, or Words, or Forms; This is also a Superstition, contrary to the Nature of that Worship, the Acceptableness of which our Lord Himself placed upon Spirit and Truth.

And again, if They take upon them to make the Favour of God to depend upon any thing, besides what our Lord declared it to depend upon; representing God to be delighted with Trifles, or reconciled by Follies; encouraging Men to hope for his Favour, upon their Performance of something distinct from the keeping his Commandments; or leading Men to fear his Displeasure, for not having added an exact Observation of what Men have instituted in Religion, to what He Himself hath declared to be sufficient to Salvation: This is the Guilt of Superstition, with regard to Practice; to be charged upon All, who have any hand in it.
It is apparent from the Nature of this Evil, that no Cure for it can be hoped for, till the Kingdom of Christ shall be established amongst Christians; and his own Subjects acknowledge Him, by their Practice, to be their King. And, When Christ's Authority is once suffered to settle the Faith and Worship of Christians; when Obedience to His Commands, under the Conduct of that Faith, is suffered to pass for Religion; when the Rule of every Christian Man's Conduct is universally allowed to be his sincere Attention to the Directions of Christ; and Christians are so upright as to take That for their Religion, which they find recommended by their Lord, and his immediate Followers: Then, and Then only, the Faith, and Worship, and Practice, of Christians, will justly be said to be all restored, and redeemed from the Follies of Superstition. But till this happy Time comes, How great and deplorable an Unhappiness must it be thought, that the very Believing in Jesus Christ, which was proposed to put a stop to all the Superstition in the World, should, by the crafty Designs of some, and the Weakness of others, be itself made the Inlet and Occasion to that same Evil, amongst Any that are called by that Holy Name; and to so shameful a Degree, as We see it to be, in many Nations round about us.
SERM. Nothing, I am persuaded, is wanting, but to uncover the Face of our most Holy Religion: and then, there can be little Doubt, but that It's most dangerous Rival, and powerful Enemy, must fly before it; and that Christianity will at length get the better of the Superstition of Christians, as it did at first of the Superstition of Heathens.
Of contending for the Faith.

SERMON II.

Preached before the KING, March 13, 1719-20.

Epistle of Jude, Verse 3. latter Part.

It was needful for Me to write unto You, and exhort You, that Ye should earnestly contend for the Faith, which was once delivered unto the Saints:

In order to find out the Nature of what is very strongly recommended to Christians in these Words, I propose,

I. To explain the Words themselves.

II. To observe from thence by what Methods we can most effectually answer the real first Design of them. And,

III. From the Whole, to draw such Observations,
Of contending for the Faith.

I. The Words ought to be explained. And this Explanation ought to be taken from the plain Purport of the whole short Epistle, in which they are; from the Time when it was written; and from the Circumstances of Christianity, and of Christians, at that Time. The Duty, here recommended to Christians, is to contend earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints; that is, in the Language of the Apostles, to all who professed themselves Christians: the Title of Saints not being, at that Time, appropriated to particular Persons; but, in common, given to All Christians, to put them in mind of their Profession, and what Obligations to Holiness it carried along with it. This Faith, here to be contended for, was the Faith taught and delivered, before this Epistle was written; being spoken of here, as already known and settled. The Expression of contending earnestly, Ἐπαγωγὴ, is taken from the Contests, Games, and Races, then in Use in the Heathen World; in which the Contenders for imaginary Glory strove, with all their Might, against their Adversaries. But, as amongst these Contenders, there were certain Rules and Orders, by
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by which They were all to be governed in their Contests; upon pain of forfeiting all Pretense to Victory or Reward, if they transgressed one of those Rules, which were the fixed Laws of those Contests: So, the earnest Contention of Christians, for the Faith once delivered, must be governed by those Rules, and kept within those Bounds, and directed by those Laws, which their Great Master, the Judge of the Contest, has declared and established.

If any one, who entered into the Contests, or Games, then common in the Heathen World, pretended to get the better, i.e. to overcome, hurt, or destroy, his Adversary, by any Method, contrary to the Laws fixed by the Governours or Judges of those Contests; He was not adjudged to have the Glory of Conquest, but the Shame of Injustice. And so, in the Christian Contest, if Christian Methods are not uniformly and constantly made use of; the Earnestness of the Contention is only a so much greater Deviation from the Duty of a Christian. One Christian may crush or oppress the Person of Another, against whom He contends, on Account of some Differences in Religion: But he cannot contend for the Faith once delivered, so as to reap any Fruit of such Contest, without contending
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But, in particular, if we consider this earnest Contest for the Faith, here recommended by St. Jude, in conjunction with the Circumstances with which Christians were then surrounded; the Methods of Contest could be none but such as were suitable to those Circumstances. They had not then in their hands the Weapons of this World, to lance at one another: And therefore, the Weapons of their Warfare could be then no other than spiritual. They were all surrounded with persecuting Unbelievers: and probably, one Part of this earnest Contention for their Faith, here recommended to them, (if not the main Part,) was the entering into that Contest, and Strife, of Suffering for this Faith, which Others, in this Epistle are described as willing to decline. This, I say, was One Instance of the earnest Contest here proposed; the enduring Difficulties, the running that Race of Sufferings, mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews (and styled there ἀγωγία) the Suffering on Account of this Faith, and by the powerful Assistance of it: Not the Fury of Zeal, in bringing Others to Corporal Sufferings, for the Sake of what They believed; but the Constancy of Patience in suffering themselves for what They knew
knew to have been *delivered to them* by their Serm. Master and Saviour. And this Sense will not be at all disagreeable to the Word in the *Original*; or the *Circumstances* of Christians at that Time; or to the rest of the *Epistle*: in which some Men amongst Christians are described as Wicked Perverters of the Gospel; and ready to deny the Faith They professed.

But, if we take the Word as implying merely a Contest for the Faith against these *Primitive Adversaries*, here mentioned, as crept in amongst Christians; We cannot help observing how they are described all through this short *Epistle*: Not, as honest Enquirers after Truth, but as wicked Perverters of the whole Design of Christianity: Not, as Persons willing to receive that Faith, which had been *delivered to the Saints*; but, as wilful Opposers of what they might have known to have been so delivered: Not, as Persons ready to lay down their Lives, or suffer all worldly Inconveniences, for what, after their best Inquiries, appeared to them to have been the *true Faith* of Christians; but, as Persons ready to renounce what they would otherwise pretend to profess, for fear of Worldly Sufferings.

This Circumstance will likewise teach Christians the Measure, the Temper, and the Bounds, of their Contests about their mutual Differ-
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II. Distance from the original Delivery of the Christian Faith: For, in what Men soever the Marks of unfeigned Sincerity are found, though but equal to Those which we may suppose in Others; and especially, if there be good ground to believe a Readiness and Resolution to suffer for what They apprehend to be Truth; and but as great a Probability of their suffering under the Persecution of Unbelievers; if any such should be, as there can be that any Others will have Constancy enough to do it: And, much more still, if they give Proof by the whole Tenor of their Lives, of their real Faith in Jesus Christ; and actually renounce, upon any just Occasion, many of the Comforts and Supports of this World, for the Sake of what they think to be His Will: I say, upon these Suppositions, the Characters and Descriptions in this Epistle are not adapted nor designed for such Men; nor are these the Persons against whom Christians are allarmed and forewarned in the Text.

But, granting that all such professed Christians are here comprehended, as do truly, or are supposed to, err in Points of Faith; what is the Remedy, or the Method proposed to Christians, in this Case? It is a plain one, and was very easy in those early Days: No other than,
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than, in all their Contests about such Matters, to keep themselves strictly to the Faith, which had been, before this, delivered to the Saints.

This leads us to the

II. Second Enquiry I proposed, viz. by what Methods we can most effectually answer the real original Design of these Words.

The first Observation which here naturally offers itself, is, That, in order to contend earnestly for the Faith delivered to Christians, before this Epistle was written, we must find out what that Faith was, which was then actually and compleatly delivered. And this will necessarily engage us to ask, where We shall seek for it, who live so many Ages from that Time? And what can we answer to this, but that we must seek for it in those Books, in which alone it is to be found; which were either writ before this Epistle; or by Persons of that Age, empowered to deliver this Faith; not to be suspected of Error in their Delivery of it, and enabled to prove their Commission to the World: who, therefore, must be allowed to deliver the same Faith, without any Variation or Contradiction. To this plain, and only satisfactory Method, I am sensible there are many Adversaries, and many Objections raised.

There are some Christians, (and a very nu-

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Of contending for the Faith.

Of contending for the Faith. (Who know no other Guides, but the living Guides of the present Church; and acknowledge no other Faith, for the Faith once delivered to the Saints, about Seventeen Hundred Years ago, but that which is now delivered to them by their present Rulers, as such. One Part of These, and much the greater, take a very short Method of establishing this Point; and That is, by first laying down the Infallibility of the Present Church, and of every Man of the past Ages, through whose Mouth, or by whose Hands, the present Traditions of Faith have all descended to them. And this, indeed, would be a very good Method, if that single Point of Infallibility could be proved.

But this is a Point so gross, and so utterly void of all Proof, that a great Body of the Christian World have broke loose from the Power of this Monster. And, in order to This, they had no other way but to declare for the New Testament itself, as the only Guide, or Rule of Faith; the only Deliverer of this Faith to Us of later Ages. And This is the very Rule, I have now laid down. But, when This comes to be put in Practice; too many of the same Persons who have set it up as the Only Guide, turn round on a sudden, and let us know that They mean by it, not those
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those Sacred Original Writings themselves, but the Interpretations, or Sense, put upon them by Our Spiritual Superiors, to which We are sometimes said to be obliged, and bound in Duty to submit; and sometimes are allowed a Liberty of Examination: but in effect, put under an Obligation to find That to be Truth which is taught by these Leaders:

Upon this Head, there is again as great a Variety of Judgment, as there is amongst Others about the Seat of Infallibility. Sometimes, we are asked, whether we ought not to pay a regard to Those whose Business, and probably sincere Study, it is, to find out the Truth; and to dispense it to Us? Yes, undoubtedly; the Regard of serious Attention, and the Respect of a due Examination of what They affirm: but not the Submission due only to Infallibility. Shall we not submit our low Understandings to the higher Understandings of Others? or shall we pretend to oppose Our Judgments to Those of our Superiors, in Matters of this Kind? Let these, and the like, Questions be asked concerning the Christian Laity, in all the Popish, and many of the Protestant Countries: and Those of our Church will unanimously answer, No: The Rule is quite otherwise. Nay, with regard to the Reformation, it has been long ago, with one consent, said,
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Serm. said, that it was a glorious thing not to submit to the Voice of Any Men: but to reserve that Regard, for God, and for Christ, in Matters of Faith once delivered to the Saints.

And, again, It is asked by others, Is there not a furer way of knowing what was delivered about Seventeen hundred Years ago, than by going Ourselves to those Books which are acknowledged by All to have been then written? Shall we not take that Original Faith more securely from the Councils of Grave and Good Men, met together, perhaps Hundreds, of Years afterwards, for the settling that Faith; or from the Writings of particular ancient Doctors? To which it must be answered, That the Judgment of These ought to have its due Weight with All who can come to find out what that Judgment was: that but its due Weight is only such as it ought to have, after it shall be compared with the Declarations of the first Writings, to which it almost always professes to conform; and into which, at last, all the Weight must be resolved: That the Wisest and Greatest of these Men, supposing them uncapable of deceiving Others, yet were very capable of being deceived Themselves: That they very often differ from one another, and sometimes from themselves; and that They cannot give so good an Account of
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The question now before us may be soon and effectually resolved by asking, Which is the best and surest way of knowing exactly what the doctrine of any particular Church, suppose the Church of England, delivered at the time of the Reformation? Whether by consulting the writings of particular divines, many years after that period; or any assembly of them at this distance; or from the authentic acts, and declarations, and sermons, made and recorded at the very time we are enquiring about; and explained by all the helps from history and contemporary writings, which we can procure? For this instance is very proper to clear up what I have been saying, as it will prove to us, beyond all contradiction, that the doctrine, even of a particular church; and a doctrine recorded and set down in as accurate a manner, as was thought necessary for the avoiding diversity of opinions; that even such a doctrine may, in fifty years time, come to undergo some alterations; and, in a few years more, to be entirely changed, in the writings and discourses of most of the members of the same church. I mean particularly the points of doctrine, called the five points, relating to justification, and God's decrees,
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Decrees, and the like; which were at first esteemed as Fundamental, and even Essential, to the Church of Christ, as any others can be; And yet have been at length much changed by gradual Alterations. For, as the Writers and Explainers were Many, This Number naturally, in a very few Years, produced a very remarkable Variation from what was once settled; Every one who writes unavoidably using his own Style, and Manner of Expression, which often alone begins the Change; and perhaps, in some Cases, his own Scheme of Philosophy which, introduced into Religion, very much affects the Scheme of Doctrine to be explained; and his own Judgment in interpreting and commenting upon the Words already fixed; which carries forward the same Change. — And if This be applied to the First Christian Writers, after the Apostles were departed; it will prove that, as their Language, and Philosophy, were various; and, as they were naturally led by these to differ from one another, in what they professed to explain and settle; great Variations from the Original Doctrine, might easily, by degrees, creep into the Doctrines delivered by Them; and therefore, that nothing remains to Us, firm and stable in Points of Faith, but what is recorded in the First Original Books themselves, as the
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Faith once delivered by Christ, and his Apostles.

The Protestant Rule, therefore, remains true and righteous, notwithstanding the Attempts of many to weaken and confound it. To find out what that Faith was, which was once delivered to the Saints, as necessary for all Christians, there is no other Method for a Christian, at this Distance, to take, but to search those Books in which it was at first delivered. And the Rule for his Direction in that Enquiry is, That every thing necessary to be believed by Him, considered as a Christian, is in those Books not left to be gathered by Consequences, or Implications; but declared expressly to be necessary to his obtaining the Favour of God promised to Christians. These are the Points he is to attend to, whilst he is searching after what is the Faith absolutely necessary to Him, as a Christian. For no one can possibly think, that every thing absolutely necessary is not, in the Gospel Revelation, expressly proclaimed to be so: The Supposition of which will make it a very useless, or, at least, a very imperfect Rule; or, rather, no Rule at all.

The Goodness and Wisdom of God will be manifest from this Rule; because the Points, expressly declared, in express Words, to be necessary, will be found to be few, and not fur-
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II. surrounded with that Confusion and Darkness which Human Explications and Additions have brought in by way of Light. For, as the Wisdom of Men is Foolishness with God; so is the Light of Men, who would be wise, in Matters of Revelation alone, above what is written, Darkness with God. To proceed,

As the Sense, or Meaning of the Declarations of this kind, in the New Testament, is to be the Matter of Christian Faith; the only Rule is, That in order to find out the Faith once delivered, we must all endeavour, to the utmost of our Power, to find out the true Sense of those Passages, in which any thing is declared necessary to be believed, in order to our Salvation; and to this Purpose, must make use of our own Understandings, and form the best Judgment we ourselves can. I know of no other Rule, but this, given by Almighty God, for the Direction both of the Learned, and of the Unlearned. And if He has left no other Guide, no other ought to be imposed upon the World, by way of Emendation to the Rule of Heaven. As to the Learned; it is generally allowed, that This may be a good Rule for Them. But with relation to the Unlearned, great Outcries are made upon their Frailty, their Ignorance, their frequent Errors; and the like. Whereas, if Frailties
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and Errors be real Objections; they lye as such.
much against its being a Rule for the Learned
themselves; who have, in all Ages of the Church, been the chief Fountains, both of
real and reputed Schisms and Heresies. It
must, therefore, still be the Rule, not only for
the Learned, but even for the Unlearned. And,
if it be found true, that the Points, declared
necessary to Salvation, are, at least, as well
and plainly expressed in the Words of the New Testament, as any Man, or Collection of Men,
can now express them; and that, in these
Points, expressly declared to be Necessary, all
Translations agree; and that, in the Scripture
Words, expressing them, all Learned Men, of
all Parties, agree; These must amount to a
moral Certainty to act upon, in such a Case:
especially when it is added, That it has not
pleased God to settle any other Rule for their Guidance. When St. Peter complained that
the Unlearned, and Unstable, in those early
Days, wrested the other Scriptures, as well as
some Words of St. Paul, to their own Destruc-
tion; this could not be meant of the Unlearn-
ed, in our modern Sense of that Word; but
probably pointed out Those Bad Christians,
who, not having learnt the true Nature of
their Religion, neglected the plain necessary
Points delivered, and distorted some obscure
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Passages to wicked Purposes, in their Practice. But whatever He meant; He himself proposed no Method of Cure for this Evil, but the Warning He gives of it, and the Care which He teaches all to take, against being seduced by such Errors of the Wicked; and the Advice he adds to increase in the Knowledge of Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. iii. 16, 17, 18.

We may, therefore, go on to observe, that, as it is absurd to suppose that any Man can be saved by the Faith of Another; or by any Belief, but what is truly his own; so, there is no possible Method of having a Faith of his own, properly so called, without building it entirely upon what appears right to his own Judgment, such as it is, after his best Endeavours for Information; and his sincerest Care to find out what God requires in the Gospel. If he rests his Hopes of Heaven upon his professing to believe, as another Man, or Body of Men, profess to believe; in the first place, He does not know whether They themselves believe, or only pretend to believe, what they lay upon Others to profess; and in the next place, it is certain, He really, in this Method, believes nothing by any Faith of his own; but only thinks He believes, because he is pleased to take certain Points upon Trust; and to be sure that something is right, of which He himself
himself knows nothing, because Another, whom he deputes to think for him, tells him that it is so; or rather, that it ought to be so professed. How great a Delusion is this, for any Man to imagine that he can be made acceptable to God by a Faith which is not his own, but the supposed Faith of Others?

Let the Shame of such an Absurdity be left to That Church alone, which is forced to add Absurdity to Absurdity, in order to make the Heap consistent; and which alone may, with any Decency, teach that Christians are saved only by Believing (that is, thinking they believe) as the Church believes. For, after having taught, that Men may be saved by the Good Works of Others, tho’ they have none of their own; It may consistently add to this, another comfortable Point, that Men may be saved by the Faith of Others, though they have none of their own: Especially having, in its System of Faith, so many Articles of Supererogation; as well as, in its Saints, so many Works of Supererogation. But let not Protestants follow them, tho’ at never so great a Distance, in this Destruction of Christianity. No one can have a Faith of his own, who makes not use of his own Judgment, in fixing in his Mind what God calls upon him to believe, as necessary to a Christian. And This is the Reason why
why he is to make use of his own Judgment; not because it is better than the Judgment of Others; nor because he himself imagines, or thinks, it to be better: but because it is his own. It is the best God has been pleased to give him; and, being his own, it is therefore, his Guide in this Matter, without which he can have no Faith of his own; and consequently, without the Exercise of which, He cannot please God. So far is this from being the Arrogance, or Pride, of setting up His own Judgment against his Superiors, in a bad Sense; or vaunting it as better than Theirs; that it is his Duty, his absolute Duty, to make use of it, in the Case of the Faith once delivered to the Saints. Let what will be the Consequence of this, it is the only Rule God has left him to walk by. Without this, he will be so far from contending for the Faith once delivered to the Saints, that he cannot know so much as what it is; nor have any Faith at all, to contend for.

Add to this, what must always be remarked, that Almighty God can guard against all the supposed bad Consequences of his own Rule, better than all the Wisdom of this World put together: Which, we see in the present Case, never fails, in attempting to cure the Evils of such a reasonable Rule, to kill and destroy that real
real Faith, which this Method alone can procure. And not only this; but He, who is also the great Judge of the World, can and will make all those Allowances for the Errors of his imperfect Creatures, in their sincere following of his own Rule; which He will not be at all obliged to make, for the miserable and wicked Consequences of setting up a Rule of their own, in Contradiction to His. But I come now,

III. To conclude with a few Observations, naturally arising from what has been said. And

1. I shall only just observe, as I pass, if this Text should be found, at last, to refer to the Contests of Christians, suffering Themselves for what They themselves believe; how greatly, and how fatally, are They mistaken, who apply it to the making Others suffer, in any Instance, small or great, for what those Others do not believe? Thus transferring, according to the vicious Self-love of Human Nature, the irksome Duty of undergoing the fiery Trial, or Contest, themselves, for what They themselves believe; to Others, whom They often bring to Distress and Suffering, for the sake of not believing exactly the same? But supposing the Words to relate to the
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the Contests of professed Christians, in Matters of Faith one against another,

2. It is evident, that the Laws of the Christian Contest must be the Laws of the Christian Religion; and that whoever transgresses one of these Laws, in this Combat, forfeits all Right to the Reward of a Conqueror. And this at once cuts off all Pretence from Christians, under Colour of securing or settling the Faith, of contending for it, or any supposed Part of it, by the Wrath of Man; or, even the Anger and Passion of Words; much more, by the Terror of Corporal Punishments: In a word, by any Method, but what is prescribed in the Gospel itself.

3. Since we have, by God’s Providence, those Antient Books, in which our Lord himself, his Apostles, and their Companions, have compleatly laid down what is of necessity to be believed; how injurious is it to represent Those as Innovators, whose whole Design is to bring Christians to search out their Faith in those Books? The Faith, which is there recorded, must be the most antient Faith: And, therefore, cannot possibly lye under the Imputation of Novelty. The Additions to it of After-ages, let them be as near as possible to those First Writings, yet still are truly Innovations and Novelties, with respect to what
what was settled before them. Neither can any Length of Time, or any Number of Ages, give them the true Antiquity of Christ's Religion, or ever make them any other than Novelties, and Innovations. And whoever refer Christians to any Writings, or Transactions, of Ages later than the Apostolical; unless it be as they may refer them to any Writings of the present Age, by way of Helps and Assistance, to find out the Meaning of what was before delivered; These are properly the Introducers and Encouragers of Innovations in the Christian Religion. But,

4. I cannot but observe, that, in order to preserve this Faith, delivered in those Antient Books, entire; the most secure, as well as the most Christian way, is to preserve the Old Words, and the Old Language, of those Books, as unvaried and unchanged, as possible. The Reason is plain, because They are the Words in which it pleased God it should at first be delivered. And therefore, tho' many Persons may mistake in their different Apprehensions concerning the Sense of these Words; yet, we may be sure, whilst we retain these Words, that we retain what God himself has seen fit should be delivered and transmitted to us, as the best Conveyance, all things considered, of the Faith required of Us. This I mean particularly with regard
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II. regard to those Articles of Belief, which are properly Christian; because these could not be so much as known to Christians at all, but by the Declarations of the very Author and Finisher of their Faith. It may be otherwise in the Point of Worship; and in the Moral Rules of Practice; in which Reason, or Natural Religion, may be necessarily applied, to settle the true Meaning and Extent of what is said. But as to Points of Faith, peculiar to Christians, I do not see how any Rule can be better than what I am now laying down: Nor any thing more reasonable, than that All should be accounted Christians, who profess the Points, properly called the Points of Christian Faith, in the Words in which They were delivered, and now are expressed, in the New Testament itself.

I am sensible, it is said, that Heresies arose, i.e. that some Men differed from Others, in their Notions founded upon these Words: And therefore, it was thought necessary to change the Language, in which this Faith was delivered to us. But did not Almighty God foresee this great Evil, of Difference of Opinion, in the Points in which Men have since differed? He did: And yet He left our Faith delivered in those Words, which are said to have been the Foundation of those Differences. Or, are We wiser than God, in chusing more effectual Words
Of contending for the Faith. Words to this Purpose, than those in which the Persons commissioned by Him delivered His Will? Who will say this? Or did He appoint that, in After-ages, the Antient Language should be totally changed, for a New System of Words; and that the Faith of Christians should be delivered over again in Novel Expressions? If he did, let a plain Text be produced; and not such a confequential Argument, of the Usefulness or Fitness of it, as may be urged, even for the Popish Infallibility itself.

But when New Language has, by the Help of such an Argument, been introduced; what has been the Effect? Good and Honest Men alone have been the Sufferers. These have been cramped and disturbed, and, perhaps, deprived of all worldly Privileges, by it. The Dishonest, and Unthinking, and Slavish, Minds have always rejoiced in such an earthly Peculium, as this Method secures to them. And, if we consult Experience, the New Words invented for the Security of the Faith, with regard both to Learned and Unlearned, have been generally, such as have increased, and not diminished, Heresies and Schisms: Hard Terms, metaphysical and abstruse Expressions, ambiguous themselves, tho' introduced under Pretense of avoiding Ambiguity; utterly unintelligible by the Unlearned, who yet are to be saved by Faith as well as others; and eternally
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And thus it will always be, when Men become wiser, in their own Conceit, to prevent Evils, than God himself. They first go out of the Road which He has chalked out: and then they find, at the End, that they cause a great deal of Evil, without preventing any: And only invent Instruments to distress, but not to convince, any Man of his real, or supposed, Errors.

Lastly, By contending for the Faith, as it was once delivered to the Saints in the New Testament, we shall only press upon Men the receiving what it is has pleased God to deliver; but shall avoid that Great Evil of enforcing upon Them the Consequences, which We ourselves see, or think we see, to follow from the Doctrines first delivered. It derogates from the Wisdom and Goodness of God to think that He has not provided, that all Points truly fundamental, should be delivered in express Terms, and, in so many Words, declared to be fundamental. And this must ever be a great Prejudice against any Point enforced by Men, as fundamental; to find them obliged to deduce it by a Consequential Arguing from their own Sense of the Words of Scripture.

The just Consequences from any Truth, are, certainly, equally true with that Truth, from which they follow. And it is as certain, that
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to Him who sees them to follow, or thinks he sees them, they are as Truths; and may justly be maintained as such. But they are not so to others, who see them not in the same Light. Nor can they be made necessary to be believed by Others, 'till these Others themselves discover their Relation to the Primitive Truths of Religion: And then they will, of Course, and Necessity, believe them. But to make the Consequences, supposed or real, of fundamental Doctrines, to be fundamental to All Christians, and necessary to be explicitly believed, is first to create a new Rule of Faith; and then it is to suppose, as a Truth, what is the greatest Falshood in Fact, that all Men's Capacities and Understandings are equally fitted to see the same Deductions, and the same Consequences, which Some may see.

And this is a great Objection against all Innovations of Language in fundamental Points; That almost all those New Words and Phrases, upon which the greatest Stress has been laid, are seen to be framed from Consequential Arguings: not to be merely other Words for the Old Words, but to be framed upon a particular Interpretation of those Old Words, and by a Train of Consequences drawn from the antient Expressions, explained in a particular Manner.
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In fine, the Faith to be contended for, was compleatly delivered, before it was to be contended for. The Direction of Other Men's Faith is not, our Capacity of seeing Consequences, or our Skill in Interpreting; but the plain Declarations of Christ, and his Apostles. To contend for it, in the very Form in which it was at first once delivered, is a Glory to a Christian. It is to follow God, by contending for it in a Method surrounded with those Inconveniencies only, with which it has pleased Him to leave it surrounded, for the Trial of the Sincerity of his Servants. To contend for the Faith, as it has been over and over again delivered by Men, has, at least, this Evil in it, that it is a forsaking the Method chosen by Almighty God, as insufficient; and choosing Another, which, by being effectually pursued, has been already seen to be the Inlet of All Superstition, all Absurdity, and all Persecution, into the Church of Christ: from the Reproach, and Guilt, and Burthen, of which, may it please God at length to deliver it, through his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord!
Of Judging One Another.

SERMON III.

Preached before the King, Febr. 18, 1721-2.

ROMANS xiv. 4.

Who art Thou that judgest another Man's Servant? To his own Master he standeth, or falleth.

We find, in this Chapter, the Apostle, with his usual Zeal, opposing that Spirit of Censuring and Judging One Another, which very early shewed itself in the Christian Church; and, at the same time, displaying before the Eyes of all Christians, in his own Example, the greatest Instance of Temper and good Conduct in this respect. He knew the Genius of the Christian Religion perfectly well. He was acquainted where the Truth lay, in those Differences which raised this Spirit of Censure in his Time. He is free to declare his own Judgment, on one side of the Question. But tho' He had all the Light and
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and Authority of an Apostle, to enforce an Agreement with Himself; yet, He chose rather to plead, even with Warmth, for Condescension, and Love, and Regard, to Those who were not of his Mind; and whom He knew to be in an Error.

The things which gave ground for this ill Behaviour of Christians to one another, were of the smallest Moment; Some thinking to please their common Master, amongst other greater Matters, with observing several Jewish and trivial Rules with respect to Eating, and Holydays, and the like; Others, thinking this a Weakness, and that Christians were freed from such like Burthens: But neither contented with enjoying their own Judgments; but One Sort censuring and judging the Other, for the Observation, or Neglect, of such Matters, just according as They themselves thought fit either to observe, or neglect, them. Here it was fit, therefore, for the Apostle to interpose; and shewed the Nature and Temper of Christianity, with respect to the Case before Him. But, alas! This evil Spirit of Censure, and Judging, was not then lay'd, even by the Authority of an Apostle: nor by the Argument taken from that Day of the Lord, which He placed in their view, and from that Judgment-seat of Christ, their com-
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mon Master, to which He directed their Minds; that they might not dare to raise Judgment-seats of their own, in order to try and condemn One Another.

Too much of this Spirit was still seen in the earliest Ages of the Church, and too much remains to this Day: to which there is no other Remedy to be applied, but the same Remedy prescribed in the Gospel; the same Rules laid down by St. Paul; and the same Argument, which he thought fit to make use of. For, Christianity was revealed from Heaven, not only to lead Men into all necessary Truth; but into the Paths of Humanity towards Those who are really in Error, or supposed to be so; to conquer the Tempers and Passions of Men; to teach them not to make their own Notions the Measure of other Men's Conduct; to habituate them to such a forbearing, complying, yielding, and tender Disposition, as may be a moving Argument to their great and supreme Judge, at last, to forgive and acknowledge Them.

There being, therefore, so much of the contrary Spirit to this, still reigning amongst Christians, tho' not one Grain of it in Christianity itself, it must be very proper to consider the Argument, here made use of by St. Paul; and see, if it will not help to cure that Distemper
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III. The temper of Mind, by which many Christians still rave against Others, with all the Marks and Expressions of Enmity and Reproach; and often shut the Gates of the Church, and of Heaven itself, against them; declare them unacceptable to God; and condemn them, with as much Authority and Solemnity, as if They were appointed by God to be their final Judges. Who art Thou, says the Apostle, that judgest the Servant of Another? To his own Master be standeth, or falleth. From which Words, the following Particulars may properly be recommended to Christians, as Arguments against this Spirit of Censure and Judging.

I. That we are not qualified thus to sit in Judgment upon One Another.

II. That it is not the Province of Us, who are but fellow Servants to the same Master.

III. That it is a Province peculiarly reserved to Himself, by that common Master whom We all serve. To which let us add, what is implied to the same Purpose, ver. 10. of this Chapter,

IV. That it is our Business to prepare for the final Judgment of Ourselves, and not to be found judging Others. For we shall all stand before the Judgment-seat of Christ: And, ver. 12.
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Every One of Us shall give an Account of Himself to God.

I. We are not at all qualified thus to sit in Judgment upon One Another. For, Who art Thou that judgest Another, but a weak, prejudiced, fallible Man thyself; and, consequently, not at all qualified for such an Office? This is, indeed, a strong Consideration, against our assuming to Ourselves the Office of Judging Others, That We are void of all those Qualifications, which are requisite to our judging aright about Them; and particularly, with regard to their Religious Conduct; in which we are most apt to exercise this Dominion over them. For, being Ourselves weak and fallible, and often passionate Men, We are so easily imposed upon and misled; so insensibly and even undesignedly prejudiced; so little acquainted with the first Springs of Action in Others; so wholly Strangers to the inward Thoughts and Designs of their Hearts; so unable to know all the several Circumstances that ought to be thrown into the Balance; (their Education; the unavoidable Bias put upon their Minds, before They were able to think for Themselves; their natural Tempers; their Inducements and Motives;) and so unwilling to make all those necessary and due Allow-
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SERM. Allowances, which We always expect in our own Case: That, on all these, and many more Accounts, who would venture so far out of his Depth, as to declare, or insinuate, any thing concerning not only the evil Designs of Others, but their Unacceptableness to God; who have no other apparent and visible Mark of wilful Evil upon Them, but their differing, in some Opinions, or circumstantial Practises, from Ourselves?

And there is one great Proof of our being unqualified, either by the Defects of our Wills, or our Understandings, to set up Ourselves for Judges over Others; that it is our constant Way, in this unreasonable Procedure, to judge Others by our own Notions, and our own Opinions, i. e. by our own Powers and Capacities: Whereas God Almighty, the great Searcher of all Hearts, will not judge one Man by the Notions of Another, but by the Man's own Notions, and his own Capacity. And He is infallible in his Decisions, and unerring in his Knowledge, of what is Truth. We condemn Others, not because they are not consistent with Themselves; not because they speak, or act, in Religion, against their own Consciences; but because they agree not with Us, or contradict our Opinions. A Procedure, which all Men so constantly judge to be unjustifiable,
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justifiable, when it comes to their own Turn to be so used, that They think Nothing more unreasonable; or more unjust. Did we truly value and regard that Simplicity, and Integrity of Mind, without which Truth itself is but an accidental Thing, and of no Value to the Possessor; or had We a true Christian Love of our Neighbour; We should take a Delight in every Mark of apparent Honesty, which We meet with, even where We meet with the greatest Difference of Opinion at the same Time; and our great Concern would be then expressed, when We find so much of what Others perhaps think, or call, Truth, taken up without Examination; reposited in ill-tempered Minds; void of all other Recommendation, but an accidental Agreement with Ourselves. But whilst our Passions are as strong, as our Understandings are weak; and whilst We are as unwilling to treat any thing well, but what is agreeable to our own Notions, as We are unable to see and know what is requisite to our making a due Judgment of Others; We ought to acknowledge Ourselves unfit for the Office; and to keep at as great a Distance from it, as possible. But,

II. As We are not at all qualified for the Work of judging Others; so it is wholly out
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SERM. out of our Province, who are Ourselves but fellow Servants with Those whom We thus treat as if We were their Lords and Masters. Who art Thou that judgest the Servant of Another? One in the same Rank and Order with Thyself? His being of another Mind, or differing in Judgment, about some Things relating to his Master's Service, in which honest Men may differ; is no real Injury to Us; it imports no Calamity; threatens Us with no Ruine: and therefore, We have not the Pretense of Self-Defense, or Self-Preservation, to take upon Us the Province. If these have any thing to do in this Matter, it must be to induce Us to act a quite contrary Part. For Nothing will so reconcile Others to Us; Nothing will so meliorate and soften their Dispositions towards Ourselves; Nothing will so defend Us from those Censures and Judgments, which are so uneasy to Us, when they come to be our own Lot; as our not censuring and judging Them. For They have as much Right to do it to Us, as We have to Them. We differ as much from Them, as They do from Us. They are as tenacious of what they believe, as We are of our own Faith: and think it as sacred, and as important, as We can think our own: and, as far as We can know, are as fully persuaded, that it has all the Marks of Truth upon it. We
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We see, therefore, Our great Business is, with SERM. Honesty and Integrity, to serve our own Master. If we should think it too much for our Fellow Servants, to interrupt and molest Us, in what We are persuaded is for his Service, or the Propagation of what He approves; and esteem them much out of their Province in such a Behaviour; let Us learn that We are equally out of our Province, when We, in the same Manner, disturb and vex our Fellow Servants, with our severe Censures, and Judgments.

III. It is to be particularly considered, that this is the Province reserved to Himself, by that common Master whom We all serve. Who art Thou that judgest another's Servant? To his own Master be standeth, or falleth; that Master whom he serveth, whose Disciple he is, who is to be his judge; and whose peculiar Office it is to determine concerning the Behaviour of his Servants, from Multitudes of Circumstances, which He alone can and does know. To Him the last Appeal is justly made. He is qualified for the Office, being perfectly knowing, wise, and good; perfectly free from all Bias and Prejudice; fully acquainted with every Particular necessary to the forming a right Judgment; and fully disposed to make all fitting
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fitting and reasonable Allowances, for his Creatures and Servants; and none, but such as are so. And this Office peculiarly belongs to Him, as he Himself has declared; He being the Master, who will call every individual Servant to give up his own Account; to be judged according to his own Capacity, his own Talents; his own Opportunities; and not according to those of other Men, or according to the Humours and Passions of Others of his Fellow Servants. And this being declared to be the Province of God himself, in order to deter Us from meddling with it; how should it affect Us to consider, that whatever rash, hasty, ungrounded, prejudiced, uncandid, Judgment, We pass upon our Neighbour, for what perhaps, he, in the Simplicity of his Heart, believes to be Service to God, and to Christ: We invade the Province of God; usurp his Dominion; erect Ourselves into Gods over our Brethren; and, like the Man of Sin, exalt Ourselves to a Dignity and Office which is the sacred Prerogative of God himself, who alone knoweth the Hearts of Men.

IV. I observed that the Apostle (in the 10th Verse of this Chapter) puts Christians in Mind, in order to remove their Thoughts from judging
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ing One Another, that We shall all stand before the Judgment-seat of Christ, and, in the 12th Verse, that We shall every One give an Account of himself to God: plainly recommending it to our Thoughts, that We have enough to do to prepare for our own Judgment, at that great and solemn Day; without troubling Ourselves with the cenfuring and judging Others. And, indeed, what greater Argument can there be? For, Who, that considers that there is a Day coming, when he shall himself appear before an All-knowing Judge, to be condemned or acquitted, as his own Actions have been agreeable or disagreeable to the Law of his Master; Who, that considers that he has such a Concern upon his Hands, such a Trial to expect, such a Judgment to meet, will easily find Time to employ upon the Behaviour of a Fellow-servant, whose Master he is not, and for whom he is not to answer?

Nay, Who that thinks of that solemn Day, does not hope for, and stand in need of, the Mercy of God to himself, or, in other Words, the Favour and Candour of his Judge? And who that considers the Matter in this Light, can suffer in himself a Severity towards Others; whilst he himself expects all reasonable Allowances at the Hands of his great Judge?
If Thou, Lord, shouldst be extreme, to mark what is done amiss; O Lord, who may abide it? And, since it is this Extremity of Rigour in our great Judge, that We have so much Reason to dread for Ourselves; how can We expect any other, if We be, not only extreme to mark what is really amiss, but to judge and censure in our Brethren, what, for ought We know, may be founded upon the strictest Honesty and Integrity; the most lovely Qualities in the Eyes of God? Who art Thou, therefore, O Man, who judgest the Servant of Another? To his own Master he standeth or falleth. Nay, We shall all stand before the Judgment-seat of Christ; and every One of Us shall give Account of himself, and not of Others, to God. These are Words which, as We have seen, contain the most powerful Argument against all unreasonable Censure, and Judging, of our Brethren; such Arguments as human Minds, rightly informed, and rightly disposed, cannot withstand.

But what is it, then, it may be said, that Christianity allows in this Case? Doth it not permit Us to take any Notice of the Errors and Mistakes, in the important Matters of Religion, in which We imagine Others to be? Have We no Part to act with respect to Them? And are they wholly to be overlooked by Us? I answer, by no Means. The Gospel rather
rather obliges Us to take Notice of them, than the contrary. But this, in a Way very different from that in which generally Christians have done it. Two Particulars I shall mention in answer to this Inquiry.

1st, We are not at all forbidden, but encouraged, to endeavour to remove all Prejudices, and Errors, out of the Minds of our fellow Christians; and to recommend to them, with all Demonstration both of good Argument and Christian Temper, the Way of Truth, which We are persuaded is right. Thus, in this very Chapter, St. Paul doth not scruple to declare his own Judgment, in favour of that Notion, that there was no Sort of Meat but what it was lawful to partake of; and this, to be sure, with Design to lead insensibly those Christians, who were troubled with the contrary Scruple, into a true Notion of this Matter; that they might be rid of a false Notion in their Judgments, and a great Burthen in their Practice. And, without doubt, He would not have scrupled to have argued the Point more largely with any who were of another Mind, upon any just Occasion. Nor is there the least Reason to be given from Christianity, or the Practice of the Apostle, why it should not be allowable, and commendable, for any Christians to endeavour to persuade Others
Others of their Errors, even tho' they be not of the first Order, or of the most malignant Consequence. But then,

2dly, After this is done in the most inoffensive Way, all the rest must be left to Christian Charity; which never shines brighter, never displays its Glory more, than when it shews its Power amongst those of different Minds, and different Persuasions. St. Paul, in this Chapter, layeth down his own Judgment. And, tho' he was an Apostle, and had as just a Claim as possible, to be followed in that Judgment; yet He doth not immediately expect, that all those Christians, prejudiced and biased the other Way, should at once leave off their Practises, or correct their wrong Judgments, in a Matter which concerned not the Vitals of Religion; but thinks it most for the Honour of God, that Charity should shew its Part in these Differences: and rather chooses, that Humility and brotherly Kindness should conquer Passion and personal Prejudice, than that they all should presently be obliged to have, or profess, the same Notions; or to conform themselves to the Judgment of One Another. To love, and bear with, Those who agree with Us in all Things, is but a low Pitch of Good-Nature and Virtue: I had almost said, it is but sacrificing to our own Pride; and
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and little better than loving Ourselves over others again in Others. But to bear with, and to be kind in our Opinions of, Those who differ from Us, is to sacrifice our Pride and Self-Complacence at the Altar of Charity: It is truly to love Others, who are so much the farther from being Ourselves, as They are removed from Us in Judgment and Opinion about some Points. This is a Pitch of Virtue worthy of a Christian, That he judges not the invisible Ground of the Behaviour of Others; that, as God, for Christ's Sake, has forgiven him, and is ready to make all reasonable Allowances for him, so is he ready to be candid in interpreting the Actions of Others; and to bear with all that Variety of Judgment which can possibly be accounted for, from that Variety of Tempers, Education, and Conversation, which is unavoidable in this State.

If any one now enquires after the ill Effects of the contrary Temper; it is enough to say, that it is the Beginning of all Persecution which is as directly opposite to the Spirit of the Gospel, as any Error can be to Truth; and is, indeed, a much worse Evil than all the Errors put together, which, in all Ages of the Church, have been ever pretended, or designed, to be cured by it. We may see, in the earliest Days of the Church, what Evils sprang from
from such small Beginnings, as some may ac-
count this mutual Censure and Judging to be;
and how one Degree of Iniquity brought on
another. In the Apostles Days, and even un-
der their Eyes, the Scene began with mu-
tual Censure and Condemnation in Words
only. The Interposition of St. Paul with the
Christians at Rome, We may hope, kept this
Evil a while from breaking out into greater
Violence. But some Years after the Apo-
tle's Death, it shewed itself again, and particu-
larly at Rome, the very Place to which He
had writ his Advice; and in a Manner,
ought to give all Christians Warning at what
a Distance they should ever keep themselves
from this Temper. I mean that very remark-
able Instance of Violence, shewn by the Bishop
of this very City of Rome, against Another
Bishop, on no more important Occasion than
That of his celebrating a Festival, on a Day
different from That on which it was observed
at Rome: and this Violence carried as far as
Renouncing All Communion with his Brother-
Bishop; and with a great Number of Other
Churches which joined with Him.

This was before the Powers of this World
were become Christian. As soon as That was
the Case, This fiery Spirit brought the Secular
Arm into its Aid: and by degrees, the Pun-
nishments
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nishments properly belonging to Temporal Affairs, were made the Instruments of the Rage of Christians against one another. For human Passion seldom knows where to stop, when once the Mind is taken off from that mild, and gentle, and forbearing, Temper, which is so great a Part of the Law of God.

Happy had it been for the After-ages, if all Christians had learnt, from such Examples, not to depart from this most reasonable Branch of his Law. But, however it has been hitherto; so many hundred Years Experience may, by this time, one would hope, teach the Christian World, and the Protestant World especially, to recollect itself. Invain has the Gospel reached our Ears: Invain doth That attempt to root out Barbarity, Inhumanity, Violence, Persecution, unless the Beginning be laid in our Tempers; unless we learn to be inwardly well-disposed, and candid to one another. For indeed the Contrary, even in Thought, is no better than a mental Persecution of our Neighbour, which, first express'd in hard and angry Words only, seldom fails to end in open and avowed Acts of external Persecution; whenever Opportunity adds Power to the Wills of Those who indulge Themselves in so unchristian a Disposition.

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SERM. Upon the whole; If the tender Compassion of God to Us be any thing more than Sound; if We be sensible what We are Ourselves, and what our Neighbours are to Us; if We have any Regard to that great common Master whom we all serve; if we ever think of that great Tribunal at which We must all appear: Let Us be induced by all these, to cast out of our Thoughts, and Words, all that Censure and Judging of Others, which will only help to condemn Ourselves: and let Us cultivate in our Breasts that happy and god-like Temper of Forbearance and Candour, which will contribute so much to our inward Peace now, and to our final Forgiveness, and Happiness, hereafter.
Of the true Use of this World.

SERMON IV.

Preached before the King, Febr. 21, 1724-5.

1 Corinthians vii. 31.
And they that use this World, as not abusing it:
For the Fashion of this World passeth away.

After St. Paul had, in the former Part of this Chapter, given the Corinthians such prudential Rules, relating to their Behaviour in the World, as the Circumstances of Christians at that Time required, He comes to sum up what He chiefly intended by all that He had been saying. This He doth in the 29th, 30th, and 31st Verses. Verse 29. But this I say, Brethren, the Time is short. It remaineth that both they that have Wives, be as though they had none: So our Translation expresseth it. But it seems more agreeable to the Original, to connect the Parts of that Sentence, after this Manner. But, Brethren,
this is what I am saying, and inculcating upon you, (because, as to what remaineth, the Time, or Opportunity, that will be afforded Us in this World, is very short) This is, I say, what I am pressing upon you, that they that have Wives: They that have Families to concern themselves for, should thus far be as though they had none, that They should not suffer themselves to be overwhelmed with worldly Cares, so as to forget the State they are in, as They are Christians: Ver. 30. that They that weep, or are under any Affliction, should be as tho' they wept not; should behave themselves under it, as Persons who in a short Time shall be released from it: that They that rejoice, should be as tho' they rejoiced not; They that enjoy the most prosperous Condition of Life, should behave themselves with Moderation, as Persons under a Sense of the Shortness of that Time which I am speaking of: and They that buy, should be as tho' They possessed not; should behave themselves only as Tenants for a very short Space, not as lasting Possessors of what They purchase.

At the 31st Verse, He sums up, in a very comprehensive Expression, the Whole of what He means to press upon Christians at that Time, with regard to all the Goods of this World: viz. that all who use this World, should behave
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behave themselves, as not abusing it; either, SERM.
as not using it with too great an Intenseness of
Affection towards it; or, much more, as not
using it, or any Portion of it, in any Manner,
or for any Purpose, contrary to the Original
Design of the Creator of all Things. Then
the Apostle adds this Reason for what He faith,
for the Fashion, or Figure, of this World passeth
away: That is, either the World itself; or the
present State and Condition of Things in the
World. This is all, according to the Apostle,
to pass away; or to be so entirely altered, as
that the same Things, and Circumstances of
Things, can have no Place after that Altera-
tion.

In this Passage, indeed, the Apostle may be
supposed to have had a principal View to that
Scene of Persecutions which was then coming
upon true Christians; and which should alter,
to them, the State of the World entirely: and
likewise, to that total Dissolution of the present
Fabrick and Face of Things, which in those
first Days was certainly understood, and often
spoken of, as a Matter just then coming, and
very near at hand.

But, without any critical Examination of
the precise Meaning of the Words, as They
stand in this particular Place: and considering
them in that more general Sense which the
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First Sound of them may be supposed to raise in Us, as allowing an Use of the World, lawful and necessary; as condemning the Abuse of it; and as urging a Reason against abusing it, from the uncertain Condition of this World; it will be proper for Us to consider,

I. What is meant by the World; and what is comprehended under this Word.

II. When it is that We use it, as it is our Praise and Duty to do. And,

III. What it is to abuse it. And then to make a short Reflexion upon the Argument here made use of, by the Apostle. And all, with Reference to Ourselves, and the State of the World at present.

I. The first thing is to consider what is meant by the World; and what is comprehended under this Word. And here it is most evident that by the World, we are to understand, whatever this World contains in it; whatever it can boast of, as on any Account desirable; and particularly, whatever there is in it, that Men are seen to think it most worth their while to pursue after, and to obtain. All this may be reduced to these three, Riches, Honour, and Pleasure; the three great Masters of the Affections, and Actions, of Those who think most of this World.
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Riches may well be mentioned in the first Serm.

Place, because they lead the way to worldly Honour, and worldly Pleasure. They have it in their Power most commonly to procure whatever a Man may propose, or fancy to himself, as necessary to his Happiness in this World: and, too often, to procure what ought to be the Reward of Merit, and Virtue alone. But then, as they seem frequently to be desired, and sought after, even for their own Sakes; I mean by the Covetous, who despise what is called Honour, and know no other Pleasure, but that of having much of them in their Possession: They may well claim a distinct Place by themselves, as they are seen to stand for themselves, and all other good Things too; to be not only Riches; but Honour, and Pleasure, in the Opinion of Those who set their Hearts upon them. But, as there are Others who are as fond of worldly Honour and Grandeur, as the most Covetous Man can be of his Mony; and Others, as transported with the Love of Pleasure, as either of these can be with their Idols; and, as Both these latter can make Riches subservient to the Objects of their particular Desires: They may justly claim, every One of them, to be distinctly spoken of, on this Occasion.

Nor
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Nor is the Nature of this World, or of Man, so framed, as that We must suppose that Riches, Honour, or Pleasure, are not good Things; or, that all Desire of them, or Enjoyment of them, is sinful. Far from it. This World is our Habitation at present. It is our House of Entertainment, in our Passage to another. The three great Entertainments that it sets before Us, are Riches, Honour, and Pleasure. They cannot but be accounted Goods (till they are wilfully made Evils) by all who carry human Nature about them, and live in such a State as this is.

This being then the Nature of the World; and these being the principal Goods it pretends to; and of so great Consequence, as to be ever chiefly comprehended in the Name World; it is plain, that the Use of these, is the Use of the World; and the Abuse of these, the Abuse of the World: that, when We use Riches, Honour, and Pleasure, as we ought, then We use the World without abusing it; and that then We abuse the World, when We abuse the Riches, Honours, or Pleasures, of it. Let Us then,

II. In the Second Place, enquire, as I proposed, when it is that We use the World, that is the Riches, Honours, or Pleasures of it, as We ought; as it is our Praise, and Duty to do. The first Step of all is to use them innocently, so as not to be induced, by the Love of them,
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them, to the Violation of any One Law of Sermon. God; or of Reason, which is His Gift. The second is to use them so as to make them the Instruments of much good, and of lasting Happiness, to Ourselves and Others. The former is something: but it is the lowest Degree of Virtue and Praise. It leads naturally to the latter: and without it, it can hardly be supposed; and, I believe, never is found. For He that doth not use the good Things of this World, so as to make them the Instruments of Good to himself, and of Happiness to Others, is, I fear, always seen to make them the Means of Evil to Himself, and of Unhappiness to Others: as, He that is seen to receive no Harm from them himself, and to be untouched by the Evil that comes from them too naturally, will likewise be seen to make them the Occasions, and Instruments, of Good, and Happiness to Others. Their Nature is such, that, if they produce not Good to Ourselves and Others, they can hardly avoid producing a great deal of Evil and Mischief.

The true use of Riches is first to be considered. And in what is it that They differ from the other common Dirt of this Earth, if they be not used so as to administer the Conveniences and Necessaries of this Life to Ourselves; and after that, to all about Us, to whom Our
Help can reach? When a Man is seen, out of a Sort of Madness of Covetousness, to deny Himself the common Conveniences of Life, rather than break in upon his sacred Store; He cannot be said to use Riches, because they lie untouched and unused, unless they are sometimes handled and told over, with an unaccountable Satisfaction. But this is so very rare a Sort of Covetousness, that it raiseth the Astonishment of all, whenever it appears. There are Few, who will not make use of the Riches of this World, for their own Ease, and Convenience; but Many, who stop here, when they should go much farther.

The next Thing is to consider the Abundance that We enjoy; and how much of it can safely and securely be spared, without breaking in upon our own Conveniences and Accommodations, or our own nearer Relations: and of this Abundance to impart to Those who have it not in their Power to procure for themselves the common Necessaries of Life without our Assistance. This is a noble Use of Riches in Truth; but not more noble, than it is reasonable, and fitting. For what can We better, or more becomingly, do with those Superfluities which surround Us? what Method can We take, to make them more effectually subservient to our own Happiness,
Happiness, than to use them thus? What more manly Pleasure, than to look upon every Thing human to be of Concern to Ourselves? and every Thing that can happen to any other Men, to touch Us nearly, as Men also? What more rational Satisfaction, than to think of Multitudes made happy by Us? It is a Sort of approaching to Divinity; and a being, in the best Sense possible to Us, Partakers of the Divine Nature; to make Ourselves, under the supreme God, Assistants, Supporters, Benefactors, Preservers, to all within our Reach. They that feel it, know that there cannot be a greater Pleasure to a well-disposed Mind, than this of adding to the Happiness, or diminishing the Miseries, of our Fellow-Creatures around Us. Nor can the Praise due to such a beneficent Use of Riches, be detained from it. Every One applauds it, tho' every One will not imitate it. It constrains and commands the Voice of Mankind in it's Favour. And if it should at any Time, by some strange Accident, go without that; yet, it always recommends to the great Judge of the World. It makes Us rich towards Him; and makes Him condescend to be Our Debtor, on Account of Others, to whom our Riches are dispensed.
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It is God, the Great Disposer of all Things, who makes One Man differ from Another. It is his Providence that gives or allows Success to attend upon his Designs; that fills his Coffers, and makes his Abundance to overflow. What can this be for? Not merely for his own Happiness, considered by himself, as separated from the rest of the World: for God sees, what We do not always see, that the Happiness of a Man, the present Happiness, is so far from being certainly promoted by the Abundance of what He possesses, that it is too commonly utterly destroyed, and confounded, by it. The plain Intent of this Favour is, that this Abundance should be dispensed abroad, by the Rich; whom he makes his Stewards, when He makes them Rich, for the Support of the Poor and Distressed under them.

This is the Use, the only Use, that Almighty God can design shall be made of the Abundance and Superfluities of rich Men: and when they use their Riches after this Manner, then do they truly use the World, as far as the Riches of it are concerned, not only as not abusing it; but as God, and Reason, and the End of Human Society, require.

The next Thing is the true Use of the Honours of this World. Now, the whole End proposed in them, by the very Nature of the Thing,
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Thing, being only to preserve and keep up such Distinctions of Order amongst the Members of the same Body, as seems necessary for the better carrying forward the Ends of Human Society; it is certain that, when they are used, by the Possessors of them, with regard only to that Distinction, they are then used, as the Nature and End of them require. When Humility and Affability accompany them; when the Power that is generally joined with them, shews itself in Beneficence and Charity; when the Mind of the Possessor views them with that Lowliness, and Moderation, which are the constant Companions of a great Spirit; and actuates the whole Behaviour so, that all that is decent and regular seems the Effect of that Greatness, and to be dictated by that Distinction, which they give a Man; engaging him to excel in Virtue, as well as the outward Appearances of Honour; then, We may truly say, that He useth this World, as far as the Honours of this World are concerned, as He ought to do; as the Nature of them, or, as Reason, and God, require.

The third of those Good Things which this World principally boasts of, is Pleasure: a fatal Evil, in the End, to Many! but what may be used so as to bring no Guilt along with it.
Of the true Use of this World.

For Pleasure, in the Design of Almighty God, being that Satisfaction, which necessarily arises from Our Senses, and the Objects about Us; and from the indissoluble Relation of these two, to one another; and our Senses and these Objects in this mutual Relation being the Work of God himself: the Pleasure which results thence, must be in itself good, and fitting. The Pleasures of this World consequently are used, as they ought to be, when they are looked upon as the grateful Circumstances of our well-being in this World; when they are pursued with Temperance and Moderation, so as to preserve, and not destroy Life and Health; so, as the Laws and Dictates of sound Reason direct; so, as not to break in either upon our own Duty and Innocence; or upon the Property and Peace of Others about Us. Thus using them, we take care, that what is not Evil in itself, doth not become evil, and pernicious, but beneficial, and good to Us, as long as we are in this State.

I have thus endeavoured to give you the best Account I can, when it is that we use this World, as not abusing it; by shewing You, when we may be said to use the principal good Things it boasts of, Riches, Honour, and Pleasure, as we ought: viz. as the Nature of Things,
Of the true Use of this World.

Things, the Nature of Ourselves, the Nature of Human Society, and the eternal Laws of God, direct, and require. And from this Account will easily appear, what I proposed,

III. In the third Place, When it is that We use the World, in the Apostle's Phrase, as abusing it. And this Abuse of the World, to be sure, is the very contrary to the right Use of it. When the Love of Money becomes in Us the Root of all, or of any, Evil: When we are so under the Power of it, as to be barbarous even to Ourselves; When the Riches of this World are made the Occasions, or the Instruments, either of Unmercifulness and Hard-heartedness; or of Fraud, Rapine, and Injustice to Others; or, of Intemperance and Madness of Pleasure, to Ourselves: Whenever any thing of this Sort appears, Riches are then grossly abused with the highest Ingratitude to God who bestowed them; and the greatest Inhumanity to Society, which ought to feel the Benefit, and good Influence, of them.

Again, When the Honours of this World dazzle a Man's Eyes, and turn his Head giddy; so that Right no longer seems Right; nor Wrong, Wrong; but Good is put for Evil, and Evil for Good; Bitter for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter: when Pride, and Haughtiness, and discourteous Behaviour, are the Effect of that
Of the true Use of this World.

iv. Distinction which they give to one Man from another: when the Passions of the Heart are raised and boiled up into the Head, by them; and the Man can come to think himself above the Rules of Ordinary Virtue, and that He is privileged to be a Sinner, as well as a Man, of Distinction; then, the true Use of Honour is forgotten; and the Abuse of it is gross, and palpable, thro' the whole Behaviour of such a Person. Or, if all his Aim be to be high in the View of Men, and exalted in Place and Power above the common Level; Ambition then is his God; and the Laws of Ambition are the Maxims of his Conduct: and then, tho' the Laws of the true God, and the Rights of all Mankind, stand in the Way, they are but of little Force to hinder the Effect of such a Master.

Again, When the Pleasures of Sense, administered by this World, are made the Measures of all Good, and a Man comes to place supreme Happiness in them; when they are pursued beyond the Bounds of lawful and right; so as to break in upon his own Health, and Life; or upon the Rules of Decency and Modesty; or upon the Quiet and Property of Others; so, as to hinder him from doing God or Man that Service He might otherwise do: When Intemperance, and Luxury, and Neglect of all that is great and good, is the Effect of a Man's Attach-
Attachment to Pleasure, and his Love of worldly Delights; I need not say, the Pleasures annexed by God Almighty to Sense and sensible Objects, are then grossly and perfectly abused. The Man himself will come to find it, if He lives long enough to feel the pernicious Effects of such a Behaviour, which it will certainly, at length, have, upon his Mind, his Health, his Estate, his Reputation; upon every Thing which he values, even in this World, supposing him to have cast off all Regard to another to come. In a word, when the World, the Riches, or Honours, or Pleasures, of the World, are so regarded, or so used, as to be the Occasions, or Instruments, of sinning against God, our Neighbour, or our own true Interest; then, the World is used, so as to be abused.

From this Account, therefore, of the Use, and Abuse, of the Riches, Honours, and Pleasures of this State, it appears that there are two Ways of Behaviour, with respect to these Things. The One is such a Behaviour, as renders Us, and denominates Us truly the Masters of what we possess here; the Other, such a Behaviour as makes and denominates Us their Slaves: the One makes these good Things, our Servants; the Other renders them our Lords. For when we are perfectly under the Dominion of Riches, Honour, or Pleasure;
Of the true Use of this World.

So bewitched and captivated with the Love of any of them, as to be influenced in our Actions by them; sc, as when they say Come, to come; when they say Go, to go; and when they say Do this, to do it: when the Case is thus, I say, it is plain, That they possess Us, and not We, them; that They are our Masters, not we theirs; that they use Us, as their Slaves, not We, them, as our Servants: For they command, and we obey. But then only are We their Masters, when our Love to them is in perfect Subjection to the Love of God, which is the Law of Eternal Reason; when we make them subservient to the End of our enjoying them, and the true Happiness of Ourselves; not guided or impelled by the unresisted Violence of Passion; but governed and tempered by the wise Influences of Reason. And now, that we may thus use the World, as not abusing it, We must, in the last Place, as I proposed,

IV. Consider the Argument here made use of by St. Paul; only, accommodating it to the ordinary and more general Condition of this World. For the Fashion, or Figure, of this World passeth away. The present Scene of Things is perpetually changing: and Another, of a very different Nature, hastning to open upon Us: Both which make up the
Of the true Use of this World.

Apostle's Reasoning. There is Force enough in these two Considerations, to destroy that Devotion to this World, which is the Cause of all the Abuse of it; and to temper our Concern about it, so as to engage Us to use it as we ought.

For consider, I pray you, when you have amassed together an Heap of Riches, what is it you have got? An Heap of good Things, if you please; but good Things, liable to a thousand Accidents: uncertain in their Possession; often following the great Revolutions of this lower World; and changing their Masters, with all the Vicissitudes of Human Affairs. It is enough to say of them, that they belong to a Scene of Things, which is always in Motion, and ever ready to change. A great Loss, common to all worldly Business; a great Mistake, to which the best Heads are liable; a Fire, an Inundation, a Perfidiousness in Those who are trusted; a popular Rage; Many more Things, to which this State is liable, have often changed the Scene of Plenty, and Riches, and surprized those with Distress and Calamity, who have perhaps thought themselves too secure, and far out of the Reach of any such Evils. And then, the Possessors themselves are sure of being removed, either sooner or later, from these Possessions; and this is ano-
Of the true Use of this World.

other Change made in our Scene. We are taken away from the World: and so, with Respect to Us, the Fashion of this World truly passeth away, when we Ourselves pass away. For it is all one, in effect, whether That passeth from Us, or We pass from that; whether We are removed from our Riches, or our Riches, from Us. This latter may be, by Multitudes of unforeseen Accidents: but the Former must certainly be, one Time or other, by the unmoveable Decree of our Maker.

The same may be said with Respect to worldly Honours, and Pleasures. They must be as uncertain, as this State itself is, to which they belong: and We must as certainly be torn from them by Death, as we now enjoy them in Life. And the little Time we live in this World, how often do we see the Scene of worldly Honour changed; and the Wheel, that is ever turning, carrying up one, and bringing down another? The Fashion of this World passeth away, when the Scene of Honour is changed: and that Scene is as often turned upside down, as Favour, and Opinion, and a thousand unforeseen Accidents, work. And, as to Pleasure; Men die to that; even before they die to Nature. It becomes insipid to them, even whilst they are alive. The Scene of that changes, whilst they look on: and they grow insen-
Of the true Use of this World.

insensible, whether they will or no, and un-served moved by what used to give them the greatest Satisfaction.

But then, as this Scene changeth continually, and at last is quite removed, there is another to succeed, so unlike it, so opposite to it; that the same Riches are no Riches; the same Honours no Honours; the same Pleasures no Pleasures, when that appears. Your Money, if you could carry it with You, is not current in that other State: Your Honours are there, as faded Garlands, dead and gone. Your Pleasures will there have no Attraction or Influence; because They will have no being.

What little Reason, therefore, have We to abuse them in this State, by overvaluing them, or by employing them to ill Purposes; when the Scene that is to succeed is of such a Nature that they will be all useless in it; and the very Memory of them insipid: and especially, when the only Mention to be made of them at the opening of that New State of Things, will be, upon Occasion of a strict and tremendous Enquiry, how We have used them in this? The Charity, the Humanity, the Generosity, that have accompanied Riches, will then be the only Advantage and Gain of the Rich Man: the Modesty, the Humility, the Meekness, that have attended the Honours of this World, will be
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be the only Glory of the Honourable: and the Temperance, and Moderation, that have been used in the Pursuit and Enjoyment of Pleasure, will then be the only Happiness of such as have had the Pleasures of this World at their Command.

The Sum of what hath been said, is this. The Fashion of this World passeth away. But the Fashion of Another World, which passeth not away, succeeds to it. And therefore, let Us use this World, as not abusing it; and let our Hearts, and our Treasure, be in that other future, never ending, State; in which we are all infinitely concerned.
Of the Love of Pleasure.

SERMON V.

Preached before the King, March 10, 1727-8.

2 Timothy iii. 4.

Lovers of Pleasures more than Lovers of God.

In an Age of Gaiety and Luxury, which, if we had a mind to distinguish it from other Ages, we might justly call the Age of Pleasure; and in a Country, where the Taste and Pursuit of Pleasure have been carried to as high a Pitch of Elegance and Extravagance, as Invention and Wealth can well stretch them; and in an Assembly, in which many of Those present have all the Advantages which Power and Riches can put into their Hands for the full Enjoyment of Pleasure: it cannot be improper; Nay, it must be agreeable to the peculiar End of Preaching; to spend some Time in leading Men to just and reasonable Thoughts upon a Subject...
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Subject in which their Happiness, even in their own Opinion, is so deeply concerned.

Let not what I have now proposed give you any Fears that I am so absurd, as to attempt to rob you of so great and darling a Good, as Pleasure; or to persuade you into such a State of Insensibility, or Pain, as neither Human Nature can admit of, nor Reason, or God, require. My Design is quite the Contrary. I am going to be an Advocate for Pleasure; and to shew you, as well as I can, how you may enjoy it more effectually, by enjoying it more sincere, and less mixed with Unhappiness, as well as for a longer Duration, even in this Life, than you can possibly hope to do in any other Method. This is all the Mortification you shall hear of, from Me, in this Season (so called) of Mortification: A Mortification! which will, I am confident, mortify and kill only the Pains, and Uneasinesses of Life; but enliven and prolong the Pleasures of it; and such an One, as is perfectly agreeable to the Christian Religion itself, which came from Heaven not to dissolve any of the Laws of Nature, or to destroy the natural Connexion of any one thing to another; but to add the Motives of the World to come, to those Dictates of Reason, which are still left as the unalterable Rule of our Conduct, in such Cases.
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as this now before Us. And, in answering the End I have proposed, I shall

I. Shew what I mean by the Pleasures I am going to speak of: And,

II. Make some Observations, chiefly upon the Two different, or contrary, Methods of pursuing these Pleasures. And from these you will easily judge,

III. On which Side the Advantage manifestly lies, in the Point of Pleasure itself.

I. Under the first of these, I will not be so unfair as to mean One Thing, whilst, I know, Those, who are most concerned, mean Another. The Word Pleasure, is now, by long Custom in common Discourse, come to be appropriated to the Gratifications of our Senses, properly so called. And when we speak of a Man of Pleasure, we are always understood to mean, One who is, in a peculiar Manner, a Follower of the Pleasures of Sense. The Covetous Man has, without doubt, his Pleasures, adapted to his own Narrowness of Soul, and inordinate Appetite after Mony; even that Abundance of it which is quite useles to Himself. The Ambitious has likewise Pleasures, in the Elevation of Himself above Others, and in the flattering Hope of a still greater Heighth,
Of the Love of Pleasure.

The Man of Virtue, that is, of true Honour, has abstracted from other Gratifications. The Pleasures, infinitely superior to both, immediately and directly resulting from the inward Rectitude of his Mind. But these are not the Pleasures we mean when we use the Word by itself, in Discourse: but the Idea which always goes along with it, is That of the Pleasures, or Gratifications, of Sense, properly so called. And it is with regard to these peculiarly that I now speak. After I have said this, the

II. Next Step is to offer, as I proposed, such Observations upon this Subject as will lead us to that true Judgment upon the Whole, without which all Boasts of Pleasure are but vain Words; and by which alone we can justly pretend to settle any Title to that Good, which, with so much Passion, we are seeking after. And this, I think, cannot be done better than by considering the Circumstances, and Consequences, of the different Conduct of Men, in their Pursuit, and Enjoyment, of this Good: neither aggravating the Unhappinesses of One Sort; nor exalting, more than is undeniably just, the Happinesses of the Other.

1. In the first Place, with regard to Those who have entered, without Reason or Moderation,
Of the Love of Pleasure.

ration, into this Field of Pleasure; No one of themsevles can deny, what too many know by conscious and sensible Experience, that there is a Pursuit of Pleasure, (of That I mean which must be allowed to be Pleasure,) which, by natural Consequence, introduces a Scene of Pain and Bodily Uneasiness; as really Pain, (and much more lasting,) as the Pleasure itself was Pleasure, which was the sole Cause of it.

Nor can it be denied that, in some Cases, the Pursuit of Pleasure, made eager by the present ungoverned Passions of the Pursuer, is seen, in a little Time, to lay waste the very Support of Pleasure itself; and, by the Excess of Extravagance, to bring on such temporal Inconveniences, as change the Scene entirely from a short Scene of Rioting in Joy, to a long one of sensible Grief and Sorrow, when He finds Himself deprived of the very Possibility of going on in the same Course. For this must be the Case of Pleasure, where-ever Passion will know no Bounds; considering that the Riches of the Pursuer, tho’ great as you please, upon this Supposition, must be soon wasted to Nothing.

But if such immediate Evils are, by a cautious Prudence, avoided by Some, it may still be said, that there is often seen, in their Examples
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Serm. amples, a Pursuit of Pleasure, founded upon a Scheme of Dishonour; and this is always accompanied by uninterrupted Cares; carried on with numberless Anxieties; successful perhaps for a Length of Time; but, when an End is put to it by any unlucky Event, naturally followed by Uneasinesses, which outweigh all the Remembrance, and efface every Image, of what was once thought Pleasure. For, before Men have quite put off Humanity, the Reflexion of a wounded Spirit, and the Regret of a sensible Heart, are, in some Events, such Effects of this Pursuit, as change the sweetest Honey into the bitterest Gall; even in the Minds of Those who think of this Life only.

This is indeed, a Pursuit of Pleasure, so unworthy of human Nature, and so dishonourable, in the Estimation of the Generality of Mankind; that, as Shame for ever follows it, so must the Fear of Discovery always attend it. And this is a Companion, alone sufficient to destroy the very Essence of Pleasure itself, in any Mind not totally lost to all Generous Sentiments within.

You may observe that I have not, in these Instances, so much as mentioned any Remorse of Mind, but that caused by the present Evils of a too eager Pursuit of Pleasure; nor
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nor any Miseries but those of the present State, introduced by it. But, as Conscience is Reason itself, first guiding Us, and then censuring Us; as Reason is the Gift of God to all Men, for their Government; and Pleasure is his gracious Law, for the Good, and not for the Ruine, of his Creatures; it is impossible that there should not be a Remorse of Another Sort, and an inward Distress, in all well formed Souls, following upon such Pursuits of Pleasure mentioned before, as evidently are Contradictions to the Will of that God who made Us what we are, and placed Us in this State, surrounded with sensible Objects; Instances of the highest Ingratitude to Him, who formed us capable of Pleasure; Injuries to our Neighbours, who have a Title to our good Offices; and, in some Cases, gross Violations of the Laws of Society, for which our great Creator made Us.

2. Secondly, I will now go on to observe the opposite Maxims of pursing, and enjoying, the same Good: and these are such as make the Pursuit of Pleasure, entirely different, in every Circumstance, and Consequence, from the former. For this Pursuit and Enjoyment of Pleasure, under the Conduct of Reason and Moderation, is undeniably such a Pursuit of it, as does not bring on a State
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Of Bodily Pain and Indisposition, as its natural or probable Consequence. It is such a Pursuit of Pleasure, as is free from that long Train of Fears and Anxieties, which never fail to attend upon the contrary Pursuit; unacquainted with any Disappointments but what the common Condition of human Life makes unavoidable; and untroubled with any Remorse of Evils procured to Others, by the Man's passionate Regard to his own Pleasure only. It is such a Pursuit of Pleasure, as does not waste or destroy that Fortune which is necessary for the Purposes of the most innocent Enjoyments of Life themselves; and such a Pursuit, as carries no Shame along with it, in the Judgment of the World about Us. In a word, it is such a Pursuit, as is a Mark of Gratitude to the Giver of all our Faculties of Pleasure Themselves, and of all the Pleasures about which they can at any Time be conversant. And, being no Violation of any one of his Laws; no Breach into the universal System of Good and Right; carrying with it no Evil to the Members of human Society, or to the Publick; It cannot be the Parent of any inward Distress or Anguish of Mind; nor consequently end either in Repentance here, or Punishment hereafter.

Thus stands, in general, the Difference of the two Pursuits. And now,
III. On which Side, the Advantages lies, even in the Point of Pleasure itself, is next to be considered.

Now, in the stating of this, we must imitate the Men of worldly Business, in the Method of stating their Profit or Loss, which they follow so as not to impose either upon Others or Themselves. If never so many of the particular Articles in their Account are real Profit, but yet have themselves been the Occasions of Loss or Disadvantage, more than proportionable to it; the Sum of such an Account cannot be Profit: and if the Balance at the End be Loss; it is small Comfort to them, and little Matter of Boasting, that there are in it particular Articles of Gain, and those, perhaps, very considerable. It is from the Total Amount, that they judge: as That alone, by which their Condition in Business must be determined.

And thus it must be in the Case of Pleasure. Put down, if you please, all the Gratifications of Sense, you can think of. Let them be magnified and swelled to as high a Pitch as an Imagination devoted to them can do it. But be just in not deceiving yourselves. Put down, before you pretend to judge of the Whole, all the Pain of Body and Mind; the Diseases, the Calamities, which were the Result of them: the
Of the Love of Pleasure:

Of the Fears, and Anxieties, and Disappointments, which attended them: the Ruine, in some Cases, of Fortune and Estate; in some, of Reputation and Honour; in others, the lasting Wound of Remorse, in the Reflexion upon what, it may be, has produced Miseries somewhere or other, never to be retrieved, and never to be alleviated; and in All, the inward Uneasiness natural to a reasonable Being, in every Step of Life, which Reason does not approve of. Put into the Account every known evil Consequence under the Notion of Pain, the opposite of Pleasure; and then it must come out thus. If the total Amount of such a Pursuit of Pleasure, be really found, as it must be, to be Pain, of the several forts before mentioned, naturally produced by it; and this more than sufficient to counter-balance every Article of Pleasure in it: the Man of Pleasure himself, to whom the Name is now appropriated, the Man who pretends to study and follow after Pleasure as his great Good, must be found, at last, not to understand what it is truly to enjoy Pleasure itself; nay, frequently to destroy his own Purposes, by shortening and ruining his own Pleasures.

On the contrary, the Man of Virtue, who is also the Man of true Honour; who enjoys the Pleasures of Sense under those Rules which
which make them sit perfectly easy upon his 
Mind, his Body, his Estate, his Reputation; 
must be acknowledged, in the Whole, by 
the natural Operation of Virtue, and by the 
Wisdom of God, in establishing the Nature 
and Relation of Man, and all things around 
him, far to exceed the Other at the Close 
of the Account; and to triumph just as much 
over Him, in Pleasure itself, as he does in 
Virtue, Innocence, and Honour. I say, in the 
Whole; because, as I am free to acknow-
ledge, on the one hand, that there are Plea-
sures, in the Sense in which We now use the 
Word, to the Man of Pleasure, which to the 
Man of Virtue are wholly unknown; yet, it 
is certainly true, that Judgment must be made 
from the Whole, and not from a Part; and 
that, upon the foot of the Whole, it is undeni-
able that the Man of Virtue enjoys Pleasure, 
more sincere, i. e. more free from the Mixture 
of any of those Pains and Evils which are its 
natural Consequences to others; and with 
much more Security of continuing so to do; 
than the Man of Pleasure can pretend to do. 
To which We may add this disagreeable Cir-
cumstance, that the Course of Pleasure which 
the Voluptuary runs so precipitately, is first in 
Time; and that the Course of Evils which are 
its Produce, succeeds; and lasts often long 
after
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after the whole Scene of Pleasure is vanished.

And certainly, it is less tolerable to human Nature, to pass from Pleasure to a State of Pain, than to pass thro' a Course of Pain to a settled State of Pleasure. To which We may add, That, as these two enhance one another, the Pleasure past must give the Man a double Sense of that Pain, which not only succeeds it, but is really owing to it.

The great Doctor of Pleasure in the Heathen World, who had, with equal Stupidity and Impiety, banished Providence out of the World, and took into his Account this Life only, saw plainly the Importance of Virtue, in order to the Enjoyment of Pleasure itself. And tho' his Doctrine, by unhappily placing the Chief Good of Man in Pleasure, not strictly explained, led his rash Followers into the most intemperate Pursuits of their own Unhappiness under that Notion; yet his Example; and the Temperance and Command of Passion, by which He enjoyed and prolonged his own Pleasures, were, indeed, a Reproach to Them, who would not interpret his Maxim by his own Practice. I only just mention this, to shew that even He, who studied Pleasure only, put the Virtue of Temperance, or the Command of present Appetite, into the very Composition of Pleasure itself. To return,
Of the Love of Pleasure.

The great Mistake in this Matter, amongst the Men of Pleasure, seems to ly in this, that they do not make Pleasure, and Happiness, two distinct Considerations: or rather, that they never inquire after Happiness, but are only for ever seeking after particular Instances of sensible Pleasure, and ready to fall in with every Invitation to them. Whereas Pleasure and Happiness stand, even in common Discourse, for two so different Things, that no One, by a Man of Pleasure understands you to mean a Happy Man; but rather, a Man who disregards Happiness for the Sake of particular Instances of Pleasure. For Happiness being a State of Mind, of a better and more fixt Nature than the sudden Starts and Passions of Mankind; it must follow, that, if the passionate Pursuits of any real or imagined Pleasure, break in upon that Happiness, which is the true Happiness of an Animal endowed with Reason to direct the Conduct of his Life; then, the Man, meanly and ignobly, enjoys Pleasure, without being in a State of Happiness.

And from hence a most important Truth flows: viz. That, if the total Amount of the Pursuit of sensible Pleasures be not a settled State of Inward Happiness, but the contrary; the Pursuit has been irregular and unworthy of a Creature to whom God has given the Capacity, and

H Occa-
Of the Love of Pleasure.

Serm. Occasions, of such Pleasure; and that these unreasonable Pursuers of this attracting Appearance, have, by their passionate ungoverned Love of Pleasure, shewn that they have no Knowledge of what Happiness is; and are quite Strangers to their own greatest Good: And that Others, who have observed the contrary Rules in all their Gratifications, have really, and truly, enjoyed Pleasure itself in such a Manner, that it has not interrupted their Happiness; nay, that it has contributed to as good a State of Happiness, as Man can hope to attain in this present short, uncertain, Life.

Thus have I been an Advocate for Pleasure, as I at first promised; and not against it. I allow Man, as framed in the Manner he is, by his Creator, and placed in this State, surrounded with Objects of all his Senses, to be unavoidably, by his Nature, and by the Law of Creation, which constituted the Relations of Things, a Lover of Pleasure. My great Point has been, to shew you the true, and most lasting, Way of enjoying this Good. And, if I have been speaking to any Purpose all this Time, the only good Rule must be, to be Virtuous, in order to enjoy Pleasure; at the first Sound, perhaps, to many Ears, a surprizing, dull, and unaccept-able Rule: but to Those who will give it but a few Minutes Consideration, a certain Truth; a Rule
Of the Love of Pleasure.

a Rule demonstrable, from Nature and Experience, to be a Friend to Pleasure, by ennobling it; by extending it beyond the Limits which ungoverned Passion will ever confine it to; and by freeing it from those Mixtures of Evil and Pain, which the contrary Rule will certainly throw into it.

You see, then, that, in the Account of Reason, which always considers all the Circumstances and mutual Relations of Things, the Love of Pleasure is not, in itself, a Crime; but, indeed, the Law of God, who created Man what He is, and placed Him in such a World as This; and is himself the Author of that Pleasure, which necessarily results from his own Works, and his own Will. You will see, if you go a Step farther, that Reason itself will support the severe Censure of the Apostle, in the Text, fixt upon Those, not who are Lovers of Pleasure (for the Apostle does not rest his Censure there) but who are Lovers of Pleasure, more than Lovers of God: i.e. who prefer the passionate Pursuit of particular Instances of Pleasure, before the Regard due to the Laws of that God, who is the great Author of Pleasure itself, to whom they owe the very Possibility of enjoying it.

Let us, therefore, from This, and from what has been said, argue, that They, who

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pursue Pleasure in Contradiction to the Laws of God, or to his Dishonour, are ungrateful to Him, who alone gave them this Good, by being Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God: that They who pursue it in any Instances, in Violation of the Peace and Rights of Neighbourhood, are very bad Members of Society, by being Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of their Neighbours: and that They, who pursue it to the Hurt or Ruine of their own Honour, Reputation, Estate, Health, and Families, are unjust to their own Interests, by being, truly, Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of Themselves, in that Sense in which they ought to be so; exposing Themselves, for the Sake of a present violent Passion, to the Loss of every thing dear in this World; even of all their own Happiness, which can never subsist, but under the Direction of Virtue.

To sum up the Whole of what is justly to be said; If We chuse to consider Ourselves as Beings concerned chiefly in the finding out, and enjoying, the Pleasures of this World only; it is most certainly true, That, in this View only, however the Unexperienced may flatter themselves, the Course of Pleasure must, and will, be limited by something or other; and the wild Pursuer must, and will, be stopped, by some Obstacle or other, in his Career. And whether
Of the Love of Pleasure.

whether any Man will not be more easy, and set m.
satisfied, in the Reflexion that good Reasons,
thought of present Concernment only, have
prevented the utter Ruine of his Happiness, by
confining his Pleasures within the Bounds of
just and Right, than in the Thought of hav-
ing left them to be totally stopped, and destroyed,
by the natural Consequences only of his own
unrestrained Passion; let Himself judge.

But, if We will be so just to Ourselves, as
not to stop here; but to go, as We ought,
into a Course of Thoughts much more worthy
of such Creatures as We are; If We would
look farther into Ourselves, and consider our
own Frames; and also the main Design of our
great Master, Christ himself, in coming into the
World; We could not but find still plainer
Demonstrations, that Reason was given Us to
govern the Love of Pleasure. For We should
very clearly see, That, as We have Faculties
adapted to sensible Objects in this short Life;
so We have Others, of an higher Nature, to
govern them, which look forward, towards a
better State to come: That We are made with
such Capacities, and such Powers, of Reason-
ing, Reflexion, and Judgment upon our own
Conduct, as will force Us to acknowledge our-
selves capable of being called to a strict Account,
and framed exactly as We should have been, up-

H 3
Of the Love of Pleasure.

Ser. on the Supposition that so it will be: That, as it is perfectly agreeable to the Reason of Man-kind to expect it, so our Blessed Lord, by a plain Declaration, sufficiently attested by his Resurrection from the Dead, has assured the World that such a solemn Day of Account will come, in which the Triumph will belong to Those, who have here below kept the Love of Pleasure in Subjection to the Love of Virtue, and true Happiness; and Shame and Distress to Those, who have been Lovers of Pleasure, more than Lovers of God, their Neighbours, or Themselves. And These will be such Arguments, as will set us above every Allurement; and engage us to live the present Life by that Religious Wisdom, whose Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all whose Paths are Peace: and will certainly conduct us safe, thro' a short delusive Scene of the fleeting Images of Pleasure only, to the real and lasting Pleasures of a State of Happiness, never more to be interrupted, either by our own Passions, or any other Enemy.
St. Paul's Discourse to Felix.

SERMON VI.

Preached before the King, Febr. 15, 1729-30.

Acts xxiv. part of 24th and 25th Verses.

He sent for Paul, and heard Him concerning the Faith in Christ: And as He reasoned of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come, Felix trembled.

The Persons here spoken of are, St. Paul, a faithful Preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and Felix, the Governor of Judea: St. Paul, now a Prisoner, under the Apprehension of all the Evils which the Malice and Importunity of the Whole Body of the Jews might extort from their Governor, now his Judge: and a Governor, whose personal Character, it appears from a Roman Historian, as well as from what is said of Him in this Chapter, might well have increased the Apostle's
St. Paul's Discourse to Felix.

Serm. Apostles Apprehensions of the most unjust and severe Sentence which Power, in the Hands of such a Man, could threaten; and, what is still more, a Governor accompanied, at this very Time, by One who had a Share in his Guilt, and an Influence over his Passions. And yet, in the Midst of all these Circumstances, we find a very uncommon Appearance; the Prisoner, undaunted and unconcerned at his own Danger; the Governor, terrified and trembling, as if his Prisoner had been his Judge; and were now pronouncing a Sentence of Condemnation upon him. What was the Reason of this surprising Event? Innocence, and the Testimony of an upright Heart, on the One Side; Guilt, and the Reproaches of an awakened Conscience, on the Other. The Former created in St. Paul a Boldness to adapt his Discourse to the Case of the great Man he spoke to, whose Character, it is evident, he well knew: the Latter enfeebled the Heart of Felix, and forced Him to betray that Fear of future Punishment, from a superior Power, which all the Amusements and Pleasures of this World can hardly ever totally remove from Guilt and Sin.

As my present Design is to make this Account of St. Paul's Discourse to Felix the Occasion of such Observations as are of universal Importance to all Christians: the Three Points
Points which immediately offer themselves to my Thoughts are These:

I. The Notion St. Paul had of preaching Jesus Christ, and his Faith.

II. The Agreeableness of This to the whole Tenor of the New Testament. And

III. The great Use, towards the main End of the Gospel, of the Argument drawn from a Judgment to come, to such Creatures as We are.

And if I apply this particularly to Those in the Higher Stations of human Life, it is because I think it the greatest Instance of Duty, and the best Good-Office, which any One, who speaks from This Place, can possibly perform.

I. We cannot but observe from this Passage, what St. Paul's Notion must have been of Preaching the Faith of Christ, so as to answer the main End of it.

It is expressly told us, that Felix sent for Paul, in order to hear Him concerning the Faith in Christ; concerning that Religion, for the Sake of which he was now in Bonds. There can be no Doubt but that St. Paul placed in the best Light, all the Evidences for believing in Jesus Christ, and particularly his Re-
Resurrection from the Dead; which was to him instead of All, and to which it was his Custom always to appeal. But, it is as plain that, in describing to Felix the Complexion and Genius of the Christian Faith, and the great End of Christ’s coming into the World, He represented it as enforcing all those Points of Virtue and Morality, to which Men are obliged as the reasonable Creatures of an Holy and Just God; fitted and designed by Him for the mutual Offices of Society. For the only Part of the Apostle’s Discourse about Faith in Christ, or the Religion of Christ, which the sacred Historian has thought fit to leave us, relates solely to These, and to the Great Motive to practise Them. The Words are very remarkable. In this private Sermon about Christ, and Faith in Him, upon which alone St. Paul was desired by Felix, to speak, He reasons (as the Word is well rendered) or argues, in his Discourse. He shews him the Nature of the Faith in Christ, by shewing him the unalterable Obligations to Righteousness, which includes all Justice and Equity; to Temperance, or, a Command over our Appetites; and then, by displaying before Him the Judgment to come, as the great and awful Motive urged by the Gospel of Christ, to secure and restore the Practice of these, and all
all other Branches of Morality. It is by this Method that He did honour to his Master, and to that Faith he had embraced; and by this, that he endeavoured to represent the coming of Christ into the World as worthy of God who sent him.

If St. Paul, therefore, reasoned upon these Duties; and, in setting forth the Excellencies of the Christian Faith, described and inculcated Morality, as the great End of it; and thought he could do nothing more for its Honour, than to represent it as joined in the same Cause with Reason and uncorrupted Nature; as enforcing the same Practice of all the moral and social Duties; and reveling the Wrath of God against all Immorality: this is Evidence enough of the Apostle's Notion of the Nature and End of the Christian Religion; and will be the Justification of All Those who follow him in this way of Preaching Christ, and his Faith. But I will go a Step farther, and observe,

II. That the Representations made throughout the New Testament, of the great End both of Preaching and Receiving the Faith of Christ; and particularly, the Accounts given of that Judgment to come, which is mentioned in the Text, do all exactly and uniformly answer to this Notion.
St. Paul's Discourse to Felix.

The Fore-runner of our Lord opened the Scene by giving Notice to all Sinners around Him, of the Nature of that Kingdom of God which was then beginning to shew itself: That it did not consist in imaginary, or Real, Privileges of One Sort of Men, or of One Nation, above Another; but that All who would flee from Misery, or enjoy the Blessings of such a Dispensation, must repent, so as to bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance.

When our Blessed Lord himself began to teach the Nature and End of his own coming; it was by preaching Repentance, that is, Amendment: and, as soon as ever He discovered any false Imagination in his first Followers, as if he was come to flatter their Pride, or to indulge their bad Inclinations; He took the first Opportunity immediately to make them sensible of their Mistake. To this Purpose are these solemn Declarations; That it is not their taking Him for their Master, or the calling Him their Lord, that would entitle them to the Happiness He promised; but the doing the Will of His Father, the Maker and Governour of all Things: That, in order to be the Children of God, and to have the Privileges of such, They must constantly obey, and imitate, (as far as Humanity will permit) all the Moral Perfections of their Heavenly Father.

And
And to the same purpose is every other Expression of his, in which he professedly delineated to them the main Strokes of his Religion, or taught Them the End of his Appearance.

His Apostles and immediate Disciples followed Him close in this main Point, after They themselves were instructed in it. St. Peter, in his first Preaching, declared to the Jews, that God sent his Son to bless us, by turning us from our Iniquities; or, as the Words rather import, to bless us, as far as we turn, or in our turning, or being turned, from our Iniquities, to the Practice of all Virtue. And, in his first Epistle, He represents One great End of Christ's Suffering to be, that We may follow the Example of his Patience; and declares that He bare our Sins upon the Cross, to this Intent, that We, being dead unto Sin, should live unto Righteousness. And in This they all unanimously agree, even whilst they speak of his Death, under the Notion of a Sacrifice, or a Propitiation, for our Sins; expressly taking Care to make this itself a Lesson of Morality, by declaring no Sins to have any Title to any Benefit from it, but such as are forsaken; and all Immorality to receive a fresh Aggravation, instead of any Indulgence, from it.

The Life, therefore, of our Saviour was designed for our Pattern in all Morality. His Doctrine
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The Doctrine was to lead us to the Imitation of God, and to the Practice of the Law of uncorrupted Reason, which He always supposed; and to which he always appealed: and this is Morality. His Death was to engage Us to himself, i.e. to the stricter Observation of his Laws, which are the Laws of Morality. The Doctrine of Forgiveness of Sins, openly promulgated by Him, is ever confined to Sins that are forgiven. Prayer to the Supreme God, (that great Duty) is an Instance of Morality, and is the Dictate of Reason and Nature, as well as the Command of Revelation; and leads us, in its End, and natural Operation upon ourselves, to a greater Sense of all our whole moral Duty. And, if We go from hence to the two Positive Institutions mentioned in the New Testament; We shall find their Design to be the same Interest of Morality.

The first of them, Baptism, or the Ceremony of Immersion in Water, used in receiving Persons converted to the Faith of Christ, is constantly declared to be thus intended. It is never described as a Charm, or a mere Privilege. On the contrary, the Thing signified by it is magnified by St. Peter, in Opposition to the Ceremony itself; the Answer of a good Conscience, to the Washing of the Outside. And St. Paul, in a most remarkable Manner (Rom. vi.) declares
declares the whole Ceremony to represent to Christians their Death unto Sin; and their Life unto Righteousness: the former, by their being covered with the Water; and the latter, by their rising out of the Water again. And, in the Nature of the Thing, it is plainly the Ceremony of admitting Men into a Religion which revives all the Obligations of Morality upon them, and enforces them more strongly than any other in the World. The other Institution is, the Remembrance of Jesus Christ, in the Lord's Supper; that is, in plain Words, a Remembrance of that Master who taught us the absolute Necessity of Morality, or Virtue, to our Happiness: and particularly, the Remembrance of his Death, which was the greatest Example of many Virtues to be practised by us in this imperfect and afflicted State; and which is sufficiently declared to be no Advantage to his Followers, but as it moves All, who name the Name of Christ, to depart from Iniquity. And if we speak of Them, in the more modern Phrase, as The Means of Grace; the very Expression denotes their End to be something higher than the Ceremonies themselves; and signifies either that Christian Virtue, by some called Grace, is the End to which they are subservient; or that they are Means to procure the Divine Assistance, another Significa-
St. Paul's Discourse to Felix.

Sermon. of the Word Grace: which Assistance is allowed to have that higher End in view, of our Improvement in all Morality.

Thus the Believing in Christ; and the coming into His Religion, and the Remembrance of Him when we are in it; are all adapted, and in their Natures subservient, to One and the same great End; the engaging us to abhor all Immorality, and to proceed to the highest Perfection we can, in every Instance of Morality.

Thus take away this one great Point; and, I fear, it will be impossible to convince any reasonable Man that Jesus Christ was sent into the World by God. One of the noblest Arguments, I am sure, drawn from this Design of the Gospel, worthy of God and Man, will be for ever removed from Christianity: and where, without This, the Advocates for it can find any Others, truly sufficient, I know not. Nay, if either Reason, or the Gospel, tell us Truth about the Dispositions either of God, the Father of all Things; or of the Son of God, towards Mankind; it is not supposeable that Jesus Christ would have been sent into this World, and have lived here, to preach to Men, but in Order to their Perfection in Virtue; and much less, that He would have died for Men, but expressly in order to their Living, as becomes Men.

Thus,
Thus, we see, the Religion founded on Faith, or Belief, in Jesus Christ, is preached; and Christ himself is preached; when the strict Obligations to all Righteousness are preached and inculcated, agreeably to the End of his coming into the World. To this Purpose alone is the Declaration which St. Paul made to Titus, in order to give him a comprehensive View of the Nature of Christianity; and this so full an one, that it may well deserve a Place here, viz. That the Grace, or Mercy, of God, bringing Salvation unto all Men, hath appeared, in the Gospel, teaching us (as the only way in which it brings Salvation) that, denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, We should live Soberly, Righteously, and Godly in this World; waiting for the Appearance of Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for Us, (for this very End, here pointed out,) viz. That he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar People zealous of Good Works.

To all this agrees, also, every Account we have in the New Testament, both of the Proceedings at the Solemn Day of Judgment, mentioned in the Text; and of the Rewards and Punishments to be dispensed to Men, in Consequence of that Judgment. In all of them Nothing but Immorality is declared to be punished; nothing but Morality and Virtue, to
be rewarded. The Pretenders to the Favor of their Master, at that Day, who are declared to be rejected by our Lord, in his own Account, are introduced by Him as pleading a certain Title to his Favor from their Zeal, and Faith, by which they have prophesied in his Name, and in his Name even worked Miracles. But they are to depart from Him into Punishment, with all their Pretences about them, merely because they were Workers of Iniquity. But the Good, and Beneficent, are entertained with Praise, and invited into the Kingdom prepared for them.

No mention is made of Any condemned, who can plead that they have sincerely endeavoured to find out the Will of God, and have preferred it before all other Considerations. No Sentence pronounced against such for Errors in Judgment, through the unavoidable Weakness of human Nature: but the Integrity and Morality of All accepted and applauded. One cannot help, as we pass, being led, by our Saviour's own Account, to think how many Pretences will the more modern Ages of Christianity furnish out at that Day? Have we not transgressed all the moral Laws of God and Nature, to shew our Zeal for what we call Religion? will many say: And how greatly surprized will they be, to find That all their Inquisitions,
Inquisitions, and Racks, and Tortures, and Hardships, and Oppressions, and even the Merit of overturning all the Boundaries of Good and Evil, for the Faith of Christ, blasphemously so called; for the Honour of His Mother; or the extending the Bounds of his Church; will be esteemed by their Lord himself as Instances of their Guilt; and the highest Injuries to Himself? And how much more surprized, to find the Excommunicated, and the Persecuted, and These to whom they would not allow the Name of Christian, or the Usage due to a Man, now called forth into Glory, and honoured in the Sight of Men and Angels, as the true Children of God; as having sincerely loved him, and practised all his moral Laws?

Infidelity itself (I hope it may be said without Offence) will then be punished no otherwise than as it is Immorality, proceeding from a wilful and resolute Neglect of Evidence, or an immoral Contradiction to it. And Faith itself will then be rewarded, no otherwise than as Morality in an intelligent Agent; the Result of the honest Enquiry of a well-disposed Mind. Or rather, the Immorality of the Will, leading at any Time to Infidelity; and the Immorality of Practice proceeding from it; are the Things only to be punished: and the Moral good Disposition leading to Faith, and the Moral Practice
St. Paul's Discourse to Felix.

vi. Object of Reward; agreeably to all that is said in the New Testament. For in That, We may observe, there is not any Faith celebrated, but either as the Word is taken for the Gospel-Dispensation, in Opposition to Moses's Law; or, as it is expressly declared to produce actual Obedience to God, and all Morality, as the End of it. And this, again, is perfectly agreeable to all that we know of the Nature of God, either from Reason or Revelation; Both which represent Him as just, and a Punisher of dishonest Men, let their Faith be never so right; but never as a Punisher of the honest and upright. St. Paul, in a very particular Manner, (Rom. ii.) declares that future Rewards and Punishments will be adjudged to the Morality and Immorality only, of Those, who are without a Revelation, as well as of Those who enjoy One.

This does not at all depreciate the high Value of Faith in Christ; or of Any of his own Institutions. On the contrary, Nothing can be more for their Honour, than to find that the most noble End, and the most worthy of God, is the very End of that Faith, and of those Institutions. And, I fear, whoever depreciates Morality, and would represent to the World any other End of Christianity, as high-
er than This, and not subservient to it; or, s e r m.
whoever would magnify Any inward Accom-
plishment, or Outward Christian Institution,
before this, and as an End superior to it, will
be, upon Examination, found to rob that
Divine Religion of One of it's brightest Orna-
ments; and of One of the noblest Arguments
it can boast: and an Argument, without
which, not Miracles themselves can, perhaps,
be found sufficient to recommend it, with Suc-
cess, to any Persons of Virtue, and good
Sense. Nay, these Acts of the Mind, and
Outward Performances, receive their Value
from the good Disposition, or Morality, of
the Mind; and are, properly speaking, sub-
servient to Morality in Practice, through the
Man's Life: but Morality can in no Sense be
said to be subservient to Them, as a superior
End; because it would have been the same
unalterable good Thing, whether They had
ever been required, or not. In a word:
when We speak of the End, We mean the
highest End of the Gospel. And that is the
highest End of the Whole, to the procuring or
Improvement of which, every inward Act of
the Mind, and every outward Institution, be-
longing to it, are made and declared to be sub-
servient. And This, to the Glory of the Gospel
be it said, is the Practice of all Morality.
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But to proceed; Since this solemn Judgment to come is so expressly declared by our Saviour, and preached by his Apostles, as the great Motive to Righteousness, Temperance, and every other Virtue; Let us now observe

III. Of how great Use the Consideration of This, may and ought to be, to such Creatures as We are, placed in such a World as this.

St. Paul's Discourse to Felix, about the unalterable Obligations to Morality, might have been entertained as a good and reasonable Lecture: But it was the Addition of this other Topic, of a Day coming, in which All Men were to be called to Account; and to be rewarded, or punished, by the supreme Judge; which made the Impression upon Him, here mentioned; and forced him to betray the inward Apprehensions of a Guilty Conscience. We find, indeed, that it went no farther, than his present Concern and Uneasiness. He put off the Discourse; and, without doubt, the Thoughts of it too. The World had taken such hold of Him, that his Attention presently returned to the Profits and Pleasures of it; and would not suffer Him to give this Subject such a Place in his Thoughts, as the Importance of the Matter required. But let not Us follow such an Example.
This awful Subject of a Judgment to come is not, I own, much worthy of our Regard, unless the Expectation of the Thing itself be a reasonable and manly Expectation. But let not any one put the Thoughts of it far from Him, as if This were the Case. Let Him look into his own Mind, and it will shew Him, in the strongest Light, That a Being made capable of giving an Account, may justly be called to do it: That a Being framed so as to see Duty, and Honour, in one Method; and Sin and Dishonour, in another; and plainly designed for Duty to a God above Him, and a World of Fellow-Creatures around Him; has the greatest Reason to expect to have that Account of his Behaviour, demanded of Him, in Another Place, which is never demanded of him, in This. These are the Thoughts of a Man, as a reasonable and social Creature: and it is agreeable to the Dignity of a Man, and of the highest of Men, to entertain Himself with the Reflexions becoming his Nature, and resulting from the peculiar Excellencies of it. And to these great and unextinguishable Evidences of it, furnished from within the Circle of every Man's own Breast, the Gospel has added the Weight of that Assurance which Christ has given Us of such a Judgment to come.
Neither let any fly from this Employment, as from a Scene of Melancholy and Distress, producing only Terror and Uneasiness. The End of this great and awful Motive, proposed by natural Religion, and heightened by Revealed, is not, to make Men tremble, but to make Men better; not to fill their Souls with Horror, but to lead them to the very contrary, by guarding them most effectually against those Practices which rob them of their Innocence and their Peace. And could Men be prevailed upon to think of it, as becomes them, I am persuaded, it would make even all the Goods of this World more agreeable to them. It would not destroy any Profit, Pleasure, or Honour, which a reasonable Creature would not wish to have destroyed. To all others it would add a Lustre and a Value. To Riches it would give the true and proper Use; which is their only Advantage. The Honours of this World it would adorn, by letting them off with all those Virtues, which alone can render them amiable in the Eyes of Beholders; and without which they are, at best, but gaudy Pageantry. And the Pleasures of Sense themselves would be rendered more sincere, unmixed, and lasting, by being restrained from hurting either the Health, or Reputation, or Interest, or Honour, of the Pursuer; and by being
being deprived of that Sting of Guilt, which otherwise will for ever attend upon them.

In such a World as ours is; with such a Nature as Man must be content with; surrounded with the Temptations of Prosperity, and the Trials of Adversity; Who would not wish to be under the Influence of a Motive, which may preserve the Dignity of his Nature, at the same Time that it guards and increases his Virtue. In every Age of our rational Life, and every Circumstance of it, We more and more, as We pass, want the friendly Assistance of such a Motive. The Innocence of Childhood quickly vanishes, and is succeeded by the Voluptuousness of Youth: and in This, a Torrent of ungoverned Passions often threatens to carry all that is good before it. In the more advanced Years of Life, the Pursuits of Ambition or Lust of Power and Advancement, take place; not without Danger of the Man's changing Truth, Sincerity, and Honesty, for Art, Diffimulation, and Deceit. And in Old Age, the Power of Avarice often shews itself in too absurd a Manner to be described. This is the general State of Man. And therefore, Every Man may justly be said to have so much need of such a Motive to fortify Him, that he will, too probably, fail without it.
But they who are, by their situation in life, surrounded with more temptations, and opportunities than others, have, of all men, the greatest necessity for such a guard and defense: or, in other words, they who have most temptations to forget the great day of accounts, have, of all others, the strongest reasons not to do it. Those who see little around them, besides the hoards of wealth, or the gaieties of power and prosperity; whose stations raise them above the common level, and put them out of the way of many of the moral advantages others may meet with; whose riches and power invite the smoothness of flattery, but check the freedoms of true friendship; and whose exalted degree of life removes them from the lesser fears or motives which sometimes weigh with others: what remains for these, who lye most open to the strongest trials of this life, those of prosperity, and pleasure; of profit, or superiority; but to be allarmed into a behaviour quite different from that of felix, now before us? Not to content themselves with hearing these truths, and feeling a little present commotion of soul upon them; not to throw off the consideration from the present certain time, to an uncertain futurity; but to enter seriously into their own breasts; to think in earnest
nest of a Being superior to themselves as much in Power, as in all other Perfections; and particularly to represent to themselves that Solemn Judgment to come, in which They have an equal Concern with the Meanest of all their Fellow-Creatures; and in which they must appear as free from all Distinction of Superiority, as the lowest of Mankind. The Strength, or Multitude, of the Temptations which have here surrounded Them, will then increase the Glory and Crown of their Virtue; but not take away the Guilt of the Contrary, in the Eyes of Him, who will judge all Men according to their Works.

In a word; If the Men in high Stations of every Sort; and the most involved in the Affairs or Pleasures of Life, would but, now and then, find or force an Interval; wearied, as they must sometimes be, with the Hurry of Business, or tired with the Circle of Amusements; if They would, I say, now and then retire from all these; and think seriously of the Dignity and End of their Beings, and of their appearing in Judgment before that God whom They can neither deceive nor resist; This would teach Them to despise every Instance of Power, Profit, or Pleasure, inconsistent with Duty and Morality. This would give eternal Peace to their own
St. Paul's Discourse to Felix.

and make their Example a Light, and an Incitement, to All below; who are ever looking up to Them, and forming their Manners on the Model of Those above them. And thus might Virtue, by degrees, spread itself through the Inferior World; and the Number be increased of Such as may be Happy both here and hereafter.
Of Consistency in all our Arguments about Religion.

Sermon VII.

Preached before the King, March 5, 1731-2.

Galatians ii. ver. 18.

For if I build again the Things which I destroyed, I make myself a Transgressor.

In the Verses going before this, we have a very remarkable Instance of St. Peter's Misconduct, in contradicting, by Doctrine as well as Practice, what He himself had taught to be the Design of the Gospel; to the great Prejudice of it amongst the Gentiles; and this, out of Fear of some Zealots amongst the Jews: as appears evidently from St. Paul's Reproof, when He said to him, before all, (ver. 14.) If Thou, being a Jew, livest after the Manner of the Gentiles, and not
not as do the Jews; [i. e. without a Regard to the ceremonial Parts of the Jewish Law] why compellest Thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? or, Why do you teach and lead Them to the Observance of what you do not observe yourself? A Behaviour! which one would be almost tempted to think to have been, by the Design of Providence, recorded, that it might stand as a perpetual Warning and Monument against founding any Pretences to Infallibility upon a Succession to this Apostle in particular. St. Paul, who records it, after shewing the Inconsistency of this Conduct with the Rule by which St. Peter had walked before, and by which the Gospel had been propagated, goes on farther to shew the Christian People, ver. 15, 16, 17. that the Gospel is not to be censured, as a deficient Dispensation, not able to put us, out of the State of Sinners, into a State of Favour with God; but They only, who either teach, or receive, such Doctrines, as are inconsistent with those Principles, upon which They themselves first received the Gospel.

He then, in the Text, lays down this general Rule, by a common Figure putting Himself for any other Person, For if I build again the Things I have destroyed, I make myself a Transgressor: that is, For whosoever doth, by his Doctrine, contradict those First Principles upon
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upon which his Religion is founded; and, to serm. get rid of a present Difficulty, again maintains or receives those Doctrines, upon the renounc-
ing of which his Title to the Privileges of his Religion depends; makes Himself a Transgres-
for; that is, puts Himself back into the Con-
dition of an Unbeliever, and Sinner, not entit-
led to God’s Favour offered by his Religion; and so hurts the Religion He professes, by a Be-
behaviour absolutely inconsistent with it. And what the Apostle affirms here of Those who build again what they have once destroy’d, may,
with an exact Agreeableness to St. Paul’s In-
tention, be affirmed of Those also, who destroy, or pull to pieces, that which they had before built up, as necessary to the Support of their Religion: because there is exactly the same Reason for it; and because what may be cal-
led building up, with respect to False Princi-
ples, may be as justly expressed by the destroy-
ing, or pulling down, those Good ones which are contrary to them.

This being the General Reasoning made use of by St. Paul, in the earliest Days, to oppose the Mischiefs done to the Gospel, by the inconsistent Behaviour of first supporting it, and inviting the Gentiles into it, by parti-
cular Principles, and then, as seeming Diffi-
culties press’d, declaring against those very Principles,
Of Consistency in all our Principles; and the reasoning being at first unanswerable, and in all Ages the same; it will be natural to apply it to our own Use, by observing, That the Arguments which alone can successfully defend, or recommend, Christianity, must be consistent, and uniformly maintained: That whosoever builds up, or maintains again, those same Principles by the Destruction, or Confutation, of which alone Christianity itself was at first, and ever must be, defended against its Opposers; and that Whosoever destroys, and throws off those Principles, upon which alone Christianity could be first built, and supported; makes Himself a Transgressor; greatly hurts the Cause of Christianity, and furnishes the Adversaries of it with the most Popular, and, according to the Genius of the World, the most successful, Pretenses against it.

And as St. Paul thought it of great Importance to address His Discourse, and his Cautions, against such Inconsistencies, to the Christian People, not without some hurt to St. Peter's Character, for fear They should either receive such Inconsistencies as would vitiate their own Title to the Privileges of true Christians, or come to reject the Gospel itself, for the Sake of them: so, I hope, I shall be excused, if I follow so great an Example, and lay, before
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before a Congregation of Christians, the same sermon. General Rule, and the same Cautions, equally necessary now, as in His Days, to preserve Them from being nominal Believers invain; or from rejecting Christianity entirely.

You see plainly, by this Time, that my Aim is, To bring that same Rule, of Constancy, into the Service of Christianity in this Age, which the Apostle made use of, in the first Age of the Gospel; and to shew the great Disadvantage arising to Christianity, from swerving at any Time from it.

The Debates which have long been, and still are, subsisting, both in the Popish, and Protestant, World, give us Occasion enough for this Lesson. If a judgment were to be made from the Tenor of some of them, one would be apt to imagine an open War declared between Reason, and Revelation; an irreconcilable Enmity between the Religion of Nature, and the Religion of Grace, or Favour, proposed in the Gospel. I hope, for the Sake of Christianity itself, that this neither is now, nor ever will be, the Case. For if such a real Contradiction should once be granted; it is very evident, Which of the two must suffer. But, to come to what I chiefly design,

I. The first Observation I shall make, is, That when Christianity is recommended to any Unbelievers,
Of Consistency in all our

lievers, either as it lies in the Gospel itself, or as it is modified in any particular Church of Christ, the Arguments are, and must be, all built upon the Right, and Duty, of all Men to enter into an impartial Examination of their former Opinions. The Appeal is made to their common Reason. They are called upon to try, by the Rules of That alone, what is proposed to them, as from GOD, before they judge or determine about it. This very Appeal supposes the Law of Reason, that is, the Religion of Nature, to subsist before-hand, as the Measure of their trying whatever is offered to Them, as a Revelation from Heaven. It supposes the invisible Things of God; not only his Being, but his Attributes and Perfections, to be already seen, from the Things that are made; and from their Relations to one another; and particularly, from the moral Capacities and Powers of Man, evidently made accountable to His great Creator.

And there can be no other Method than This. For how can I possibly judge, whether any Proposition, or Injunction, be worthy of GOD, unless I first know the Nature and Perfections of that GOD, about whose Dispositions I am called upon to judge? And how can I possibly judge whether the Proposal offered be agreeable to his Original Law, the Religion
ligion of Nature, by which I am called upon to judge; unless there be such a Law existing, either actually known to me, or within the Reach of my Capacity, before I form my Judgment about what is proposed to me?

This being so, it is evident that when Men are first invited into Christianity, it is not by the way of Imposition upon their Faculties, or Senses; nor by depreciating, or throwing Contempt upon, their Reasoning Capacity; but by acknowledging the Usefulness of Reason, and the Excellence of the Religion of Nature. They are then told, that it is their Duty to judge of the Demands made upon them, in the Name of God; and that they can and ought to do this, by applying Themselves to their natural Light, with an honest Heart; and by comparing what is now proposed with that Light, which the same God has already given them, before they can be assured that Nothing is now required of them, but what is agreeable to their former Law: and All, We see, is to be built at first, not upon the Ruines, but upon the Evidence and Support, of Reason.

If any Unbeliever, in such a Situation, should answer to this Proposal, when first made to Him, that he dared not trust Himself in so important a Case: That the reasoning Capacity
Of Consistency in all our Serm. pacity in Man was too weak, to judge of the Ways of the great God; that the Light He had to see by, in this Case, was so dim, that He could not presume, without forfeiting all Title to Humility, to determine a Matter of such infinite Importance by it; and therefore, thought it more becoming Him to rest Himself where Providence had once lodged Him, rather than to enter into Searches, out of which his poor, weak Reason, would hardly bring Him found and whole: If any One, I say, upon the first Proposal of Christianity to Him, should answer in this Manner; I doubt not, he would be told that this was only the Refuge of a lazy, unactive, or wicked Mind; that the eternal Law of Reason and of God, was not so obscure, or remote, as Vice and Indolence would fain represent it to be; that his reasoning Capacity, let it be what it will, was the only Measure of his judging for which He can be accountable; that God has a Right to call upon Him to make use of it, as the Rule of his Judgment, concerning all Pretensions of this Kind.

Thus evidently does it appear that Men are not, and could not be, invited into Christianity, but by a professed Homage paid first to the Religion of Nature, as to a Superior Judge, of God's Appointment, by whose Sentence the Religion of
ARGUMENTS about RELIGION. 133

of Grace (or Favour) is to stand or fall: and that the whole Weight of the Latter, lies upon the acknowledged Strength of the Former. The Agents of the Church of Rome themselves, who compass Sea and Land to gain a Proselyte, even They are forced to speak to Men, at their first Application to Them, in this same Manner; and to make some Complements to the Reason of Mankind, as to the proper Judge of the First Step necessary to their Success. Thus much for the first Observation I had to offer.

II. The second will relate to the Procedure which too often is seen to follow this Beginning; but is quite inconsistent with it; and therefore, hurtful to the Cause of Christianity itself. I will give only an Instance, or Two, of what I mean: but these sufficient to shew of what Importance it is, to be perfectly consistent in what We say upon so interesting a Subject, as Religion.

1. If any of Those Persons, to whom the Christian Religion is, in the Manner before-said, recommended, should take Occasion, from the Excellency of Reason, and of the Religion of Nature, thus appealed to, as the Rule of Judgment, to argue against the Probability, or even the Possibility, of the Christian Revelation, upon this Ground, that, there being already so good a Law open to Men, there can
Of Consistency in all our Serm. Can be no Necessity for such a Revelation. Supposing this, I say, (which has been the Case) can it possibly be consistent with what was proposed to these Persons before; nay, must it not hurt the Cause, designed to be served, for Them immediately to be told, as They sometimes are, that Human Reason is very weak, at best; that the Law of Nature, or the Religion of Nature, is imperfect and insufficient; or obscure, and not within the Reach of our Understandings; and therefore, a Revelation was absolutely necessary to the Direction and Salvation of Mankind? For, How quick and natural will the Reply to this be? Why then have you appealed to this same Reason, and this same Religion of Nature; and demanded of Us to judge from These, whether Christianity be worthy of God?

Human Reason, or the Capacity of a Man, be it what you please, is all the Light that Man has to judge by, concerning the Nature and Attributes of the Great God. By this Reason, weak as it is; weak as it can be painted out even since the Fall, We are required by You to judge of the Gospel itself, by comparing it with the prime Law of our Creator, and with His known Attributes. But if we are too weak either to find out That Law; or if That Law, when found out, is no Law for
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for Us to judge by; but either a dim, or a SERM. deceitful Light; either not sufficient to shew Us Good, or leading Us (as some Lights do Travellers,) out of our Way: If this be the Case; We are brought back again, where we set out; and, if This be the State of Human Reason, with regard to That Original Law, and the Attributes of God, from which it must be deduced; We have Nothing to judge by, with respect either to the Truth, or Expediency, of the Gospel-Revelation. And how such a Reply can be well answered, I do not plainly see.

This is enough to shew, that the Cause of Christianity itself may be unwarily hurt by our thus pulling down what We once built up; or building up what we once pulled down; in our Arguments relating to it.

If any ask after another Answer to this Difficulty, and one quite consistent with the Appeal made to Reason, or natural Religion, as to a previous Law, perfect enough to be the Touch-stone of all Revelation; I hope, such an One may be easily pointed out. For, supposing the Perfection of this Primary Law of God; and granting the Plainness and Clearness of it to all attentive and well-disposed Minds; and also, That a Revelation is not absolutely necessary; I think it may be, with
Of Consistency in all our Serm. the strictest Truth and Consistency, answered, vii. That, agreeably to all the Notions of Almight-y God, taught by Reason and natural Religion, it is in all respects worthy of that supreme Governour, to do for the Happiness of such Creatures as He has made us, not only all that is absolutely necessary, but what may be excellently useful to that End: That He may, with Glory to Himself, display his paternal Regard for Us, by doing much more than what is strictly necessary for our Eternal Good: That it is Love, and not the Rigour of Obligation, which is represented in the Gospel, as the Moving Principle of his sending Christ into the World; and that this Love is a Principle, which leads to greater and more Instances of Beneficence towards his Creatures, than what can be thought in Justice due, on his Part.

This may be illustrated by observing, That a Father amongst Men, would be accounted but a very indifferent Friend to his Child, who, because his Son might possibly find out the Ways of Prudence and Safety, by a constant Attendance to the Light, he Himself could strike out, should, upon this Account, refuse to advise him, from his own Experience; or so much as to awaken him to a Sense of any Danger, in his Entrance into the World: That, as it would not be esteemed an useless
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or weak Thing for a Father to do more than can be called necessary; but, on the contrary, a Mark of Indolence, or Ill-nature, not to do it in many Cases; so it cannot be thought in Almighty God a Conduct, either fruitless or unreasonable, but accompanied with the greatest Propriety and Glory, to do more for his Creatures than He is strictly obliged to do, in order to put Them into the True Way to all Good.

Thus may it be proved to be worthy of the Supreme Governour, to consult their Happiness, by calling upon them, in an extraordinary Manner, to forfake that Vice and Idolatry, which they might, without such an Interposition, see to be contrary to Reason; and to practice that whole System of Morality, the Obligation of which, it is granted, They might possibly, without this, find out to be their Duty. Nay, It may be added, that, considering the Importance of the Religion of Nature, and the willful Negligence and Corruption of the Bulk of Mankind, it was very probable, à priori, that a Good God would once at least, interpose to awaken his reasonable Creatures, by some extraordinary Method, to the Study and Practice of That Religion. And surely, it must be acknowledged that the Gospel, if We consider it seriously, proposes what is at least most useful to Mankind, by making this very Religion of Nature
Of Consistency in all our Serm. Nature a main Part of what it requires; and by revealing plainly the Motive of a judgment to come, in order to secure all Obedience to it.

This, I think, must be allowed to be a satisfactory Way of treating the Difficulty before-mentioned; and particularly on this Account, that it is a Way perfectly consistent with all our Appeals to natural Religion, and all that can justly be said of the Excellency of it; and therefore, a Way which preserves to Reason all its Weight, and to Revelation all the Dignity it claims.

2. I will now mention a second Instance of a very inconsistent Conduct with regard to the Christian Revelation. When an honest Man, moved to the Enquiry into it, by the Appeal made to the sufficient Strength, not to the Weakness of Human Reason; called to it by the Trust reposed in Him by God, of looking after his own Soul, and his own Happiness; encouraged to it, by his acknowledged Capacity to find out and judge of the Attributes of the Great God, and his Right to reject all Doctrines about them, but what are agreeable to the Dictates of natural Religion: When, thus invited and encouraged, a Man with an honest Mind, compares the Contents of the Gospel, as preached by Christ himself, and Those immediate Disciples whom He called to
to do it, with the immutable Law of Nature, and the invisible Things of God; and is justly come to this Conclusion, that the Gospel is worthy of God, and accompanied with sufficient Evidence: When, after He is come thus far, to his Satisfaction, He thinks himself still to have the same Right to consider, and judge of, the Meaning and Extent of the Propositions and Precepts, recommended in the New Testament, or taught by Those who profess to preach nothing else, by the same Rule of Reason, and God's first Law: how surprizing must it be to Him, to be stop'd, and told, that, having come to this good Resolution, and entered Himself into the Church, or Society of Christians, it is now Time to acquaint Him, that, after his embracing the Christian Religion, there will be very little need of his troubling himself in that Manner: That He has been called upon, indeed, as a Person entrusted with the Care of his own Soul; but that He is now to be eased of that Trouble, and to devolve it upon Others: that He has been treated as a Person endowed with Understanding, and required to embrace Christianity, as far only as his own Understanding should perceive and find every thing in it worthy of God transacting with Man: but that now he must lay aside this Character of an Understanding Being, and
Of Consistency in all our Serm., and must not think it hard to embrace what is dictated by Others, though quite unintelligible to Himself; or, which is worse, absolutely inconsistent with all his own well-founded Notions of God, and of his Duty? How surprizing, I say, must this be? And yet, as surprizing as this is, it is the open avowed Language of the whole Church of Rome; and, I fear, the unavoidable Consequence of what Some, who have departed far from that Church, unwarily teach and inculcate.

But is not this again, destroying what we have built up; and, in another View, building up again what we have destroyed? And, what is most to be lamented, with Men who have not Strength of Mind enough to get out of these Difficulties, and yet Understanding enough to see them; the Damage falls upon the Gospel itself. With all others the Case is plain, and the Answer easy. If We are fit to be trusted with our own Souls, and we are justly called upon, as a Duty owing to them, to judge of what is proposed to Us, as from God; We are as fit still to judge of the Nature and Extent of our Duty, as we are still as much obliged to take Care of Ourselves, and of our own Happiness. If We had no Capacity to understand any Propositions expressed in Words; we could never be called upon by a Righteous God to judge of them.
them in order to receive them. If the whole sermon were unintelligible to Us; it would be of no more Concern to us, than if the Form of Words, pretending to convey it to Us, were only a Crowd of inarticulate Sounds; and We, no more interested in it, than if we were of the Herd of Animals, incapable of Reason. And, by the same just Rule, if any Part of what is proposed to Us, be utterly unintelligible to Us, that Part is just as much out of our Sphere, and equally of no Concern or Influence, with Regard to Us: and We ought not, if this be the Case, to be called upon to judge at all in so important a Matter. As therefore, in all other Sciences, truly so called, amidst all the most intricate Difficulties and Differences, it is expected that the Words, on each Side, should have a Meaning to them, and be understood, without which, no Use could be made of them: So, much more, in Religion, which is a Science of infinite Use to our Practice, nothing can have Influence, that is not known; and nothing can be made known to Us, that is not expressed in Words, which are intelligible to Ourselves; and therefore, to be judged of by Ourselves.

And if we go from Speculations, and Principles, to Precepts, no one can deny but that the true Meaning, the exact Bounds, the Na-
Of Consistency in all our Serm.ture and Extent, of the Figurative, or General Expressions, in which almost all Duties are laid down in the New Testament, cannot possibly be fixed, but by the Attributes of God, and the Law of Reason and Society; which is the Religion of Nature. And this Religion, neither our Saviour, nor His Apostles, ever professed completely and explicitly to delineate, in all its Parts and Measures; but They constantly appealed to it, and invited the World to regard and practice it. On the contrary; if this be so, that, in embracing the Christian Religion, we must discard that Reason, by which alone we were led to embrace it; and if that Understanding, which we were told was sufficient to judge of the Relation between the Attributes and First Law of God, and the Revelation of the Gospel, is now in some Parts of Religion, to act no more the Part of a Director to Us: May it not be said, too justly, that this Procedure is no better than leading Us by the Brightness of Light, into the Blackness of Darkness; and a Method of making our Understanding itself the Instrument of guiding Us to a State of no Understanding? Nay, Will it not from hence be urged farther, by Some, that They have been imposed upon in the whole Proceeding; and ought to go back to that Point, at which They began, when They
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They were first invited, and (if I may use the expression) enticed, into Christianity, by the Complements then paid to the Religion of Nature, as the Original Light constituted by God for us to judge by, of all possible Schemes of Religion. I have not time to name more Instances of the same Sort. But these Two are sufficient to shew the just Ground I had to observe that Christianity itself must suffer by the Inconsistencies of Those, who, in their Arguings about it, do thus build up again what they had destroyed, or destroy what they had built up.

I will now conclude with a few Remarks, which plainly follow from what I have said.

1. They who inadvertently treat Reason, and the Religion of Nature, in the Manner I have now described, if we go on to speak in St. Paul's Figure of a Building, seem to have totally forgot the Beginning and Progress of the Work, in this whole Fabric of Religion. They treat the Law of Reason, as if it were only the Scaffolding of the Building; and, like the Scaffolding of Other Buildings, to be taken away with the Rubbish, at the End of the Work. Whereas, it is the very and only Foundation, upon which They themselves are forced, and glad, to raise the Building at first. And, like other Foundations, so absolutely necessary to the standing, as well as to the first erecting, of it, that if
Of Consistency in all our Serm. if you take this away, the Building itself must fall. It may seem to themselves, indeed, to remain; and they may please themselves with the thoughts of living still in the upper Rooms: But it is from that moment a Fiction only; the Fiction of Fancy, and a mere Castle in the Air. The Rain need not descend, nor the Floods come, nor the Winds blow and beat upon this, to weaken and destroy it, like the foolish Man's House in the Gospel, built upon the Sand: for, upon taking away the Foundation, this must of itself immediately fall; not having so much as Sand to support it.

2. As the Law of Reason, even in fallen sinful Man, is God's original Law, to the Test of which Revelation is, of Necessity, submitted: Methinks, there ought to be, in all Persons concerned, the greatest Fear of offending God, by depreciating This, which may most justly be called His Primary Revelation of his Will, under the Pretense of a more than ordinary Zeal for any Secondary Law of his, which cannot be received, or so much as known, without This. And this Fear must be the more reasonable in a Christian, if it be considered, that whoever attempts, (let his Design be never so honest and pious,) to extinguish, or diminish, the Splendor of God's Original Light; if He could succeed, may
be sure of darkening the Second Light, which He thinks to set up on high, and make brighter: because the Light of Nature is the Light of the Gospel also, as it shews Men the Way to it; and as it throws its Beams upon every Page of it. And I will here add, what seems too often to be forgot, that the Religion of Nature is not the Opinion, or Whimsy, of this or that Philosopher; no, nor what any, or all of them put together, have actually said, or may say: but it is truly that Law of God, which may justly be collected, by His reasonable Creatures, from the immutable Reasons, and Relations of Things; and is the same Law, as one of the Heathen Writers well observes, at Rome and at Athens; that is, in other Words, at all Places, from one End of the World to the other.

3. Though it appears from what has been said, that the bad Consequence of such inconsistent Methods, is, or may probably be, the turning away of Many from the Faith of Christ; yet, it is fit that such Persons should know, that This Fault in Others, will not wholly excuse them; because They may see, if They please, that This cannot be charged upon the Gospel itself, but only upon the Weakness, or Wickedness, of Frail Men. On the other hand, how great the Guilt is of Those who lay any Stumbling-Blocks in the Way of Christianity; let
Of Consistency in all our Serm. let our Saviour himself teach us. Wo unto the World, because of Offences. For it must needs be that Offences come: that is, The Nature of Man is such, that Stumbling-Blocks will be laid in the Way of the Gospel. But Wo unto that Man, by whom They come. And this Wo is more particularly described by our Lord, in a Manner, pathetic enough to awaken all Persons concerned, to put a strong Guard upon their own Zeal, or their own Passions; lest They should, even under the Influence of a well-meaning Heart, at any Time fall into this Condemnation.

4. As the Religion of Nature is supposed to be a sufficient Rule, and in a sufficient Measure within our Reach, when we are called upon, as a Duty, to examine into Christianity by it; it evidently follows, that Whosoever takes most Pains, and most successfully, to delineate the Religion of Nature, in all its Branches, and all its Extent, is so far from being an Enemy to the Gospel, in the Event; that He really is the Man, who does what the Gospel came to awaken the World to do; and what is necessary towards the explaining and settling the moral Duties mentioned in it: and furnishes out a System, which, if it be founded upon Truth and Reason, becomes immediately a Part, an essential, certain, and indisputable Part, of the Gospel.
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pel itself; being That Part, upon which the S E R M. 
great Account to come is so often there repre-

sentcd chiefly to turn.

There can be no greater Service done to Chri-
tianity itself, than what arises from such La-
bours of Wise and Serious Men. And it is with 
a View to the same Service, that I have, at this 
Time, used my best Endeavours that the R e-
ligion of Favour and Mercy may not suffer by 
any Disgraces unwarily put upon the Religion of 
Nature. In a word; if We have a real Regard 
and Concern for Christianity, let us shew it 
by the Value we set upon that Religion of Na-
ture, by which alone we could be rightly con-
ducted to it; and without which We cannot in-
terpret, or understand, any of it's Doctrines and 
Precepts, when We have received it: Nay, 
which is now incorporated into it, and itself 
made the Law of Christ. Let us not encourage, 
or receive, Any one inconsistent Method of treat-
ing the Christian Religion: For such Inconsis-
tency is, in Truth, the great Strength of Infidelity, 
on one hand; and, in some Cases, of Popery, 
on the other. But, let us act that consistent 
Part which alone can make Christianity fit easy 
upon a thinking Mind; or recommend it to 
the World of Unbelievers.

If we conscientiously do this; neither build-
ing again any Part of that System of Darkness 
L 2 which
which We in effect destroyed, when We, upon our own Conviction, embraced Christianity; nor destroying the least Part of that System of Reason and Light, which We may be said then to have built up, as the Strength and Support of it: And if We add to this that beautiful Consistency, in the Practice of All that is good, which is the Duty and Ornament of a Christian; We shall, by this whole Conduct, do the greatest Honour and Service to the Gospel; and secure to ourselves the Happiness attending such a Behaviour in this Life, and the Reward promised to it, in That which is to come.
No continuing City here, &c.

SERMON VIII.

Preached before the King, Febr. 23,
1734-5.

HEBREWS xiii. 14.
For here have We no continuing City; but We seek one to come.

THE Life of Man, in this World, is often represented, by the Author of this Epistle, and other sacred Writers, as the Life of a Traveller, a Stranger, or Sojourner here below: and this World itself, as the Road to another. And, in Truth, this is a very proper Representation of the Cafe. Heaven, that Seat of established Happiness above, is our Home; and ought to be so accounted by Us. Thither all our Steps ought to be tending: and through this World must we go, as through a Road, before we come to it. In our Journey
No continuing City here, &c.

We have all the Unhappinesses of Travellers. We meet with an inconvenient Lodging, and ordinary Entertainment, for some Time. And if it be otherwise, yet we must certainly leave it; and no more think of settling ourselves in it, than a Traveller does of fixing his Habitation upon the most beautiful Spot of Earth he meets with in his Way; or in the best accommodated House upon his Road. The little Rest we have, if we have any, is, as in a strange Place, disturbed and interrupted with much Noise, and Hurry, and Disorder; and, like that of Travellers, to be left, perhaps, with the next Morning's Light; and ourselves to be called Home to a more fixt and durable State. For here have We no continuing City: but We seek one to come.

From this Allusion to the Life of a Traveller, by which the Unhappinesses of our Life in this World, are illustrated; and from the Words of the Text, particularly setting forth the Uncertain, and Unsettled, Condition of Man here below; it is my Design to take Occasion, without any critical Examination into their Connexion with the Words before and after them, to consider, more at large,

I. The unhappy Condition of Man in this uncertain State, where he has no continuing City; supposing
No continuing City here, &c.
supposing Him to be without the Hope of a bet-
ter and happier State to come.

II. The Grounds we have firmly to expect, and seek, such a State of Happiness, in a continuing City to come: And,

III. Lastly, the Importance, and true Use, of the foregoing Observations.

I. The unhappy Condition of Man in this uncertain State, in which He has no continuing City; supposing Him to be without the Hope of a better and happier State to come.

I. To be brought into the World (by the Will of a superior Being) weak and helpless; to pass our first Years in a State of absolute Dependence upon the imperfect Wisdom, or strong Passions, of Others; to be nourished, through Infancy and Childhood, with much Care and Trouble to Those about us, and much Uneasiness and Pain to ourselves; to be educated, through our Youth, and through all the Hazards and Storms of that impetuous Seafon, according to the good or bad, the just or mistaken, Notions of Those who claim the Right of conducting us to the Gate, at which we are to chuse our own Path, and at the Entrance of which our own Life properly begins—To enter upon this Life, now to be led under our own Conduct, perhaps big with the Thoughts of Nothing but the Enjoyment of
No continuing City here, &c.

of uninterrupted Good; and to find ourselves soon surrounded by a Crowd of Evils: To go on, and still be hoping for something satisfactory, and still disappointed; Unhappy, by missing the Aim in View; or more cursed, by obtaining it; either not finding what we sought, or finding what appeared Happiness at a Distance to be Emptiness, or perhaps, Bitterness itself: — To inherit the Pains, and Diseases, of our Forefathers; or to suffer under new ones of our own: To bend under Afflictions properly belonging to Ourselves; or to partake sensibly in those of Others, in whose Happiness our own is wrapt up; or at least, to sympathize with our Fellow-creatures, in the many Scenes of Distress, forcing themselves into our View, on which Side soever we cast our Eyes: And, after passing such an uncertain and tempestuous Sea, in which one Wave is continually pressing upon another; and one Danger attending to take the Place of another: i. e. after passing a short Life of Folly and Vanity; of Expectation and Disappointment; of imperfect Health, and uneasy Pain: After all this, I say to sink into Nothing; to fall into a State of utter Insensibility: — The Experience of the One, and the Prospect of the Other, seem too great a Burthen for a rational Creature to bear.

Nor are the Unhappinesses and Uncertainties of human Life confined to any particular Climates
No continuing City here, &c.

mates of the Earth, or Degrees of Men. GotoserM.
those Parts, which are sometimes called Happy; where the Sun shines warm, and the Earth is always ready to pour forth its Abundance: and you will find, in the Moral World, little but Violence, and Iniquity, triumphant; in the Political, the Oppression of the Powerful, laying waste the Rights, and living upon the Spoils, of Those below them; and in the Natural, Distress and Want spread over the most delightful Countries, through the Sloth and Effeminacy of their Inhabitants; or the Violence of Tempests and Earthquakes frequently scattering Terror and Ruine all around them. And if You return to those Parts where Power is made useful and lovely by Justice and Law: How often will you find them torn to pieces by intestine Quarrels; always disturbing, and, sometimes, totally destroying, the Peace and Security of private Life?

3. If we let our Thoughts go up to the more elevated Stations of Life; are They more securely fenced about from Evils, by Providence; or more defended from Uncertainty and Unhappiness than Others? Is the Sleep of Those who possess them, sweeter, or less interrupted by anxious Cares and Fears, than That of their Inferiors? Or, are Diseases and Death kept farther and longer from Them, than from the Meanest? Far otherwise. The Outside, indeed,
is all dazzling and pompous: But within, are
the Cares, and Perplexities, and Unhappinesses,
naturally attending such Stations, either through
the Imperfections inseparable from human Na-
ture; or from the Envy and Disatisfaction of
Others. And were their Estate a thousand
times more eligible; I might say, less pitiable,
than it is—Nay, were Power nothing but
Happiness unmixed; were Government, Pleasure
without Pain; and the sincere Cares of it always
repaid with Duty and Gratitude: Were Riches the
Instruments of Good, untainted by any Marks of
Misery; were Grandeur as gay within, as it is
gaudy without: yet, have the Possessors no Se-
curity from Evils of another Sort, and no con-
tinuing City here. The Diseases and common
Calamities of Life are sufficient, often, to make
the whole Scene of all these united, Insipid, or
Nauseous: and whether They do, or not; the
last Enemy must come; and to his Force, by
the Appointment of God, the best built Fabrick
of human Happiness must yield.

If This, therefore, be really the unhappy and
uncertain Condition of Man in this World; and,
from the highest to the lowest, no One exempt
from it; what does it become Us to do? Shall
We stop here in this Distress, and place our on-
ly Happiness in Despair of Any? Or shall we
spend the Vigour of our Minds in unmanly
Com-
Complaints of our unhappy Portion; and lose 
Sight of all Happiness, because it will not at- 
tend Us, upon this tottering and uneven Stage? If 
we are wise, or know what it is to be made rea- 
sonable Creatures, in our Degree; Let us rather 
try, what was proposed in the next Place,

II. Whether this Unhappiness itself, in this 
State, will not guide our Thoughts to Happiness 
hereafter; and the Experience of having no con- 
tinuing City here, lead us to the reasonable Ex- 
pectation of One to come?

1. The first Thought, upon this Head, will 
arisefrom our being brought into Life, and placed 
in this World, by a Superior Agent, a God of all 
possible Perfections. If this Supreme Director be a 
Being, not only of all Power, but of all Wisdom 
and Goodness; not acting by arbitrary Will, but 
by the Maxims of unclouded Reason: Whatev- 
ver Darknesses there may be, in our finite Un- 
derstandings, with regard to the Design of every 
Part of the Creation; yet, This must be certain 
if any thing in the whole Comprehension of Na- 
ture be certain, that Such a Being could not 
possibly command us into Existence, with such 
Faculties as We possess, with any Design sepa- 
rated from That Godlike One, of conduct- 
ing Us finally to Happiness; whatever State of 
Trials and Uneasinesses, He may first appoint 
Us
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us to pass through. It is unworthy of such an Agent, whose Goodness must give Counsel to his Power, to suppose that He could have had any Glory of his own in view, but what was perfectly consistent with a just Regard to the Happiness of such Beings, when He resolved to send Them into this World. The contrary Notion of the Glory of God is the Foundation of the worst Errors about his Dealings with his reasonable Creatures; and cloaths Him with Power, only to make Him their Terror, and not their Delight.

If God, therefore, who then brought us first into Being, when we first tasted of Life, and were free from all Possibility of wilful Offence on our Part, could be supposed to throw us into this State, in which so few have any Taste of Good, and so many are almost devoted to Pain and Misery; and, at the same Time, to open to our Thoughts no other Scene but This: might it not justly be said, that such a Proceeding as this, is no better than to force many kinds of Evil, and many Degrees of Misery, upon Creatures void of all Offence, without the least Hope or Pretense of so much as any Recompence for them? But if the Greatest Being in the Universe be the Best; as He certainly is; let us be afraid of imputing such a Conduct to Him; and, under that Fear, let us do Justice to his Attributes in
in this Instance; and, with Assurance, conclude that He would never have created intelligent Beings, only to sport a little, and suffer much, in such a World as This: and, consequently, had in his View Another and better State after This, when he first commanded us hither.

2. Let us go one Step farther, and, if we may be allowed to do it, let us suppose a Being created with sufficient Degrees of Intelligence; and immediately placed, by his Creator, in such a Point of View, as to be able to see through all the Mazes of human Life, and survey all the Imperfections, and Miseries, and Uncertainties, here below; and to judge of them just as well as Experience enables the most unprejudiced amongst Men, to do. Let us suppose, after such a full View, it were left to his own Option, whether He would be content to pass through the same several Periods of Life which the Inhabitants of this World do, and to take the common Lot of Mankind here below, as his whole Portion; whether He would chuse this certain Conflict with Evils, and small Chance for any Good; and, after the Conflict, be reduced to a State of Insensibility; or to be thrown back now immediately into his former State of the same Insensibility. Were this the Case, I hardly think that the bare Name of Life, which is but an empty Sound when separated from all Hope of...
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SERM. of settled Happiness; and much worse, when connected with a great deal of Misery; that the mere Name of Life, I say, could possibly tempt him to choose a Part in such a State, and then to cease to be; rather than to accept of the same Sentence, without going through the Evils of this State, before it.

But then, put the Case that a Scene of Established Happiness should be opened to the View of this Being, to succeed the Vanities and Unhappinesses of the present; and this Happiness declared to be reserved for such as shall pass through the Other with Virtue and Honour: This would alter the State of the Question; and would be a sufficient Inducement to any such Understanding Being, to undertake the Conflict; and to be content to tread the uneasy and uncertain Path of human Life here below; when he found it to lead to the Certainty, and Duration, of Good, and Happiness hereafter.

This way of Discourse is not founded on a mere Curiosity of prying into the Secrets of unfathomable Wisdom; but a sober Attempt to justify the Ways of God to Man: And these He himself, in all Points, in which moral Justice, Equity, and Goodness are concerned, must be supposed to have submitted to the Judgment of his intelligent Creatures, when He made Them moral Agents, and obliged Them to govern themselves by
No continuing City here, &c. by the same Rules of Justice, Equity, and Goodness, which He himself observed.

My Meaning, therefore, is not to pretend to judge of all the Views of infinite Wisdom, which would be Arrogance; but to draw an Argument from the Moral Attributes of God greatly conducing to his Honour: viz. That the Best of Beings, being unalterably happy in Himself, cannot be justly supposed to have commanded into Being a Number of intelligent Creatures, void of all Offense towards Him, upon any such unhappy Terms, as no One of them could have consented to, had it been possible for him to have judged of it: And, therefore, that such a Being ought not to be supposed to have forced Us into the poor Habitation of this World, without designing us for Another, and a Better.

3. I will go on, in the next Place, to argue from our peculiar Capacities, directed to the finding out the Existence and Nature of the Supreme Being; and fitted for the Worship of Him, and the Imitation of his moral Excellencies. For how vain, or worse than vain, are all these Capacities, if they be not designed by Him, who gave us them, to lead to his Favour in a future State? The low Concerns of Animal Life, and even of Social too, might have passed on, in a way worthy enough of this present Life, without our being made capable of the exalted Notions of
No continuing City here, &c.

A God, and of That true Religion, which cannot properly subsist, without the Expectation of a future State. If there be something real to answer to what We can discover by the Powers given Us; then are our Capacities worthy of God who is their Author. If the contrary be supposed; how great an Absurdity is by this fixt upon Him, who endow'd Us with these Capacities?

Much the same may be said of those reasonable and restless Desires of almost All Men; longing to continue in Life; and travelling perpetually towards greater and greater Degrees of Happiness, and made capable of them by their good Creator. These must all be accounted the fruitless Efforts of vain Capacities; unless Life be Happiness; and designed to be our lasting Good.

If we add to These, the common and well-known Complaint of all Ages, that the Affairs of this World are conducted, under the Inspection of Providence, in such a Manner, that the Best of Men, even in the ordinary Course of Things, are often seen to groan under the Weight of the same common Calamities of this Life which Other feel; and besides these, in some extraordinary and unnatural Cases, to suffer all the Evils that the Malice of wicked Men can bring upon them, for the Sake of a good Conscience: If We add, I say, such Considerations; The Argument
argument from hence will be This, That the Best and most Equitable of all Beings must design, and act, consistently with that amiable Character; That He cannot do this, without putting as great a Distinction between the Best and the Worst of his reasonable Creatures, in Happiness, as there is in Behaviour: and therefore, there being no such settled distinction in this State, but much Misery left for the Virtuous and Upright often to struggle with; there must be, in the great Design of the Creator, another State, in which Virtue and Happiness shall be seen inseparably united. Without this, there can be no Appearance of Proportion, in the whole moral System: and with it, all the just Relations and Habitudes of Things are exactly preserved. Upon which Account we may justly conclude it to be so designed.

These Considerations are not thin Speculations, spun out of the Cobwebs of the Schools, or built upon the Subtleties of Metaphysics; but Arguments, founded upon the Nature of God, and the Nature of Man, and the sensible Experience of our present State: and particularly, upon those Notions of the Supreme Being, which it is our Duty to embrace, and conduct ourselves by: and therefore, ought not to be entertained as the Dreams, or Wishes, of good Men wearied out with the Evils of this
No continuing City here, &c.

To these We Christians ought to add the Assurances given by Jesus Christ, of a Future State of Rewards and Punishments, without which his great Design had been all Vain and Fruitless: and these Assurances confirmed, beyond all reasonable Doubt, as the Voice of God himself, by that Series of Wonderful Works, and that Resurrection from the Dead, which were the Demonstrations of his being sent by God, into the World, to shew Man-kind the true and only Road to their eternal Happiness, in a continuing City to come.

III. The Use, to be made by us, of what has been said, is the only remaining Point: and the Point, indeed, in which we are most concerned.

We have seen the Conditions, upon which we live in this World: how certainly Pain, Affliction, and Adversity, in all their various Forms of Misery, are our Portion here; and how small a Part of our Time any Thing that has the Appearance of Happiness takes up. We are, at best, rather Amused, than Happy, in this Life: rather diverted from the continual Sense, or Dread, of Evil, than filled and satisfied with any Good. There are, indeed, Images of
of Pleasure, like Phantoms, dancing before our Eyes; and, like Phantoms, soon disappearing. But, even with regard to These, we are rather taken up with the Pursuit of what we have not, than satisfied with what we have. And, supposing ourselves possessed, as we fallly call it, of all the Goods of this World; in the midst of Life, we are in Death.

In these Circumstances of Distress, what Beings, made capable of higher Things, as We are, can forbear to wish for a more settled State of Good? And if we wish for it, our greatest Interest will incline Us to attend seriously to the Arguments which prove it; and to yield up Ourselves to the Force of that Evidence they carry with them: And if we be convinced of the Reality of such a State, we cannot be so insensible as not to desire a Place in it; and, if we really desire it, we cannot but be solicitous to take the true Method of obtaining it: that only Method of fitting ourselves for it, pointed out to Us by the Religion of Nature, and of Christ: I mean the uniform Practice of all Virtue, which is the Imitation of God, the Best, and most perfect, of all Beings.

This is the true and only Use of what has been said, that can possibly be made,
with any Appearance of Reason, by any Creature, brought into Being by the Supreme Father of all Things, and endowed with all the Qualities necessary to the constituting of a moral Agent.

The Thoughts which I have now laid before You, are of infinite Moment to every reasonable Being, condemned at present to this World, in which He has no continuing City; but framed so as to seek One to come.

The Lowest, and the most Unhappy, of all the Sons of Adam, may receive Support and Comfort, from this Lesson, which ought to be ever in his Mind, That the Evils of his wretched Condition, his Pains, and Sicknesses, and Poverty, and all the Distress attending it, cannot last longer than his short Life; and that, after a Period put to his Life and his Miseries together, He has as good a Title to plead to a durable State of unmixed Happiness in a never-ending State, or a continuing City to come, from his patient and blameless Behaviour here below, as the most elevated, Prosperous, Rich and Powerful, of all that tread on this Earth; and that his Voice will then be as well heard, and as much regarded, as the Voice of Any of Those, who perhaps thought too much of their Superior Exaltation above Him, in this State. Those in the middle State of Life, will feel the great...
No continuing City here, &c.

Advantage of the Thoughts I have proposed, throughout their whole Conduct, in all their Business, and every Stage of Life.

But what is most proper to be said of Them, in this Place, is, that They are Thoughts of equal Importance to the highest Prince, and the meanest Subject: to Those who are distinguished by the Honours of this World, and Those in the common Order of Life. For what can, indeed, be more awful and moving, and therefore, what more useful, to Those in exalted Stations, than to consider seriously, that, at the opening of that Future never-ending State, All the most dazzling Distinctions of this World shall cease; and none remain, but that essential One between the Good and the Bad; the Virtuous and Vicious: That no Rank shall then be regarded, but the Rank of Moral Excellence; no Guards shall attend the Great, but their Innocence, or true Repentance; and no Praises be heard from the Mouths of Flatterers, but from the Voice of their good Actions only: That in this continuing City, their Station shall be allotted, not according to their exalted Power, or Grandeur, or Riches, but according to their Use of them, here below; and that their Godlike Behaviour in this World, shall be the only Title to their Thrones of Glory, in the World to come?

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And
No continuing City here, &c.

Serm. And let me add, that I would not permit Myself to recommend such Thoughts as These, in this Audience, If I were not fully persuaded that they are Thoughts, which will blunt and soften the Thorns and Cares of Power; will throw Comfort into the Retirements of the Great and High; and scatter Innocence and Honour through the whole System of their Actions: Which will most safely conduct them through the Troubles, and Allurements, of their present Situations; will animate them to be like God himself, in the exerting all their Capacities for the Happiness of the World around them; and give them an Ambition to excel in every thing praise-worthy here, in order to their obtaining a Seat in that State of future Bliss, which is represented in the New Testament, as a Kingdom unshaken in the Heavens, far out of the Reach of all such Commotions and Disorders, as are seen in the Kingdoms of this World; and as a continuing City, the Seat of Established Happiness for ever.
Christ's Yoke, Easy; and Burthen, Light.

SERMON IX.

Preached before the King, Febr. 27, 1736-7.

Matthew xi. 30.

For my Yoke is Easy, and my Burthen is Light.

It is not improbable that our Blessed Lord, when he spake these and the foregoing Words, was looking upon Crowds of Travellers, coming up to Jerusalem, upon some great Feast-Day; many of them loaded with Burthens, and all tired and weary with their Journey: and that, according to his usual Custom in other Cases, He took Occasion from hence to speak to Them, who now wanted Rest of Body, concerning another Sort of Rest, of far greater Consequence; the true Rest
Rest and Happiness of reasonable Creatures: calling their Minds from the low Concerns of their Bodies, to the higher ones of their immortal Souls; and from the Buffle and Hurry of this World, to the Calm and Quiet of true Religion.

But, whatever the immediate Occasion of this Discourse might be; the Intent of it is so important, and so general, that every Man, in every Age, is equally concerned in it, who feels in his Breast any Degree of Reason and Reflexion. For it is very evident that, in this and the two foregoing Verses, our Lord is inviting Men to take upon them this Religion, and to imitate his Example, as the happiest Course they can chuse. At the 28th Verse; Come unto Me, all ye that Labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest. Come unto me, all ye who are wishing for Happiness and Rest, but are still in a State of Uneasiness and Disquiet, by pursuing it in wrong Methods; and I will shew you the only way to that Rest, which is worthy of your Searches. Verse the 29th; Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in Heart: and ye shall find Rest unto your Souls. Enter upon the Practice of my Moral Rules; or, in other Words, imitate my Example, in the Practice of every Virtue, and particularly of Meekness and Humility,
mility, which are in their nature Rest and Quiet themselves; and you will quickly find yourselves in that State of Happiness you are seeking. Then follow the Words of the Text, verse 30; For my Yoke is Easy, and my Burthen is Light. For that System of moral Duties and Obligations, which I am come to inforce and lay upon you, is of such a Nature, as to be much more agreeable, and easy, to such a Creature as Man is; and much more conducive to the Quiet and Happiness of such a Being; than a Freedom from it, or an Engagement in any Course of a contrary Nature, can be.

Thus far these Words of our Blessed Lord may, justly and naturally, be extended. For He plainly appears to speak to Such as are in a restless and unquiet Condition wanting and wishing for Happiness; from his offering to shew them the only way to it. He plainly intends what He says of his Yoke, to be understood of the Moral Rules and Obligations of his Religion, because He himself instances in two of them; viz. Meekness, and Humility. He plainly appears to comprehend, in what He says, his whole System of Virtue, from his calling it by the Name of his Yoke and his Burthen; which must mean his Whole Moral Law. And He certainly intends what he says of the Easiness
Easiness of his Yoke, and the Lightness of his Burthen, to be understood in Comparison of any other, set in Opposition to it; because he still calls it a Yoke and a Burthen: Words, which suppose it not to be void of all present Difficulty, and Uneasiness. And the Whole is plainly meant, in Comparison of the Yoke and Burthen of Sin, or Immorality; because He instances, expressly, in the Practice of the moral Virtues mentioned, as the Way to Happiness.

I may, therefore, very reasonably, take Occasion from these Words, to consider how truly and justly it is said, that the Yoke here spoken of fits easier, upon such a Creature as Man; and the Burthen of practical Religion lighter; than any of a contrary Sort: or, in other Words, to shew that the Practice, implied in This, is a much surer way to his Happiness, than That of Vice and Immorality. In order to this,

I. The first necessary Step is, to consider what a Sort of Being Man truly is.

II. The second will be, to enquire what Circumstances are necessarily required to the making any Course of Action easy and happy to such a Creature.

III. And the third will be, To shew that an uniform Course of Virtue, or practical Religion,
on, has a Title to all these Requisites; which the Course of Life, opposite to it, cannot pretend to.

1. As to the first of these; it is but Folly to spend our Time in vain Complaints of the Imperfections of our Nature: That we are not made, on one hand, with Abilities to practice all Virtue, in every Circumstance of Life, without any Inclination, or Temptation, to the contrary; or, on the other hand, capable of enjoying unbounded Pleasure, wherever it offers itself, without any Restraints from within, or any ill Consequences from without. Our Business is to consider ourselves as we truly are; and not as we could wish ourselves to be: as Creatures, related to the inferior Part of the Creation, in our Bodies, and bodily Appetites; but greatly distinguished from it, by a Faculty within us, which enables Us to find out the Existence of a God above Us; the Excellency of his Nature; the true Glory, and Duty, of a rational Being; and the Expedition, and Becomingness, of One Sort of Conduct above another. For to consider Man, either as a Creature merely Animal, without any Direction in his Nature but to the Animal Pleasures; or as a Creature merely rational, without any Bias from Flesh and Blood, or any Temptation from the present Scene of Things; is a very partial and unequal Consideration;
Chrift's Yoke Easy;

Sermon; and likely to carry us but a little way in the Enquiry now before us.

2. After this, the Second Step is to consider what Circumstances are requisite to the making any Course of Life easy, and agreeable, to such a Creature as Man, certainly, is.

And here, there are two Things, which seem to me to have a just Claim to This, viz. That this Course of Action should be agreeable to the best and governing Part of his Frame: And, That it should either have no Difficulties, and Distresses, of any Sort, in it; or that those Difficulties, and Distresses, should be, at least, sufficiently compensated by Advantages, either present, or future, or both.

1. To make any Course of Action, easy and happy, to Man, it must certainly be agreeable to that rational Principle within Him, which, He is sensible, has a Right to guide and direct Him in his Actions.

The Liberty of a reasonable Being is his Happiness: and the true Liberty of such a Being, cannot consist in an unbounded Freedom from the Obligation of all Laws; but in the ready and settled Habit of following that Principle, or that Authority, which is, evidently, entitled to the Rule and Government of Him. For by this means it is, that a Person, or intelligent Agent, comes to do what Himself approves
and Burthen Light.

proves of; what Himself recommends to his own Practice, before Action, and delights in and applauds, after it. On the contrary, it is the Slavery of moral Conduct, which is most of all to be dreaded by such a Being: And the most hard and intolerable Yoke, and the most grievous and oppressive Burthen, to Him, must be a Life, in which He is hurried, by the Command of an Inferior Principle, got loose from the Influence of the Superior, into such a Scheme of Actions, as Himself can never seriously approve, before Execution; and cannot but wish undone, after it. It is with Moral Liberty, as it is with Political Liberty, in its Perfection; which is greatly mistaken, and ill-treated, when it is supposed to be Licentiousness absolutely free from Rule; whilst its very Essence consists in a ready and uniform Submission to such Principles, or Persons, as have a right to govern us; and govern us by such Laws as Reason, (consulting the Good of the whole Society) declares it to be best for us to obey.

If we ascend higher in our Thoughts to That Being who holds all Perfection in Himself, it is no Presumption to say, what He accounts his own Glory; That it is the Liberty of Almighty God himself, to be constantly, and without any Deviation, governed by the eternal
eternal and immutable Laws of Good and Right, Just and Equal. From whence we may justly argue, that no Being capable, in any Degree, of knowing any Part of those Laws, can have any other Moral Liberty than This; or desire any other, upon any reasonable or honourable Terms.

Consequently, on the other hand, it must be the Essence of Moral Slavery to Man, to be arbitrarily governed by such Powers, as He knows to have no Right to any Command over Him; or hurried into Action, by such Laws and Commands, as He himself cannot think of in any other Light than as Contradictions to the Dictates of the Superior Principle, and inconsistent with his own Peace, and all Order within Him. Neither does the present transient Pleasure of obeying them, in any Instance, at all alter or affect this Truth: unless Pleasure, against Reason, can change Evil into Good; and alter the Nature of Things, so as to turn Bitter into Sweet; the bitter Reproaches and Resentments of an offended Mind, into the sweet Approbations of its ruling Principle.

It may, therefore, be justly inferred, from what I have already said, that it is impossible that any Course of Action can be an easy Yoke, or a light Burthen, to Man, in which He is ever contradicting the Superior Principle within, and the
the only one He has to consult, and to be influenced by; and is guided by the impetuous Rule of Another, which was made to obey: because, such a Course, must necessarily beget Self-Condemnation, and the worst Sort of inward Distress; and make the Man his own Enemy, and his own Punisher. But,

2. To the making any Course of Life easy, and happy, to such a Creature as Man, I will be free to own it not to be quite enough, that it be perfectly agreeable to his best and governing Part; but necessary also, that it should either have no greater Difficulties, and Disadvantages, in it, than what are certainly found in That opposite to it: or that These Difficulties, and Disadvantages, should be sufficiently and fully compensated by Advantages, present, or future, or both.

This needs no Sort of Proof, or Illustration; that, if any Course of Action has Difficulties in it, next to insuperable; or Uneasinesses, next to intolerable; there can be but little Hope of Constancy enough, in such a Creature as Man, to keep Him steady in it: But that if the Difficulties in it are not worthy to be named with the Advantages and Encouragements attending it; this will render it an agreeable Task to every well-informed Mind. If the present Advantages of it be but small; yet, if the future
true ones be vast and durable, tho' they be supposed only probable, This will weigh greatly against the present Difficulties of it. But if it should be found to have a more sure and probable Title than the contrary, to all present Advantages, worth the seeking after; and the surest allowed Title to all future ones; only supposing us to be Creatures accountable to that God who made us: These Considerations, joined to what I have said, under the former Head, will be more than sufficient to place it far above any Course of Life that can be opposed to it; and recommend it to the Choice of Men, as the most easy Yoke, and lightest Burthen; or as the Course of Life, much more free than any other from all the Evils that are most to be avoided by such a Being.

III. Let us now proceed to the third Proposition I laid down; viz. That a settled Course of practical Religion, or Virtue, has a much surer Title to all these Requisites before-mentioned, than that of Vice and Immorality.

And here, I believe, it is an uncontested Truth, that the habitual Practice of Virtue, is the Practice fully approved and applauded by our best and superior Faculty; by that Principle within Us, which, we are sensible, was given to rule and govern our Actions. And this single Truth will make a vast Difference between
between the Practice of Virtue, and that of Vice; That, to the Former a Man is constantly directed by serious Consideration, and by a willing Choice, which is the Result of it; that in it, He is accompanied with his own Applauses, and the secret Approbations of his Conscience; that after it, He is entertained with the Pleasure of a sweet Reflexion, and the Praisés of unpolluted Reason; That, on the contrary, to the Latter He is never, in any one Instance, led by the serious Considerations and Arguments formed by Reason and Judgment; that the more he considers, and reflects, and reasons, the more he is dissuaded from it; that he is hurried into it by quite the contrary Principle; that he is accompanied in it by frequent Reproaches of his own Reason; that he is often pursued after it by the Lashes of a guilty Conscience, and by the stinging Thought, that he has done what he can never justify at the Tribunal of his own Heart, or the more impartial one of Him who made him what he is.

Of this one might make the wickedest of Men, not void of all common Sense, Judges themselves: whether it was serious Consideration and Reflexion that made them Sinners; whether it was the last Result of their Judgment and Reason, that the Path they tread would
would lead them to their greatest Happiness; or, whether the Course of Vice be the Course agreeable to their superior and governing Principle. On the contrary, let the lowest Order of good and virtuous Men witness, whether their Virtue ever gave them any Uneasiness, upon the Review of it; whether the Sentiment of sorrowful Repentance was ever stirred up in their Minds, by the Thought that they had been just, or temperate, or humble, or charitable; or, whether They ever felt any Remorses within, upon looking back upon the virtuous and righteous Part of their Lives. They will give Testimony, every one of them, that if they ever have felt any Uneasiness of that kind in their lowest and most desponding Moments; this has been owing to the Suspicion, that They have not done enough in the Cause of Virtue: not that they have been so good, as they have been; but that they have been no better. On the other hand, if any Ease of Mind, in a religious Sense, has been experienced by any habitual Sinners; it is undeniable that it has never arisen from any Pleasure resulting from the Review of a vicious Course: but from their deep Sorrow, on account of their past Conduct; and from the secret Hope they sometimes entertain, that God will accept such Sorrow instead of that Virtue and Holiness,
Holiness, which they mourn the want of. All they which puts it beyond Doubt, that a steady Course of Virtue, is the Course, entitled to the constant Approbation of our best Part, and to the Favour of that Principle within, which was given to rule and direct us: and that the Course, contrary to this, is accompanied with all its Dislike, and Displeasure.

2. If we now proceed to the Second of Those Requisites before-mentioned, "That to make any Course of Life, agreeable to such a Creature as Man, it should either have no Difficulties, or Distresses, in it; or, that they should be sufficiently compensated by Advantages, present, or future, or Both; We shall, I hope, find it also true, that a Life of Virtue has manifestly the Preference, in this View, that the unnatural Discouragements, it may, in some extraordinary Cases, meet with, are more than compensated by the Advantages attending it; and that the general Rule, in the natural Course of Things, is greatly in its Favor.

To this Purpose, let it be considered, That the present Advantages of it are as certain, as Any of the most certain Pleasures, or Profits, of Sin; and of much more Importance to such a Creature as Man is. It constantly, and without Variation, brings along with it a Peace, and Serenity, and Joy of Mind; never known or
or felt without it. It tends, naturally, to the Health of that Body itself, upon which some place the highest Value; to as good and creditable a Situation in Life, as ought to be wished; to such a Reputation, as a Man would chuse upon the best Considerations: And, in the Enjoyment of the Goods peculiar to this World, being bounded only by Reason itself, it is always free from those many Embarrassments, Disappointments, Uneasinesses, Anxieties, Perplexities, and present Miseries, to which the unbounded Enjoyment of the same Goods is every Day seen to expose Men.

On the other hand, the Practice contrary to this, if it has any Effect upon the Mind, (as it must have, as long as the Mind exists) it is to disquiet and discompose it, by such well-grounded Uneasinesses, as are themselves present Unhappiness. The Effect of it upon the Body is, in many Cases, to bring on Ruine, and Dissolution, before it's Time; to fill it with more Distempers, and invite more Calamities into it, than would, otherwise, be experienced. The Effect of it upon the Name and Reputation, is no better; if the best Reputation be the Esteem of the Good and Wise. And upon Men's Estates, the Influence of some Vices is as bad, in lessening them, and bringing them to Nothing; and of Others, in making them
useless to the Possessors themselves. And if this be plainly the Case, that, excepting in some very unnatural and extraordinary circumstances of Affairs, the Cause of Vice has nothing to boast of, even in this present State; and that the Course of Virtue has, in itself, a constant Fountain of inward Ease, and a natural Tendency to all the outward desirable Happinesses of Life; here, at this Point, all the Boasts and Pretensions of Vice cease at once.

It is Virtue, alone, that can look forward, with any Courage and Satisfaction, into a future State of Things. Vice is no Rival there: nor does it so much as presume to think of any Claim to future Rewards; but, as long as Thought remains, is often allarmed with the Fear, or Suspicion, that, as Punishment is due to it, Punishment will hereafter overtake it. I say, it is a State of Virtue, alone, that can make Us feel a Pleasure in hoping and thinking; That, as surely as there is a God, who made Us reasonable Creatures capable of the Guidance of Moral Rules; as surely, as He has made us with all the Tokens of Creatures accountable for our Actions; and as surely as there is a State after this poor Life: so surely will the Favour of God, and all the proper Marks of it, be shewn to the truly Virtuous; and the Rewards of another and better Life, more
more than make up for all that was grievous in this, to the most unfortunate and oppressed of all the Lovers and Followers of it. And We Christians know that it was the great Design of our Blessed Lord, to bring Life and Immortality, in a future State, to greater Light, than they were viewed in, before; in order to make his Yoke still the more easy, and his Burthen the more light, to All who should take his Religion upon them.

I have thus endeavoured to induce you to chuse the Yoke and Burthen spoken of, in the Text; that is, the Obligations of practical Religion, or Virtue, before the Slavery of Vice; the only Rival which stands in Competition with it. I have compared their several Pretensions: And I am not sensible that, in this Comparison, I have given one Grain of Weight to the Scale of Virtue, which does not, undeniably, belong to it; or taken from the contrary Scale any one Advantage which it could possibly claim.

And now, if I may conclude with a Word more peculiarly proper to this Assembly, and this Place, in which I now speak; I will add, That, if what I have been laying before you be the Truth of God, of such Importance as to be worthy of your Attention; it cannot but be the immediate Conclusion from the Whole, in the
the Breast of every Person of High Rank, here present, that a settled Course of Virtue must be the only Course of Honour, to such a Being as Man is; and that the more established any Man is, in this Course, the greater Title he has to be called a Man of Honour. The Word Honour still remains amongst us, applied to the Behaviour of Men; and, if the Ideas, annexed to Words, be not yet entirely confounding, it can mean Nothing distinct from, much less contrary to, Virtue. Nor are the Differences of Things yet so lost, but that the Word is still designed, in all the Instances of Conduct and Action in which it is used, to signify a Degree of Virtue even exalted above the common Pitch; and exercised in Cases, to which human Laws, and human Eyes, often cannot reach; but the Right and Reason of the Thing do: as in those of Gratitude to Benefactors known only to Ourselves; Truth to the most secret Promises; Justice and Equity, as such, where no Court, and no Man's Judgment, can enforce it. These, and many other Instances, shew an Acknowledgment, in Those who use the Word, of the strict Obligation to Virtue, as the Dictate of the rational Faculty; and of the utter Disagreeableness of the contrary to that secret Principle in Them, the Power

and BURTHEN Light.
This is, in Effect, to acknowledge, what is a most certain Consequence, that a Man of Virtue, and a Man of Honour, through the whole System of Morality, are only two Expressions for one and the same Thing: and that it is a Contradiction to the Nature of Things, as well as the greatest Abuse of Language, to put asunder what God and Reason have joined together.

And, indeed, what can be the Honour of Man, but that Practice, which is unvariably agreeable to his superior and ruling Principle? Let him not claim any other, for fear He should be found to claim the Honour of lower Animals, instead of his own; and to boast of That, in which many of the irrational Kind, could They act in our World, would greatly excell him. For, in Men themselves, it requires but a very low Capacity, and little more than Inclination free from the Restraints of Reason and Reflexion, to be dishonourably wicked.

This is no wandering from the Words, and Doctrine, of the Text. For I mean to infer from what I have been now saying, that Virtue must be the Easiest Yoke, and the most Light Burthen, to a Mind sensible of the Rules of the strictest Honour; because this, we see,
is ever acknowledged of some particular instances of it; and therefore, cannot be denied of any other Branches of that God-like System, which relies, in every Part of it equally, upon the same eternal and immutable Laws of Right, and Truth: and, on the other hand, that a Course of Vice, and Immorality, must be the most galling Yoke, and the most heavy Burthen, to such a Mind; because it is a most uneasy Contradiction to those same Rules of Honour, by which the Man acknowledges himself, of Right, to be governed, and preserved from Moral Evil, in some Cases; which Rules extend equally to every Branch of the whole System of Iniquity.

And here, let me repeat, That no imagined Pleasure, or Profit, can alter this Truth: because Nothing of that Kind can turn Unreasonable into Reasonable; nor, consequently, the Dishonour of an intelligent Being into its Honour. Nor can all the Ensigns and Trappings of outward Greatness (in another Sense, sometimes, called Honour,) make it otherwise. They will always render Vice more deformed, and more disagreeable, in the Eyes of all who think rightly; because it is truly more out of Character, in such a Garb, than in the Coarser Dress of the Lower World: but They can never give to it the peculiar Privilege of Virtue; which,
which, alone, ever was, and still remains, the true Honour of all the Great and Noble of this World, as well as their Duty and Happiness.

I have thus, in the best Manner I could, explained and enforced a very important Declaration of our Blessed Lord, concerning the Practice of all the Moral Duties of His holy Religion: and, I hope, in doing this, I have been preaching Christ, and his Doctrine. It is the Glory of His Gospel, that the great Design of its Founder was to direct his Followers to the whole System of Natural Religion, or Morality. His Doctrine, upon which He rests their Happiness, is Virtue. His Life was an unspotted Example of all Virtue. His Death is the greatest Argument for Virtue. And his Sufferings are blasphemed, when they are represented as designed for the Advantage of any Sinners, but such as have forsaken their Sins, and are returned into the Paths of Virtue. Let Every One, therefore, who professes to follow Christ, as his Master, learn of Him; and take his Yoke, and his Burthen, upon Him: And he will find Rest to his Soul, in a Conduct agreeable to his own Mind, in every Part, and every Relation, of Life, here; and unspeakable Happiness, hereafter.
Of Persecution on Account of Religion.

Sermon X.

Rom. xiv. 4.

Who art Thou that judgest Another Man's Servant? To his own Master, He standeth, or falleth.

In a former Discourse upon these Words, I observed, that the Foundation of all outward Persecution, for any sort of Differences about Religion, was laid in the Mind within; that the first Step was the Inward Act of Censuring and Judging our Neighbours, on Account of what They esteem, as any Part of the Worship or Service of God: But that the Evil seldom stopped there, but was generally observed, when Opportunity offered,

*Note, This was the Second Sermon upon this Text. See the First in p. 47. of this Volume.
Of Persecution on Serm. to break out into open Violence to Men's Bodies or Estates, for the Sake of their Consciences.

This being the Case, the first Step I chose to take, was to attempt the Cure of that wicked Distemper of Mind within; or, to shew the inexculcable Iniquity of the Inward Act, before it can proceed to Outward Evils. This I endeavoured to do, by observing,

1. That we are not qualified thus to sit in Judgment upon One Another.
2. That it is not the Province of Us, who are but Fellow-Servants to the same Master.
3. That it is a Province, which our Great and Common Master hath peculiarly reserved to Himself. And,
4. That it is our great Business to prepare for the final Judgment of Ourselves, and not to be found judging Others.

But, as Men have been, in all Places almost, and in all Times, observed to proceed from Inward Censures, to the Application of Outward Force, and Worldly Evils, in Matters purely Spiritual, and belonging to Conscience; I shall now pursue this Subject farther; and endeavour, in the plainest Manner possible, to shew the great and unpardonable Iniquity of all Outward Persecution, on Religious Accounts: And this, by such Considerations, as will
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at once determine That, and answer the chief Pretences alleged by Any Men for it.

Now, this Great Evil of Persecution is, by All such Patrons of it as speak seriously of believing the Gospel, and regarding the Salvation of Mankind, always avowed, to be built upon the Great Importance to All Men, that They should be Believers of the One only true Religion, and found Members of the One only true Church of Christ, in order to their Eternal Salvation: And upon the Duty of bringing Men to their own Happiness, by Force of Outward Evils, when other Methods fail. I know, there is Another Reason, or Excuse, for it, sometimes mentioned; taken from the Peace and Quiet of Society, and of the Christian World about Us, which is pretended to require such an Agreement, as this Outward Force is designed to produce and establish. But this, (not to mention that it is built upon a great Mistake, directly contrary to Truth and Experience) being merely of a political Nature; and plainly founded upon the Wicked Maxim, that it is of no Importance what is True, or False; what is pleasing to Almighty God, or not; and throwing Religion quite out of the Question; I shall not now enter at all into the Merits of so weak and worldly a Pretense; but shall only consider the Former: which,
Of Persecution on Serm. which, being the most honourable Pretense for Persecution, is always the most avowed:

Few caring to own that they mean nothing but this World, and their own Power, or private Interest, in it. This then being plainly put upon the Importance of right Sentiments about Religion, and the true Church of Christ, out of which there can be no Salvation,

I. The first Consideration which offers itself, is this; that supposing, the Importance of Truth would justify Us; yet, without the Certainty of our being Infallible, in what we ourselves hold to be Truth in Religion, it would be most unreasonable, and inexcusable, to act against our Fellow-Creatures, by the Application of Outward Force. Persecution, you may know from all History, takes a great Compass, and is seen to exert itself, not only with Regard to the Fundamental Truths of all Religion; but, (We may say, chiefly and most commonly,) for the Support of Those many inferior, or lesser Points, in which the Thoughts of serious and sober Men ever were, and ever are likely to be, different. And if, in These, or any of These, We make a wrong Judgment; then, Every Step we take is not only out of the Paths of Charity, but of that Truth likewise, the Name
Name of which we make use of to cover our sermon. Uncharitableness.

This is so plain, in the case before us, that the Romanists, who generally take care to make their scheme of absurdities consistent with itself, first assume to themselves an infallible unerring judgment, before they venture to affirm to you, that you shall believe, and profess, what they think fit. For they well know that, if they should own themselves, to be liable to errors, and to be fallible men, in all contested points of religion, they could not claim the submission due only to infallibility, in matters of faith and worship: and so, they choose rather to lay their foundation in impudence, than to lose the benefit of worldly terrors, for the inlarging the bounds of their church.

But such an outrage upon the common sense of mankind, cannot be carried by mere dint of assurance. For it comes to no more than this, "We affirm that we are infallible: and therefore, you are bound to obey us, as such: neither can they themselves, who utter this oracle, tell us, in what place, and person, or persons, we shall certainly find this infallibility.

This therefore, is a voice, little becoming such a creature, as man is, even the most elevated
Of Persecution on Serm. elevated of all so called: who every Day finds within himself the Experiences of a Creature, capable of being deceived; and standing in need of all favourable Allowances, both from God, and his Fellow-Creatures. But,

II. Supposing that We could be, not only morally certain, but infallibly secure, that All the Points which We ourselves embrace as Parts of Religion, were really True, and Irreprehensible; the next thing to be considered is, That it is naturally impossible, by outward Evils, to force the Inward Assent of Others; or to make their real Sentiments about those Points conformable to our own. For the Assent of the Mind to any thing as Truth, must be upon such Evidence, as makes it appear to be Truth. Now nothing External can make any Proposition appear True to a Man's Understanding. Whatever doth that, must be of a kind, congenial to the Mind within: To which outward Force bears no Similitude, nor Relation. It is Reason and Argument, either real, or supposed, that works within; and which alone must do so, till the Nature of Man, and of Truth, be totally altered.

If a Blind Man were put upon the Rack, day after day; and intense Torments applied to Him, for the great Crime of not seeing the beautiful
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beautiful Colours, which his Neighbours see. This might extort from him a Protestation, that He doth see them; nay, it might create in Him such an Inclination to see them, that He might fancy, He did so: But it is plainly true, that it would not make Him really see any thing like them. He would still be the same Blind Man; incapable of seeing, and unacquainted with Colours, till All Defects should be rectified, and All Things requisite to the Purpose of Sight, should be rightly disposed.

Thus it is, in the greater Case before Us. All Men are pleased to suppose, that They themselves see and perceive Truth, and that Others are blind, and stupid, just so far as They differ from Them. Be it so. Let Us be wise and knowing; and let the Herd around us be all Blindness, and Ignorance. Must it follow, therefore, that the Application of Outward Evils will work that Persuasion in Others, which will make Them, altogether such as we are, in the Inward Sentiment? No. It may create a Wicked Prevarication, a false Protestation, an impious Hypocrisy; all ending in Irreligion and Atheism, which We must in great Measure answer for: Or, It may go so far, as to make Creatures, distracted with the Intenseness of Pain, fancy at last that They see what Others see, and believe what Others believe. But this can be
be no more than Imagination, or Fancy; because it is plain that the Medium made Use of, is not the proper Mean, or Instrument, to convey a real Persuasion. Force is not Evidence; Torment is not Argument. And therefore, whatever it may work, tho' bearing never so much Resemblance to Persuasion; yet it cannot be That it self in Reality, because That can no more be the Effect of any thing merely external, than the Sight of a Blind Man can be restored by tormenting him in an improper Place, and Manner.

This is so plain, that Those who profess to argue for any sort of outward Penalties, or Inconveniences, upon Accounts merely Religious, if They ever touch this Argument, only alledge, that those outward Things duly applied, may make Persons the more willingly attend to Argument and Reason: For so Every thing is called by Men, which Themselves hold, or would appear to hold. And from this very Concession it is plain, that it is the Evidence and Argument, which is the Mean of this supposed Conviction; and that even by Themselves nothing but this is supposed, or can be supposed, to work a real Change, in the Persuasion, and inward Sentiments of any Man. And this being the only Gloss that can be put upon this Proceeding,
III. It is to be considered that, supposing this were possible; it is neither the Business, nor the Interest of Truth, to be received, by such Methods, or in such a Manner. It is much better, and more pleasing, in the Eyes of Almighty God; if We can judge at all, either of his Nature, or of his Revelation by Jesus Christ; That any Man, in the Uprightness and Sincerity of his Heart, should remain in an Error, than that He should embrace the Truth, so induced, and so persuaded to it. It is the great Interest of Truth, to be received upon such Motives, and Principles, as are manly and honest; such as lay the Foundation deep within, and are directly opposite and contradictory to Those by which alone Falshood is, or can be, supported.

But when a Man is worked upon, by Torments, or any sort of outward Inconveniences only, to wish, or incline, to see a Point to be True; and the Inclination carries Him to assent, as He thinks, to the supposed Arguments for it; He is not at all sure that He hath not parted with his Integrity, for a Speculation; that He hath not made Ship-wreck of his Conscience, for the sake of a supposed Faith: or, that He is not worthy of that Imputation of holding the Truth, in Unrighteousness. It is plainly
ly an Accidental thing to Him, if He should, by this Method, be brought to a Right Opinion in any thing. It is wrought by such Methods, as would as certainly have turned him from Truth to Error, as from Error to Truth. He doth not, therefore, reap the Honour of a sincere and hearty Lover of Truth; and perhaps loses entirely the Reward of all his former Uprightness and Integrity. Almighty God gains no Servant, no faithful Dependent, in Him: nor doth the Man secure to Himself any Share in the Favour and Love of God; as far as We know, either by Nature, or the Gospel, the Will of our Heavenly Father.

And, as it is not at all the Interest of Truth, to be accidentally received, just in the same manner, as Error itself might; so, is it the greatest Indignity and Dishonour that can possibly be offered to that same Truth, for whose Service, as it is pretended, this great Concern is shewn. For what hath Truth to boast against it's Enemy, and it's Opposite, but that the One stands in need of nothing but Light and Evidence, to recommend it to Men's Minds; and that the Other cannot be supported without the Passions and Wrath of Man? This Boasting is entirely destroyed, when the Methods of propagating and supporting Truth and Falshood, are made the same. This puts them upon an equal
equal Foot, and makes their Glory the same: For, whatever becomes of Falsehood, this Method extinguishes all the Beauty and Glory of Truth, by conveying it to the Minds of Men, in a Method unworthy of any thing, but the grossest Falsehoods.

This, therefore, is certain to All who know the Value of Integrity and Honesty in the Eyes of Almighty God; that, supposing the Application of Outward Evils could create a real Change of the Persuasion within, and that for the better, as to the mere Truth of any Proposition; yet, Error it self, joined with Uprightness and Sincerity of Soul, cannot but be more valuable in the Account of our Great Judge, than Truth, either accidentally embraced, or infused into the Mind by the Workings of Force, and the Considerations of this World. But it cannot be supposed, that such a Persuasion within can really be the Effect of Outward Evils. Nor indeed do They who make use of them, at all trouble themselves about the True Sentiments of Those whom They use in a such manner. All that They think of, is to draw the same Words, or Sounds, that is, the same outward Professions, from All. This leads us, in the next Place, to observe,
IV. That to force the Professions of Men contrary to the Dictates of their Consciences, in Matters of Religion, and Divine Worship, is directly contributing to the Worst of Sins; and acting a Part the most inexcusable, and unreasonable. Any Instances of Torment or Misery, applied to this Purpose, even if it were in Favour of the plainest Proposition in Mathematics, would, in the natural Tendency of Things, be so far from inclining, either a generous or a perverse Mind, to the real Belief of it, that They would rather create an Averseness to, and Hatred of, a Point, which stands in need of such Methods of Support. And, supposing that Weariness under Evils, at Length shall make Men profess such Points to be true, which They cannot believe to be so: this is, in Those who make use of such Methods to this Purpose, the Great Crime of ensnaring their Fellow-Creatures into Hypocrisy, and in the End, perhaps into Atheism itself; into a Contempt of every Thing truly good, and a Disregard of what is True, and what is False. So that I should not doubt to say, that All the Inward Ins fidelity and Atheism, that is in the Hearts of so many Men, in those Countries, where Persecution is openly avowed, is in great Measure owing to that Persecu-

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...tion, which pretends to root it out; and will be charged upon the Persecutors themselves, by the Great Judge of the World, when He shall come, to bring to Light the hidden Things of Darkness, and to make manifest the Counsels of the Heart. Let us go on now to observe,

V. That, as it is just, and holds good, in the Case of all Truth, that it ought to be received, by every Man, in the Love of it, and not in the Fear of any of this World's Evils: so, is it plain, that the more Important the Truth is, and the more it relates to another State, and his own Eternal Salvation; the more still is it certain, that it ought not to be forced, but to be left to the Man's own Conscience, and to that Thought and Reflexion, which were given to Man for the balancing and receiving it; and which alone entitle Him to Reward, or Punishment, for his Conduct relating to it.

The Reason is plain; because the Importance of any Truth to the Service of God, or the Happiness of Man, makes it more requisite, that the Man should pursue the Enquiry after it, with Sincerity; and hold it fast with Constancy: neither of which He can do, if He is overpowered by the Motives of this World; and by the same Arguments, which equally recommend Truth and Falshood; and which
which therefore, would have had the same Effect upon his Mind and Tongue, were any certain Error, by the like Pain and Distress, recommended to Him.

Nay, upon this Account it is not unreasonable to affirm, That it would be more justifiable of the two, to erect a Court of Inquisition, and to apply the Extremity of Bodily Torments, for the Conviction of All who will not own that a Part is greater than the Whole, or that Ten are more than Twenty; than to make use of the same Terrors, in Matters purely Religious, that touch the Worship and Service of God, according to Men's own Consciences. The former is monstrous, and absurd, and an Injury to Human Society. The latter is as monstrous and absurd; and besides, is a profane Invasion of Almighty God's Province; a Judging his Servants before the Time; an Insult upon Conscience, which is to be the Rule, and Measure, of a Man's Duty here, and of his Happiness hereafter.

Since therefore, to force the Mind and Conscience within, is impossible; and since to force the Words and Professions of Men, against their Inward Persuasion, is impious and wicked; and since this is much more so, where God's Prerogative, and Man's Greatest Interest, are concerned, in the most peculiar manner: it remains
remains that the only Method in this Case, allowed by Justice, or Equity, is, the Use of Reason and Argument to convince Men inwardly of any Errors; and that All the rest must be left to Charity, and mutual Forbearance. There are Two Arguments, to prove This, and to inforce it upon all Men, and Christians. The One is taken from the Sentiments of all Men, when they make it, or rather feel it, to be their own Case: and the other is, what ought to be constantly regarded by All who bear the Name of Christ, the Method in which Christianity was propagated through the World.

1. As to the first of these; there is no Rule allowed to be more equitable, or more humane and fitting, than this, that what one Man hath reason to expect from another, He is obliged in Reason to perform to that other, in like Circumstances. If we cannot think it just in Others, in their Height of Power, to demand an Agreement in every Thing relating to Religion, of Us, supposing us under their Power; no more can we think it just in Us, to exact, with worldly Penalties, that same Agreement, whenever Superiority, and Strength, give leave: Because Force is not Right; nor can any Thing be done lawfully by one Man, which may not as lawfully be done by Another, in the
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So that Men perpetually pronounce, in this Case, their own Sentence of Condemnation, by asserting and pronouncing That to be the Height of Injustice and Wickedness towards themselves; which yet They will venture too often to practice towards Others, upon every the least Opportunity. It is not only a Law of the Christian Religion, but of eternal Truth, \( \text{Whatsoever ye would} \) (whatsoever You have reason to expect) \( \text{that Men should do unto you, That do unto them} \); and never the contrary.

2. But then, as I observed, there is something so peculiar to Christians, in the Propagation of their own Religion, in its first and pure State, that it deserves to be duly considered. The great Debate, We see, lies, between two Ways of promoting and supporting, what is called Religion; or extending the Bounds of a Church. These are, eitherForce, or Persuasion: either the Argument of Reason, or of outward Evil. Here then, we shall find, which was most agreeable to the Wisdom of God. It was, with respect to his Power, equal to Him which Method to make use of. Had He seen fit to have illuminated and converted the Princes and Magistrates of this World, (as He did St. Paul) this, according to some, would have done the Work effectually. The Authority of such
such Men, besides the Influence of their Examples, which there is a natural Inclination in Mankind to imitate, would immediately have drawn into the Church, the numerous Throng that is always seen to follow Power and Greatness. Nay, Multitudes of Lives might probably have been saved this way; because no Persecution of this new Religion could have been set on Foot, when all Power was with it; but would have been applied, on the side of it, if a few (which is not credible,) should have been so unmannerly, or so stubborn, as not to follow Great Examples. But then, the whole End of the Gospel had been well nigh frustrated; which was not, a bare Profession of it; but a receiving it as the Truth, in the Love of Truth, and the not holding it in Unrighteousness. Where would then have been the Trial of Men's Hearts and Souls? Where would have been the Proofs of Sincerity and Integrity in it's Professors? Where would have been Virtue and Honour, in following what was their great and lasting Profit?

Almighty God, therefore, who sees the Springs and Ground of all praise-worthy Actions, chose a Method the direct contrary, for the Honour of the Gospel, and of the first Professors of it. He not only did not cloath it at first, in the Garments of this World's Glory;
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not only did not arm it with any of the Force and Might of this State; but He left it to the Power of those Evidences that accompanied it: And, that Sincerity might have it's perfect Work, He opened it, when all the World was disposed to arm against it; not only not to cherish or befriend it, but to persecute and oppress it. So that here is the Difference between the Sentiments of Man, and of Almighty God. Weak Man never seems to think even the Religion of God's own Institution safe, unless it have Persecution, and worldly Power, in it's Friendship and Alliance. And the All-wise God judges so differently from this, that, in the Settlement and Establishment of the Religion of Christ, he chuseth to have the Power of this World against it, rather than for it. The Reason is, that this World may have as little to do with Men's Determinations about Religion, as possible; that the Uprightness of the Heart may lay the Foundation; and that Virtue may have it's Effect here, and it's Reward hereafter.

This, methinks, should convince all Christians, that Persecution, in any Degree, is the Invention and Instrument of God's greatest Enemy: and that, as Christ disdained to make use of outward Force, in planting the Best Religion in the World; so it is Unchristian and Impious
Impious to change his Method, in supporting it; and for this Purpose, to choose Those very weapons, which his Enemies used at first against him, and his Kingdom: and which, his Father, in his infinite Wisdom, rejected, as improper for the good end, he then had in view.

We may now, at the Conclusion of this discourse, very justly ask, If all this be true, according to the Law of nature, and the gospel of Jesus Christ; how great, how expressibly great, is the Guilt of the Leaders of that Church, which places the whole strength of Religion in the strength of Power, and the arm of flesh; which turns the Motives of all that is good, from inward to outward; which hath no care or concern about honesty and integrity, but enforceth an unity of voices, by fires, banishments, racks, and such like methods; which forsakes the Paths of meekness plainly pointed out by God and Christ, and pursues those of desolation, and destruction? And then, Let us consider, how much it behoves all who have professed to separate from that Church, to separate effectually from the most unchristian and diabolical thing in it; and to keep themselves at a distance from every tendency to the same evil: to study the gospel, and to put on that spirit of Charity,
Of Persecution, &c.

Serm. of Peace, and of Forbearance, which breathes through Every Page of it. And This will effectually dispose them, not to judge, or censure; much more, not to condemn and injure, oppress and torment, the Servants of Another Master: but to leave their Fellow-Servants, in all Matters of Religious Concern, to stand or fall, by the Judgment of their one common Lord and Master, to whom alone They must all give an Account for Themselves.
Of Zeal not according to Knowledge.

SERMON XI.

Rom. x. 2:
I hear them record, that they have a Zeal of God, but not according to Knowledge.

ZEAL, (in the usual Acceptation, of the S E R M. Word, and as it may be understood in most Places of Scripture,) is a great and Sincere Concern of the Mind for any Thing. And a Zeal of God, is a fervent Concern of the Mind, founded upon a Religious Principle; a Concern for something which a Man thinks of Importance to the Honour, or Worship, of God. But the true Notion of Religion, and of the Honour of God, has been so little known in the World; and Superstitious and fond Opinions about his Will, and his Worship, have taken such Root in the Hearts of Man-
Of Zeal not according

so8
Of Zeal not according kind, and been propagated so from Age to
xi. Age; that the Zeal commonly observed in the World, has been of more Prejudice to true Religion, and the Honour of God, than the greatest Indifference and Coldness could have been. So ready human Nature has always been to mistake, in such weighty Matters; and to turn the Virtues and Duties of Religion into Vices, by their Misunderstandings, and the undue Management of their Passions.

A Zeal of God is, in itself, a reasonable and commendable Thing. But when Men mistake in the first Principles, and great Fundamentals of Religion; and fix upon the Deity whom they worship Such Attributes and Qualities as are agreeable to their own Fancies or Inclinations; all that they act is out of the right Way: and their Zeal degenerates into a superstitious Fury, and a mere Madness; being not guided by Reason, nor built upon a true Understanding of the Nature of Religion. Thus St. Paul observes, in the Text, that the Jews, even whilst they rejected and persecuted Christianity, and adhered to Justification by their own Law, had a Religious Zeal: but He observes, also, that it was not according to Knowledge; not accompanied with Understanding, or built upon a right Apprehension of Matters.

And
And that We, whilst we have a Zeal of God, and a Concern for what we account Religion, may not fall into the same Condemnation; it will be proper for Us to spend some Thoughts upon this Subject. And, in order to do this with Advantage, I propose these following Things:

I. To shew When it is that a Religious Zeal is not according to Knowledge.

II. To lay down the best Rule I can, for regulating our Religious Zeal.

III. To offer some Motives, in order to our avoiding that Religious Zeal, which is not according to Knowledge.

I. I shall endeavour to shew When it is that a Religious Zeal is not according to Knowledge. And, I think, this may be determined, 1. By the Degree of our Zeal, which ought always to be proportioned to the Value of the Object of it. 2. By the Methods in which it shews itself. And 3. By the Motives which give Life to it.

1. A Religious Zeal is not according to Knowledge, when the Object of it is not what it ought to be. Nay, It is Absurd and Foolish; a Contradiction to All Reason and Understanding; when is employed upon what does not
Of Zeal not according

SERM. not deserve any Part of our Regard. As We are made Reasonable Creatures, We are obliged to act as Such. And therefore, When Men regulate and settle their Religious Zeal, for their own private Conduct, which is a Matter of great Moment to them; it ought to be done with the most mature Deliberation, and upon the best Grounds; with Regard to nothing, but what is of real Weight in the Balance of Reason, and of the Gospel. Otherwise, They may unhappily come to lay out the Strength and Vigour of their Souls upon what cannot profit them; upon what cannot carry forward the great Affair of their Salvation in another World; and to found their warmest Expectations of God's Favour, and Happiness, upon insignificant Trifles. And then, All their Concern for them, the more Vigorous and Passionate it is, the more Absurd it will be also. It may be a Religious Zeal, indeed: but it will be, not according to Knowledge, or Understanding.

And as the Degree of our Zeal ought to be proportioned by the Value of it's several Objects; it is evident That Our Religious Zeal is not according to Knowledge, when We shew more Zeal for some Matters of Little Consideration, than we do for Those of much more Moment, and of greater Importance to us. All Men who believe any Thing
Thing of Religion, (and none but such can pretend to any Thing of a Religious Zeal,) cannot but acknowledge that the main Design of it, and the strong Lines of moral Duty, to which it always tends, are the Matters of greatest Concernment to them. This, I am sure, our Saviour has plainly taught all Christians: and yet, the Zeal of Men, and even of Christians, which has most appeared in the World, has been seen to exert itself, as if These were framed to yield to Points of much less Consideration. The Honour of God, in the Sanctification of Men's Lives, has been too much neglected; the Terms of Salvation, proposed by God himself, both in his Book of Reason, and That of Revelation, have been overlooked. Other Terms have been invented; other Supports for Men's Hopes and Expectations fought out: and a much greater Stress laid upon some Circumstances, which are, comparatively, trifling and insignificant, than upon what God has plainly declared to be of the greatest Importance.

But, certainly, We act not agreeably to that Character of understanding Creatures, which we pretend to, when we put off the great and momentous Points of Religion, with a very small Part of our Zeal; and employ the main Force of it upon something of much less Consideration:
Of Zeal not according

when we express a very cold Affection, and little Warmth, for Righteousness, and Justice, and Temperance, Truth, and Honesty, and Integrity; but have a burning Zeal for some particular outward Forms, or inward Opinions; or for the Enlargement of the worldly Interest of a particular Sect; none of which can come in Competition with Those greater Matters, which True Religion strictly and principally requires.

2. Our religious Zeal is, certainly, then not according to Knowledge, when it shews itself by undue Methods, and is discovered after an indecent and unchristian Manner. Let the Objects of our religious Concern be what They will, and what they ought to be; let the Degree of this inward Concern be, according to the Rules of Equity, proportionable to the Objects; yet there is something more requisite: It must not break forth into Indecencies, or do Evil that Good may come. We cannot be too much concerned for the Honour of God, and the Conversion of the World from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan to the living God. But the aiming at the Service of God himself, will not justify all the Means we may possibly use, in our great Concern for it. Zeal for God, and his Glory, must not break in upon any of the Laws which He himself has
has laid down, in order to his own Glory: for this would be to affront Him, in order to honour him; and to bring a Disgrace upon his Religion, in order to propagate and extend it. And therefore, When the Zeal of any Persons for what they account Religion, breaks forth into Reproaches and Calumnies, Murthers and Destructions, Violences and Passions, Invasions of Rights and Privileges, and the like; or, when Zeal for Religion discovers itself in any Thing contrary to the known Laws of that same Religion; so that Virtue itself suffers, in any of its Branches: it is apparent that This is a Zeal of God, not according to Knowledge; being founded upon the Ignorance of what God expressly requires; and proceeding from Men's not knowing, or not regarding, the eternal Laws of Practice, which God himself has proposed to Mankind. And of such Persons as These, the Apostle, in another Place of this Epistle, says, whose Damnation is just.

3. Lastly, When the Motives that give Life and Vigour to our Religious Zeal are worldly and Evil; then our Zeal is not according to Knowledge, nor begun, and carried on, by Reason and Understanding. This one Thing will spoil the Best of all our Actions, and will certainly ruine the Beauty and Acceptablenes of our Zeal in the Eyes of God. To express a Warm
Of Zeal not according

Zeal for Him, and for his Honour, and His Commands, above all other Things; and to shew this Zeal in proper and becoming Methods; These are very laudable and Christian Points. But to exert this Zeal upon Temporal Considerations, and for some vile End of our own, undiscovered to the World, renders the whole Procedure odious to God; even when there is Nothing bad in it, but the Principles, upon which Men act. For God sees the Heart and the Reins; and is intimately acquainted with every Thought in Man. He delights in Sincerity. And though That will cover many an Imperfection in his Eyes, yet, Nothing can atone before Him, for the Want of That. And it is the Highth of Ignorance, for any understanding Creature not to know this: and, if it be known, it is the Highth of Assurance, to think to impose upon Almighty God with the outward Appearance, or Mask, of Zeal for his Name.

That religious Zeal, which alone He can look upon with Delight, must be founded upon an inward Sense of the Importance of Religion. But if there be all the Outside and Pomp of Zeal imaginable; and this be founded upon mere worldly Considerations, and be expressed only to carry forward some temporal End; it is absurd to think, that God can approve of it;
or that this is such a Religious Zeal, as it becomes an understanding Creature to have. Actions materially good and praise-worthy, are rendered vicious and evil by the Motives that give the first Spring to them. From whence it follows, that, though a Zeal for God and Religion, be, in itself, worthy of Commendation and Reward; yet, when it is built upon Considerations taken from this World only, and not upon a due Sense of Religion heartily embraced within, it becomes a vicious Zeal, a Zeal unacceptable to God; as it is not only not according to Knowledge, but absolutely inconsistent with it. Thus have I endeavoured to shew, when it is, that a Religious Zeal may be said to be not according to Knowledge: which was the First Thing I proposed.

But, before I proceed any farther, I desire to put in a Caution, That I would not be understood, by any Thing I have said, under this first Head, to intimate That a great Regard was not due to Those Performances appointed by our Lord, in his Religion, which, compared with Some Others, may justly be esteemed of less Importance. For I know Who has said, These Ye ought to do, and not to leave the Others undone. But what I have offered on this Subject, I intended to this Purpose, that We should not fix our Zeal upon these lesser Matters, more than upon Those which God himself
Of Zeal not according

Of Zeal not according to Knowledge. When the Duty of Sacrifice, under the Law, came in Competition with the Duty of Charity and Mercy, our Lord himself observed, out of one of the Prophets, that God required Mercy, and not Sacrifice. And so, when any Moral Duty comes in Competition with an instituted Rite, we know, by this Rule, (confirmed by our blessed Lord,) which is to give Place. This Preference shews that the One is, of itself, of greater Value; and therefore, Reason will direct us to have more Zeal for it.

So likewise, it is certainly lawful for Us to be concerned for any Practice, Opinion, or Notion, relating to Religion, which we ourselves think True, and of Importance; and to shew this Concern by all Christian Methods; nay, to endeavour to convince Others of the Reasonableness of complying with it. But it is a wretched Absurdity to make the Obligation to this Compliance, of equal Importance to Mankind, with their Obligation to Righteousness and Holiness; and much more So, to shew a greater Heat and Concern,
Concern, in order to make Men all of one Mind, and one Opinion, than in order to make them holy, and just, and charitable. Having just mentioned this Caution, I now proceed to the next Thing I proposed; which was,

II. To lay down the best Rule I can, for regulating our Religious Zeal.

This is certain, that it is our Duty to have a Zeal for God, and for Religion. But it is our Duty also, as certainly, to take effectual Care that it be a Zeal according to Knowledge; lest otherwise it should flame out, to the Prejudice and Dishonour of Religion itself, and of that God in whose Service it pretends to burn. The Best and only Rule, I can think of, is, that we must take all possible Care to fix in our Minds just and true Notions of the Nature of God, and of the great Design of Christianity. For, as the fundamental Error of Men, in this important Matter, has been the forming to Themselves the falsest Notions of the Nature of Almighty God, and of the End of the Gospel itself; and, as this Error has given the sad Occasion to all their Madness, under the Covert of a godly Zeal: So, the Rule I have mentioned must be the most proper to prevent, or cure, this great Evil.

When Men have been so foolish, as to imagine that God is pleased, and served, and worshiped,
Of Zeal not according
as He ought to be, by little and trifling Ceremonies; nay, by absurd Rites, and ridiculous Offices of Devotion; (as many have brought themselves to think,) They naturally lay out all their Strength, and employ all the Bent of their Minds, to establish and propagate these; and stick not, at last, to destroy All that stand in the Way of their Fancies. Indeed, the chief Agents of this Sort, in the World, are, I believe, too wise to be persuaded themselves of the Truth of what they pretend to Others. But many, who serve under them, in the Prosecution of their Ends, think that all they are doing, let it be never so bad, is necessary for the Honour and Service of Almighty God, and his true Religion; and therefore, lawful. But if we would not Ourselves be of the Number of Those whose Zeal is a Dishonour to God; we must take Care to know what that God is, whom we serve; what his Nature and Attributes are; what his Will and Pleasure is; and what the End of his making Mankind capable of regarding it, and living according to it.

Nothing can be of more Service to us, in the Matter now before Us, than This, which I am now recommending to you. Supposing, what is certain, that We shall find, upon Inquiry, that God, the great Lord whose Servants we are, is a God of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity; that
that He is merciful, just, and holy, to an infinite Degree; that he cannot hate any of his Creatures; that he wishes, and designs their Happiness; that he made them to know, and worship, and serve Him, in the Practice of all Virtue; that he revealed his Will to them, by his Son, in order to teach them more effectually to live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present World; and by This to bring them to all Happiness in another, and better State: Supposing, I say, a serious Person made truly sensible of this; Is it possible for him to think of honouring God any otherwise, than by the Practice of what he knows to be pleasing to him? Or, to pursue any thing in the whole World, with a Zeal comparable to That, with which he presses after what He knows to be the Will of that God? Can such a Man ever suffer himself to transgress the plain Laws of God, in order to promote his Honour? to be cruel and barbarous, in order to carry forward the Glory of his merciful Father? to be unjust and uncharitable, to shew his Zeal for the God of all Right, and the Father of all Mercies? Or, to be ill-natured to all the World about him, in order to propagate the most peaceable and best-natured Institution in the World?

I hope, as far as the Nature of the Thing itself can go, I may be justified in answering, That
Of Zeal not according

That such a Conduct is next to impossible. He, who sincerely inquires into the Attributes of Almighty God, cannot easily suffer himself to act any thing contrary to that Nature and those Attributes. He, who seriously looks into the Christian Religion, will not easily think that any Thing, which contradicts the very Design of that Religion, can be acceptable to Him who instituted it. He, who sees how great a Stress is laid in the Gospel, upon Holiness, and Mercy, and Peace, can never be induced, under Pretense of the Honour of Christ, or his Church, to disregard the Practice of these, even for one Day. Nor can He, Who ever once thought in earnest about Religion, be brought to imagine it to be a praiseworthy Practice to serve the Cause of it by vicious and immoral Actions.

There is nothing therefore, more likely to fix our Zeal upon its true Object; and to fix it in the greatest Degree upon what most deserves it; to keep it from discovering itself in all Methods disapproved and condemned by Religion; and to rectify the Principles and Motives which give Life to it; than the Study of the Nature of God, and the Design of Christianity. I hope, upon the whole, I may conclude, That, if Men would study the Book of Reason, and the Gospel of Christ, seriously, They could not possibly entertain, or shew forth, any Religious Zeal, but what
what is according to Knowledge. I shall now proceed,

III. To offer some Motives, in order to our avoiding such a Religious Zeal, as is not according to Knowledge. And to excite us to the well-regulating our Religious Zeal, it will be very proper to consider,

1. The Reasonableness, and excellent Usefulness, of Religious Zeal, when it is duly regulated. It is not left to our Choice, whether we will have a Zeal for God, and Religion, or not; but it is our Duty to form and nourish it in ourselves: and such a Duty as we cannot but practice, and effectually compass, if we heartily set about it. To have a Zeal for God, is to have a warm and affectionate concern for a Being to whom we have innumerable Obligations; who is the proper Object of all our Hopes, and Desires, and Expectations; and who has all possible Claims to our whole Service. And to have a Zeal for the Substantials of Religion, is to have a great Regard for what deserves it more than all other Things in the World; for what is truly pleasing to our Lord and Master, and can never be otherwise; for what is essentially necessary to the Happiness of human Society here below, and to our own eternal Reward hereafter.

It
Of Zeal not according

It is just and becoming, therefore, to have a Zeal, and hearty Concern, for this great and important Business of Religion. And, to have this Zeal so directed, as to pursue its End by none but proper and Religious Methods; by Nothing but what Reason and God himself recommend; is, to consult the true Honour of Religion, and the Service of that God who requires it of Us. No Scandal is brought, by such a Conduct, upon our Profession: but every Mouth blesses it. And then, to have this Zeal founded on the Motives of eternal Moment, the Rewards of Heaven, and the Importance of Religion, and the Favour of God and Christ, is to improve the Beauty and Loveliness of it yet more. There can be no Argument in the World, nor the least Shadow of an Objection made, against a Zeal, which has God, and the Practice of Religion, for its Objects; which regards These more than any Thing of lesser Consideration; which discovers itself only in the Ways and Methods recommended in the Gospel; and which works upon no other Principles but what the Gospel approves of. But, on the contrary,

2. Let us consider the Unreasonableness, and the pernicious Consequences, of a Religious Zeal, not well-regulated; or, in the Apostle's Words, not according to Knowledge.
And here it is too obvious to Every Man's S e r m. Observation, that Nothing has done more Mischief, or produced more lamentable Effects in the World, than this Sort of Zeal. It was this Zeal for the ceremonial Part of their Law, that kept the Jews from acknowledging our Saviour; nay, which induced Them to reject and crucify him. It was this Zeal for Matters of lesfer Consideration, which, in very early Days, disunited the Churches of Christ from One Another; and in these later Ages, keeps up, with a fatal Heat, the Differences between the several Sorts of Disciples of Christ, in the World; and leads Christians, by degrees, to act against their Fellow-Chriffians, with a Spirit of Fury, and wicked Persecution. It is this Zeal without Knowledge, and the Discovery of it in an undue and unchristian Manner, which has prejudiced many against the very Name of Christ; and made the glad Tidings of Salvation a Scandal to Unbelievers.

But though it appears (as we have seen it to be, in the first Part of this Discourse,) so unreasonable, in itself; and has proved so pernicious to the Cause of true Religion in the World; Yet, it has always had a Multitude of Votaries, who have loved and entertained it themselves; and who have abused and persecuted Others, who have not shewn their Zeal in the
the same severe, and inhuman Methods. Nothing could be of worse Consequence to the Jews, than this blind Zeal for their Ceremonial Law: and yet Nothing was in more Repute amongst them. And They who had it not; They, who believed that Sacrifice was of least Value than Mercy, or moral Duties of greater Moment than Ceremonies; or the Salvation of the whole World of greater Concern than their Rites and Forms of Religion; were accounted false and perfidious; treated with Contempt, exposed and affronted, excommunicated, and banished from Society. And They have been followed, in this Path of Uncharitableness, ever since, in all Ages and Countries, by Such as have followed them in their Zeal not according to Knowledge.

But, One of the Worst Consequences of this, I must not omit; because it is to be found wherever this blind Zeal is, even in the lowest Degree; That it naturally brings in, wherever it is universally embraced, an universal Neglect of the great and substantial Parts of Practical Religion. For when Men's Thoughts and Hearts are taken up with the Shadows of Things, and all their Heat and Vigour spent upon these; They have no Time, or Zeal, left for the greater Matters of the Gospel. Nay, it is often seen, that, when They are most possessed with a Zeal for
for the lesser Matters and Appendages of Religion, They are most of all apt to forget the sacred Laws of Practice, and to transgress the Rules laid down in that very Religion which, they think They are propagating.

There cannot be any Consideration of more Weight with Christians, in the present Case, than This, That where the greatest Heat and Concern are expressed about the insignificant Circumstances of Religion, there the essential Parts of it are seen most to be neglected, in the Lives, and whole Behaviour, of the Professors of it. What Christian will not be moved to discourage, and put what Check He can, to a Fire, which may, too probably, burn to the Destruction of all that is valuable in that Religion itself, in whose Cause alone it pretends to burn?

It is, I confess, a melancholy Consideration, that some of the best Qualities and Affections of the Mind, so easily degenerate into accursed and wicked Passions; and tend, in their Corruption, to the Ruine of the best and most important Things in the World. But this should excite our most serious Consideration; and induce us to make the great Strokes of Practical Religion the chief Objects of our Zeal; and to resolve to shew this Zeal by Those Methods only,
OfZEAL not according, &c.

which the Gospel recommends to Us, as much as it doth this Zeal itself. And then, We may be secure from falling under the Censure of the Apostle, in the Text, of having a Zeal not according to Knowledge; and not only of This, but of pleasing Almighty God, by placing our Zeal where it ought to be placed; by regulating it agreeably to his Nature and Perfections: And so, at last, may inherit the Reward of that Faith and Obedience, which we have not defiled by a false, rash, and wicked, Zeal; or by pretending to carry forward the Honour of God, by such Methods as He himself abhors.
SERMON XII.


No servant can serve two masters: for either He will hate the one, and love the other; or else He will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.

In these Words our Blessed Lord supposes, and represents, all Men who have it in their Power to come to the Knowledge of the Supreme God, as tied and bound to Him, in the Relation of Servants. This being the Supposition; in order to convince his Followers of the great Unreasonableness of pretending to be the Servants of God, and yet to be the Servants, together with Him, of an opposite Master,
The Impossibility of
Sermon: Master; Slaves to the Riches, or Grandeur, of this World; Our Lord useth an Illustration taken from common Life. No Servant amongst Men can possibly serve two Masters, that is, two Masters, with different and opposite Wills; of contrary Tempers, and contrary Resolutions. For it will be either thus, that the Servant will have a much greater inward Affection, and Kindness, for one of them than for the other: Or, supposing that He can inwardly love them both equally; yet the Nature of their Commands, and separate Interests, is such, that He must often, whilst He is obeying the one, or holding to the one, as the Text expresseth it, despise, that is, neglect the Commands of the Other. The first Affirmation is, that He cannot be supposed to love them both equally, so as to be attached to their Interests equally in his inward Affection, and Inclination: the second Affirmation is, that, supposing him to love them both equally, yet, in the Execution of their contrary Commands, He must unavoidably neglect, or despise, the one, whilst He holds to, or obeys, the other. From this Instance of a Servant amongst Men, pretending invain to serve two Masters, opposite in their Interests, and their Wills, Our Lord argues, and assures his Followers, That it is so, with respect to God, and Riches, here represented as a Person,
serving God and Mammon.

a Person, or false God, set up as a Master, in Opposition to the true God. Ye cannot serve the true God, and Mammon; that is, Riches, or the imaginary God of Wealth.

If you would now see the Force of our Lord's Argument, extended, as it ought to be, to other Points, as well as Riches; it may be comprehended in these three Propositions.

"You are all obliged by the strongest Ties, and the most unanswerable Reasons, to be faithful and sincere Servants of the true God, to whom You owe Yourselves, and all you have, and all You can hope for." Now, as it is impossible, amongst Men, for a Servant to serve two opposite Masters, either affectionately, or faithfully; so, it is impossible for You to be the Servants of the fictitious God of this World, and to serve the true God faithfully, at the same Time.

"Therefore, you are obliged, if you would serve God, as you ought, to renounce to the Service of every other Master, opposite to him, in Interest, and in Will." From the Text, thus explained, I shall take occasion to discourse of several Particulars, not foreign to the plain Design of the Words; nor useless to Christians of these later Ages.

I. I shall observe that many Persons, who have naturally good Dispositions, and, frequently holy and warm Resolutions, please themselves with
The Impossibility of

Sermon with dividing their Services between God, and Something opposite to Him; and entertain a foolish Opinion that this Conduct is a secure way to his Favour.

II. I shall observe to you how unreasonable, and how useless, this Division of their Service is; and how ill-grounded and vain, all their Hopes are, which are founded upon such a Service.

III. I shall endeavour to dissuade you from all such Service to Any thing in this World, as will make it impossible for you to perform the Service that is indispensably due to God. And,

IV. I shall conclude with a proper Application, concerning the Reasonableness, the Honour, the Advantage, and true Glory, of that Service which we owe to Almighty God.

I. I shall observe, that many Persons, who have good Dispositions, and frequently holy and warm Resolutions, often please Themselves with dividing their Services between God, and something opposite to Him; and entertain a foolish Opinion that, by thus halving their Behaviour, They are in a secure Way, and truly his Servants. For it being so, that Religion hath been taught them, and the plain Doctrines
servimg God and Mammon.

trines of it inculcated upon them from their SerM. Childhood; and That, notwithstanding all xii.
the Allurements, or Terrors, of the World, Virtue hath still its peculiar Attractions, and Advantages; and that the Prospect, or even Suspicion, of God's Anger and future Punishment, is very terrible, and to some Minds intolerable: These Things, I say, being so; many Persons find it impossible to root out of their Minds all Regard to Religion. They experience a Reluctance in their Consciences, when they attempt it; and this Reluctance gives them so much Uneasiness, as rather determines them to set about some Part of the Work of Religion, than to neglect the Whole. They cannot bear the Thoughts of being totally cast off by Almighty God; and of forfeiting all possible Title to Heaven and Happiness; and of incurring certainly his Wrath and Displeasure. These Things they cannot think of with any Ease; nor can they bring their Consciences to sit down quiet under the Apprehension of them.

But then, on the other hand, perhaps their natural Inclination leads them strongly to some particular Vice, or other: Perhaps Custom has improved this Inclination, before they were enough aware of it: Perhaps, it brings them in a great deal of present Profit, and Advantage; or
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or it procures them a great deal of Pleasure; or Honour, and Pomp, may attend upon it. These Things are so entertaining, and bewitching, to some particular Minds, and Tempers, that Men are not able to bear the Thought of parting, effectually and entirely, with what procures them so much present Satisfaction. When their Minds are employed upon the Excellency and Beauty of Religion, and the good Consequences of serving God truly; and are a little at Leisure from the close Attacks of any thing of this World; then perhaps, they may come to a Resolution of forsaking all for God, and a good Conscience; and be vain enough to think that Nothing shall move them from such Resolutions. But when the Season of Trial comes again; and the Temptation presents itself to Them, in all its Force: They begin to think more favourably of the Matter; and to imagine it no mortal Crime, to be influenced by it; and to give Proofs, by their Weakness, that they are Men.

This being their Case, between the Motions of Conscience, and God's Commands, on one hand, and the Temptations of Profit, or Pleasure, or Honour, on the other; They at last are seen to come, with Calmness and a Sort of Serenity of Mind, to divide themselves between this World and the other: between the true God, and the Idol.
serving God and Mammon.

Idol God of this State; and to procure themselves a Sort of Ease, by performing Part of that Service which they owe to Almighty God, (and This, to be sure, will be the Part that They themselves happen to like best) whilst at the same Time they never lose the View of what they propose to themselves in this vain World. All indeed do not give up themselves to the same Masters. Some you may see pursuing Pleasure to an immoderate Degree; others, ambitious beyond all Bounds; others, busying themselves in amassing Heaps of useless Wealth: and very many of these, in their Intervals, appearing before God, in publick Worship; calling themselves his Servants, and perhaps really thinking that they are so. But

II. I come now to observe to you how unreasonable, and how useless, this Division of their Service is: and how ill-grounded, and vain, all their Hopes are, which are founded upon such a Service.

And this will appear most evidently by considering, what the true Service of God is; and how much of our Hearts and Time it must unavoidably require. The great Mistake of Men seems to lye in their not knowing, or not attending to, the true Notion of God’s Service. Were it so indeed, that to serve God were
The Impossibility of

were nothing but to say our Prayers, to call him Master, to attend upon his Ordinances, to bow before him, to lift up our Hands and Eyes, to confess our Sins, to beg his Blessing, and to give him Thanks: were This, or the like, all that is implied in serving God, then it is very certain that we might divide Ourselves, and give the World our Strength, and our Heart, and our Practice, whilst we serve God (as some call it) with our Lips, and our Bodies. We might then certainly go, from our Intemperance and our Luxury, to our Prayers and Praisers; we might come fresh from cheating our Neighbours, and fall low before the Footstool of our Master; we might come from our Hoards of ill-gotten Possessions, and be as loud, as the best of our Neighbours, in calling God our Father, in professing our Faith in him, and laying Ourselves before the Throne of his Mercy.

But this Notion must be rooted out of Men's Minds. This is what God complained of, under the Jewish Dispensation. This People draweth nigh to Me with their Lips, but their Heart is far from Me. You see, the Worst amongst that wicked and corrupted Generation of Men, in which our Saviour appeared, put on the greatest Shew of Zeal for God and his Service. Who such Zealots as They, to pay Tithes;
Tithes; to fast; to pray; and to do many other things which belonged to their Religion? But what was this? or to what Purpose? Their Practice, their Hearts (which are discovered by Practice) were all another Way. Mammon was their true Master; because They were his true Servants. The Service they did to Sin was visible. The World about them felt the Effects of it: whilst they called that Form of Religion, the Service of God, which He assured them He abhorred and detested, when it was separated from that practical Service which He indispensably required.

For what is it, in which the Service of any Master upon Earth consists? Is it in the calling Him, our Master; or Ourselves, his Servants? Is it in a formal Attendance upon him, to receive his Commands, or merely to know his Pleasure? Is it a bare confessing of Ourselves guilty of transgressing his Will, and in a daily returning to ask his Pardon? Will any Master upon Earth acknowledge this to be Service? or, will any Master value, or regard a Man who behaves himself thus, as his Servant? Offer it now to any Man, and see if He will accept of such Mock-Service, as this. If I be a Master, faith God, by his Prophet, where is my Service? i. e. If I be your Master, as you pretend to call me, pay me the Service due to a Master:
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Ser. m. ter: Behave yourselves as that Relation, which you pretend to be between us, enjoins and demands.

It is the Part of a Servant to regard the Interest of his Master, as his own Interest; to consult the Honour of his Master, as his own Honour; and principally, which is the only Thing to judge by, to look upon his Master’s Will, as far as a Master’s Authority reacheth, as the Guide and Rule of his Actions. Now, if We apply this to Almighty God, and that Relation we stand in to Him, as Servants; we shall presently see how far the Service we owe him reacheth; how much of our Time, and how much of our Hearts, it must of necessity take up. The Interest of our great Master must be esteemed by Us, as our own Interest. Now, the Interest of our Master can be Nothing, but the Encrease of all that He approves of; and the Addition of as many Persons as possible, to his true Service. Our great Master’s Honour is what we are obliged, as Servants, to consult and regard. And this lies likewise, in the Likeness of all understanding Natures to his moral Perfections; and in the advancing, as much as possible, the State of true Virtue in the World. And, what comprehends all, our great Master’s Will must be made the Rule of all our Actions; for They are but indifferent
indifferent Servants indeed, who do not pay a constant and strict regard to the Will of their Masters. Now, the Will of God is every Command that he hath made known to Us, whether by the Law of Nature, which is his Voice; or by the Law of Revelation, which is an open Confirmation of that first Law.

From hence, therefore, it appears that, under the Service of God, is comprehended the whole System of moral Virtues, as well as all the external Acts of Devotion and Worship. A Part of that Service, which we owe to him, is indeed, external Adoration; the Prayers, and Praises, of our Lips; and all the Expressions of Dependence upon Him, and universal Love to Others, which become such Creatures as we are. But this is but one Part of his Service; however it may have come to be called, in general, by that Name. Nay, if it do not proceed from the Heart and Soul; if the Mind and Thoughts do not sincerely accompany it, and direct it all, with due Affections and Sentiments, to Him; it is indeed no Part of his Service; but only so many Words pronounced, without Meaning; and so many Sounds, muttered over for Form's Sake, without any Effect either upon Him, or Ourselves. Nay, and supposing the Heart and Soul to go along with Us in these outward Exercises of our Religion; supposing Us
The Impossibility of SERM. Us to be sincere in this Part of God's Service; and to confess, and pray, and praise, and intercede, with all the present Affection that becomes the Attendance of such Servants upon such a Master: yet, when this is done, This is but a Part of his Service.

There remains behind a large Field of Virtue. Temperance, and a Command of Ourselves, and all our Appetites; Charity, or an unbounded Love to all the intelligent Creation; Justice, or a strict Regard to the Duties and Rights of all Mankind about us; Forgiveness of the greatest, and most provoking Injuries, that can be offered us; Patience, under all the Evils of Pain, Sickness, Loss, Disappointment, that come upon us by the Providence of our Master; and Contentment in every Station, to which he is pleased to confine Us; in a word, such a Behaviour and Conduct, in that Post in which our great Master placeth us, as becomes us, as Servants, and as is required by the Nature of it, whatever it be. All may be comprehended in the two great Commandments, of loving the Lord our God with all our Heart, and all our Mind, and all our Soul, and all our Strength: and of loving our Neighbours as Ourselves: or may be summed up in St. Paul's comprehensive Expression of living soberly with Respect to ourselves; righteously, with Respect to
serving God and Mammon.

This being then the Task of God's Servants; this being the Work which every one hath to do, that hath given up his Name to Him; tell me now, Is there any room for other Masters, opposite or contrary to Him? Can any Man love God with all his Heart, and yet love any Enemy to God with the least Degree of his Affection; or the least Part of his Heart? Can any Man, who hath such a Task marked out for him; so many Virtues to excel in; so many good Habits to implant in himself; so many good Actions to fill up every Moment of his Time; so strict a Regard to pay to the Honour of his great Master, and the Commands of such a Lord: Can any Man, I say, in these Circumstances, find any Opportunity, or the least Interval of Time, for the Service of other contrary Masters; such, I mean, as direct Him to any Instances of that Sin, which is as opposite to the Will of God, as Darkness is to Light? It is evident indeed, from the Nature of the Thing itself, that, in whatsoever Point we decline from his Service, we cease to serve him; and that, as soon as we are drawn to Sin, we are no longer the Servants of God, but of his Enemy. For know ye not, faith the Apostle, that to whom Ye yield yourselves Ser-

vants
The Impossibility of

SERM. vants to obey, his Servants ye are, to whom Ye obey. And consequently, If You obey the Commands of God, You are the Servants of God: But if You obey Those of Sin, You are the Servants of Sin; and have departed from the Service of God. And the Service of God being the Practice of all Righteousness, in every Instance equally; it is impossible that You should at the same Time be the Servants of God, and yet transgress Any of the Rules of that Righteousness.

How vain therefore, and groundless, are the Hopes of Those, who pretend to divide themselves, and their Services, between God, and this World; between Duty to this supreme Master, and any Sort of Vice; They themselves may see, by considering seriously what the Service of God is: Not a Prayer, or a Tear, or an Act of Devotion; but a continued Tenor of good Works; a Progress and Improvement in all Virtue. This is a Service, which admits of no Remission of Care and Diligence; and which can brook no Rival. And therefore, the Man, whenever this is neglected, or broken into, immediately ceaseth to be the Servant of that God, who cannot be truly served, unless He be served with the whole Heart. The Reasonableness of what hath been said under
serving God and Mammon.

this Head is so manifest, that it will make Way for what I next proposed; Which was

III. To dissuade you from any such Service to Mammon, i. e. Riches, or any other Thing, or Person, in the Universe, as will make it impossible for you to perform that Service which is indispensably due to God. For, it having appeared plainly, that it is impossible to serve, or obey, any Two Contrary and Opposite Masters; and consequently, impossible for the same Man, to be the Servant of Mammon, and of God; the only Question is, Which of the two opposite Masters, who contend for his Service, He shall chuse for his Lord and Director: whether the True God, or the false Gods of this World, Pleasure, Profit, or Honour, that set themselves up against his Right, and in Opposition to his Will: for One or Other of these, He must chuse.

Now, there is this, at first Thought, to be said of the Service of God, that the greatest Part of Those who are truly the Servants of Mammon, or some other evil Principle, know not how to throw off all Regard to their right-ful Master; but even, whilst they are serving his Enemy truly, would gladly ever now and then, return to the Service of God, in some Instances, or other. By this They themselves give a remarkable Testimony that
The Impossibility of

SERM. Almighty God hath a lasting, true, and certain, Title to their Service; whilst They cannot be easy in their Minds, without paying him some Sort of Service. On the other hand, all that the greatest Votaries of this World can say for that sincere Service they pay to their other Masters, is, that Inclination strongly leads them to it; that they hope it is not so bad as it seems to be; and that they design still, one time or other, to have due Regard to the Service of God, their true, and rightful Master. But how long will such Pretences satisfy reasonable Creatures? Only long enough, to serve, to make them miserable, when they come to see, too late, the Unhappiness of that Service, in which they have engaged themselves.

For this is the Case. Almighty God hath such a right to your Services, that is, to your Obedience to all his Laws, that, in the midst of your serving other Masters, you are forced often to recurr to his Service, and to pretend to pay him some Sort of Obedience. Now, you have seen that this interrupted Obedience, this Half-duty, which is only so much as your other Lords, your Lusts and Passions, your Covetousness, or Luxury, will permit you to pay Him, is not truly his Service; and that you cannot pretend, by such a limited and broken
Obedience, to prove yourselves his Servants. Would you, therefore, be his Servants, so as to have that Reward which He hath promised to his true and faithful Servants? There is an absolute Necessity that you should immediately come out of the Chains of other contrary Lords; that you should break their Fetters; and renounce every Degree of that Service, which Mammon, or any Sort of evil Principle, requires of you. For God's Service cannot be his true Service, unless it be perfectly free from all such Regard to any thing else in the World, as is inconsistent with your constant Regard to all His Laws. His Service never can be easy to Yourselves within, till You have thus got rid of all the Influences of impetuous Inclination to the Service of all contrary Masters: nor can it be ever pleasing to Him, till it is that uniform, sincere, unmixed, Obedience, which He hath a right to, by all possible Titles.

On the other hand, consider what Title, what Right, any other Thing in the World, opposite to Him, hath to our Regards. What do we owe to them? Are they the first Causes of our Beings? Are they the primary Occasions of our Happiness? Will they, at the End, stand us in stead, against the Attacks of Adversity here, or the Displeasure of an offended God hereafter? Are they stable, unmovea-
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seem-ble, certain, unshaken, Goods? or, Are we certain of always having them for our Comforts and Supports? or, Are they not rather, vain, imaginary, moveable, and transitory Things; and we ourselves, hastening away with a never ceasing Pace; till all Correspondence with them is entirely interrupted, never to be renewed again? And are such Things as These, fit to be chosen for our Masters? or, Are we of that Nature, as that it can become Us to make ourselves their Servants? By no Means: God, and Reason reclaim Us from all Approaches to such a Service; God, and Reason, which are to Us infinitely more than all the World besides.

If therefore we would have God for our Friend, we must choose him first for our Master; and his Laws for the Rules of our Service. And if we would have our own Reason, and Conscience, at Peace with Us; we must act the Part to which they direct: and that Part is ever the Service of that God, to whom we owe ourselves. Whatever hinders us from a constant Application of ourselves to that Service; whatever opposeth us in it, or would draw us off from it, is to be disregarded, and cast from us with Courage and Constancy. And, it being certain that the Service of Sin, is utterly inconsistent with the Service of
serving God and Mammon.

of God; it is certain, that if we would serve God, as we ought, in Duty and Interest, to do; We must first shake off all Regard to his Enemy; we must, if we think of being his Servants, unto all Righteousness, shake off that Yoke of Servitude which other Masters would impose upon us. And if we be truly willing to do this, there will remain Nothing to hinder us from giving up ourselves to the true Service of God.

IV. To this I shall now endeavour to persuade you, and so conclude. His Title, or Right, to this Service, is indisputable. He hath created us what we are. We owe to him all we have, and all we can ever enjoy; and the very Possibility of enjoying any thing. He hath bought us again into his Possession, by the Life and Death of his Son. To him we owe this fresh, and greater, Opportunity of making ourselves happy in his Service. And, how can we deny a Service due on so many, and so excellent, Accounts? The Rules of his Service are his Laws, by which He governs us, and to which he requires our Obedience. And these are Reason, and Light; the Transcripts of his own moral Perfections, which constitute his own Happiness. They are the Dictates of eternal Truth; and every Step we take in the Paths
Paths of them, brings Peace and Joy along with it: in which they entirely differ from the Laws of every other sinful Principle, that would draw us aside from them.

The Rewards of this Service (for we serve not God for nought) are unexpressible. The present Reward is all that inward Satisfaction which a well disposed Mind can take, in the Consciousness of a good and reasonable Conduct; and the Thought of having God's Approbation. The future Reward, after the Service is over, is all the Happiness of God's Presence, or, of those more immediate Communications of his Love, and Favour, which he hath promised to all his faithful Servants. In the Scripture-Style, by being his Servants, they become his Sons; and, by being his Sons, they are adopted into the Inheritance of the Saints in Glory.

What is it now, I pray, that can come in Competition with this Reasonable Service? Can uncertain Riches, or empty Honour, or insatiable Luxury, pretend to any thing like this? What Title can they shew to the Services They claim? or, what can they produce in Favour of their own Right? Can they speak Peace and Satisfaction to the Mind within? Are their Laws the equitable Laws of Reason, and obeyed with the Approbation of our Consciences? or, will they entitle to any, the least Reward
Reward hereafter? What are their Laws, indeed, but the hard Commands of Tyrants, accompanied by Disquiet, here, and ending in Unhappiness and eternal Death, hereafter; flattering with Images of Pleasure, but leading to certain Pains?

Here then let us stop, and acknowledge that it is Almighty God alone, who can justly claim Us, as his Servants; He alone, who hath the Reward of our Services, in his Hand; and hath Power to execute what his Goodness hath promised us; and He, alone, therefore, who demands, and deserves, our whole Service. We cannot, We see plainly, serve Him, whilst we serve other contrary Masters. To him, therefore, without Delay, without Reserve, without Hypocrisy, let us give up ourselves, as true Servants; and shew ourselves such, by our sincere, constant, and uniform Obedience to all his holy Laws: that so we may, at last, with the good and faithful Servant in the Parable, enter into the Joy of our Lord.
III CONJ"
The Ambition of Christ's Disciples reproved.

Sermon XIII.

Matthew xx. 26, 27.
But it shall not be so amongst you: but whosoever will be Great amongst you, let him be your Minister: and whosoever will be Chief amongst you, let him be your Servant.

The Occasion of this Lesson of our Sermon is particularly related in the Verses immediately before these Words.

The Mother of Zebedee's Children, (viz. James and John,) being very desirous of shewing the great Affection she had for Them, and her Zeal to promote their Interest, came with Them to our Blessed Lord, whose Disciples they were, and, with the proper Marks of Respect, let him know that she had a certain Thing to ask of Him. Our blessed Lord, always inclined to grant to all his Followers
... and whose Consent this Petition was made, and said, Ye know not what ye ask: that is, you are not yet sensible what a Scene of Difficulties They must go through, who desire to be Great in my Kingdom; and what it is that is requisite to the making...
making you the highest amongst my Favo-
rites: Are ye able to drink of the Cup that I
shall drink of, and to be baptized with the Bap-
tism that I am baptized with? You must not
expect to arrive at any Dignity in my Kingdom,
without following my Steps. And are You
able to do as I, your Master, must do; and to
undergo what I must undergo, before I arrive
at my own Glory? The two Disciples, not
knowing well what He meant, and being pos-
essed of the Opinion that, let these Diffi-
culties and Distresses be what They would, His
Kingdom would display itself, after their short
Continuance, in all worldly Pomp, and Victo-
ry over all the Enemies of his People; and still
inflamed with the same Desire of Power, and
Preeminence, answered him with a great deal
of Confidence, that They were able to follow
him, and to drink of the same Cup that he
should drink of, whatever it should be.

Our Lord, well knowing that, in the midst
of all their Ignorance, They had a sincere
Zeal for Him, and his Service, and that they
would be great Instruments of good in his
Church, said unto Them, Ye shall, indeed,
drink of my Cup; that is, (if we speak more
plainly than our Lord at this Time designed to
speak,) Ye shall, indeed, be persecuted and
afflicted, according to the Example of your
Master;
The Ambition of Serm. Master; and go through a Scene of such like Difficulties as I myself must; and, by this Means, make yourselves fit to be glorified in my Kingdom. But, supposing you thus to follow my Steps in this uneasy Way to Glory; yet, To sit on my Right Hand and on my Left, is not mine to give; but it shall be given to Them, for whom it is prepared of my Father; that is, the chief Places of Dignity, in my heavenly Kingdom, are not now, to be disposed of, according to my arbitrary Will and Pleasure; or to be given away any otherwise than as my Father has seen fit, in his perfect and unerring Wisdom, to decree and order them.

When the other Ten Apostles heard what had passed betwixt Jesus, and the Two Brethren and their Mother; what They had solicited, and how great their Ambition was; They, as little knowing the Nature of their Master's Kingdom, as the other Two, and as much desiring the great Posts andHonours in it, were very angry at the Request of James and John, and very uneasy at their aspiring Designs. But Jesus called them all to him, and took Occasion from the Petition of the two Brethren, and from the Pride of the other Ten, to instruct them a little farther in the Nature of his Kingdom; and to teach them, that though in the Nations of this World, Those were reputed the
the Greatest who had the greatest outward Service, Dignities, and the highest Authority; yet, in his Kingdom, They should be accounted the Greatest, who had least Pride, and least Ambition; and who were most ready to stoop to do all good Offices, and to minister, as Servants, to their Brethren. And this Instruction he concludes with his own Example (ver. 28.) even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his Life a Ransom for many: as if he had said; As I myself, whom you will easily acknowledge to be the Greatest in my own Kingdom, think it no Diminution of that Greatness to condescend to all Instances of Love and Kindness to Mankind; and now am come into the World to be a Servant to Men, and, at last to dye a servile and ignominious Death for their Sakes, and to procure their Happiness.

Having now related to you, and explained, as I went along, this History of the Ambition of the Two Brethren; their Mother's Petition; the Answer of our Lord; the Indignation of the other Apostles; and our Saviour's Instruction, occasioned by their mistaken Notions: it is my Design to consider, not the Words of the Text only; but what other particulars shall offer themselves, upon the Review of this whole History, and the Circumstances of it.

And
And the Observations I shall make at present, are these:

I. This story gives us occasion to observe, how inclined men are to mistake their own happiness; and how apt many parents are to overlook the real good, and true interest, of their children; and to frame their wishes with regard to them, rather with a view to the riches and grandeur of this world, than to their true and lasting happiness.

II. This history gives occasion to observe the great tendency, and strong bias, there is in human nature, towards outward dignity, and superiority over others.

III. We may observe from it, what notions the Jews had, at this time, of the kingdom of their Messiah, and the nature of his glory.

IV. It concerns us principally to regard what our blessed Lord here delivers and intimates about the nature of his own kingdom; and the method of attaining to the greatest dignities, and highest stations, in it.
of their Children; and to frame their Wishes with regard to Them, rather with a View to the Riches and Grandeur of this World, than to their true and lasting Happiness.

Here were Two of our Lord's Disciples, who had been his Followers for some Time, so grossly ignorant in the Doctrine he had delivered, as to think that they were not capable of greater Happiness than They should experience, if they were placed in an eminent Post of Honour and Dignity, above their Brethren, in that Kingdom of their Lord, which, according to their Notion of it, was very soon to be opened, full of earthly Glories and temporal Splendour. And here was their Mother, who thought she could not give a greater Proof of her Love for her Children, than by joining with Them, in what was truly their Petition, and adding her Request to our Lord, in order to procure them this great Dignity which they aimed at. How much better had They consulted their true Happiness, had they asked to be instructed in the certain Method of obtaining and improving All those Virtues and Graces, which are the eternal Ornaments of a Christian Mind? And how much greater a Demonstration had their Mother given, of her True Love to them, if she had checked their forward Ambition, and aspiring Thoughts;
Thoughts; and petitioned our Lord for his favorable Directions, in order to make her Sons glorious in all that was lovely in his Eyes, and agreeable to his great Design?

After our Lord's Resurrection, They were sufficiently convinced of the Folly of their former Address to Him; and found, by Experience, that His Kingdom was to be established by Persecution and Hardships; and a Place of Dignity in it, to be obtained by the Practice of the lowest Humility. How happy had it been, if the Christians of all succeeding Ages, had been wise by their Example; and had learned, from their Weakness, and our Lord's Instruction occasioned by it, to check and conquer this same Temper in Themselves?

But it is too visible, That, though the Nature of Christ's heavenly Kingdom is so plainly declared, and the Way to the Glories of it so clearly pointed out, through the Path of Humility, in the Writings of his Apostles, and his own Discourses; yet, there are Few that can persuade themselves to think the Crowns of Heaven, upon the Terms of the Gospel, worthy of so warm a Contention, and so eager a Pursuit as any temporal Superiority, or earthly Dignity, is. How much Time, and how much Attendance, and how much Importunity, can Men employ, in soliciting some worldly
worldly Honour, or Post of Rank, above them. Others, who perhaps, grudge to bestow a few Minutes of a Day upon the Thoughts of Religion, and the Pursuit after the good Things of another World? How many Men, who know the Tenor of the Gospel, and profess to believe it, are seen to lay out the Strength and Eagerness of their Desires, for Themselves, upon the Possessions, or Pleasures, here below; without mixing, perhaps, one hearty Prayer for Possessions, and Pleasures, of another Nature? And no wonder, if such Persons, as far as They concern Themselves with the Happiness or Unhappiness of their Children, should chuse to fix their Wishes for Them, on the Things which are seen, as the Instruments of all Good; rather than on the Things, which are not seen.

We may judge, without Uncharitableness, that the Motions of their Hearts all centre in this World, by the indefatigable Pains They will be at, to raise their Children to State and Riches, here below; and the little Concern they express, to make them Great by Goodness; by the Practice of Charity and Humility, and all the other moral Virtues. There are but Few that can taste this Sort of Greatness and Glory, Themselves; and Few therefore, who will recommend it to Those, in whom They are
The A M B I T I O N of

SERM. are most nearly concerned. Some, I trust and
xiii. believe, there are, who are not ashamed of a
different and better Conduct. But the Num-
ber is great of Those, who are so blind and
mistaken in their Notions of Happiness, that
they too often wish and procure, for Them-
selves, and their Children, Misery instead of it;
whilst They are labouring only after such
Glories, Greatness, and Wealth, as, in the End,
often prove the greatest Dishonour, and the tru-
est Poverty, to an intelligent Being. And,
as this is the Case, Who can wonder, That, by
the Many, He is not accounted so good a Father,
whose chief Regards are expressed in what
tends to the real and lasting Happiness of his
Son; as He, who leaves no Methods unat-
tempted, to raise him to such a Hights of
Greatness; or to overwhelm Him with such
Hoard of Money; as must bring along with
them the greatest Danger to his Virtue and,
Eternal Interest.

II. The History now before us, gives us oc-
casion to observe the great Tendency, and strong
Bias, there is, in human Nature, to the Love
of Superiority, in Power, and Place, over
our Fellow-Creatures in the same Society.

The Twelve Apostles were now, as it were,
divided into two Parties; and both equally
tainted
tainted with the same Sort of aspiring Thoughts. Two of them hoped to have prevented the Attempts of the Others, and to have secured to themselves the Places of prime Dignity in their Master’s Kingdom. The other Ten disdained to be thought inferior, or subject, to Them; and conceived a great Anger against them for their Design. It may, indeed, raise some Wonder, that such a Temper should at all take place in the Breasts of Those, who saw Nothing in their own Master, more remarkable, than the greatest Instances of the contrary Spirit, of Meekness and Humility.

If any thing can be an Excuse for this, and abate our Wonder, it is, that they All thus strove for Dignity, and worldly Glory, when they thought their Master’s Kingdom, a Kingdom only of this World. But who can forbear to wonder more, as well as to lament, that Christians, who cannot read a Page in the Gospel, without reading their own Indispensable Obligation to all the Offices of Humility, for the Good of Others, should be so devoted to the Love of Superiority, as we every Day may observe them to be? What a Contention does there often appear, in our World, for Place and Precedence? what Passion, and Revenge, for an Affront put upon the supposed Honour and Dignity of a Man? What a Care...
The Ambition of

Serm. and Caution, about every Punctilio of Ceremony, and Observance? What a Noise, about Family, and Titles; the Antiquity of a Name; the Dignity of Predecessors; or, the like Sort of Excellencies? Nay, what a prodigious Value is there often set, even upon so low a Matter, as Equipage and Attendance?

It would weary one to speak, or even to think, of the Vanities and Follies of weak Mortals, upon this Head; the Uneasinesses, Quarrels, Jealousies, and Breaches, it occasions; the inexcusable Mispense of Time, and Neglect of all that is great and good, which this Temper introduces into the World; and the great Mischiefs which, in various Shapes, have proceeded from it, in every Age. And yet, Mankind seem not, in the least Degree, wiser for their Experience; or at all the more disposed to set only a just Value upon those Distinctions which the Nature of Society makes proper amongst Men; or, to resist that Inclination (that perverse Inclination) there is, in human Nature, to the Sweets of Superiority, and Power over Others.

It is one of the meanest Characters we can draw, of any Men, to describe Them, as searching out Opportunities of depressing and sinking Others below them; and finding out continually some new Distinctions, if the old Ones
Ones are worn out, in order to place their SERM. Brethren in a meaner and more contemptible Rank than Themselves; and thinking the most empty Reasons sufficient for this ignoble and unmanly Purpose. And yet this is so true, and so universally observed, that it is constantly lamented by all good Men; and constantly ridiculed by All, who make Themselves publicly merry with the Follies of Mankind. Thus are the Minds of reasonable Creatures busied about Trifles, which divert them from Matters of infinitely greater Concern; and are founded upon such Maxims only, as appear to be unworthy of their Attention, either as Men, or as Members of human Society. Let us now proceed.

III. The third Observation, I said, we might make from this History, related to Those Notions which were, at that Time, common amongst the Jews, about the Nature of the Kingdom of their Messiah.

We find, in this Passage of the Gospel, not only James and John, with their Mother, but also the other Ten Apostles, all agreeing in the fame Expectation of a Temporal Kingdom of Christ; and of Places of Eminence, and worldly Authority, to be enjoyed under Him: as appears from the Lesson our Lord reads to them
all at last, about the Way to Greatness in his Dispensation; and from many other Places of the New Testament: from which we may gather, that the Apostles themselves could not, before They were better instructed, so much as bear the Thought of their Master's Suffering Death; or of his reigning in any other Kingdom, but One full of this World's Majesty and Glory. They did, indeed, cleave to Him, in his low and mean Estate, convinced by the powerful Works he shewed forth: but They were continually watching, and longing, till he should open another Scene, and reveal himself to the World, by restoring the Kingdom to Israel. Thus had these well-meaning Men the same low and groveling Expectations, which were entertained by the Crowd around them.

For the Jews universally neither looked for, nor desired, any Messiah, but One, who should crown them with the Glories of this World; and clothe their temporal Enemies with Shame: One, who should bless them with Victory, and Plenty, and Riches, and Power. Nor would the far greater Part of that People accept of any Salvation, or Blessing, which could be offered, but such a Salvation, and such a Blessing, as They had figured to Themselves upon the Principles of this World only. The saving
saving Them from their Sins, which was the Serm.

Salvation of Jesus; and the Blessing Them, by turning Them from their Iniquities, which was the Blessing of his Gospel: These were Kinds of Salvation, and Blessing, which They thought too mean, and contemptible Offers, for their Messiah to make; or for Them to accept. They had no Relish for such Sort of Happiness: and desired no Part in a Kingdom, which was not of this World.

The Apostles, indeed, were sincere and honest, whilst they were so grossly mistaken. But the Bulk of that Nation were led to these Notions through a Course of Wickedness, and Hypocrisy. No Wonder, therefore, that those Persons should go on to greater and greater Degrees of Hardness of Heart, and reject a spiritual Messiah, who had before given themselves up to their own Lusts and Passions; and had shewn, by their Manners, that there was, in their Opinions, no greater Happiness to Mankind, than the Enjoyments of Flesh and Blood; the Glories, Profits, and Pleasures, of this World. This was their Principle. And the Argument from this Principle was very agreeable to it, viz. That, the Blessing of their Messiah, who was to make them happy, could consist in Nothing, but what They themselves accounted their greatest Happiness; and, No-
The Ambition of

The AMBITION of SERM. thing being, by Them, accounted so essential to That, as these temporal good Things: This Blessing, therefore, must consist in granting, and securing, to Them, the unbounded Enjoyment of what They so highly valued. But,

IV. It concerns us chiefly to regard what our Lord delivers, upon this Occasion, concerning the Nature of his own Kingdom; and the Method of attaining the greatest Honours in it. And,

First, It is plainly implied in his Answer to the Petition made to Him, in Behalf of the two Brethren-Disciples, that his Kingdom was so far from consisting in worldly Pomp and Glory; that his true Servants were to expect to meet with Persecution, and all evil Treatment, for their Master's Sake. And,

Secondly, The Instruction which He gives to all his twelve Apostles at last, expressly taught Them that the Way to be great and glorious in his Kingdom, both here, and hereafter, is to be humble; and truly disposed to descend to one another, and to stoop to all good Offices, for the Service of their Brethren.

First, I say, It is plainly implied in our Lord's Answer to the Petition of James and John, and their Mother, that his Kingdom was so far from consisting in worldly Pomp and Magnificence,
that, in this World, all his true Servants were to expect to meet with Persecution, and great Hardships, for their Master's Sake. This Answer is in the 22d Verse: where, instead of feeding them with Hopes of enjoying great Power and worldly Grandeur, under Him, he mentions the Cup, He himself was to drink of; and the Baptism, He himself was to be baptized with; and proposes the same Cup, and the same Baptism, to Them, for their Portion, before they could come to any Glory in his Kingdom. It is true, the ordinary Course of a Christian's Life, in these later Ages, is not exposed to such Persecutions, and to such severe Trials, as the Lives of the Apostles were, at the Time when They were sent forth to be the first Preachers of Christianity. But yet, This is applicable to all sincere Christians, in some Degree, That They must drink of their Lord's Cup, and be baptized with his Baptism; that They must follow him through evil Report, and evil Treatment; through Reproaches and Disgraces; and through many, not inconsiderable, Hardships, though not perhaps so far, as to a Cross, or to a Stake. They may not be called to part with Life itself, for the Sake of their Faith, or their Integrity: But they will certainly have occasion to exercise a great deal of Patience, and Courage, if they resolve, in all Cases,
to approve themselves his Disciples. For there never yet was any Age of the World known to be so indulgent to Virtue; and so kind to the Practice of all the Christian Duties; as not sometimes to cast many Difficulties, and many Grievances, in the Paths of the virtuous Christian, under some Pretense, or other.

But the principal Thing that we ought to remark, is, the Instruction our Lord gives to his Disciples, upon the Sight of their indecent Pride and Ambition, in the Words of the Text: By which We are plainly taught, as I observed just now, in the Second Place, That the Way to be great and glorious in his Kingdom, both here and hereafter, is to be humble; and disposed to condescend to all good Offices; and to make ourselves the least amongst our Brethren, rather than to contend for Superiority and Pre-eminence.

This was our Lord's Instruction. But it was a Lesson too hard for the Apostles Themselves, at the Time when it was first given Them; and is daily seen to be too hard for the generality of Christians, though it be so indispensably insisted upon, in the Gospel. Not that it is, or can be, sensibly hard, or painful, to Those, who will consider what They are originally; and how much Occasion, and
and how great Reason, they have to be humble and lowly: Not that it doth not carry its own Reward along with it, when duly practised; freeing the Soul from all those Uneasinesses that attend upon Pride and Ambition; and filling it with all the Quiet, and Peace, and Satisfaction, naturally flowing from the Contrary: Not that it is not reasonable and becoming all Men, in itself, standing in no Need of a positive Command to enforce it: but it is a hard Lesson, because Men have been generally trained up in the Notions of Pride and Ambition; and therefore, are seldom disposed to regard what is truly reasonable, and fitting their Natures, so much as what is agreeable to their present Inclinations, and the Practice and Customs of a corrupted World.

Many are the Considerations, by which we might enforce upon Ourselves, and our own Consciences, the Practice of this Instruction in the Text. But, because our blessed Lord uses no Argument, in this Place, to enforce it upon his Disciples, except his own Example; I shall, therefore, confine myself, at present, to the same Argument; and endeavour briefly to shew the Strength of it, with regard to Ourselves, as well as His Apostles.

He is our Lord and Master, as He was theirs. And, therefore, we cannot think it beneath
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Serm. beneath Us, to behave Ourselves, as He did.

This he himself, upon several Occasions, judged to be a good Argument to recommend any moral Duty, That He himself practised it. Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly, is his own Direction; in the Case of that Humility, I am now speaking of. And, indeed, We must either throw off all Relation to Him, or acknowledge it to be a very forcible Consideration. He was far exalted above Us, before He descended to converse with us here below; high above all Principalities and Powers; above the greatest and wealthiest and most powerful of Us, the poor inconsiderable Inhabitants of this Earth. But, notwithstanding this infinite Distance betwixt him and us, He pitied Us, and condescended to be subject to our Infirmities; to live a poor and despicable Life in our wretched World; and, at last to lay down his Life, at the Command and Decree of a Man. He knew perfectly well what was becoming a reasonable Being; what Behaviour was beneath the Dignity of an understanding Nature, and what was not so. And his Notions of that Dignity appear from hence, That, during his Abode amongst Men, He divested himself of all Appearance of Grandeur, and stooped to minister to the meanest of his Servants; whose Interest He regarded, both in his Life, and in his Death.
Death. And it is very remarkable, and ought to be taken into this Argument, what St. Paul affirms, That for this very Humiliation, and making himself of no Reputation, and descending to wear the Form of a Servant, God exalted Him, and crowned him with Glory inexpressible.

From this, then, we cannot but thus reason with Ourselves. If He, who was so great, and so wise, did not think it beneath his Dignity, to condescend to such Instances of Humility, as we are never called to; to live such a Life of Lowliness; and die such a Death, in order to minister to the Necessities of Man-kind; We cannot think it beneath the Dignity of the Higheft of Us, to imitate this great Example; and even make Ourselves, by the lowest Instances of Love, truly subservient to the good of our Brethren, in this World, and their true and eternal Interest, in That to come.

When we look upon this great Example; and see our Lord bending Himself to all Acts of Charity, towards Those who were so much below him; how can we think it right to stand upon little Niceties, and Punctilios; or becoming Us, to find out any trifling Excuses to exempt Ourselves from doing the like good Offices to our Fellow-Creatures, in the same lowly way? Let not his Example, therefore, be ever out of our
The Ambition of, &c.

Ser. M. our Minds, when any occasion of Humility presents itself to us. Let us consider how readily that Lord, whom we serve, would have laid hold on such Opportunities: and we shall be ashamed to avoid them ourselves. Let us look upon those Glories which He is said to have acquired by his Humility; and they will animate us to bear even the Reproach of Humility here below, if Reproach can ever follow so lovely a Virtue. And, as He is set down at the Right Hand of God; and has a Name given him above every Name, for the Sake of his Lowliness and Condescension; so We, by the same Practice, may hope to sit down at his Right Hand, and to be crowned with Glory and Honour in the Presence of God.
The Different Characters of John the Baptist, and Jesus Christ.

SERMON XIV.

Luke vii. 33, 34.

John the Baptist came neither eating Bread, nor drinking Wine, and ye say, he hath a Devil. The Son of Man is come, eating and drinking, and ye say, Behold a gluttonous Man, and a Wine-bibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners.

This is our blessed Lord's own Account both of the Manner of Life used by John the Baptist, his Forerunner, and by Himself; and of the Perverseness of the Jews, in misinterpreting and censuring the Conduct of them Both. John the Baptist came neither eating Bread, nor drinking Wine; i.e. he avoided all common Conversation with Men, and retired from the Noise of the Multitude; not so much as allowing himself the Enjoyment
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Enjoyment of human Society frequently; or laying hold on any Opportunities of eating, and drinking, with the rest of the World about Him. And the Jews, because they were not disposed to receive his Doctrine, (which was the severe Doctrine of Repentance, and Amendment,) and his Testimony concerning Jesus Christ, represented him as a Person disturbed in his Brain, possessed by some evil and melancholy Spirit; and led, by That, into the Retirement, and Solitude, and Austerity, which he seemed to affect.

Well then, one would have thought, by this, that if a Prophet should appear amongst them, with all the Signs of a divine Mission; and converse freely with Them; not refusing to be present at their Entertainments, or to mix himself with them, upon all just Occasions; that This should be quite acceptable to Them; and all their Prejudices be removed. But it was far otherwise. For the Son of Man, the Messiah, Jesus Christ, came eating and drinking; i. e. conversing freely with Mankind; partaking with them, upon all proper Occasions, of the ordinary Refreshments of Life, without Scruple; and laying hold on all Opportunities of a free Society with the World around Him: and yet This also was so far from pleasing, that They
They only changed their Note of Dislike and Censure; and said, Behold a Man, addicted to his Appetite, a Lover of Wine, and a Friend to the Worst of Men.

And, indeed, He was a Friend of Publicans and Sinners, in the truest Sense of the Word, Friendship: i.e. His great Design was to do them real Service, and to lead them to Repentance and Happiness. But it was so manifest a Piece of wicked Scandal and Injustice, that he was intemperate, in those Opportunities which only he could take of conversing with the Men, whom he came to save; that no Person of common Sense; No One, whose Eyes were not blinded with the darkest Prejudice, could possibly believe, much less, report, such a Thing. So far from it, that Nothing was more visible, than the greatest and strictest Abstinence from all Excess, through his whole Life and Conversation: no Delight in the pampering of his Body, or the pleasing of his Senses; but a constant Regard to the Rules of Sobriety and Temperance. But, waving this, I shall return to my Design in choosing these Words, at this Time: and That will appear in the Consideration of these following Particulars.

I. The different Behaviour of St. John Baptist, and our blessed Saviour, with Respect to human
The Different Characters of human Society; and the Agreeableness of it to their different Designs.

II. The gross Misinterpretation put by the Jews, upon this their different Conduct; and the Lesson we may learn from thence. After which I design,

III. To say something, with respect to these two different Methods of Life: That of Austerity and Retirement; and That of a more free Enjoyment of human Society.

I. We see plainly, in the very Words now before us, the different Behaviour and Conduct of our blessed Saviour, and John the Baptist, with respect to human Society: and shall presently observe the Agreeableness of it to their different Designs. John the Baptist chose a Wilderness, or Desert, for the Scene of his Appearance and Action; avoided the Places of Concourse and Society; and took upon him, in the best Sense, the Habit and Vow of Austerity, and the strictest Abstinence. I call it the Scene of his Appearance, and Action: for this Retirement was not, as some have been in later Ages, chosen by Him for an inactive and idle Life of Contemplation, and useless Speculation; nor with the least Thought of withdrawing himself from the Eyes and Ears of a vain and
and wicked World, by a voluntary and pleasing Recluseness within Walls and Fences. But it was embraced by Him, on quite contrary, and very useful Accounts.

He was to preach, and therefore to be known, to his Country-men. And accordingly, the Desert he chose, at his opening his Ministry, was very near to Jerusalem: where his Name could not but be soon heard of, and whither He sometimes went himself. And there was something so peculiar in his Manner of Life, and his Preaching, which presently became the Subject of Discourse; that it drew the Attention of all People towards him: and They were induced by his Fame, and the Curiosity which That raised in them, to go out to Him, and hear what He taught, and what He pretended to. Our blessed Lord, on the contrary, when he displayed himself, and opened his Message to Mankind, frequented the Places of greatest Concourse; and laid hold on all fair and good Opportunities of conversing with the World of Sinners. He chose even to eat and drink with Them; and took their own Times, and attended their Leisure, and their Invitations; and seemed rejoiced at every Occasion of the most familiar Intercourse with them.

And this different Conduct, We shall now see, was very suitable and agreeable to their
The Different Characters of SERM. different Designs. The Baptist's great Business was to raise the Minds, and turn the Eyes, of the People of the Jews, towards the Messiah, who was now going to appear; to prepare them, by the Baptism and Doctrine of Repentance and Reformation, to understand the true Nature of his Kingdom, and to receive Him when he should shew himself; to bear a Testimony to the true Messiah; and, after that was done, He himself was to decrease, and the other was to increase: as He expresses his own Sense of his Office. Now, there is something in that retired, and severe, Manner of Life He chose, which is apt to raise the Curiosity and Attention of Men very much; and to put them upon asking such Questions, as may lead to the Knowledge of the most useful and important Truths.

And We see accordingly, that this Method of Living and Preaching, in which John the Baptist shewed himself, had such an Influence upon the Jews, that Many were in doubt whether he was not Himself the Messiah, the promised Saviour of that Nation. It was so long, since so much Sanctity, and so much Contempt of the World, had been seen amongst them, that, in their good and sober Moods, They were induced to think, from such Beginnings, that This might possibly be He: though
though they quickly came to reject Him, when they found he spake of Nothing so much as of Repentance, and bringing forth Fruits worthy of it. But, after They had thus rejected Him, we find the most Artful and Designing amongst Them were so embarrass{ed} between their own Conduct towards the Baptist, and their Fear of the People, that They did not know how to answer the Question put to them by our Lord, whether the Baptism of John were of divine Original, or Not? For his Manner of Life, and Holiness of Conversation, had gained him such an Authority amongst the People, that it would have incensed Them, to have denied him to be a true Prophet; and, to have owned it, would have condemned Themselves, for not receiving Him.

And as the Manner of his appearing, in that outward Garb, and inward Reality, of Severity and Austerity, forcibly invited the Eyes and Attention of the Multitude to him; and engaged even the worst Part of the Jews to send Messengers to him, to ask him of the Character he bore, and the Design he came upon: So, likewise, it is worth observing, That, his chief Design being to bear Testimony to a greater Prophet than himself; and not to ingratiate himself so much with the People, as to gather Multitudes of Disciples to his
his own Person; He could not have chosen a more proper Method of pursuing this, than that retired and austere Manner of Life. Had he made it his Business to have frequented all Places of Concourse, and gathered to himself great Numbers of Disciples, who were often Followers of the Person, more than of the Doctrine, of their Master; it might possibly have had an unhappy Effect with Relation to the Messiah himself, who was to preach Salvation to, and make Disciples of, the whole Nation, as far as They would permit Him.

It must indeed be owned that, the greater the Number of John's Disciples had been, the greater Influence it would have had upon the Cause of the Messiah, if All of them had cordially received their Master's Testimony concerning Him. But this, probably, would have been found too hard for Practice; as it carried with it unavoidably this Consequence, That Jesus was a greater Prophet than their Master, John the Baptist. For we see, there was always a Contest between the Disciples of several Masters; and a great Regret, and Envy, raised in every Sort, to see their own Masters sunk and depressed by the greater Glory of Others. And it is not improbable from the sacred Story, that the few Disciples John had, were leavened with this Sort of Temper; and that
that They could hardly have been persuaded to believe any Prophet greater than their Master; or, with their whole Heart, receive the Messiah, who was now going to appear as Such.

Here therefore, was another Reason for the Baptist's Manner of Life: That his Business was, not to consult his own personal Interest, as a Master and a Prophet, so as to gather Disciples, and Followers, to himself; but to be a living Witness to one Greater than Himself, and only to prepare Men's Hearts for the Reception of Him, and his Doctrine. And for this End, the Method which he chose seems much more proper, than if He had mixed himself more with the World; and made it his Business to frequent the Places of popular Course, and to shew Himself daily in the Commerce and Crowds of a great City: which might have appeared a Design of gaining Popularity, and Followers to Himself; rather than of serving the Honour and Interest of that Prince of Prophets, the Messiah, whose Fore-runner only He was.

But the Messiah had another Part to act. His great Business was to gain Proselytes and Disciples to Himself, who could not adhere too close to him. He could not be too popular, when once it was proper to open his Pretensions, and reveal his true Character to the
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the World. His great Design was to engage Mankind to Himself by all proper Methods:
and of These, an easy and familiar Conversation, and a Compliance with their innocent Customs, was one of the most likely to win upon them.

Another Consideration is, That it was justly designed by God, and expected by the Jews, That the Divinity of Christ's Mission should be proved by wonderful Works in public; never performed, after such a Manner, and in such Number, before that Time: which being not the Case of John the Baptist, it was the less necessary for Him to affect the Society and Course of Men. And as the Truth of our Lord's Pretensions was to be demonstrated, and the Mouth of his Adversaries stopped, by a constant Series of these astonishing and divine Works; upon this Account, a more public Scene was the proper Scene of his Action: that He might not be said to have chosen the darkest Corners, and Places void of Witnesses, (which are thought proper Places to shew Tricks in,) and then to have weakly expected the World to believe in Him, for the Sake of what They never saw. The clearest Day-Light, and the greatest Multitudes, and even his Adversaries themselves, were to be the Spectators (though, to their own Shame, the envious and malicious
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ous Spectators,) of the Proofs he had to give of his divine Authority. And therefore, it became him to pursue them, as it were, of his own Accord, with his wonderful Works; to appeal, every Day, to the Eyes and Ears of Thousands, and to call in all the Witnesses possible to the Testimony He had to give of Himself. For Truth, entirely void of all Fraud, doth not fear, but desire, Witnesses. Again,

John the Baptist, though a Person of extraordinary Holiness of Life, without regard to that peculiar Character in which He appeared, was not designed to be proposed to Mankind, as the great Example, for their Imitation: But the Messiah was to be that perfect Example, which all should be obliged to copy after, with the Care and Attention of sincere Followers. It became Him, therefore, to choose a Sphere of Action, and a Manner of Life, agreeable to the Tempers, and Necessities, and Business, of the Generality of Mankind; not such a one, as suits with the Tempers, and Purposes, of a very small and inconsiderable Number. Our Saviour, without Doubt, had as mean an Opinion of that Generation of Men, in which He appeared, as it was possible to have conceived from a perfect Knowledge of their Weaknesses, and Follies; their Passions, and Vices. And, had he only had his own Inclination, without regard
regard to the good of Others, to have consulted no Person could have relished the Pleasures of Solitude so well: because no Person was so fully sufficient to his own Entertainment and Happiness; or so little in want of Any of the Supports of human Society. But how, then, should he have fulfilled all Righteousness? Or, How could He have answered the End of his Appearing, to be made an Example to Us, who must converse, and deal, with one another: who must court and attend one another; and cannot, without our mutual Assistance, preserve the least order in the World; or answer the beneficial Ends of Society, in it?

But I have said enough on the first Head, viz. the different Behaviour of our blessed Lord, and John the Baptist, with Relation to human Society; and the Agreeableness of this their different Behaviour to their different Characters and Designs. And shall only add this one Caution; that what I have said is not to be understood as if, on the one hand, I thought that John the Baptist would not have been perfectly ready to a greater Correspondence with the World, had it been more for the Purpose of his Appearance, all Things considered; or, as if, on the other hand, I was not sensible that our Saviour had often shewn his Love to Retirement, especially
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cially for Prayer to his Father: though it is observable, this was generally his Entertainment, when there was no Opportunity of conversing with Mankind; and of doing good to Any of Them by his divine Presence and discourse. I come now,

II. To observe, what I proposed in the next Place, viz. the gross Misrepresentation put by the Jews, upon this different Conduct of our Lord, and John the Baptist. And that is plain in the Text. The One they censured, as a Glutton and a Wine-bibber, and a Friend of Sinners, because he ate and drank, and entered into Company, after the usual Manner of Men, in order to a more free and more beneficial Conversation with Them: And the Other they esteemed little better than a mad Man, because he seemed to fly from the rest of the World; and lived not after the common Form, but affected something very peculiar in his Garb, and in his Diet. So hard is it to please Those who are resolved not to be pleased. The Lesson we may learn from hence is this, That Men are often very ready to entertain the most unjust Prejudices, rather than yield to the plainest Truths which contradict their beloved Notions or Practices. Had the Jews entertained the same Notions of
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SERM. of the Messiah, and of the Nature of his Kingdom, that the Baptist, and our Saviour, both preached; They had shewn no such Perverseness and Prejudice, as now appears; and the Two Prophets had not met with so unjust and heavy Censures. Or, had the Baptist and our blessed Lord cared for them in their beloved Notions of worldly Greatness and Majesty, or their favorite Vices; and taught them Happiness after their own absurd false Scheme; One may venture to say, They had been extolled to the Skies, and Both received with open Arms. To such a Pitch of Prejudice were the Jews come, that They could not bear to have their received Opinions, or Practices, condemned; and would not accept of an Happiness, not to be obtained without relinquishing their old beloved Follies and Vices: When, in Truth, it ought to have been quite otherwise. For, if John the Baptist had preached any other Messiah, than one whose Fan was in his Hand, and who required the strictest Holiness of Life; Or, if our blessed Lord had preached any other Gospel, than the Gospel of Holiness, and Humility, and Love: the Jews might, justly, have charged the One, with the Madness of having a Commerce with evil Spirits; and the Other, with being a Friend to Publicans, and Sinners, in the worst Sense; a Lover of their Practices,
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Practices, and an Encourager of their Vices.

It was this Doctrine of Repentance, and Amendment of Life, that gave such a Stop to the Gospel, amongst the Jews, at first. It is this that hinders the Increase of it, and that bars its Entrance to so many Ears, at this Day. The great Obstruction, I say, to the Gospel, is, that it will not reconcile Vice and Happiness, a wicked Life and the Hopes of Salvation, together. Could it do this, plainly and effectually, how many Votaries should we daily see flock in, and how many Encomiums should We hear upon it? What joyful Tidings would it be accounted, and how glorious a Salvation, to the Sons of Men, wearied and affrighted with the Prospect of the Punishment, but not with the Practice, of their Transgressions?

How obliging and courteous a Thing, therefore, is it, in the Church of Rome, to endeavour to make up this great Defect in the Gospel; and, by the infallible Spirit it assumes, to supply this Want; and remove the only insuperable Objection to wicked Minds against it? When we consider the Workings of human Nature, we shall not much wonder that Proselytes are gained, by teaching Men how to compound with God, for the Breach of his Laws: Or, by
by the dextrous Management of such Machines, as Indulgencies, and Absolutions. But when we consider the Reason of the Thing itself, it is most astonishing that even the weakest of Men can be seduced by such Pretenses. For I truly think, That, of the Two, it is more easy, and more pardonable, to believe Transubstantiation itself, than to believe that Almighty God would enter into any such Covenant with Mankind, as should encourage them to continue in their Sins; or give them the Liberty of transgressing the least of those Laws of eternal Reason, which are the Foundation of his own Glory, and of all the lasting Happiness there is in the World.

In moral Philosophy, This is as great an Absurdity, as the other is in Natural; attended with as many Difficulties, and with much more intolerable Consequences, relating to our Eternal Salvation. And, I am sure, it is more excusable to err in a Matter of Opinion; nay, though it may draw after it great Evils in the Worship of God, than in a Matter, which destroys the very Essence and Obligation of all Morality; confounding Virtue with Vice; making Light, Darkness, and Darkness, Light: and which is, indeed, calculated for the promoting of the whole System of Immorality in the World, as much, as if it had
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had been designed for Nothing else. Our blessed Lord had no such Gospel to preach: and therefore, found no Reception amongst Men of corrupt and profligate Minds; constant Pursuers of the Pleasures, or, unwearied Solicitors of the Glories and Honours, of this World.

Nay, could a Religion of such Indulgence be supposed agreeable to the Will of God, I see no Need of a Prophet to be sent into the World, on Purpose to teach, or inculcate, it. No fear, but that Mankind would learn this fast enough, by the Influence of their own bad Hearts, and the Example of Others. From the Beginning of the World, great Multitudes had no other Gospel, but This: and to the End of it, I doubt, great Multitudes will embrace no other; but live and dye in their Sins, expecting Mercy and Heaven, whilst they have no Foundation for it within, nor Promise of it, from without.

For ourselves; Let us learn, from this perverse Temper of the Jews, how unbecoming it is, and how unreasonable, to reject, or to neglect, any thing, not because it is not agreeable to our own best Principles of Reason, but, because it is contrary to our wicked Inclinations, and to our worldly Designs. It is manifest from the Gospel, and from the Accounts of
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xiv. of those Days, that the Jews set Themselves to asperse both John the Baptist and our Saviour, and, at last, rejected Them, chiefly because They were Preachers of the strictest Holiness and Virtue. It was because the Baptist was assisting in destroying the Works of the Devil, that they said he had a Devil. And it was because our Saviour was not a Friend to Sinners, who continue such, that they blasphemed him as a Friend to Sinners, in the worst Sense. But let it not be said that any of his own Followers, who are called by his Name, act, as if They partook, in any Measure, of the same Temper; and retained the same wicked Principles. I come now, in the last Place,

III. To say something, in short, concerning those two Methods of living, now seen in the Christian World; That of Retirement and Austerity; and That of a more free and general Conversation: the One, sometimes pretended to be copied after that of John the Baptist; and the Other, really copied after that of our blessed Lord.

It must be acknowledged to be very becoming the Character of a reasonable Creature, placed in this State, to have a due Sense of the
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the Uncertainty and Vanity of the Enjoyments of this Life. And who would not be glad to retire from a World of Noise and Impertinence, of Ignorance and Folly, and, what is worst of all, of Wickedness and Impiety? Who would not be glad, I say, to do this, in the most absolute Sense, that could support himself in Solitude; were it not, that We have other Obligations to answer, and other Maxims to live by, than the following our own Inclinations, or Humours? The World is the Stage of Action, to a Christian: and all the Members of that vast Body are his Neighbours; entitled to his Regard, as He is to Theirs. The Afflicted, the Desolate, the Lame, the Blind, the Sick, the Weak, the Fatherless, the Widow, the Poor, the Needy, the Ignorant, and the Sinner, These all, We know, called for our Lord's Assistance: and He thought it unbecoming Him to retire, when Any of these could be met with to receive the Influences of his Goodness. And the same Obligations belong to his Followers, by Right of Descent. They are the Disciples of Him, who lived in the World to do good to All in it: and these distressed Objects are left by Him to their Care; and They are made the Patrons and Guardians of them, in his Absence. Whenever a retired Life hinders not the Care, and Relief, and Support, of These;
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SERM. nor breaks in upon any other moral Engagement; Or, any of the Duties strictly owing to Human Society; it cannot be said to be unworthy of a Man, or a Christian. And accordingly, our Lord, we see, freely mixed himself in Society, in order to the Benefit of the World about Him, as long as the Light permitted Him: and when Darkness came on, often laid hold on the Opportunities of what may be called a Religious Retirement from it. And generally speaking, Christians, in their due Measure, can imitate him in both these Cases. But They, who cannot follow him, in Both, are strictly obliged to take especial Care not to neglect the Former. This was his peculiar Delight; to converse, with Ease and Humanity, amongst Men, because, without This, no Instance of Charity could reach Them: and This was what he peculiarly recommended to his Followers, as the Duty They owed to their Fellow-Creatures. Every Man may find Opportunities of Retirement, sufficient to secure the Blessing of Heaven, and the Favour of God, by Prayer: and every good Man will make Use of them. And if He be always disposed to lay hold on every Occasion of doing Good in human Society, according to his Abilities; He will by These Two Instances of Practice, shew Himself
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felf the true Disciple of that Master, who went before Him, in Both.

But to make Retirement, an Art, or a Burthen; to build Houses of Entertainment to entice Men into it; to frame arbitrary Rules of Severity for it; to guard it with rigid Vows, too probably, drawing bitter Repentance and Sorrow, after them; and to clothe it with such Appearances of Something extraordinary, and above the common pitch of Devotion, as may ensnare unguarded and unexperienced Minds into what may prove the great Unhappiness of their whole Lives: Nay, to court it merely on our own Account, in order to lead an idle and useless Life; or to be at Leisure, perhaps, not for the Study of God's Will, as delivered to Us by himself, but only for the Improvement of our own peculiar Whimsies: This is, undoubtedly, unworthy of the Grand Design of the Christian Religion; and was not only never commanded, but never intimated, by the first Preacher of it, and his immediate Successors, as far as we have any Knowledge of them.

That this is not copied after the Life of our blessed Saviour, All will allow, who read the History of it; and find Him daily and hourly, conversing with All that came in his Way, in the Streets and Houses
The Different Characters of

Houses of Jerusalem, and the neighbouring

Nor can it be called the Life of John the Baptist; or the least Imitation of it: because it is most evident that He retired, not to please his own Phanfly; but to answer the End of his Office; and dwelt in the Desert, not in order to avoid the World entirely, but to entice and invite All within his Reach to hear his Doctrine of Repentance, and of the Kingdom of God, then at hand. And, as far as We know the Nature of this Kingdom, or Gospel, of Christ, We may retire, as much as That requires of us, in the Midst of the most populous City; and without throwing off the least Part of our necessary Business, or innocent Conversation: Nay, I may say, We may do this much more agreeably to the Nature and End of that Gospel, than if we were shut up, within Walls, from the Sight of Men, and employed our whole Time, in performing, by Night and by Day, the most regular Round of Offices, under the specious Title of Devotion.

In a word, the Way of Life, with regard to human Society, in this World, recommend- ed to Us by our Master, is the Life of such Beneficence, as supposes Us conversing, and acting a Part, in the Society around Us; and this cannot be, a Recluse Life of Inaction, but implies in it the very contrary. This is that Behaviour
John the Baptist, and Jesus Christ.

Behaviour and Conduct of ourselves in the Social World, according to the several Stations assigned Us in it, which the Precepts of our charitable Religion declare to be our Duty. This is what the Example of our great Master directs Us to: And, this will be our Reward and our Crown to all Eternity. If we can perfect Ourselves in this; We may securely leave to Others the Happiness, and the Glory, of any useless and idle Retirement, which They may please to miscall by the Name of Religion; but which has not the least Tincture of the Religion of Christ: And may well content ourselves with following, as near as we can, the Footsteps and Rules of our common Master, rather than the silly and fruitless Inventions of Thofe, who, under the Cover of his sacred Name, have almost extinguished the Knowledge of the main End of his appearing amongft Men. And this Regard to our Lord himself, above All other Directors, I hope, We shall all resolve to shew, in the whole Conduct of our Lives here below.
The Extremes of Riches and Poverty.

Sermon XV.

Proverbs xxx. 8, 9.

Give me neither Poverty, nor Riches; feed me with Food convenient for me: Let I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord? Or, let I be poor and steal, and take the Name of my God in vain.

I shall not enter into any Enquiry concerning the Person to whom the Words in this Chapter are ascribed. The only Question of Importance is, whether this be not a Wish, or Prayer, worthy of a wise and considering Man; founded upon Reason, and a careful Observation of the Inconveniences, and Conveniences, attending the several States of Life in this World. If it can be proved to be a reasonable, and well-grounded Prayer; we ought all to join in it, whoever were the first Author of it. And, on the
Serm. other hand, if it shall, after Examination, appear to be contrary to Reason, and judicious Observation; it can be of no Importance, to find out, if we could, Who was the Person that made this Wish, here recorded.

Now, in order to our judging rightly, in the Case before Us, it is proper to observe that the Prayer in the Text is plainly founded upon This; viz. that the Hazards, and Inconveniences, attending the two Extremes of boundless Riches, and the lowest Poverty, are so great, and so generally fatal to those who experience either of those two States; that, if a wise Man were to choose for himself, with regard to true Happiness, and the Interest of Virtue and Religion, He would certainly choose the middle Condition: Or, such a Competency, and convenient Subsistence, as should set him above the Need of Relief from the Bounty of Others; and enable him to provide tolerably for Those in whom He is most nearly concerned. And as the Proof of the Parts of this Proposition will sufficiently vindicate, and establish, the Wisdom of this Prayer, which is built upon it; I shall, therefore, make the Proposition now mentioned the Subject of my following Discourse.

And here, as to the one Part of this Proposition, and this Prayer, viz. That which relates
lates to Poverty; there is something in this so disagreeable, and so distasteful, to the Bent and Inclination of human Nature; something so contemptible and mean, in the outward Appearance of it, which strikes more upon Men than the unseen and hidden Part of any Condition; that there is not One in the World, perhaps, of Those who may be esteemed in their right Mind, who would voluntarily choose the lowest and meanest Condition of human Life. There always was, and always will be, a general Concurrence and Consent in this Part of the Prayer, Give me not Poverty: not, perhaps, for fear of sinning against God, in that Condition, which is the Consideration allledged in the Text; but for fear only of that Contempt and Ignominy, and those necessities, and worldly Inconveniences, which are annexed to that State.

On the other Side, there is, and always was, and always will be, almost as general a Consent against the other Part of this Prayer, which relates to immense and excessive Riches. There is something in the outward Appearance and Figure of that Greatness and Superiority which often attend upon vast Riches; something in the uncommon Conveniences, and Pleasures, They are supposed to procure; Something which captivates the Minds of most
most Men, to such a Degree, that They can hardly know how to choose the best State, against their own worldly Interest; or, not to wish Themselves in that distinguished Condition of Life, which They are so apt to envy, and admire, in Others. And, generally speaking, He that should go about to persuade any Man to beseech God earnestly not to grant Him the Abundance of Riches, would, I fear, be looked upon, in almost the same ridiculous Light, as He would be, who should teach Him to pray expressly for the Extreme of Poverty, and Want,

This being so, That Men are very ready to pray ardently against Poverty, and a low Fortune, upon mean and worldly Considerations; and as ardently to wish for the greatest Riches, without a due Regard to the natural Consequences of such a Wish: It is, therefore, of Importance to endeavour to shew, on one hand, that there are Considerations, of a better Sort, sufficient to make a wise Man pray against the lowest Condition of this Life; that so, our natural Abhorrence of extreme Poverty may be settled upon a right Foundation, and improved into a Virtue: And, on the other hand, still more necessary, and of greater Importance, to shew that there are Reasons sufficient to remove the Bent of a wise Man's
Riches and Poverty.

Man's Thoughts from all anxious and impor-
tunate Desires after the Abundance and Ex-
tremity of Riches; that so, we may not fa-
tally err, on that Part, on which there is most
Danger, from the apparent Tendency of hu-
man Nature. Thus shall we be led to fix our
Wishes, with respect to this World, in their
due Centre, on the middle Condition, rightly
tempered between the two Extremes. In
order, therefore, to shew the Wisdom and
Reasonableness of this Prayer in the Text, I
propose these following Particulars:

I. To consider the fatal Inconveniences and
evil Consequences, with respect to lasting
Happiness and Religion, naturally attending
the Extreme of Wealth, and the Abundance
of Riches, in this World.

II. To consider, on the other hand, the
Inconveniences, with respect to Virtue and
Religion, generally seen to attend the lowest
Condition of Life, and the Extreme of Po-
verty.

III. To infer, from what I shall have said,
the Reasonableness of desiring the middle Con-
dition, called in the Text, Food convenient for
Us; and the greater Likelihood of obtaining
Happiness, and securing and improving our
Virtue and Religion, in this Estate. This will
be
The Extremes of Serm. be a sufficient Vindication of the Wisdom of the Prayer now before us. And,

IV. After I have said what may be proper upon these Heads, I shall be led to answer some Questions of Importance, which may offer themselves upon this Subject.

I. In order to shew the Wisdom and Reasonableness of the Prayer in the Text, I shall endeavour to represent to you the many fatal Inconveniences and evil Consequences, with respect to Happiness and Religion, which naturally attend the Super-abundance of Riches in this World.

And here, if I should attempt to speak of all the Sorts of Folly, and Madness, truly so called; and all the Vices, to which the Over-flowings of Riches incline, and naturally lead, frail weak Mortals; of the Vanity, the Pride, the Haughtiness, the Contempt of their Fellow-Creatures, which appear in Some; the hard-hearted, selfish, Sordidness, of Others; the Luxury, the Idleness, the Profusion, the Intemperance, the immoderate Pursuit of worldly Pleasures, to which Many more, by the Guidance of Riches, have given themselves up: the Time would fail Me. Nor would this be merely a Declamation, or a Satire, founded on
on the Ill-nature and Envy of Those below s e r m. this Condition; but a Matter of Fact, too x v.
much confirmed by the Observation, and Ex-
perience, of many past Ages: and seen, at
this Day, to be still so generally true, that We
seldom hear of an Exception.
And this Evil is never more remarkable
than in the Conduct of Those, who have
shewn a good and virtuous Conduct in a l o w e r
Sphere, but have not been able to withstand
the Shock of a larger and more exalted For-
tune; or, to be Proof against the Attacks of a
sudden and extraordinary Prosperity. How
often, upon such Occasions, may We justly
say, has the Increase of Riches been the Begin-
nning of all moral Folly, or the Increase of
all moral Evil? How often has the Addition
to the outward good Estate of a Man, proved
a sensible Diminution of the inward good
Estate of his Soul; and the Improvement of
his Fortune, the Improvement of every evil
Disposition of his Mind? Where Quiet and
Contentment have been known to dwell, in a
very great Degree; there, when Riches have
entered, D i s c o n t e n t, and U n e a s i n e s s, have en-
tered with them. Where Friendship, and
mutual Confidence, have flourished: there
Enmity, and mutual Animosities, have taken
Place. Instead of former Repose and Tran-
quillity,
Serm. quillity, Quarrels and Law-suits, Care and Anxiety, have been seen. Instead of Love and Amity, Disgust and Jealousy; instead of Serenity and Calmness, a wrinkled Brow and an uneasy Countenance; instead of Affability and Courtesy, Haughtiness and Contempt of Others, have taken Place.

Thus Vice, in several Forms, has often triumphed over the most amiable Virtues, by the Help of Riches: and thus have the truest Enjoyments, in human Life, been totally ruined and laid waste by Them. They are pretended sometimes to be sought after, to satisfy Men's Desires, and to extinguish Covetousness; and They only encrease those Desires, and add Fuel to the Fire within. They are really designed perhaps, by Some, to be made use of, for the Happiness of Others who want them: but they are seen to make Men more hard-hearted, than they were before, and less inclined to Beneficence and Good-nature. What numberless Temptations, of all Kinds, and these irresistible without the greatest Guard upon their Minds, doth the Excess of Riches administer to Men? All indeed do not fall by them: but all are in the extremest Danger. There are Exceptions: Otherwise, the World would be a Scene of wicked Confusion between Covetousness, and Pride.

And
Riches and Poverty.

And happy They, who make the Exceptions!

But, comparatively speaking, how Few are Those, who have Strength of Soul enough to know the only reasonable and noble Use of that Distinction from their Fellow-Creatures, which Riches create? Or, in the Words of the Text, how Few, who are full; and do not, some way or other, in their Practice, if not in Words, deny God, and say, Who is the Lord? So great is the Danger, that immense Riches may draw off the Mind from all due regard to Virtue and Religion; and expose it to be fatally led away into such a State, as is inconsistent with lasting Happiness here, or hereafter; and is, indeed, the Reverse to all that a Wise Man would wish for.

It is impossible to say all that might be properly urged upon this Subject. But, Whoever seriously thinks upon such Observations as have been now mentioned; and consults his own Knowledge, or Experience; will find Reason enough not to desire, or pray for, such a Condition, as That by which so many have been ruined; and in which He himself is sure of meeting with the most hazardous Trials, and all those Temptations which are most likely to prove fatal to his own Greatest and Truest Interest.

X  II. Upon
II. Upon the next Head, viz. the Inconveniences generally seen to attend the lowest Condition of Life, I need not spend many Words: but must say something; That we may not avoid it, or pray against it, merely for worldly Reasons, because it is a Condition of Life irksome and disagreeable to Flesh and Blood; but upon better and worthier Considerations; lest we should fall into Sin, by the Temptations peculiar to it. For this is the Reason in the Text, upon which the Part of the Prayer relating to Poverty, is founded.

But here it cannot be improper, before I mention the Vices peculiar to this State, to observe, that, notwithstanding the wide Distance and Difference of the two Extremes, there are great Sins common to Both: I mean that the Lowest of Men are seen to practice Many of the same Vices, which their Superiors sometimes do: as if They strove to resemble the Richest, at least, in their Wickedness; and to shew Themselves exactly like Them, in the Worst of their Features. The same Profaneness and Defiance of God; the same Lewdness and Debauchery; the same Oaths and Execrations; the same Intemperance and Drunkenness, when Opportunity, or the Bounty of the Rich, gives leave; nay, the same Insensibility, and Disregard to the Happiness
RICHES and POVERTY.

pines of the World about Them, are found amongst the very poorest of all Men: The same, I say, which are seen sometimes to accompany the Riches of Others.

There is one only trifling Difference, That the same Vices are practised, by one Sort, in a coarser and more sordid Manner, which are practised, by the other, (perhaps not always,) in a more refined and delicate Way. This methinks, ought to shock Those of superior Rank; and, when They see that Beggars themselves can rise to the same Pitch of Immorality, must move Them, even from the Pride of keeping up their so much boasted Distinction, to abhor those Vices, in which the Poorest can equal, if not excel, Them.

But we must now add, that there are Vices peculiar to this lowest Condition. The Tricks and Lies; the Forgeries, and Thefts; the false Testimonies, and Perjuries; the Violences, and even Murthers, which the Poorest are, forely and often, tempted to be guilty of, in order to support themselves in Life, as they pretend, are hardly to be enumerated. Here, likewise, there are Exceptions; and Some may be found, who preserve a Sense of God, and Religion, amidst the Pressures of the narrowest and most distressed Circumstances. But still the true
and just Reasons why a Christian should pray against this State, are, Because he knows not what the extremest Necessity may reduce him to; and how little Strength he may find himself to have, upon Trial, against such Temptations, as extreme Poverty may expose him to.

If these Crimes, now charged upon the Poorest of Men, were in such Sense the Works of Darkness, as not to be known, or seen, but only suspected; This Accusation might be deemed only an Addition of Affliction to their distressful State. But, who does not know and lament this Scene of Wickedness amongst Them? And if more Notice were taken of it, it would be much happier both for Themselves, and their Neighbours. They would have less Encouragement to make so detestable a Figure in their low Estate; and human Society, less to fear from their evil Practises; and the better Sort of them more Supports for their Patience and Humility, under their Calamities.

Having thus set before you the Inconveniences, with respect to Virtue and Religion, which are too generally seen to attend upon the two Extreme Conditions of Life, in this World; what I have already said will naturally lead our Thoughts to what I proposed, in the next place, viz.

III. To
RICHES and POVERTY.

III. To shew the Happiness of the middle Condition; that State of Life, which is removed from the Trials and Hazards, attending the Superfluity of Riches; or the Extremity of Poverty: and blessed with Conveniences enough to place the Man out of the Reach of those Evils, to which Excess and Abundance, on one hand, and Penury and Want, on the other, are seen to expose Men. We are all weak and imperfect Creatures; too easily imposed upon, and misled, by the specious Outside of Things; or too easily driven, by the Sense of Pain and Want, into the Paths of Error and Sin. Therefore, the best Condition is That which has most Security in it. And that has most Security in it, which has fewest Temptations to Vice, and least Difficulty to surmount. And the Extremes of Fortune, in this State, being the most hazardous to Virtue and Religion; the middle Condition between the two Extremes, must, consequently, be what a Wise Man would choose, all Things considered: unless he could know the certain Event of Things, which in their own Nature are uncertain, and depend upon the voluntary Choice of free Agents. For it may be truly said of this middle State, That it doth not, by its natural Tendency, so much endanger Virtue, as either
THE EXTREMES OF

Sermo. ther of the Two Extremes, of Riches, or Poverty: not so much, on one hand, inclining the Man to deny God, and say, Who is the Lord? or, on the other hand, to steal and take the Name of God in vain, as it is expressed in the Text.

It must be granted, that many are the Vices of that Multitude of Men, placed in this middle Condition: the more inexcusable is their Guilt and Folly. But what would the same Men have been, in greater Abundance, or greater Narrowness, of Fortune? Much worse, it is to be feared. If the lesser Temptations they meet with, are able to draw them into pernicious Courses; what would those greater, which they must have experienced in other States, have done? But I will not multiply Words. I hope, I have said enough to lead you to see, and acknowledge, the Wisdom and Reasonableness of the Prayer, in the Text, Give me neither Poverty, nor Riches; feed me with Food convenient for me.

IV. The Time will now only permit me to consider some Questions that may arise upon what I have been recommending to your Thoughts: which was the next Thing I proposed to do.
It may still, without Impropriety, be asked, in return to all that has been said, whether Riches, even the Abundance of Them, are not a very great Advantage to Men in this State, in many Respects: and, therefore, whether, notwithstanding the evil Use that has been made of them by Many, and the evil Practices They naturally lead to, They may not be desired by Wise and Good Men. The true Answer to such a Question, I think, is this, That there can be no Reasons sufficient to move a considering Person to make it the uneasy Care and Business of his Life to obtain any Riches beyond what are necessary and convenient for his own well-being, and for the Support of those whom the Providence of God has nearly allied to him; because it is far from being certain that He shall not be tempted to make a bad Use of them, as so many of his Fellow-Creatures have done before him. The Excess of Riches can be found an Advantage to no Man, 'till the final Event has shewn, that He has actually made a noble and Godlike Use of them, for the Benefit and Advantage of the World about him. We are apt to think, perhaps, that We should make such a Use of them: And it may be so. But we cannot certainly promise this to Ourselves. We may fall by the same Snares that have entangled so many before Us: and We know not the full Power of a Temptation, 'till
we have tried it. And therefore, I cannot think
that it would become us to make it the great
Object of our Wishes, or our Labours, to be
Rich above what the Necessities and Conveni-
ences, proper for our Stations, require. And if we
walk by this Rule, it is most likely, that what the
Providence of God sends beyond this, may prove
a Blessing; and not a Curse, as it often hath proved,
when Men have solicited Heaven and Earth, as
it were, for it, and spent their Nights and Days in
the Pursuit of it. The only Advantage that
the Superfluity of Riches gives to any one is,
that it opens a larger Field to his Generosity
and Beneficence; that it makes his Charity
conspicuous, and his Humility lovely; and adds
a Beauty to all his Virtues. But who can tell
that He shall certainly be the happy Man, of
Virtue and Faith enough, to possess this World,
as though he possessed it not; and to use it,
as not abusing it? We cannot indeed, avoid
rejoicing in any of the Good Things of this
World, which are granted Us. But, if we
be Christians, we cannot rejoice in them any
farther, than as we are resolved to dedicate
them to the Glory of Him who gives them to
Us; to the Purposes He recommends to Us;
and to the Happiness of the rest of our Fellow-
Creatures.

2. Another
Riches and Poverty.

2. Another Question may arise in the Minds of Some, concerning the other Extreme of Poverty; whether it be not often represented, and even in the Holy Scriptures, as a Sort of a Blessed State, and a Title, as it were, to the Favor of God; and the Rewards of Heaven; and therefore, be not truly worthy of a wise Man's Choice? But this again can be judged of, only by the Event. If Persons behave themselves in that Condition, with a constant Regard to Virtue and Religion; with a noble Courage and Patience; and with a due Submission to the Providence of God; there is no doubt, it opens a Door to much greater Degrees of Happiness to come. But it is not the Part of a wise Man to venture eternal Happiness upon what may possibly improve Him; but rather to wish for what is least liable to Temptations, and least hazardous to his Virtue, in this State of Probation. When we are placed by our great Governour in a dangerous Post; our Business is to maintain it nobly and courageously: but it is Presumption, and not Duty, to desire and court unnecessary Hazards. We seldom come off without the Loss of Honour, from Dangers of our own choosing: and therefore, our Lord himself teaches us to pray, Lead us not into Temptation. So that, though the Extremes of human Life,
Life, on both Hands, may prove honourable and glorious to Those who can bear them with due Temper, and resist all the Temptations which They administer; yet no one, who thinks what human Nature, at present, is, would either labour, or pray, himself into a Condition, which Multitudes of Examples before his Eyes may make him fear, He shall not go through, without some considerable Loss, or Wound, to his Virtue, and Religion.

3. If you now ask, what is that Prayer, in Relation to the Things of this World, which it becomes You to put up to the supreme Governor of all Things; I answer, that the Wisdom of the Prayer in the Text is recommended to You, tho' not made an absolute Duty. This will shew You that You may, with blameless Hearts, and in express Words, pray against the hazardous Extremes of superfluous Riches, and the lowest Poverty: and that when you so pray, out of regard to the greater Security of your moral Practice; left the Trials in those two Extremes should be too powerful for You; You are sure, You act according to Duty, by making the Considerations of Religion the Ground of your Prayer.

If You would not be outdone, or put to Shame, even by the Heathens, let One of the wisest that
that ever appeared amongst them, lead your ... Thoughts to a Prayer, a little more general, but near a-kin to that in the Text. You may learn it from One of his Scholars, who, in his Address to God, requested the supreme Being to grant Him whatever was truly Good for Him, though He should be so blind himself, as not to ask it: and to deny Him whatever was not really so, but hurtful, though He himself should be so ill-instructed, or weak, as to beg it of Him earnestly and importunately: or to this Effect.

But if You would act in this Case, as Christians, which your Duty requires of You; You must strictly observe that most reasonable Form of Prayer, which your great Master dictated to his Disciples. In this, He effectually teaches You not to pray for Superfluity of Riches, unbounded Possessions, numerous Servants, splendid Equipages, or the like: but allows You, (I may say, commands You) to shew your Dependence upon the supreme Being, by praying, in express Words, for Your daily Bread only; leaving all the rest to Providence, and your own careful Endeavours, within the Bounds of his Holy Religion. This Direction of our Blessed Lord is an infallible Guide to all his Followers, upon this Subject.

4. Lastly,
4. Lastly, if You should ask, what is that exact Competence, which You are still permitted to desire, and seek after; I must answer, not only That it is beyond my Power to fix it; but that I believe it impossible for Any One to settle That precisely, by one Measure, which requires Many, according to the several Stations of Life, allotted to the several Inhabitants of our World. To say, It is always Something more than a Man has already, is the Voice of insatiable Avarice; witty perhaps, but sporting itself upon a most serious Subject.

There is One Way, I think, of coming near to the Truth; unless it be quite stopped up by the Resolution of Men to deceive their own Souls. It is certain, that Almighty God cannot be so rigorous, as to make any Man's Salvation depend upon a mere Nicety, in which the most honest Mind may be mistaken. And it is as certain that He will not be mocked, or put off, with the poor Excuses of Many, who have it in their Power to know their Duty, and their Happiness. All Men, who will consider, may know well enough, what Manner of Life is required of them, in Decency, and Compliance with Custom, according to that Station, and that Rank, in which they are placed. And by the Maintenance of This, without Injustice, or Intemperance,
perance, it is evident, They do not sin; Nay, serm.
that They contribute to the good Subsistence of many honest and industrious Persons in the World. They may also know, if they have a Mind to it, who They are, whom, in Conscience, they are obliged to provide for; and what is sufficient to place them in a proper Station, in the World; the most likely to prove happy to Them, at the End. And They all must be sensible that, when These two Points are tolerably secured, What is over and above, is then used, and improved, with Glory and Honour, when it is made a Fund for Charity, and Beneficence. If Men will study all Evasions to flatter, and impose upon, Themsefes; Who can help it? But if They will deal sincerely and honestly by Them- selves, in this Point, there is no need of a Pro-
phet, to fay to Any One of Them who are con-
cerned, Thou art the Man. Every One will fay it to himself. And this is all that can be done, by Us, in a Cafe of this Sort; to apply ftrongly to Themsefes, and to leave it upon their Con-
sciences, as they will answer it at the solemn Day of Account, whether They do not in-
wardly know that They are happy in that Competency, and good Estate, which a Wise Man ought to wish for. This therefore, is juftly left to their own Determination.

To
SERM. To conclude, Let us all, in the Sincerity of our Hearts, make the best Use We can, for our own Happiness, and the Good of Others, of what has been said; and shew a Conduct, worthy of Men and of Christians, in that Condition of Life, whatever it may be, in which our Great and Good Governour shall think fit to place Us.
Then said Jesus unto Him, Go, and do Thou likewise.

Whether the Verses before this contain a Parable, invented for Instruction; or a real Matter of Fact; it imports little. The Words I have read to You, are a Lesson drawn from the foregoing Story: The Occasion of which was this. A certain Lawyer, one who studied the Law of Moses, and exercised himself in all the Questions belonging to that Law, having heard that our blessed Lord professed to shew a sure and infallible Way to Life and Happiness, came to him to try what Answer he would give to that important Question, What shall I do to inherit eternal Life? Our Lord's Answer was short and plain; viz. that the Summ of all that Religion
The Good Samaritan.

Religion, which can make us acceptable to God, is to love God above all Things, and our Neighbour as Ourselves. The Lawyer seems here not to be at all concerned about the Former; not doubting, perhaps, but that he had always sufficiently demonstrated his Love to God, by his strict Observance of all the Ceremonies of the Mosaical Law. And, hoping to justify himself in the Matter of Love to his Neighbour also, desires to know of Jesus, Who that Neighbour is, whom he is thus to love as Himself.

Here We must observe, that, at this Time, the Jews were in Nothing more corrupted, than in their Notions about the Persons, on whom they were to bestow any Tokens of Good-will. They had, in a Manner, forgot that strict Bond of Nature, by which all Men are allied to one another: and all the World took Notice how stiff and narrow in their Regards to Others; and how void of all Charity, They were grown. They were come to that pass, that they denied the common Civilities, and the common Conveniences of human Life, to Strangers, and Persons of other Religions. We are told by some, that they would not shew them so much as the Way to any Place they were going to; or direct them to a Fountain where they might quench their Thirst.

Here,
Here, therefore, our Blessed Lord had a good sermon. Opportunity of opposing this narrow and inhuman Spirit that was gone out amongst them: And We may be sure, He was glad to lay hold on it; as he came into the World to implant other Sort of Notions in the Minds of Men, and to make their Charity as like to that of Almighty God himself, as it could be. In answer, therefore, to this Enquiry, and to teach Him who made it, Whom He was to look upon as his Neighbour; as an Object of that Love, he was speaking of; and in order to do this in the most moving and affecting Manner, he sets his Duty plainly before his Eyes in a Story, here related.

A certain Man, He does not say, whether a Jew, or a Stranger. If a Jew, the good Nature of the Samaritan, presently spoken of, was so much the more remarkable; there being a consummate Hatred betwixt the Two Nations: If a Stranger, the Compassion of the Samaritan was peculiarly fit to be recommended to the Imitation of the Jew; in order to teach Him that universal Benevolence, from which He was utterly alienated. This Man, in a Journey from Jerusalem to Jericho, fell amongst Thieves, who robbed him, and used him so ill, that he was left half dead. Such an Object, lying helpless, and in a most inconvenient Place,
And yet we find Compassion sunk so low amongst the Jews, that our Saviour thought their Behaviour in such Cases fitly represented by what follows. A Priest, and a Levite, Persons peculiarly employed in the Service of God, and devoted to the external Offices of their Religion, had forgot Humanity so far, as not to be touched with the Sight. The One saw him, at a Distance, as appears; the Other came, and looked on him: but Both of them passed by on the other Side. What Pretences they had for this Neglect, our Lord does not say. Perhaps, They were in Haste, upon Business; or going to attend upon the Sacrifices, or other Offices of the Temple; not understanding, nor feeling, the Force of that God-like Saying, I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice. Or, perhaps, They found him to be a Stranger, a Heathen; and so fit rather for their Aversion, than their Pity. Something, or other, They had to lay their Consciences asleep: and were, without Doubt, glad of any Excuse, or Evasion, to that Purpose.

Let us see what follows. But a certain Samaritan, One of that Nation which mixed Idolatry with the Service of God; which worshiped they knew not what; of that Nation which was hated and despised by
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by the Jews, to such a Degree that They had no Dealings with Them; a Samaritan, when he saw this miserable Object, was moved with Compassion; shewed him all the Love imaginable; performed all the good Offices that his present Condition could demand of him; and administered every Thing that his Necessity required. The Cruelty, and unbecoming Bar-barity, of Those who neglected Him, was so apparent; and the Beauty and Loveliness of this Action of the Samaritan so bright and evident; that our Saviour doubted not to make the Lawyer himself judge, which of these Three had fulfilled that Command, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self; and which of these Examples was most fitted to direct him in the Performance of his Duty. And when he had answered, in favour of the Samaritan, that it was He, who had done the Duty of a Neighbour to this distressed Person: Jesus recommends this Pattern to him, in these Words, Go, and do thou likewise. Imitate this Samaritan. Look upon this Example, and You will not be at a Loss to know, Who is your Neighbour: but You will lay it down for a Truth, that every Person in the World, of what Country, of what Profession, of what Religion soever, who is in Necessity, and stands in Need of your Assistance, and whom you can assist without
s E R M. without Injury to Yourself, or to Those for whom You are more nearly concerned; That every such Man has a Title to your Beneficence and Charity; That You have the same Relation to Him, that the Samaritan had to the distressed Person before-mentioned; That He is one of those Neighbours whom God requires you to love as yourself; and to do unto Him, as you might reasonably expect Others to do unto You, were you in his Circumstances. This was the main Design, and principal Intent of this History.

But, because in such Histories, or Parables, there are often Many other Things to be learnt and observed, besides the Main Point; I shall, therefore, in my following Discourse, make such Observations, as offer themselves from every Part of this Story, as well as from the chief Scope of it: but yet I shall name None but such as We may probably enough suppose to have been intended, and hinted at, by our Lord. For Instance,

I. We cannot but observe, that a Whole Nation of Men; Men who have, and think They have, the greatest Opportunities of Religious Knowledge; Nay, Men who are peculiarly devoted to the Study and public Offices of Religion, may be often grossly ignorant of some of the plainest, and most essential, moral Duties
Duties of It: and, accordingly, their Practice may be most unreasonable, and inexcusable.

II. We may observe, how glad many Persons are, of any Excuse, or Pretense, in order to avoid the greatest Objects of Charity, which will cost them a little Trouble, or a little Money.

III. From this Story, related by our Lord himself, we may observe, that Men of an Orthodox Faith, with respect to God; and of a true, and a revealed Religion, may sometimes learn the Practice of a very great and substantial Duty from Men of an unsound Faith, and a false Religion; even from Idolaters, Samaritans, and Pagans.

IV. Lastly, the principal Point intended by our Lord, in this Story, being to recommend Goodness and Love to all Men; I shall say something upon the great Duty of universal Charity, and a most comprehensive Compassion; and our strict Obligation to the Practice of it.

I. From this History, and the Occasion of it, we may observe, that a whole Nation of Men, Men who have, and think They have, the greatest Opportunities of religious Knowledge; nay, Men who are peculiarly devoted to the Study of Religion, and the Offices belonging to God's Worship, may sometimes, be grossly ignorant:
of some of the plainest and important Duties of Religion; and accordingly, their Practice may, be most unreasonable and inexcusable.

Here was the whole People of the Jews, to whom God had given a supernatural Revelation; and, with this Revelation in their Hands, not a Man to be found amongst them, who was not of a narrow and confined Spirit; who had any Notion of a Neighbour, or of Persons to whom any good Offices were due, out of their own Society, and Church: not a Man, who understood, or practised, the great Duty of Charity, though it has the clearest and most evident Dictates of Nature, on its Side; Or, who had Generosity enough to perform the commonest Offices of Civility or Humanity, to Any, but a Jew. This was what the Heathen Poets, and Historians, often severely condemned, and ridiculed Them for. Here was a Person, who had made the Law of Moses his Study, who knew not how to expound that second great Precept of loving his Neighbour as himself; but, as it appears, stood in Need of some farther Instruction, in this Point; how willing soever he appeared to justify Himself. And, in our Saviour's Answer, who always had regard to Truth and Decency, a Priest and a Levite, Attendants upon the Service of God in the Temple, and punctual, without Doubt, in every Ceremony and
and Mode of Worship, are represented as in-
excusable guilty in one of the chief Branches
of practical Religion; passing by the greatest
Object of Pity imaginable, a Man in the ut-
most Distress, standing in need of their imme-
diate Assistance, and, in all probability, pe-
rishing without it. So far from embracing
such an Opportunity of doing good, and
exercising those god-like Virtues of Charity
and Compassion; that They are spoken of,
as wholly unmoved at the Sight, and glad to
get out of the Way of that Mercy, which
might cost Them a little Mony or Trouble.
What a Devastation of All that is good
in human Nature, must there be supposed;
when it can forget its own manifold Wants
and Necessities; put off its own tender
Affections; throw off all that is soft and apt
to be moved in it: and contract, in its stead,
the Roughness of a Brute, and the Hardness
of a Rock? And how low must That Man
have been sunk beneath Himself, who could
forget that He himself might have been the
Man that fell amongst Thieves, and was left
half dead; and not recollect what would
have been the Anguish of his own Soul, in such
a Condition; and what Regard He himself
would juftly have expected to his own Cries and
Wounds, in so miserable a Case? Yet thus it
was
was, in our Saviour's Time: otherwise, He would not have had the Thought of representing it, in this Light.

II. The next Observation from this Story, was, That many Persons have so far hardened Themselves, in Covetousness, and Insensibility, that they are glad of any Pretence or Excuse, for neglecting the most moving Objects of Pity, if they are likely to put them to a little Trouble, or Charge: nay, That they will often, rather than be at the Expense of a little Compassion, arm Themselves against it without any Pretence; avoid whatever seems to demand their Assistance; and fly from all Opportunities of doing good.

The Priest, when he saw this poor Man in the most wretched Condition; fearing perhaps, it might be an Object moving enough to melt him into Pity, seems to have been contented with the Sight at a Distance, and passed by on the other Side. The Levite came, and looked upon him; viewed his Condition; was Witness to his Wounds and his Distress; saw him to be utterly unable to help himself, and destined to Death without present Assistance: and yet, was proof against such a Spectacle of Misery; shut up his Bowels of Compassion against Him, and passed by also on the other Side.

And,
And, as we can observe of other men, that, though they abound in riches, and all the superfluities of life, they yet are willing to be ignorant of the wants of their neighbours; or, hard-hearted enough to deny them the relief, which they could easily grant them: So, let us look into ourselves, and see, if we also are not guilty of this same wickedness, ourselves, in some degree, or other. How many petitioners, such as really want and deserve our help, have we been deaf to? How often have we avoided a person in distress, merely because we knew, or suspected, he would beg our assistance; and how often have we passed by on the other side, upon a distant sight of him? Have we not sometimes found ourselves but too willing to take no notice of the opportunities, put into our hands, of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, relieving the sick, and afflicted, releasing the captive, or prisoner? All these, whenever they present themselves to us, are our neighbours; and have a title to our love, and to, the effects of this love, all the good offices we can afford them. And when we refuse to hear the cries of the unhappy, and to administer that relief, which we have opportunity, and ability, to administer; or, to supply the wants of those who present themselves to us with the certain marks of
of Distress and Misery upon them, We do, in our several Degrees, approach to the Barbarity, and imitate the Cruelty, of Those Persons, in the Story now before Us, who could see a Man upon the very brink of Death, destitute of all Comfort; and yet not be moved so far as to afford him the least Assistance.

III. I proceed now to a Third Observation, which, I said, we might make from the same History; viz. That Men of an orthodox Faith with respect to God, and of a true Religion, may often learn the Practice of a very great and substantial Duty from Men of an unsound Faith, and false Religion.

Our blessed Lord, in his Discourse with the Samaritan Woman, (John ivth) in express Words, preferred the Jewish Religion far before the Samaritan. We know what we worship; Ye worship Ye know not what. They of Samaria had many Idolatries mixed with that Worship of the true God, which they retained. The Jews worshiped God according to the Law of Moses; whose Instructions They received as the Dictates of God himself: And by these Instructions They were led to the strictest Notions of the Unity of the Supreme Being; and of the Perfections of his Nature. But, notwithstanding all this, We find,
and, in the History before Us, that our Saviour did not scruple to propose to the Imitation of the Jews, in a most important Point of practical Religion, the Example of an idolatrous Samaritan, in order to throw Shame upon their fordid and cramped Notions of Charity; and to inspire them with a pious Emulation, and a Resolution, not to be outdone, in the most God-like Virtue, by Those, whom They so much out-did in their Faith, and Worship.

I know not how it comes to pass, That the very Things which God designs to make Some Men better than Others, often prove the Occasions, through the Perverseness of these Men themselves, of making them Worse. That peculiar Relation which God appeared to have to the Jews; that Love He shewed to their Forefathers; the fighting their Battles; the establishing Them in a good Country; and, above all, the giving Them the Law from Heaven, and leading them into the Knowledge of himself: All these Favours, instead of making them generous and beneficent, served to sour their Spirits; to contract their Souls; and to shrink their Affections into a narrower Compass. So ungrateful a Return did They make to these Blessings, that They were always reflecting upon the worse Condition of the Nations around Them; how little
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Serm. little other Mortals were esteemed and favoured by God; in comparison with Themselves; and therefore, how fit to be despised and neglected. And how many Men may we meet with, or hear of, in our own Days, who value themselves upon the mere outward Profession of This or That Religion; who are often thanking God that They are Members of the best, or only, Church in the World; whilst they shamefully neglect many Instances of Morality, which the very Heathens excell in; and are boasting of their Faith, whilst They are inexcusably wicked in their Practice?

What Cruelties have been exercised by some called Christians, upon Infidels, merely for worldly Ends; and these much the more to be abhorred for being coloured over with the specious Name of Religion? Cruelties, which are said to have created in those Infidels Themselves an irreconcilable Hatred to the very Name of Christ. To speak more plainly, what Methods have been taken by Those of the Romish Church, to plant what They call Christianity, where it was not; or to maintain, and reform it to their own Minds, where it was? Methods, that would make the Ears of an honest Heathen to tingle; so much beyond the common Bounds of Barbarity itself, that They can hardly be expressed; but will al-
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ways, I fear, be remembered to the Infamy of the Christian Name, by Those who know of no other Gospel, but what such Men have preached. And are there not, amongst Those who utterly condemn this Conduct, Some to be found, so intent upon the Goods of this World, as to forget those Duties in which the Vigour and Life of Religion conflicts; Justice, and Charity; and to retain little more, than so much of the Profession of Religion as may help on their worldly Designs?

But though God certainly preferred the Worship of the Jew, before That of the Samaritan; yet, we need not doubt to say that He was much better pleased with the good and charitable Samaritan, than with the inhuman and unmerciful Jew. Nay, we may go farther, and take occasion from hence to affirm that a Good God will make all just Allowances for the Errors of every such charitable Man; but None for the wilful Wickedness of One who professes a true and holy Religion, and transgresses the plainest Laws of Nature, and Reason, and of all Religions in the World. This admits of no Excuse: the Other may, in the Eyes of Him, who sees the bottom of all Hearts, and knows the Spring from whence all the Errors in the World proceed.

So also, though it be certain that a Christian of a Right Faith is more acceptable to Him,
One who is not so, where there is nothing to make it otherwise; yet, We may be as certain, That an honest Heathen is much more acceptable to him, than a dishonest and deceitful Christian; and that a charitable and good-natured Pagan has a better Title to his Favour, than a cruel and barbarous Christian; let him be never so orthodox in his Faith. Nay, for the sake of the Gospel itself, whatever that Part of Christians do, who, in the heat of their Zeal for enlarging the Bounds of their Church, seem to think it a Duty to forget all the Softnesses of Human Nature, and to practise the utmost Inhumanity; Let Us, (who pretend to be reformed from them) have no hand in casting such an indeleble Blot upon our Holy Religion: and, while our Mouths are making a good Confession of Faith, let not our Lives be full of those Vices which the Gospel came to extirpate. And, particularly, Let that extensive Charity, and unbounded Love and Beneficence, adorn our Lives, which make so great a Part of, and add so great a Lustre to, that Divine Institution. To this End,

IV. The principal Thing intended by our Lord, in the Story we are now considering, being to recommend Goodness and Love towards all Men, let us turn our Thoughts to this great Duty of Universal Charity, and our strict Obligation to the constant Practice of it.
In order to fix the Nature of this, it is proper here again to call to mind, That this universal Charity is not designed to break in upon those Duties which we owe to Our selves, our Parents, our Children, our Friends, nay, and our Acquaintance. It is not in the Power of Any Man to assist every One in distress: and Nature directs Him to prefer These before Strangers, when they come in Competition, and are in the same Degree of Want, or Distress. Accordingly, our Saviour here chooses the Instance of One in the greatest Danger; at the very Point of Death; certainly perishing without present Help. And had the Case been thus, that the Priest, and the Levite, were going to a Father, or a Child, or a Friend, in the same Necessity; and had it not in their Power to assist Both; We may venture to say that our Lord would not have blamed Them for neglecting a Stranger for One in a much nearer Relation to Them, and in the same Condition. And therefore, the Doctrine taught in this History, is rightly understood to be this, That Whoever of the human Race stands in need of our Assistance; whom we can relieve without Injury to Our selves; or without neglecting Others, in the same Condition, whom we much more ought to relieve; has a Title to our Benevolence and Kindness: Or is our Neighbour, whom we are to love as Our selves;
and whom we are willingly to comfort, support, and assist. And, this We are plainly obliged to do, as we are Men, of the same Class and Order of Beings; as we are obliged to imitate Almighty God; and as we are Christians, to be guided and judged by the Gospel.

1. As we are Men; and, as such, Partakers of the same Nature; subject to the same Accidents; placed in this World upon the same Conditions, with Other Men. Look up to the common Creator of all, and the common Father, from whom all had their original; and there is no Difference. The Rich, and the Poor; the Happy, and the Miserable; the Fortunate, and Unfortunate; are of one Stock. God created the One and the Other: and placed them in the same World; where None of them, not the greatest, and richest, and most powerful of them all, can be secure that he shall not, one Day or other, come to be the least, the poorest, and most distressed, of Men. How happy soever and flourishing we are to day; how prosperously soever Things succeed with us; not many Years may, perhaps, make a great Alteration. A single Act of great Imprudence; an unexpected Loss; a very calamitous Accident; Envy and Malice of Others: One, or more, of These, may overturn All; and deprive us of those good Things, a small Part of which We now think
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think it hard to afford our Brethren in their Ne-
cessities. Let not, therefore, the Wants of your Neighbour, nor your own Riches, make such a Difference between You, in your own Eyes, as to recommend him to your Contempt. Neglect not Him, in his distressfull State, whom God has created with the same Faculties you possess, and placed in the same World which you inhabit. Remember that a small Time may, possibly, alter the Face of Things, in so uncertain a State as This: and You will always make their Case Your own. Call to Mind often that it is not for Men to live without mutual Help, and good Offices: and that the Richest of all do, indeed, owe so much to the Labour and Industry of the Poor, that They may be glad to supply the Wants of the Distressed, when their own Industry and Labour cannot. The more frequently You entertain yourselves with such Thoughts, the greater and more constant will be your Regard to your Fellow-Creatures around You.

2. We are obliged to practise this universal Charity, as we are obliged to imitate God him-
sfelf. That great and all-perfect Being wants not the Assistance of any Men; nor can ever possib-
ly want it: and yet He has not neglected, or de-
pised, their Necessities. Those Blessings, the
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Administration of which he reserves to himself, how common and universal are They? His Sun shines; and his Rain falls, indifferently on All: and why then should not those Blessings which He has entrusted with the Rich Men of this World, be freely and universally distributed, as the Neceffities of poor Men require? What would the Richest of them all do, were the Supreme Creator, and Governour, of all things, quite Regardless of Them, and of their Well-being here below? They could not breath one Moment without his Concurr- rence; and he affords it them. They could not live, without his Sun, and his Air, and his Rain; and all these, by his Command, contribute to their Support. And this is a most powerful Argument, That, when Others want what they have in Abundance, and what they can spare; They ought, with all Readiness to communicate it to their Fellow-Creatures. To refuse to do this, is indeed a most ungrateful Return to that God who shews himself, every Day and Hour, so good to Them. For to refuse to imitate Him in this, is not to thank him. Nay, it may justly be taken as an affront to Himself, that, when He has communicated to Them of the Fullness of his own Happiness, They have so little a Sense of the Beauty of such Bene- volence
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volence, as not to think it worthy of the most natural Regard of Imitation. But,

3. We are obliged to this Beneficence, as we are Christians, to be guided now, and judged hereafter, by the Gospel We pretend to embrace. In that We are plainly taught, That whatever we have, over and above the Neceffities and Conveniences of Ourselves, and those in whom we are most nearly concerned, is intrusted to Us for the Use and Benefit of Those who want it. To see our Brother have need, and to shut up our Bowels of Compassion against him, is condemned by the fame Gospel, as a Sin: And if in Sins there be Degrees; We may say that This is One of the most unpardonable of all. The Duty of loving, that is, doing Good to, all our Fellow-Creatures, when their Distreffes call upon Us, is so often there repeated, and inculcated, that it is needless to be more particular. The Example set before Us, in That, is Christ Jesus, who was never weary of exerting his Power for the Relief, and Comfort, and Support, and Happiness, of all the World around him. The Account there given of the Day of Judgment, and the great and solemn Audit to come, turns all upon Charity; and represents the Case in this Manner. Have you fed the Hungry, clothed the Naked, enter-
Sermon.

attended the Stranger, visited and relieved the Sick, supplied the Wants of all Mankind, as far as you were able? If you have; you are those happy Disciples, to whom our Lord will say, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you, from the Foundation of the World. If you have not; the Other Sentence is declared to belong to you, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire. What can be a greater Demonstration of how great Value, in the Eyes of God, this universal Charity is, and of what a heinous Nature the contrary Vice is? And what can be a greater Argument to Us, to avoid the One, and practise the Other?
Of the Duty of Christians under Afflictions.

SERMON XVII.

Hebrews xii. 11.
Now, no Chastening for the present, seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterwards, it yieldeth the peaceful Fruit of Righteousness, unto them which are exercised thereby.

This, and the foregoing Verses, certainly had reference to that Scene of Persecution, to which the Profession and Practice of the Christian Religion exposed Men, in the first Ages of the Gospel. But the Application of them is so natural to the common Calamities and Troubles which Men meet with in this World, even when the outward Profession of their Religion is secure and easy; that We may, very well, take Occasion...
Of the Duty of Christians

Serm. on from them to discourse of those Afflictions, which Mortals seem to be born to, in this State; the severe Trials of their Faith and Trust in God, here; and the great Instruments of Reward and Glory, hereafter, to Those who bear them as They ought to do. And, in order to treat this important Subject, in a manner which may be most useful to the Persons most deeply concerned in it,

I. I shall observe the little Reason we have, any of us all, to expect to pass through this World without our Portion of Trouble and Affliction.

II. I shall endeavour to shew after what Manner we ought to bear those Afflictions, which may be said to be our almost unavoidable Portion.

III. I shall point out the great and prevailing Arguments there are, to engage us to bear them after the best and most reasonable Manner. And

IV. I shall consider the great and unspeakable Advantages of these Afflictions to Those who are exercised therein, and who undergo them after this good and becoming Manner.

I. I shall
I. I shall observe the little Reason we have, any of us, to expect to pass through this World without our Portion of Trouble and Affliction.

Look abroad into the present State of Things, and extend your View as far as That will permit: and find out, if it be possible, those happy Men, who meet with no Bitterness; no Misfortune; no Calamity, in this World. You would think, perhaps, that Such might most successfully be sought for, amongst the Virtuous and Best Part of Mankind. But These, if you will believe their own Words, have been most exposed to the Calamities and Misfortunes of this uncertain State; and to have been exercised the most severely with Trials and Afflictions, here below. It has been, in all Ages, a Sort of a Reproach which They themselves have made to Providence, that their Virtue, though pursued and cultivated sincerely, has only, at present, seemed to entitle them to more Troubles, and more Misfortunes, than Others have experienced; and that ill Success, and cross Accidents, have attended Them, when the wicked Part of the World have seemed to be at Rest, and to have all that their Hearts could wish to enjoy.

But,
But, though this has been said, in the Heat and Passion, if I may say so, of Good Men; yet it cannot, in any tolerable Sense, be proved that Wickedness is any more a Security against Troubles and Afflictions, in this State, than true Goodness and Holiness. It may, indeed, often prosper, so far as to procure outward Grandeur, and immense Riches: But what is that to the State of Mind within, which is the Seat of Happiness? How many Projects does the wicked Man often frame, that are not fulfilled, but generally brought to Nothing, when he attempts them? How many Pleasures does he pursue, that end in Nothing but the Bitterness of Disappointment; and often, in, what is much worse, the Bitterness of a wounded Conscience, which He always carries about with him, and from which he cannot fly. Providence has not yet so forsaken the present Condition of Virtue and Goodness, in this World, as to leave Wickedness wholly triumphant; or to give it the Encouragement of the good Things of this Life, without the common Mixture of the Bad. Far otherwise. We see, the Wicked Man often suffers, in this World: Nor can all his Cunning and Contrivance, in some Cases, keep off from him the public Disgrace of Evils much above the ordinary.
ordinary and common Evils, of which He also has his Share, here below.

It may indeed, be sufficient, to ask, upon this Head, Of all the Men ordained to live in this world, Who is there; Who has there ever been; Who can there ever be, truly Self-sufficient? Who, so fitted for Happiness within himself, as to place no Part of it in any thing without him; or, to seek for no Part of it any where but within his own Breast? Who, so perfect, or, Who framed after so peculiar a Manner, as not to find it unavoidable to delight in, or love, some particular Good, so as to make the Uncertainty, or Loss, of it, a great Evil? One indeed, fixes upon one Thing; and Another, upon Another: One, upon the Riches of this World; Another, upon the Honours and Pride of it; Another, upon Reputation and Glory; Another, upon his Family, and his Children; Another, upon the Pleasures of Friendship, or Learning: But still every One, upon something, or other. All find it so necessary, to seek Support, under the expected Evils of this Life, from some one, or other, of these, or the like, good Things, that They constantly, and universally, do it. And though the Best of them do Nothing but what Nature leads Them to; and though They make the wisest Choice possible, in
Of the Duty of Christians

Serm. fixing upon something the most proper of all Things below, for their Assistance; and though They pursue it with Innocence, and a due Regard to Religion; yet even still it must be owned That there is Room enough left for very severe and piercing Afflictions. There is one single Circumstance of human Life, which is alone sufficient to render insipid every Thing that can be called Enjoyment. I mean, the Habitual Want of Health, which Many, we see, labour under. And much more are the frequent Returns of the most violent Pains and Diseases, which are the Portion of Others, able of Themselves, to scatter Misery, where Joy might otherwise reign; and to bring to Nought the Happiness of Those who possess the greatest of all temporal Goods.

Nor do I see a Remedy in this Case. For we must take our Natures, as God has made them; and the World, as we find it. We cannot pretend, by any Self-Sufficiency, to procure for Our-selves, that little Happiness which We, for a few Hours or Days, sometimes obtain in this State; and which we cannot help desiring, any more than we can help desiring to live. And yet it is true, That, whatever it is, here below, that our peculiar Constitution of Mind directs us to pursue, in Aid of our Happiness, must have so
so much of the Nature of the other Good Things of this State, that it cannot but be, one Time or other, the Occasion of Uneasiness and Affliction. But I come now to the next Point I proposed, which was

II. To shew, after what Manner it is the Duty of reasonable Creatures, and Christians, to bear those Afflictions, which are so unavoidable in this State.

And here, I think, we are to consider the different and various Tempers, Educations, and Dispositions, of Mankind; by which it must come to pass that They cannot possibly All shew themselves equally courageous, or equally patient, in the same Circumstances.

It is nothing to one Person to lose a Summ of Money, who yet is sunk by the Loss of an exalted Station in Life. It is a small Matter to another to suffer in this Point of Honour, who cannot bear the least Disappointment in Profit, or Gain. And a third Person, perhaps, values a Friend, or a Relation, more than the most covetous Man upon Earth does his Bags; or the most Ambitious, his high Estate. And, again, the Passions of Some may be stronger by Nature than those of Others; and their personal Weakness greater: They may be of a softer and more tender Nature,
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and so capable of deeper Impressions, and more disorderly Commotions of Mind, than their Neighbours: and the Notions They have received in their Education, may have still more distinguished Them from Other Men. Allowances are to be made for all these Things: and Almighty God will certainly make all reasonable Allowances for such Variety of Circumstances, and Dispositions.

It cannot be expected, that One who is possessed with the Love of Mony, or Honour, can bear a Separation from Them, with as little Shew of Remorse, as One who never felt any strong Inclination towards them. And so likewise, in other Cases. But, taking all these Considerations into the Account, the least that can be our Duty, under the severest Dispensations of God's Providence towards us, in the Removal, or Diminution, of those good Things, from which we have expected any Addition to our Happiness in this World, is, To acknowledge God to be perfectly wise, and perfectly good; much better able to judge and to determine what is good for Us, than we are, for ourselves; and to submit to Him, as to a Governour, to whom there is all theReason in the World to commit Ourselves, and all our Fortunes.

I do
I do not think, and therefore, I cannot teach, That this Submission to Almighty God, which is equally the Duty of All, must be joined with a rejoicing in such severe Dispensations. On the contrary, It seems to me to be perfectly consistent with a deep and sorrowful Sense of the Loss we have sustained, and of the Good removed from us. Otherwise indeed, it can hardly bear the Name of an Affliction.

I know, In the Case of Persecution for the Sake of the Gospel, our blessed Lord speaks, of rejoicing, and being exceeding glad; and his Apostles, of counting it all Joy to suffer for his Sake. But these are to be looked upon as Figurative Descriptions of a State of Mind, reasonable, indeed, in itself; but not commanded, as the strict Duty of every Christian.

It is, in itself, I say, reasonable, if we consider only the Goodness of the Cause, and the greater Rewards of another Life, which our Sufferings procure us, even to express a Joy, in the midst of All the Pains We can undergo, for the Sake of our Religion. Nor can it be denied That there have been Instances of Men, who have, in this Best of Causes, shewn all the Marks of a real Joy in their Sufferings for it. I wish, the like could not be said of Others,
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Others, in the very worst, and most unworthy of such an Appearance. But, on the other side, considering the nature and circumstances of Man, in this world, it seems impossible for All to arrive at such a perfection, as to be able literally to fulfil such expressions. And therefore, this cannot be the Duty of All. I am sure, the Apostle, in the text, expressly faith, that no chastening is, for the present, joyous, but grievous; and this, with regard to our suffering for the sake of the Gospel. Nay, our Lord himself not only advises his first Disciples, in some of his last hours, to watch and pray, that they may not enter into such temptations, or severe trials, on account of their relation to Him; but recommends to them in other passages, the prudence of avoiding them, as far as they innocently and honourably could. And if we call to mind his own practice, when his sufferings pressed close upon him, for the most glorious cause, which he knew to be his Father's will, and his own undertaking; we shall see that he did not think it unworthy of his character to shew the sincere tokens of exceeding sorrow, mixed with his submission and perseverance. So that, even in this extraordinary case of persecution for his sake, it may be justly said, that an honest Christian performs
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performs that Duty which God requires of Him, when He patiently submits to Pain and Torment, as the Act of Providence, rather than deny his Master, or abjure his Religion.

And upon all the foregoing Considerations, with regard to the usual Calamities attending human Life, I shall not scruple to say, That what the Great and Good Ruler of all Things expects from his imperfect Creatures, as a Duty, is, Not that they should wish for, or desire, Calamities; or shew a Stupidity, or Joy, under them: but that They should have Recourse to the Considerations of Religion; and make a rational and patient Submission to Him, as to a wise and good Governor, in all the Afflictions which They may experience in the Course of this World. And now, in order to this,

III. I shall point out the strong Reasons there are, to induce them to bear these Afflictions with Patience, and a proper Submission to Almighty God.

No one can deny that it is both just and reasonable that God should sometimes try the Duty and Affections of his Creatures, provided such Trials contain Nothing in them beyond their own Strength, or That which he is pleased to afford them. Nor can any
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one deny it to be highly reasonable that Men, in such a State as this, should give some plain Evidence that they believe there is a God, a Being of perfect Goodness, and perfect Wisdom, who governs and disposes all Things here below. Now, What greater Evidence of This, is it possible for Us to give, than patiently to submit all our Affairs to his Determination, and quietly to acquiesce in his Decrees? This doth not at all forbid Us to make use of our own Prudence, in guarding, as much as we can, our Lives here below from all the Evils of this State: but teaches Us to do this under the Inspection of his Eye, and with a constant Submission of our Will's to His. And the serious Consideration of our own weak and imperfect Faculties, and of His infinite Perfections, will soon convince Us, that such a Submission is, in our present Condition, our greatest Happiness.

If We consider ourselves, and the Powers that belong to us; We shall find how narrow and confined they are. How many material Things are there, that we must be ignorant of, even of great Concern to ourselves, and our Happiness here below? By how many Passions, and how many Fancies, are We often led out of the Paths of Right Judgment about
about our own true Good? And this, to such a Degree, That other Men, weak and frail like Ourselves, can often see our real Interest, better than we can, merely because They are not Ourselves, or biassed by any foolish Self-love, when they judge in our Case? Experience itself has frequently taught Us, how mistaken we have been in our past Determinations; and how little able to judge what would be the Consequence, were all our own Desires fulfilled: And therefore, how miserably unfit to allott to Ourselves our own Portion of Good and Evil in this World. If these Things be so; can there be a greater Happiness than to be under the Governance of a Benevolent and all-wise Guide, who cannot be mistaken in our real Good; and who, in all his Dis-pensations towards us, is Himself directed by a constant regard to our true and lasting Interest?

In the poor Condition of human Life here below, What a Blessing is it, to Children, and Persons not come to the Maturity of their Judgment, to be under the Conduct and Management of wiser Persons than themselves; more experienced in the Affairs of this World; and better Judges of what is fit for them, and what not? How often might They ruine A a themselves,
themselves, under the Notion of Good and Pleasure, if they were not so? How often would their Appetites, or their childish Conceits, be the Instruments of their Unhappiness? And what are the best and wisest of Us, when compared with Almighty God, but weak as Children, and as truly unfit to choose for ourselves, in many Cases of singular Importance to Our chief Concern? And if it be an Happiness to Them to be under the Guidance of Others, whose Duty it is to keep them from noxious and hurtful Things, and to grant them Nothing but what is truly good for them; how much more is it happy for Us, that there is One above us, to train and educate us to a more blessed State, by the Discipline of Afflictions when he sees them necessary: and thus to consult our true Interest by denying us the Enjoyment of what is not so good for us as we imagine; and by not permitting us to ruine ourselves; as, probably, we should do, were our Desires, in this World, more frequently granted us.

It is a Work of Difficulty, I confess, contentedly to part with That, on which we have founded any of our Hopes of Happiness in this State. But see how easy, even for worldly Reasons, and without any of the
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the Afflictions of Religion, many Men can be, under great and considerable Disappointments; and see also how Time has performed those Cures upon the most disturbed Minds, which They have not permitted Reason and Consideration to do: And then judge, Whether it be not much more becoming Us, to have this Cure effected by wise and excellent Motives, or, in other Words, by the most reasonable and most unexceptionable Methods. And what can be of more proper Influence upon any ingenuous and well-disposed Mind, than the Consideration of God's Providence; the Thought that it is agreeable to his Will we should suffer all we suffer; that the Circumstances we are in, are what He has judged proper, for the best and wisest Reasons, to allot us: Or, at least, that our Portion is so far his Determination, that, if He had seen it to be bad for us, all Things considered, He would not so much as have permitted it to be what it is? And this is much the same Satisfaction, as if He himself had assured us that it is what we ourselves should choose, did we know our own good, and could we see all Things as they truly are.

And this leads to another Consideration, very well fitted to make us easy and resigned; That, let our Condition be what it will, at present,
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Sermon present, it is such as We ourselves should choose, or patiently submit to, as the fittest and best, if all Things, proper to be considered, could be present to our View. For the Reason why We do not, at first Thought, acquiesce in all the Dispensations of God Almighty, is because We do not see that Fitness and Propriety in them, which He always has before his Eyes. And this proceeds from the Imperfection of our Capacities and Understandings: which Defect can be supplied by Nothing but our Submission to a superior and perfect Understanding.

It may be an innocent Speculation to think how great our Happiness would be, if we were so framed, as to see perfectly every Particular, and all possible Circumstances, relating to our Condition here, and hereafter; what is truly our Good, and what is not: But this is not given to Us. We may seek after such Knowledge, as well as we can; but we must be content with that Cloud of Darkness in which it is at present wrapped up; and give Repose to our Souls in the reasonable Assurance that there is a Being superior to us, who made us, and who governs us; that this Being sees all Things as they truly are, in their own Natures and Tendencies; and orders Nothing for his Creatures, but
but what they may be satisfied is best and fitted to be ordered. And did we but heartily believe this, and duly consider it, it could not but be a mighty Relief to us in all our Exigencies: And we could not but feel the satisfaction of a rational Faith supplying the Defects and Imperfections of our own Natures.

But, in order to this Relief, We must strictly guard against that great, and, I had almost said, blasphemous Error, which represents God, as acting, in the Government of the World, and in the Disposition of the Fortunes of his Creatures, after an arbitrary and tyrannical manner, in order to shew his Power and Greatness: and always think of Him, as a Being who delights in Nothing more than in doing Good; and esteems Nothing so much his Glory, as to act constantly, and without Interruption, according to the eternal Rules of Justice and Goodness. And if we would often thus represent to Ourselves Almighty God, as the Best and Wisest of All Beings, who could have no End in creating us, and can have none since in governing us, separated from our own Happiness; This would be a solid Ground of inward Satisfaction and Contentment, amidst all the Unhappinesses and Pains, and Distresses, of this
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Sermon this World: especially, if we added to the Argument, That this same God has assured Us of Another future and unchangeable State, in which He will reward the Patience and Resignation we have exercised in This; and make us ample Amends for all the temporal Evils we have here sustained. This is what leads Me, as I proposed,

IV. To speak of the great Advantages of Afflictions to those who are exercised therein; and who bear them with a due Christian Patience, and Submission.

To pass through an uncertain miserable World well, has the greatest Encouragement, when it is known to be the Road to a certain and happy State; a State, in which we shall receive infinitely more Good than ever we have lost here; if we press towards it with a manly and Christian Greatness of Mind. And this Encouragement We cannot be without, if We truly believe That there are Treasures in Heaven, sufficient to make the Want of all the Gold of this World tolerable; Honours and Glories, sufficient to make the Disgraces of this State fit easy; and Happiness in such Perfection, as to make all the Miseries experienced here below, appear of little Moment, when compared with what is to come.

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under Afflictions.

How then should this Thought contribute to the enduring any temporal Evils and Calamities with a decent Patience, That, in the other State, if we make ourselves worthy of the Rewards of it, All will be exactly what we could wish; the Loss, or Want, of the good Things of this World made up to us a thousand Fold, by large Communications of unmixed Happiness; Sickness, and Pain, exchanged for Health, and Vigour, of Body and Mind; Infirmities of every Sort, far removed from Us: and this happy Condition made more happy by the Certainty and Stability of It; free from the uneasy Suspicion of any future Alteration, or any the least Decay in the Favour of God towards Us.

And, Is it not worth while to be Patient under the transient Evils of this World, which you must suffer whether you will, or no; and which are made much more intolerable for want of a reasonable Submission? Nay, to shew a proper Degree of Contentment under them, when this will certainly procure you a higher Place in the Love of God, and a greater Portion of the Rewards of Heaven, than you could hope for without them? It is indeed, for this Purpose, that God layeth his afflictive Hand upon Some; not to crush or oppress them;
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Sermon. into a stupid, unactive, and desponding Condition; but to give them an Opportunity of demonstrating their Faith in Him, and of practising those Precepts of Religion they have treasured up in their Minds.

And that this does not proceed from any Want of Love, and paternal Benevolence, towards Them, the Final Issue of these Corrections, when Patience shall have had its perfect Work, will openly prove: when the great Ends, proposed by Him, will appear to have been, That He might more effectually take their Thoughts off from this wretched World; and fix them more firmly upon another and better State, to which They are hastening apace: That They might do the more Service to true Religion, by their Examples, here; and deserve more of his Favour, and receive a brighter Crown of Glory, hereafter: That He might make their Virtue and their Faith to shine more bright before Men, in this State; and Themselves more illustrious Instances of his Love, before his Angels, in Heaven. And we may add to what I have said, That thus it has pleased the same God to deal with Some of the greatest Examples of Virtue, (always amiable in his Eyes,) which have appeared in the Heathen, Jewish, and Christian, World: and

even
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even with his own Son, in whom He declared Himself well pleased.

The mention of this Divine Person, who, when in our Form, was a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief; and who is both our Master, and our great Original to copy after, leads Me to think, I can conclude with Nothing better, than this short Exhortation. Let every one of us, with respect to the Evil Things of this Life, have His Example always in Our View. This will teach Us that, before any Affliction is actually come upon Us, We may becomingly say, with Him, Father, remove this Cup from me; but it will teach Us also to add, in his Words, Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou willest. And after the Time is come when we see it to be God's Will that we must suffer Affliction, in some Point or other; let us learn, from the same perfect Pattern, to endure it after such a Manner, as that, being made like unto Him, in Suffering, and in Patience, in this World, We may be made like unto him also, in the Glories of That which is to come.
The Christian Race.

SERMON XVIII.

I Corinthians ix. 24, 25.
Know ye not, that they which run in a Race, run all, but one receiveth the Prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every Man that striveth for the Majesty is temperate in all Things. Now They do it to obtain a corruptible Crown, but We an incorruptible.

These Words are an Allusion to Serm. xviii. those public Races, which were much in Use amongst the Heathens, in St. Paul's Days, and drew together a great Concoure of People from all Parts. And as it was His Custom to draw Arguments for Care, and Diligence, and Patience, in Christians, from what passed in the World about Him; so we find Him frequently referring to all the Other Sports, and Contests, then in Use: such as Fighting, Wrestling, and
Thus, speaking of the Christian Contest, he says, *We wrestle not*, Or, as it is in the Original, *Our wrestling is not*, against *Flesh and Blood*, but against *Principalities and Powers*, &c. Eph. vi. 12. And, immediately after the Text, speaking of Himself, he says, *So fight I, not as One that beateth the Air*; Or, more literally, *as One who is not beating the Air*, in a feigned Fight, merely to exercise his *Arms* and *Hands*: But, like One in earnest, *I keep under*, or rather, *beat my Body, and bring it into Subjection* as an *Adversary*: which he expresses by Words taken from the *Bruises* and *Marks* of those severe *Blows* given to *Adversaries* in the public *Fightings* of his Days; and the *Insults* over *Them* when conquered. And, in the triumphant Review of his own Conduct, he particularly makes use of the Expressions peculiar to these Games, and Contests, 2 Tim. iv. 7. *I have fought a good Fight; I have finished my Race*: A *Crown of Glory*, *is laid up for me*. So also, in other Places of his Writings.

In the Words of the Text, he entirely confines his *View* to the public *Races*, then much frequented: And they may be thus interpreted. "You know that they who pretend to run in the *Stadium*, or Place in which the public-*
public Races are performed, All indeed run for the Prize proposed; but that One only obtains it; He, that outdoes the rest, in Activity, and Swiftness. And the like may be said of the Christian Race. They who profess Christianity, or pretend to be aiming at the Rewards promised to Christians, All pretend likewise to run the Christian Course, or lead the Life of Christians. But it is one Sort only of These, who obtain the Prize proposed; only They, who come up to the Conditions required by their great Master and Judge. So run that ye may obtain; that is, Since there is but one Sort of Professed Christians, who can obtain the Crown of Life, contended for, it ought to be your Endeavour so to run the Christian Race, that you may be of that Number. But in order to this, You must consider That Every one who surviveth, in these Races amongst the Heathens, undergoes a great deal of Pains, and exercises the severest Instances of Command over his Appetites, in order to the preparing his Body, and going through the Fatigue of his Undertaking. Now They do all this to obtain a Garland of fading Leaves, and the Acclamations of Men perishing like themselves: How much more should We Christians willingly undergo the like Care and La
bour, who expect a far greater Reward; an incorruptible Crown of never-fading Glory,
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Ser M. and eternal Honour, in the Presence of xvi. God?"

Thus we see what the Apostle aims at, in this Allusion to the Preparation, Care, and Labour, of Those who strove in the Sports and Games of the Heathen. And from these Words, thus interpreted, I propose,

I. To consider the Nature of the Christian Race, represented to us in this Allusion; and what is necessary in order to Success in it: under which will appear the main Intention of the Apostle in this Passage. And,

II. To take occasion from hence to enlarge the Apostle's Argument, by adding an Instance or Two, of that Care, and Labour, and Pains, which the Men of the World, by their own Choice, undergo, for the obtaining as great a Portion as They can, of the good Things below; in order to stir up an Emulation and Zeal, in Christians, who profess to seek after nobler Enjoyments above, to equal, if not excell, Them, in all the like Care, and Labour, and Patience.

I. We are led to consider the Nature of the Christian Race, represented to us in this Allusion, and what is requisite to our Success in it: not
not excluding what St. Paul often alludes to, and argues, relating to the Other public Games and Contests for Glory, amongst the Men of his Age.

Let us see, then, what was thought requisite, at that Time, towards finishing those Races, to which the Apostle alludes, so successfully, as to obtain the Garland, or corruptible Crown, He here speaks of; and consider whether this will not lead us into some proper Thoughts about the Nature of the Christian Life; and what is requisite towards the obtaining the End proposed by all who are really Christians. Now,

1. In order to the striving and contending successfully, in these Races, or other Exercises, it was thought absolutely necessary for the Contenders to undergo a severe Preparation, by which they were made fit for the Fatigues of their Contests. And this is one Thing principally aimed at, by the Apostle in the Text, when He says, **Every one that striveth for the Majesty, or that pretends to run, and contend, for the Prize, is temperate in all Things**; performs every Instance of Self-denial, and Command of all his Appetites, necessary to fit him for the successful finishing of his main Undertaking. And from hence the Apostle
Apostle takes occasion to argue; Much more should You Christians go through the Discipline of a due Preparation; as the Prize You contend for, is infinitely more excellent: and then goes on, in the Words following the Text, to let the Corinthians know that He himself found great Necessity of subduing his Body, left his Bodily Appetites should hinder Him in that extraordinary Course, which He, as an Apostle, had to run. And, certainly, whatever any Christians may find necessary, in order to the having a perfect Command over those Bodily Passions, and Appetites, which are the great Enemies They have to strive against, ought to be strictly performed, if They would run their Christian Race with Success.

But This was not the only Preparation They were to undergo, who of old contended for Victory in the public Races and Games. There was another Preparation also necessary, without which they could not hope successfully to finish their Course: A Preparation, by which they were instructed in the Nature of their Courses; the Rules of their own Conduct; the Stratagems of their Antagonists; and animated with a Desire of the Glory of Conquerours. And as, without such a Preparation, it was vain for Them to enter upon their
their Work: so, likewise, it is vain for such Christians to enter the Lists against the Enemies of their Souls; and to undertake so laborious a Task as the Christian Life, which is surrounded by Adversaries on every Hand, and admits no Rest 'till They are come to the End of their Race; it is vain, I say, for Men to undertake this, without the like Preparation, of considering and knowing, what is necessary for their great Undertaking.

For instance, They must be inwardly convinced that Jesus Christ was sent by God, and revealed eternal Rewards and Punishments to Mankind: or else, They will be greatly in danger from every Temptation that allures them; and too apt to yield to the inviting Scenes of Pleasure, Profit, or Honour, always ready to be presented to their View. They must be forewarned of all the Dangers in their Way; all the Wiles and Stratagems of their Enemies, so often spoken of in Scripture, the World, the Flesh, and the Devil: otherwise, They may be apt to be surprized by the Images of Good, which may be unexpectedly placed in their View, to turn them aside from their Course. They must also be perfectly instructed in the Conditions required of them; and in all those Rules, that are necessary for the running their Christian Race aright: otherwise, They may
may mistake fatally, in Matters essential to their Success; and embrace Evil for Good, and Wrong for Right; and find themselves, at last, going backward rather than advancing forward. A Preparation of themselves in these and the like Particulars, by consulting and considering the Gospel itself, and not the Phantasies of Men, is what all Christians must undergo, before they can hope to finish their Course with Glory. But

2. In the performing of the Races of Old, to which St. Paul here alludes, there was a Course of Labour, and Care, and Diligence, continued without the least Interruption of Idleness, or impertinent Trifling. And This leads us to consider the Christian Race likewise, as a Business of constant Care, and Diligence, never to be interrupted, if we desire to arrive successfully to the End of it. And indeed, To imagine that Christianity can ever dispense with the greatest Degree of serious Attention and Care, is to contradict the Design of it, and to undervalue the Rewards it proposes. For the Christian is never quite secure on this Side Heaven; because He is never in a State free from dangerous Enemies. He is nearly joined to His own deceitful and flattering Appetites, which are, upon all Occasions, endeavouring to seduce Him; He lives in a World which, every
every Hour, furnishes him with new Scenes of Trial; and with Objects framed to terrify Him from Virtue, and to allure him to Vice. And has such a Person any Reason to think of remitting his Diligence, or loosening the Reins of Government over himself; when one fatal Mistake, or Slip, through an inadvertent Negligence only, may involve him in Circumstances, from which He may never be able to extricate himself? Let the Christian only remember That it is the Habit of Virtue which is the very Race He is obliged to run; and then consider that this Habit is the continual repeated Practice of every particular Duty, as often as Occasion offers; and he can have no doubt That the most constant and serious Care is requisite towards the keeping and preserving such an Habit, as well as towards the obtaining it.

The Importance, therefore, of the Matter; and the Dangers that encompass a Christian, through every Portion of his Time, make his Race also, like Those of Old, a continued Course of watchful Labour and Care: But not of Labour, and Care, without even present Pleasure and Satisfaction mixed with it. For it is not possible for us to conceive a greater inward Pleasure, than what the
The Christian Race.

Serm. the good Christian enjoys, in the Testimony his own Conscience gives to the Uprightness and Reasonableness of his Conduct; or a truer Satisfaction than He finds in the Thoughts of the Favour of his great Judge, and in the Prospect of the Rewards of Heaven.

3. In order to the right Performance of those Races, antiently so much in use, there was a Necessity of laying aside every Weight, or Burthen, in order to make the Body as active, and light, and unmolested, as possible. So, likewise, in order to the successful running of the Christian Race, every Burthen, or Impediment, which may make us the less fit for our Course, is to be laid aside, and thrown from us.

Thus St Paul, in the twelfth Chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, alluding to the same Games, says, Let us lay aside every Weight, in order to run with Patience the Race that is set before us: And this very properly, because the more free Men are from Weights, the more likely to perform their Race successfully. What the Apostle particularly meant by every Weight, He explains by adding immediately, and the Sin which does so easily beset Us: or rather, every Weight, even Sin which is always close to Us; and is certainly, the heaviest Weight, and strongest Impediment, to
to a Christian in his Race; And a Weight therefore, which He must of necessity lay aside, if He has one Thought, in earnest, of running, so as to obtain the Prize.

4. Our Lord himself, in speaking of the Christian Life, and what is necessary in order to it, goes still farther; and often mentions the removing out of the Way, every thing which may offend, or, which may be the Occasion of our Stumbling in our Christian Course; and so, of losing the Prize, by falling before We come to the End. And this, let it be of what Nature it will; never so necessary to our Comfort and Happiness in this World; never so dear, or useful to us; never so painful in the Removal of it; though it be our right Hand, or our right Eye, if we cannot keep it without sinning, We are to cut it off, or pull it out, and cast it from Us. Otherwise, we canot overcome in the Christian Contest.

How ridiculous a Thing would it have been for any Person, in the Races of Old, to have pretended so much as to enter upon his Course, without having first removed from himself all that might hinder him in it? And how much more unaccountable is it, in any Christian, to think of arriving, with Glory, at the End of his Race, or of being victorious in his spiritual Contests.
Serm. Contests, whilst he is resolved against parting with any thing grateful at present to his Senses; though never so prejudicial to his Virtue, and of never so fatal Consequence to his Pretensions.

And yet, This is what we see every Day amongst professed Christians, That Men can hope and expect to be saved by Jesus Christ; and seem to aim at that incorruptible Crown which He has promised; and yet are most unwilling to part with Those beloved Vices, which They themselves know to be inconsistent with all Hope of it: as if They were determined to arrive at Heaven, in their own Way, or not at all; and thought to take it by Storm, without thinking once in earnest, of the Conditions required of them. But These are Christians who little deserve that Name; nor seem at all to live under the Influence of such an Institution; who have undertaken the Race of Christians, and yet are disposed to multiply upon Themselves, more and more of those Hindrances which They find agreeable at present, rather than to part with Every, or Any, Weight that is likely to press Them down; or to remove out of their Way, Every, or Any, Stumbling-block, that may hinder the Success of their Course. Again,
It was thought necessary for the successful Performance of those Races and Contests of Old, that They who ran and strove in them should be inflamed and animated with the Prospect of Victory, and the Glory consequent upon it; that They should ever have the Crown of Leaves (fading as it was) before their Eyes, and the Shouts and Acclamations of the Spectators, (vain as They were) in their Ears. And from hence We Christians may be taught, That, in order to our successful running the Race that is set before us in the Gospel, and contending for another Kind of Victory, it is highly necessary that We should always have in our Thoughts the just Expectation of that incorruptible Crown of Glory hereafter, which is to be the Reward of our Victory here. This our blessed Lord himself judged worthy of his own Character. To whom St. Paul therefore, directs our View, in the Passage just now cited, looking unto Jesus, who, for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the Shame. This all the Apostles of our Lord thought highly requisite, in the extraordinary Course They had undertaken to run, and the Fight They had to fight; to consider the Rewards They were at last to inherit; and that all their Conflicts, in this
this World, were not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed. And they owned that this it was which kept Them firm and faithful to their great Master, in the difficult Office he had called them to. It may well, therefore, become Us, who stand in need of all Supports, and all moving Considerations, to enlarge our Prospect beyond this Scene of Things, and to take into our View the Glories of the Other, which is to open after this is broken to pieces; and thence to draw Arguments for resisting all the Temptations here below, which are but for a Moment; and for pressing forward, without any Intermis sion, towards the Mark of the Prize of our high calling. When We consider this incomprehensible Reward; according to our Faith, so will our Endeavours, and our Conduct be, in our Christian Race: And, if we truly believe that there is a Crown reserved for Those who bear up against all Opposition, in a constant Course of Righteousness, We shall think no Enemies here below insuperable.

There is another Consideration peculiar to the Christian Contest, and not belonging to those Others which we have been speaking of; and it is this. That, as the Christian who runs his Course with all Care, and Diligence, and
and good Conduct, is secure of a glorious Reward: so, the Christian who, through his own wilful Carelessness, and Neglect, fails and sinks in his Christian Course, not only loses that Reward which the Other obtains, but inherits unspeakable Punishment, proportionable to the wicked Folly of One, who professes to have the most glorious Reward in his Eye, and yet of his own Choice neglects to obtain it; and is shamefully contented to fall short of it. This is a Consideration which must work upon the meaner Souls, as the other attracts the more ingenuous and best disposed Minds.

6. I shall mention one Instance more of what was thought requisite to the glorious Performance of the Contests and Races, to which the Apostle in the Text alludes; and that is, a Perseverance to the End.

Many may be apt to think, that it was a glorious Thing to begin, and to proceed happily a good Way, after the best Manner: and so it was, considered as it tended to a happy Conclusion. But if the Contenders of Old stopt or failed, in the Middle, or even within view of the Bound to which they were to come; All was nothing, and They failed likewise, of their Glory, and of their Crown. And so it is in the Christian Life. It is a happy Thing to begin.
begin well; and happier still to make a considerable Progress in the Paths of the Gospel. But if the Christian does not persevere steadily to the End; if, when he comes within View of the Crown of Glory in the other World, he relapses into the Life of Infidels, and Sinners, He stains all his former Lustre with a base and ignominious Dye; He forfeits all his Title to the Heaven and Happiness of Christians; Nay, he renders himself much more inexcusable, than if he had never moved one Step in the Paths of Righteousness; by suffering Himself to be conquered by those very Enemies which he had before found he could subdue; and by falling voluntarily from a State of the most desirable Freedom, into an inglorious Slavery to Sin; and thus bringing Contempt and Shame upon the Religion of Christ itself.

Thus have I considered the Parallel between the public Contests and Races, so much celebrated and frequented in St. Paul's Time; and the Christian Race: and from hence have endeavoured to shew the Nature of the Latter; and what is necessary for the happy Success of it. I must just observe, as We pass, That the whole Intention of the Apostle may be plainly expressed thus, agreeably to what has been said. "If these Men, of whom
If you can, by Patience and Self-de-servinial, to conquer their Bodies, and their strongest Appetites; and enstate themselves in a perfect Command over themselves; and endure so much, and persevere so long, for the Sake of a contemptible Prize, a Garland of fading Leaves; Much more ought You to be willing to labour, and strive, and exercise the greatest Government over Yourselves, who aim at a much nobler Prize, an incorruptible Crown of eternal Glory." I come now,

II. To take occasion from hence to enlarge the Apostle's Argument, by adding an Instance or Two, of that solicitous Care, and incessant Labour, with which Men pursue after the Things of this Life; in order to shame Ourselves (if we have any Shame left,) into a greater Concern for the Rewards of another never-ending State.

1. Look on the Man that follows the Alarms of War, and see what He can undergo, for the distant View of future uncertain Honours, or Riches: to what Dangers He willingly exposes his Life; in what Fears, and Cares, and perpetual Tumult, his Breast is exercised; his Mind continually upon the Rack, ever projecting Evil to his Enemies, and guarding Himself against All their Designs; and filled with
SERM. with all the Uneasiness of various Passions; and his Body worn out by all the Extremities of Heat and Cold, and more Hardships than we can number. What would Men say, were all this required of Them, in order to obtain the Kingdom of Heaven? And how hard a Task-master would they represent Almighty God to be? And yet all this Men often willingly choose, for what brings along with it Nothing of lasting Good and Happiness; and cheerfully undergo it, for the Sake of those worldly Advantages, which they often do not obtain; and which, if obtained, are never truly satisfactory, and, at best, but of a very short Continuance. For such Rewards, Men are often seen to bear what one would think intolerable to human Nature: and yet These are but the Shadows of Good, which often betray Men into Excess and Misery, and can never afford a constant and lasting Satisfaction. On the contrary; the Rewards of Heaven, though of an infinite Duration, carry very weak Charms along with them; and few think it worth their while to labour, and contend, for them. If they will fall to their Lot, without the Pain of seeking after them; well and good: They are contented to be made happy, if it may be without
The Christian Race.

out any Expense of their own: But they have little Zeal or Heart to take much Pains for it. So absurdly do many professed Christians behave themselves, and so unequally, with respect to the corruptible Crown below, and the incorruptible Crown above. And,

2. Once more, Behold the Man that follows the Arts of Gain and Advantage, after a more sedate and less tumultuous Manner. The Man, I mean, that has proposed to himself, as his chief End, the Treasures of this World, by the more peaceful Methods.

What Care and Labour, in his more silent way, will he refuse to undergo, for the Sake of the wretched End He has in view; though He is uncertain of obtaining it, at least before he comes to be almost incapable of enjoying it? He will rise up early, and late take Rest, and eat the Bread of Carefulness, and run all Hazards, and watch all Opportunities, and catch at every handle, and use all Tricks, and think no Pains ill employed, that He may possess himself of what he can never be sure of keeping; and of what, he knows, he must certainly, in a very short Time, leave behind him.

And shall not the Thought of this kindle an Emulation in the Breasts of Those who seek after other Treasures, and other Riches;
The Christian Race

Serm. Treasures that cannot deceive those whose
Hearts are truly set upon them; and Riches from
which Nothing can ever separate the Man who
is once possessed of them. They are perfectly
satisfactory to a reasonable Creature; they
are of eternal Duration; out of the Reach of
all Accidents; guarded by Almighty Power;
and dispensed by infinite Goodness. And is not
the Motive of such Riches able to inspire us
with another Sort of Covetousness than is seen
here below? a Covetousness, not the Root of all
Evil, but the Principle of all Good; not a
glorious Thirst after true and everlasting Happi-
ness? How can we hope to answer for our
Want of Zeal and Industry, in this Pursuit, at
the last Day, when our own Zeal and Care,
about the Concerns of this Life, shall perhaps
witness against us; and the Labours and Toils
of Others, the Children of this World, shall
certainly serve to confound and abash us, for
our Inactivity and Negligence in a much nobler
and more glorious Cause.

This Argument is so reasonable that I
shall leave it to your own Determination: and
return to the Comparison used in the Text; and
so conclude.

We have a Race of Labour and Care, to run;
that is, a Life of strict Virtue to live. We have
a Prize in view, to contend for, inestimable, and worthy of all our Pains and Industry; that is, eternal Glory and Happiness. We have a Day set, in which we must finish this Course; the present Life; and, after this short Day, the Night of Death cometh, in which no Man can run. We have a Judge, infinitely knowing and righteous, to determine our Condition according to our Endeavours in this Race, viz. the great God, who is not to be imposed upon, and cannot be biased: and, after Judgment given, there is an Eternal State for us to live in, either of Reward or Punishment. And these are not light Matters; but such as deserve many of our Thoughts, and much of our Time. Let us behave ourselves like Men under the Influence of such momentous Truths; and then, We shall for run our Christian Race, that we shall obtain that incorruptible Crown, which is the Prize we are contending for.
The Best Christians, unprofitable Servants.

SERMON XIX.

So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those Things which are commanded you, say, We are Unprofitable Servants, We have done that which was our Duty to do.

There are two Extremes Men have run into, in the Matter of Good Works, and in their rating the Service They pay, and the Duty They perform, to Almighty God. On the one Side, Some have put such a Value upon the Good Works of Christians, as to make them meritorious of that Salvation, which is promised in the Gospel. And, on the other side, Some, who have thought this impious, and injurious to the Mercy of God, and the Merits of Jesus Christ, have departed as far from it as they could; and
and have brought down the Price of Good Works so low, and made them to bear so inconsiderable a Part, in the great Affair of Salvation, as almost inevitably to lead incautious Men of bad Inclinations to think them hardly worth the Care, or to deserve any of the Regard, of a Christian. The Church of Rome teaches the Merit of Good Works, in our Claim to the Rewards of Christians: And Others, in opposition to That, teach us, in effect, that Good Works signify so little to our Justification, that we are not so much as to bring Them into the Account; nay, That We must cast them from Us, when we would plead our Title to Heaven.

The Truth apparently lies betwixt these Two, and may be thus expressed; That, though our good Actions do, by no means, deserve the exceeding Happiness promised in the Gospel; and come greatly short of such a Reward, as is set before Us in That: yet, They are not so inconsiderable, or of so little account, but that our Title to the Heaven of the Gospel, cannot be pleaded without them; nor our Station in it be assigned Us, without the Consideration of them. The Merits of Christ, indeed, that is, His Obedience, and Life and Death here below, are said to purchase this Reward for us; and, if He had not humbled himself
himself for our Benefit, our Good Works could have given us no Expectation of such Rewards, as He proposes. He suffered, that
We might be exceedingly happy, upon the Terms of his Covenant with Mankind; and that Covenant is, That We should abound in Good Works, Or, in all the Instances of Virtue and Righteousness. Nay, whatever it be, that He has merited for Us; it is all sufficiently declared to be of no Importance to Us, but on Condition that we shew forth in our Lives such Good Works as He has commanded. And therefore, though We are said to arrive at Heaven for the Sake of Him, who came to restore Us to the Favor of God; yet, we must arrive at it, through such a Life of Good Works, as He himself has made indispensably necessary to the obtaining of it; and no otherwise, as far as He has revealed his Father's Will to Us.

Which of the Two Errors I have mentioned, is of the worst Account before God, may be judged of, by considering which of them leads to the most pernicious Consequences.

It is a foolish and groundless Boast, to say that all the best Works, of Any Man, collected together, can possibly merit, at the Hands of God, those eternal Rewards promised to Christians, which bear too great a Proportion to the poor Services of our whole
The Best Christians

whole Lives, to be comprehended by us. But then it is worse than foolish and groundless, to make so little Account of those Good Works which the Gospel insists upon, in every Page, as tends to render Men careless and unconcerned whether they perform any, or no. All that We can do is not worthy indeed, to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed: But, the very End of Christ's Appearance being to teach Men to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this World, and expressly so declared, To speak meanly of those Good Works, which are in such manner commanded, seems to oppose the declared Purpose of the Son of God's appearing in the Flesh; and may, unhappily lead Men into a State, first of Carelessness, and then, of Sin. For, as the Doctrine is sometimes explained, the Obligation to Virtue is almost imperceptible to common Capacities; and requires superior Faculties, and some Subtleties, to find it out: And if it does not directly encourage many to neglect what is declared to be of the utmost Importance, by the plain Words of the Gospel; yet, at best, it never can be thought to excite Men to the Good Works required in it.

Both
Both these Errors are carefully to be avoided: and, in order to our avoiding them, the Consideration of the Words I have now read to you will, I think, be of some Service. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those Things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable Servants, - we have done that which was our Duty to do. They are an Instruction given by our Lord to his Followers, immediately after a Parable he had spoken to them, about a common Servant amongst Men, who, though he did all that his Lord commanded him, and performed his Duty faithfully, yet could claim no extraordinary Favour from him; nor any thing more, than to be treated as a Servant still. Our Lord then adds, So likewise ye, who are my Disciples, when you have done your Duty to God; and performed the Service He has commanded; You cannot claim that Happiness, as a Reward in Justice due to your Services, which God will in Mercy give you; but ought to acknowledge yourselves Unprofitable Servants. You have, indeed, performed your Lord's Commands; and done what it was your Duty to do, even for your own sakes considered as Servants: And from This you may reap the Satisfaction of thinking, That you cannot have incurred the Displeasure of your Master, or deserved any Punishment; nay, That
That You have a strict Right to whatever Wages You contracted for, or whatever Advantages inseparably belong to your Offices: But You cannot claim, from hence, any extraordinary Favours, as due to such Servants; and cannot justly pretend to have merited that exceeding Glory which I am come to set before You.

If we apply these Words to all Christians, to whom They belong much more than to the Apostles of Christ, whose whole Lives were spent in the greatest Instances of Service and Obedience; We may draw some useful Lessons from Them. At present, I propose.

To observe, from them, That there is a Service and Obedience indispensably due from all Christians to Almighty God; or, That they are so obliged to do all that He has commanded in the Gospel; that they cannot hope for Heaven and Happiness without it.

II. To observe that, when we have sincerely practised all the Laws of Virtue and Righteousness, given to Us by God, We ought to acknowledge that we are unprofitable Servants; and that we cannot claim the Rewards of the Gospel, as due to us upon the Account of those Services,
unprofitable Servants.

Services, but must own ourselves unworthy of them. This will naturally lead Us,

III. To consider, on what Account, the Best of Christians may be justly styled Unprofitable Servants; and to have little Reason to over-value their best Services.

I. That there is a Service and Obedience indispensably due from all Christians to Almighty God; or, that all Christians, according to their Abilities and Opportunities, are so strictly obliged to do all that is commanded them in the Gospel, that They can have no Ground for any Expectation of the Rewards of Heaven, without it. This is plainly signified in the first Part of the Words read to You, so likewise Ye, when ye shall have done all those Things which are commanded you; in which there is strongly implied an indispensable Obligation to the Performance of all the Commands of the Gospel, in order to our future Happiness promised in it.

The Meaning of this, is not, That there are no Hopes of Salvation to a Man, if He shall ever fail in any Point of Evangelical Obedience; or that God will be so rigorous as never to forgive any Neglects, or Transgressions, of the most sincere, and honest, of his Servants: But that there is such an Obligation upon
Serm. upon Christians, That, if they willfully and habitually neglect the Duties of the Gospel, and allow themselves in any known Sin; that, if they do, even under Pretense of magnifying the Mercy of God, continue in Sin; nay, That, if they do not, in a regular and settled Course, follow after Righteousness; They cannot hope to secure themselves an Interest in the Favour of God, or the Rewards of another Life.

They are all the Creatures of an Almighty Creator, and the highest Obligation to do his Will results from that first, and close Relation. They are all the Subjects of a most powerful and merciful King; and therefore, obliged to obey, both out of Love, and out of a just Fear. They are all tied to his Interest by the most endearing Instances of Mercy and Kindness; and therefore, are bound in Gratitude to return him all the Duty He can expect from them. They owe all They have, and all They can hope for, to Him, and his Favor; and therefore, They cannot pay him back too much Regard and Obedience. They are all to be considered, as under his Authority, and He, as their great Lord and Master: and from hence results all possible Service to such a Master. By these, and many more, Ties are They most strictly obliged to love, honour, and serve
serve, Almighty God; whether He had called SERM. or not. But He has thought fit to speak unto them by his Son. And by this his beloved Son, and his Apostles, it has been declared, constantly, in a multitude of the strongest Expressions often repeated, That without our Practice of all Virtue, and Obedience to all his holy Commandments, here below, We shall never arrive at the Place of Reward, and Glory, above. This is, indeed, so plainly the uniform Voice of the New Testament, that it alone may justly be thought a sufficient proof that the Unprofitableness of our Services, affirmed in the Text, cannot be intended to sink the Value of Moral Good Works, so as to make them appear of little Importance in the Affair of Christian Salvation. This therefore, being certain, in the Dispensation of the Gospel, That a sincere Obedience to all God’s Commands, is absolutely necessary to our Salvation; I shall now proceed to what I next proposed from the Words of the Text, viz.

II. That the Best Christians, when They have done all that is commanded them, or, their whole Duty, in the Service of God; and have sincerely practised all Virtue and Righteous-
ness; ought, after this happy Conduct, to confess Themselves to be Unprofitable Servants; and to acknowledge that They cannot claim such Rewards, as the Gospel proposes, as of Right due to their utmost Endeavours. So ye, when ye have done all that is commanded you, say, We are unprofitable Servants.

In which Words We must not imagine that our Lord declares, or insinuates, that the best Christians, and such as have exercised themselves in all the Good Works of his Holy Religion, ought to acknowledge Themselves to have done Nothing in what is called the Service of God, or for the Good of Mankind; or of any Significancy to their own Salvation; or That any thing like this is the Meaning of the Words unprofitable Servants. Far be such Thoughts from Us, concerning Him, who, in this very Parable, represents Himself, or his Father, as speaking to Every Christian of this Sort, Well done, good and faithful Servant; enter into the Joy of thy Lord. And from this Passage it may justly be inferred, That a Man may be a good and faithful Servant, in the Sense of the Gospel; and yet be an unprofitable One, as the Word is intended in the Text. For the Name, unprofitable Servant, here used, is so far from being opposed to One who has faithfully performed all
due Obedience and Service to his Master, that it is actually given to Those who are supposed to have done all those Things which are commanded them.

Nor can the Unprofitable Servant, in the Text, be the same with the Unprofitable Servant, Matth. xxv. 30. For the Unprofitable Servant, in the Text, is expressly described as One who has served God sincerely, and actually done what it was his Duty to do; and the Unprofitable Servant, in the other Place, is as expressly declared to have, knowingly and willfully, neglected his Duty; and called, by his Lord, a wicked and slothful Servant; and by his Appointment, ordered to be cast into outer Darkness, where there is weeping, and gnashing of Teeth. But the Meaning of the Words of the Text must be, that, as that Servant, of whom Our Lord had been speaking, in a Parable before, though he had been serving his Lord well in the Field, either plowing, or feeding his Cattle, could not at his Return home, claim, as his Right, any extraordinary Favor from his Master; could not, for instance, demand, or expect, to be invited by his Master to sit down to Supper before He himself had supped; as it is expressed in the Parable; or to be treated otherwise than as a Servant who had done
done what it was his Business to do: So, the 
best Christians, Those who have served God 
most faithfully, in all the Duties of their seve-
ral Stations, cannot claim, as their just Due, 
the extraordinary and unconceivable Joys and 
Happiness of Heaven; but must acknowledge 
that They are *unprofitable Servants*; and that the 
*Duty* They have performed bears no Proportion to Those incomprehensible Rewards They 
are to enjoy. I come now, as I propos-
ed,

III. To consider on what Accounts the *best of Christians* may be justly said to be *unpro-
table Servants*; And to have little Reason to 
overvalue their *Services*.

1. They may be said to be *unprofitable Ser-
vants*, because they cannot, with all their Ser-
vices and all their Labours, make any the least 
Addition to the well-being, or Happiness, of 
Almighty God, their great *Master*. And, in 
*this*, the *Servants* of *God*, and the *Servants* of 
*Men*, differ; that the *Servants* of *Men* can, by 
their Diligence and their honest *Service*, con-
tribute greatly to the Increase of their *Masters' 
Riches* or Honour; and, in some Instances, 
very much promote their Happiness in this 
*World*. But the *Servants* of *God* can only, 
by their *Service*, do *Themselves* good, and
increase their own true Happiness. And the Reason is, That the richest and most powerful of Mankind are frail and imperfect Beings; liable to many unfortunate Accidents; standing in need of many Supports; and owing much of their Greatness to the meaner Sort who are under them: But Almighty God, being most perfect in himself, and enjoying all possible Happiness, is therefore, utterly incapable of the least Addition or Increase of Glory, or Pleasure. What therefore, can our Services demand of Him, to whom they add not one Grain of Greatness, or Happiness?

Every Master amongst Men would account him but an unprofitable Servant, who, with all his Pains and Care, could not possibly do anything for his Advantage, or for his Satisfaction; and hardly think himself obliged to reward him, in an extraordinary Manner, for a Service, out of which He could reap no real Benefit. And that Servant himself would hardly have the Face to expect or demand the least Favour from his Lord, on that Account. Thus it is with Us, considered as Servants to the great God. We are truly unprofitable Servants, to Him; utterly incapable of doing any thing that can increase or improve his Happy Estate.
It is true indeed, That, as we are his Creatures, brought into Being by his Almighty Decree; and willing and desirous to fulfil his Will; We may claim the Protection of his Providence, and his paternal Regard to Us, as long as He continues us in being; and cannot but enjoy the Reward of an inward Satisfaction of Mind arising from this Consideration. And again, the great God, whose Creatures We are, may condescend, as He does in the Christian Revelation of his Will to the World, to call our best Endeavours by the Name of Services to Himself; and speak of them as promoting his Glory, and increasing his Honour; and by promising Us more than We can deserve, may oblige himself to Performance so, as to give Us a Right afterwards to expect and demand it, if We have not failed on our own Part. But, since it is most evident That we cannot, by all our Services, add the least Increase to infinite Perfection; it cannot but become Us to own, and say, We are unprofitable Servants; We have, indeed, endeavoured to do what it was our Duty to do, which is a Comfort to Ourselves, but we have contributed Nothing to our great Master.

2. The Best of Christians may be said to be Unprofitable Servants, if we consider the many Failings,
unprofitable Servants.

Failings, and Faults, they are liable to, in that service which They really intend to perform; and the Mixture of many Imperfections in their very best Actions.

The sincerest Christians in the World, though They do what God will, at the last day, accept, for the Sake of Christ; yet, They cannot be said, in the Strictness of Justice, always to do whatsoever They can, in what They call God's Service. They have their Intervals of Coldness and Indifference, or of Carelessness, when it may be said that the Spirit is willing, but the Flesh is weak. And they have, in Every State of Life, strong Temptations, to strive against, which they do not always entirely overcome. They sometimes yield; or, if they do not, yet they often overcloud the Victory with the Attendance of some Imperfection, or other: and frequently experience in Themselves, what They cannot excuse even to the Judge within their own Breasts. And if so imperfect Servants, who are sometimes diverted from their Duty; and cannot command Themselves, upon every Occasion, to attend to their Duty: If such Servants as these should claim the unspeakable Rewards of Christians, as due, in Justice, to their imperfect and interrupted Endeavors.
Serm. xix. They would justly incur the Imputation of Arrogance.

And besides that the Best of Men are guilty of Failings, and Negligences, in the several Branches of their Duty, They do also, sometimes, mix so much of human Imprudence, and of the Imperfections of their Nature, with their best Actions, that They spoil the good they intend; and frustrate the very End they propose to Themselves, by their own Weakness and Inadvertency: so that, if one were to examine into the Events of such Matters, it is a Question, concerning some very well-designing Christians, whether their Zeal and Devotion, intended for God's Service, has more conduced to the promoting the great Ends of Religion, and the Glory of God, in the World, than their Imperfections and Imprudences, (the Characters of which they have stamped upon their best Undertakings) have contributed to the Prejudices of other Men, and the Hurt of Religion itself. And, though we have to do with a merciful God, who will not rigorously punish these Mixtures of Imprudence which are to be found in the Conduct of good Men; yet, when He grants the exceeding Rewards of Heaven, and the unexpresse Glories of a future State to such Servants; this must be accounted
unprofitable Servants.

accounted a Favor, and not a Debt; promised to Them by the unmerited Goodness of a merciful God; and given to Them, as Due on Account of that Promise, and not for any thing done by Them previously to it. Certainly, were They themselves, who are encompassed with such Imperfections, and give daily proofs of such Imprudences, made Judges in their own Case, and set to determine what Name They themselves deserve; whether the Name of Meritorious, or of Unprofitable, Servants; They would, with all Humility, acknowledge that the Latter Title was their due; and That, though They had, in the main, truly intended the Service and Honour of God, in the Course of their Actions, yet They had not always prosecuted their Design, or done their Duty, after such a Manner as to deserve any better Word, or Character.

3. The Best Christians may, in no very improper Sense, be called Unprofitable Servants, considered in Themselves, and their own Merits; and justly be said to have little Reason to boast of any thing They can do; because They have received their whole Capacity, even of doing any Duty at all, from that Master himself, whom They serve.

If We carry our Thoughts back, and consider our Creation only, We may truly say that
that Almighty God endowed us, at our first coming into Being, with all the Powers and Faculties we have; and gave us even the Possibility of serving Him: and if we have any Strength, by our original Frame, to do any good Actions, This very Power is the Gift of our Creator and Master. And, if We go farther, in our Thoughts, as Christians, We shall find That God, after having given Us these Capacities of Good, did not stop here, but, in Mercy to Us, sent his Son into the World, to make us fresh Offers of his Favor, and to promulgate the strongest Motives and Arguments for the Performance of our Duty, which is his own Service; and that, in order to this, his Holy Spirit is represented, in the Gospel, as procured by Christ; and given to the Prayers of those Christians, who duly and heartily ask it.

If therefore, God communicated to us, at first, all the Powers and Faculties of Moral Agency, which We enjoy; and if the same God affords us all the Assistance in our Service to Him, which is proper and necessary for Us; with what Right can We set such an immoderate Value upon our Services to Him, as cannot possibly be justified, unless We could evidently demonstrate that our Good Works are altogether Our own, in this Sense,
unprofitable Servants.

Sense, that We Ourselves were the Original Framers of All the Capacities We are endowed with; and the Givers of all the Powers We find in our Constitution; which is the highest Absurdity: and that God our great Creator, and Christ our mercifull Redeemer, have no part in Them; which is the greatest Impiety.

We find St. Paul, who, in that Foolishness of Boasting which He excuses from the Provocation of his Enemies, declares that He had laboured more abundantly than All the Other Apostles, ending his triumphant Speeches with Acknowledgments of what was due to the Assistance of God; and laying the Glory of his Labors at the Feet of his great Master. And, in Imitation of such an Example, the Best of Christians, who have been the most exemplary in all Virtue and Goodness, and the most abounding in all the Fruits of the Spirit, have been always found the most ready to refer the Glory and Praise of their well-spent Life to that Lord, who taught and led them; and to attribute the Success of their Labors to a kind Providence, and to a Conductor superior to Themselves. Considering therefore, under whose Discipline, and Direction, Christians act, in the Service of their Master; and to whom They owe the very Capacity and
They have too just Reason to speak of Themselves as Unprofitable Servants; and as utterly void of any Claim to extraordinary Favours from God, for having performed that Duty, which He himself gave them the Power of performing.

I have now done what I proposed from the Words of the Text; and have shewn, I hope, That there is an indispensible Obligation upon all Christians to perform all that is commanded them in the Gospel; and that, when They have done all that is commanded them, They ought to confess and say, We are Unprofitable Servants: And lastly, That on several Accounts They may truly be said to be Unprofitable Servants.

I will now add an Observation or Two, not foreign to what I have been saying; and so conclude.

1. The Subject We have been treating, may naturally lead Us to a Question which has been sometimes asked by Those, who, I fear, are much more willing to know what is not their strict Duty, than to practise what they know to be so: And that is, Whether any Christian can do more than He is commanded, or, than it is his strict Duty, to do? To
To this, I think, it may be answered, that no Christian can possibly do more, in the great Points of Moral Duty, rightly understood, which are the Good Works required in the Gospel, than He is strictly obliged to do; because These Points are always indispensably necessary, and the Obligation to Duties never released or abated: But that, in other Points, and these not displeasing to God, which may be said to belong to his Religious Service, as Circumstances of it, a Christian may do more than what is strictly enjoined, as absolutely necessary to his Salvation.

This may be the better understood from what St. Paul says of Himself; viz. That He chose to preach the Gospel to the Corinthians without any Charge to Them, in order to have a greater Influence, in the Exercise of his Office, amongst Them; and that this was more than He was strictly obliged to do. For it is plain that He (as well as all others) was obliged to do whatever He apprehended to be most for the Honour of God, and the Interest of his Gospel: And yet it is also as plain, from his own Words, That, had He taken a Maintenance of Them, He could have justified Himself before God; and had ground for boasting, that He did not. He expressly distinguishes
the Gospel; and the Circumstance of preaching it without Charge to Them.

---"Wo to Me, if I preach not the Gospel. This is my indispensable Duty. But whether I shall take a Maintenance for doing this, or not; This is left free to Me: and I have chosen not to do it: This is the Ground of my Boasting."

1 Cor. ix. 6, 19.

I might mention also what is written of the first Believers, that Those amongst them, who had Possessions, sold them, and laid the Price at the Feet of the Apostles, to be distributed, in common, to All who wanted. It is evident, of These Persons, that They were strictly obliged to the Duty of Charity to their Brethren in want: and yet, it is also plain that This particular Behaviour of Those who voluntarily and honestly performed this Service, in so extraordinary a Manner, was more than was commanded Them by their great Master. Nay, it is declared, by St. Peter, Acts v. 4. that it was not their strict Duty, but a Matter left to their own Choice. From whence it appears, that, in this, They did more than it was their strict Duty to do.

2. From what has been said may appear the absurd Vanity, to say no worse, of the Roman Doctrine of the Merits of the Best Works
unprofitable Servants. Works of any Christians. Nay, the Words themselves of the Text, without any Comment, are sufficient to shew it. For, in them We are supposed to have actually done all that is commanded Us, and, in another Expression, All that it is our Duty to do; which is the most favorable Supposition possible concerning the Best of Men: and, after all this, with such a Treasure of Good Works accompanying Us, We are taught and directed to say to our Judge, with our own Mouths, "We are unprofitable Servants." And how our utmost Services, imperfect and unprofitable as They are, can merit the immense Happiness offered Us, in the Gospel, it is impossible for the Wit of Man to prove.

3. From what has been said, We may farther learn, not only the Vanity, but the Wickedness, of another worse Doctrine of the same Church, which, (for fear, one would think, that Men should not be careless enough in the great Affair of their own Salvation,) encourages Them in all Negligence, by pretending to transfer the Superfluous Merits of Saints (so called) to the Account of the greatest Sinners; that is, to give, or perhaps sell, the Kingdom of Heaven itself to the Worst of Men, void of all Good Works of their own, for the Benefit of procuring Them a Quantity of such Good Works as
The Best Christians

ser. m. as can be spared from the Stock of Others, according to this Invention.

You will, I hope, recollect, That the Instances I mentioned, from Scripture, of Good Men who have done more than their strict Duty, related to the Circumstances only of some Religious Duties; and not at all to what was essential to the Duties themselves; or to any Branches of Christian Morality: and observe from thence, That no Man, amongst the most Perfect, was ever thought to have too many of such Good Works; or, for Instance, was ever said to be more Charitable, more Temperate, more Pure, more Peaceable, or more Humble, than the Dictates of Reason, and the Commands of God, rightly understood, made it his Duty to be. No Works of Supererogation, therefore, are to be found in these, or any of the Moral Virtues. And these being the only Good Works, of any Account, at the Great Day; No Christian, who is destitute of them, Himself, can possibly be supplied by Others; because, of these truly and necessary Good Works, the Best Man in the World, has none to spare; but rather justly fears he has not enough for Himself; and for the Security of his own eternal Interest. And as to any Mistakes of Ignorance, or Enthusiasm; such as the Romantic Excesses of Some, in the Rigors
unprofitable Servants.

Rigors of Abstinence, or the Severities of Penance, and the like; They may, by a good God, be pardoned to well-meaning Men; but can never be acceptable or pleasing to Him. Consequently, such as these, though, in truth, Works of Supererogation, yet cannot be thought, by any Man in his Senses, to be the Good Works of the Gospel. They may indeed be granted, or sold, to Those upon whom the Managers of such Merchandize can impose. But it is impossible They should do any real Service to Those deluded Men who depend upon Them, because They are not the Good Works required of Christians, as necessary to Salvation.

4. Lastly, if, from what has been said, We are truly convinced of the Necessity of Good Works, as the indispensable Condition of our future Happiness; though not of their Merit, as the adequate Foundation of our Claim to it; Let this induce us not to be so incensed against the Doctrine of the Merit of Good Works, as to avoid Them, for fear of being tainted by it; and not to dwell so much upon the Merits of Christ, as to forget the Conditions which he absolutely requires at our Hands. For it may, I think, justly, be said, That we had much better believe the Merit of Good Works, than have None at all to produce for
SERM. for Ourselves at the last Day: And that it will be found a more pardonable Error, at that Time, not to have considered so much as We ought, the *Merits* of *Christ*, than to have neglected that *Obedience* to all his Commands, which He so strictly requires of us, in his *Gospel*.

May We all be sensible, both of what we owe to *God*, and to his Son *Jesus Christ*: and also of the great *Work* We ourselves have to do; that so We may do it, and be blessed in our Deed!
The Nature of Christ's Blessing.

SERMON XX.


God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning every one of you from his Iniquities.

The Doctrine plainly delivered by St. Peter, in these Words, is this, That the Blessing, with which Jesus Christ was sent by his Father to bless the World, consists in turning Men from their Iniquities. This I design to make the Subject of my following Discourse. And, in order to give all the Light and Evidence I am able to this great and important Truth, I shall consider it under these following Propositions; which will, I hope, form a strong Argument in Support of it.

I. That
I. That the promised Messiah was to be the greatest Instance possible of the Love of God to the World; and the Design of his coming, to bless Mankind with the most perfect Blessing which God could bestow on Man, or Man receive from God.

II. That the greatest Blessing Men are capable of, consists, either, in never transgressing the Laws of Virtue; or, if they have unhappily transgressed, in their being turned from their Iniquities, to the Practice of all Virtue again.

III. That therefore, if Jesus be the Messiah, as we believe Him to be, upon the strongest Grounds; the great Design of his coming must be, to turn the World from their Iniquities; to restore Reason and Religion to their rightful Authority over Mankind; and to make all Virtue, and true Goodness, flourish in the Earth.

I. That the promised Messiah was to be the greatest Instance of the Love of God to the World; and the Design of his coming, to bless Mankind with the most perfect Blessing, which God could bestow on Man, or Man receive from God.
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This is so universally acknowledged by all, that it is already come, or have any Expectation of the Appearance of such a Person; that it may justly be taken for granted, without any Injury to the present Argument.

The Descriptions of this great Person, from the Beginning of the World to the Appearance of Our Blessed Lord, were so framed, as first, to raise, and then, to strengthen, this Notion in the Minds of Men. The Marks and Characters, by which He is described through the Books of the Old Testament; the Names, and Titles, and Attributes, bestowed upon Him by the Mouths of the antient Prophets; the Accounts given, in the same sacred Writings, of that grand Revolution which was to attend upon his Appearance in the World: All these conspire to lead Them who receive those Books, to look on the promised Messiah, as the most consummate Blessing God could bestow, or Man receive: and this, whether They believe Jesus to be that Messiah, or not.

Accordingly, the Unbelieving Jews themselves constantly maintained, and never could forswear, this certain and undoubted Principle, though they drew a false and fatal Conclusion from
from it; and so argued themselves into Infidelity and Ruine. This they were sure of, that, whatever it was, in which the chief Happiness of Man consisted, That they might, and ought to, expect from their Messiah. But then, the great Evil was, that the whole Body of That which alone They esteemed their Religion, was of so low and earthly a Nature; their Notions of higher Matters so totally corrupted; and their Minds and Morals so universally debauched; That, at the Time when our blessed Lord lived, They did not, or would not, know any greater Happiness than what arises from Riches, Honours, Pomp, and Luxury; Revenge upon their temporal Enemies, and Triumphs over the Adversaries of their worldly Greatness. And the Consequence was this, That, since our blessed Lord appeared in a low and mean Condition, and was so far from flattering their Pride, or Revenge, or Sensuality, that all he did, and said, manifestly opposed and condemned their most beloved Notions; They resolved to reject him, and shut their Eyes against all the Evidence he brought along with Him. One of the Principles They went upon, could not be denied, viz. That the Design of God, in sending the Messiah to his chosen People, was to bless Them with the greatest Blessing They were
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were capable of; which was the first Things I proposed. But the Other is most certainly xx. false, viz. That the chief Happiness of Man consists in the Gratification of his Appetites, his Pride, or his Revenge: As will, I hope, be very evident from the second Proposition I laid down, which was This,

II. That the greatest Blessing of which Men are capable, consists, either, in never transgressing the Laws of Virtue; or, if they have unhappily transgressed Them, in their being turned from their Iniquities, to the Practice of Virtue again.

For the making ourselves sensible of this, We are to consider,

1. That Man, as a reasonable Creature, has a Principle in him, interwoven with his very Nature, which is plainly designed to direct and advise his Practice before Action; and to judge Him after it; which calls him back, when he is going astray; and reproves and reproaches Him when He has acted unreasonably. And this is what we call Reason; or, which is the same Thing, Conscience.

2. The next Step is, That the proper Happiness of such a Being as Man must consist in acting agreeably to this Reason, or Conscience. This follows from the Former. For
if the Author of his Nature has made him so, that He finds within his own Breast a constant Monitor and Director, pointing out to Him his Duty; then certainly, this Duty must be his Happiness; and the acting contrary to it, his Misery. The same Reason which tells him the first, has Power enough to make him very sensible of the Last. For, as it is a Guide and Director before, so it is a severe Judge after Action: Reflection, upon what a Man has done being the inseparable Companion of his Reason.

What I would say, is almost self-evident. A reasonable Being, not acting reasonably, must be miserable at present, before his Reason be quite laid asleep; because it is his professed Enemy, and a very powerful one: and He must be miserable afterwards, because his Reason can never dye, and whenever it wakes (as it most certainly will) must be a very uneasy Companion to Him. The Happiness of Men, therefore, or of understanding Beings capable of moral Agency, must necessarily depend upon their acting according to the Rules of Reason: and the lasting Satisfaction of Creatures, endowed with Reflection and Conscience, must consist in the behaving themselves so, that Reflection and Conscience may not be armed against them. It is not Riches, or Honours, or any thing without, that can give a lasting Eafe
Ease of Mind, which is Happiness, to such Beings; but That must always be founded upon something within their own Breasts. If they have not their own Reason, their Bosom-Friend, they cannot be happy; and this They cannot have, without acting reasonably: And if They have their own Reason, which is always present with them, their internal Enemy, They must be miserable; and this They cannot but have, if they act unreasonably. I proceed to observe,

3. That what the Gospel calls Sin, and Iniquity, is, in every particular Instance of it, the Transgression of the Laws of Reason; and that what is there called Righteousness and Holiness, is always, truly speaking, reasonable, and becoming. For, if that Reason, which distinguishes us from Beasts, assures of any one thing, it assures us of this; That the Imitation of God, who is the most perfect understanding Nature, in all his moral Perfections, is what we ought to study. And this is what our Blessed Lord came to teach Men; to become the Children of God, by being (according to their Capacity) perfect as he is perfect, and holy as he is holy, and merciful as he is merciful; and in their whole moral Behaviour, as like to Him as possible.
What I mean is, that every Particular of those Moral Duties which our Saviour and his Apostles lay so great a Stress upon, has the Voice of Reason on its side; and this, not now and then, but constantly. There never was, nor ever can be, a Time supposed, when uncorrupted Reason does not determine that Justice, Piety, Temperance, Chastity, Humility, Beneficence, Placability, and the like, are what we ought to study and practice; and that Injustice, Oppression, Intemperance, Impurity, Pride, Unmercifulness, Revenge, and the like, are what we ought to abhor, and fly from. And, what very much confirms the Truth of this, He who most attends to, cultivates, and improves, his Reason, is always most strongly persuaded of this: and None are found to be of the contrary Opinion, but Such as had first sacrificed their Reason to their Appetites; Such as make their own Lusts and worldly Affections the Measure of their Actions, and ask their Passions what is reasonable. And thus, if we consult our own Breasts, we shall find the Matter to be, That this inward Companion never fails to applaud us every Step we take in the Paths of Virtue: and, on the other hand, 'till we have made ourselves insensible, never fails, not only to warn and recall us, when we are going into the
Gospel calls Sin and Iniquity the Tree of Condemnation, or vice versa, and since Sin and Iniquity, and must be miserable under the condemnation, cannot be Happy without the receipt and judgment of acquits or condemns Him; Creature endowed with Reason, which di- 

and the Emotions of a wicked world, which, to a due sense of what Prejudice, Education, Man, the more effectually to awaken them World, to call upon Man in an extraordinary manner, it is a much divine Part of the De- 

clean it, as a much divine Part of the De-
the Body not expected; We ought always to with regard to the whole Body of Mankind, from this Book of Reason duly studied; yet, 

Duty and their Happiness, completely well, considering Persons might have learn their 

And, even Supposing it instantly possible that 

Act of Importance can give an understanding the Unctions the Reflection upon the grea-

Sleased the Laws of Virtue, to give us all the Parts of Vice, but after we have train-
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Sermon.gression of the Laws of Reason, and stands condemned, and Righteousness approved, in our own Breasts; it follows that Iniquity must lay the Foundation of Misery in Man, because it arms his Reason against him; and that the Practice of Virtue must be his only proper, or true, Satisfaction, because it is what his own Mind, that is, He himself, never fails to recommend and applaud. I come now to the Conclusion of the Argument, which is the Last of the Propositions I laid down at the Beginning of this Discourse: viz.

III. That, therefore, if Jesus be the Messiah, as We justly believe, the great Design of his coming must be to turn Us from our Iniquities; to restore Reason and Religion to their rightful Authority over Mankind; and to make all Virtue and true Goodness flourish in the Earth.

For, supposing the Nature of Man to be such as is before described; and his Reason, or Conscience, to be the Judge of his Happiness; and supposing Him to be working out Misery for Himself, by transgressing the plain and express Laws of his Reason, (which is too true;) This is the greatest Happiness he is capable of; absolutely necessary to his inward Peace; and the only proper Method of Salvation.
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Salvation to be wished for by such a Being.

If there be any Force in all that has been said, To turn him from his Iniquity, is to turn him from his Misery; To save him from his Sins, is, to save him from his greatest Enemy; To direct him to the Paths of Virtue, is to put him into a certain Method of being at Peace with his own Mind, which is Himself: And to lay the Foundation of his Happiness upon this Rock, is to deal with Man, as Man; as a reasonable and thinking Creature, who lives a few Hours in a World where everything is uncertain but what he possesses within himself; and is hastening to Another never-ending State, in which the good Temper of his own Soul must be the Measure of all the Happiness He can hope for.

We may, then, very safely conclude, That no Design but This could have been so much for the Happiness of Man; or so certain a Demonstration of the Love of God to Him; or so worthy of the great Undertaking of the Messiah, and of the Character he was to bear, of being the greatest Blessing God could bestow, or Man receive.

Nay, if We may have leave to make a Supposition so unbecoming, and yet so agreeable to Jewish Prejudices; If our Lord had

E e 3 come,
come, on any other Errand; and appeared with all that Pomp of Majesty the Jews expected: If He had confirmed Them, in all temporal Prosperity; led captive Nations in Triumph through their Streets; and made Them drunk with the Blood of their Enemies: If such as these, I say, had been his Designs; the Jews of that Age (if they had argued aright) might have found strong and reasonable Prejudices against Him; and rejected him without that Guilt which They then brought themselves under. For, truly speaking, what a poor Attempt would This have been, and how small an Advance to their true Happiness? What a mighty Blessing would it have been to such a Creature a Man, to be put in Possession of all the Earthly Honour and Grandeur imaginable, to have lived a few Days in Pomp and State, and then gone off the Stage, not only with the more Unwillingness, but with a Mind quite unprepared for the Good things of Another State, in which no such vain Appearances can have any Place? Or, to have been encompassed with all the Riches the greatest Luxury could desire, in a World from which He himself was soon to be separated? Or, what great Satisfaction could it be, to Him, to see all his Temporal Enemies conquered; if He himself
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is subdued by worse Enemies; and is that miserable Slave, who is every Day doing those things which He cannot but condemn himself for doing; and which arm his own Conscience against Him?

Thus far, then, we have proceeded; and the Argument stands thus. The Messiah was to be the Author of the Greatest Blessing Men are capable of. The Greatest Blessing human Nature is capable of, consists in the Practice of all that is good and virtuous. Therefore the great Design of the coming of Jesus Christ, into the World, must be to turn every one of Us from our Iniquities, as St. Peter in the Text affirms.

I shall now make some Observations, and draw some Inferences, which seem naturally to offer themselves from what has already been said.

1. The first is, That our Blessed Lord himself, and his immediate Followers, give an Account of the Nature of his Blessing, exactly agreeable to what has been already argued, from the Frame of Man, and the Voice of Reason.

As for Himself; He professed himself indeed, a King, by professing himself the Messiah. But then, He took all Occasions to avoid
avoid whatever might look as if He thought of erecting an *Earthly Kingdom*; and very severely to rebuke his *Disciples* for their gross Notions of the *Nature* of his *Design*; and to assure them, before hand, that, instead of earthly Glory and Grandeur, He himself was to meet with Scorn, and Contempt, and Reproaches, and Death; and that *They* must not think to escape better than their *Master*. Agreeably to this, when he was accused before *Pilate*, He acknowledged, indeed, that He was that very *King* the *Jews* were taught to expect; but at the same time, He solemnly professed that *His Kingdom was not of this World*; (John xviii. 36.) And his whole *Life*, and *Doctrine*, spake the same thing.

And his *Apostles*, who were to preach the *Gospel* of *His Kingdom* to all Nations; how carnal soever in their *Apprehensions* of things *They* were, at first; as soon as He had opened their Eyes, and taught them the Truth, and poured forth his *Spirit* upon *Them*, we find *Them* so far from expecting worldly Pomp and Glory, as *his Disciples*, that *They* looked for nothing but *Persecution*, *Bonds*, *Imprisonment*, and even *Death* itself. And their *Notions* of their *Master's Kingdom* were so altered, that their constant *Declarations*, after his *Resurrection*, were, That the
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great Design of the appearing of the Son of God was, to destroy the Works of the Devil, the great Adversary to all Virtue; That the great End of the Life, and Death, and Resurrection, of Christ, was to teach all Men to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World, as an absolutely necessary Condition of their future Happiness. These, and the like Declarations, scattered through every Page of the New Testament, evidently shew, that neither our Lord, nor his Apostles, knew of any greater Blessing He was to bestow upon Men, than the turning them from their Iniquities; and that This was really the Blessing, with which He was sent by God to bless the World.

2. From what has been said, it appears, that the Jews, who rejected our Lord, had but a very slender and weak Excuse to make for this, from the Manner in which the Prophets spake of this great Person.

It cannot indeed, be denied that their Antient Prophets set forth the Messiah sometimes in a most lofty and exalted Style; and represent Him, as a King, the Extent of whose Kingdom, should be the whole Earth; and as a Prince, sitting upon the Throne of David, with a Sceptre, and all the Ensigns of Royal Authority;
Authority; vested with sufficient Power to destroy the Enemies of his People; and the like. But it is true also, that, in the same Prophets, there are so many Passages allowed to belong to the same Person, which either describe his Kingdom as of quite another Nature than the Kingdoms of this World; or Himself, as a Man in a low and suffering Condition; that Many of the Jews themselves were reduced to the Necessity of inventing Two Messiahs, to answer to these different Descriptions; when, by a due Consideration, They might reasonably have applied all to One and the same Person. And this They would naturally have done, if They had not been too much debauched in all their Principles, and Practice, to be disposed to consider either the Nature of God; or the Frame of Man, and the Dictates of the common Voice of their own Reason, in Matters of such a Kind.

For Proof of this, it may be observed, That it would not have been very hard for serious Persons to have accounted for all such lofty and figurative Descriptions of their Prophets, after such a Manner as this. There is a Spiritual Kingdom, as well as a Temporal one: And He who reigns in the Hearts of his Subjects is a King and Lord, as much as the greatest Potentate.
tentate on Earth: There are Enemies to the Spiritual and Eternal happiness of Man, as well as to his present Ease, and Prosperity: And These are the same, with regard to the true and proper Happiness of Man, that earthly Tyrants are, to his worldly Peace and Quiet: and He, who subdues these, and delivers us from them, is the same, with respect to our real and substantial Happiness, as a good Prince, who rescues us from the Tyrants of this World, is, with respect to all our temporal Enjoyments. And therefore, if their antient Prophets, in representing the spiritual Kingdom of the Messiah, make use of Words which signify the greatest Blessing, and Glory, in sensible Matters; if He be said to have his Throne and his Sceptre; if the Enemies he is to subdue, are spoken of by the Prophets in the same Terms by which Temporal Enemies are described; if his redeeming us from their Power is represented by such Words, as Conquests, Victories, and Triumphs; this is justified by the Use of very high Figurative Expressions, upon many Occasions, in all, but especially the Eastern, Languages; without the Thought that such Expressions would be taken literally; or that Those, who were most concerned in them, would not make use of their Common Sense, in
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The Jews indeed knew this Figurative Style to be almost always the Prophetic Style; and not to be interpreted, in other Cases, according to the Letter: and therefore, might have learned another, and a true, Doctrine from such Figures of Speech. And this they were still more directed to do, in the present Case, by many plain Expressions in several Passages of the Prophets, mixed with the Lofty and Metaphorical ones, and necessarily interpreting them: Such, I mean, as represented the Dispensation of their Messiah to have been designed to make an End of Sin, and bring in everlasting Righteousness; and such as give This peculiar Character of it, that under it God would write his Laws in the Hearts of his People; and remember their Sins no more; and Others of the like Sort. All which is fully sufficient to shew the Guilt of that Infidelity of the Jews, which was owing to their total and wilful Neglect of such Considerations, as ought to have directed their Thoughts, and influenced their Conduct, upon this Occasion.

3. It will not be improper to observe, That what has been said may lead Us to the true Sense of those Figurative Expressions in the New Testament, relating to this same Blessing of
of the Messiah, which have caused great variety of Sentiments and Debates. I mean particularly such seemingly hard Phrases as, being born again; being created again to good Works; renewed in our Minds; putting off the old Man, or the whole Body of Sin; and putting on the new Man, in all Holiness and Righteousness; being dead with Christ unto Sin, and arising again with Him to a new Life: and other extraordinary Forms of Speech to the same Purpose. All these are justly and truly explained by the plain Phrases of ceasing from Sin, and Learning to do Righteousness; and, in the Words before Us, by being turned from our Iniquities to all Virtue; by leading a new Life of habitual Holiness: and set forth no other Doctrine than that the Blessing of the Messiah consisted in calling the World from their former customary Sins, to the Practice of all the Duties of moral Righteousness.

4. From what has been said may justly be concluded the Presumption and Iniquity, of that Church, which assumes to itself the Privilege of blessing Christians in a way absolutely contradictory to what is laid down in the Text, and other Places of the New Testament. What I mean is This. Our Lord and his Apostles declare his Blessing to consist in the making Us happy, by turning Us from
all our Iniquities. A Body of Men, calling themselves his Disciples, and even his only Disciples, stand forth, and openly undertake and promise to Sinners, That They will bless and save them, without their being turned from their Iniquities; without one Mark of their Conversion through their past Lives; or one Mark of it, in their last Hours, unless it be a Declaration of their Sorrow. And this, which has no Relation to their Conversion from their Iniquities to a Course of Righteousness, They profess to make Equivalent to a past good Life; and, by some Methods invented by themselves, warrant the Arrival of their Disciples at Happiness, as effectually as if they had spent many Years in Obedience to the Laws of God. This, and the like Doctrines of Indulgences, and Pardons, for the Encouragement of Sinners in not being turned from their Iniquities, are such manifest and direct Contradictions to the whole Tenor of our Lord's own Declarations, that there cannot be the least Need of one Word to recommend such Blasphemy to the Abhorrence of all Christians, besides the bare Mention of them.

5. Others, who have separated from so polluted a Church, may learn not to imitate, in the least Degree, One of the worst Practises in that Communion which they have forsaken.
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forfaken. And how near to this Presumption of the Church of Rome They come, who take upon them to administer the Comforts of God's Mercy in Christ, under the Terrors of Death, to Those who have willfully stood out against all the most powerful Motives to Amendment through their whole past Lives, let themselves judge: but let Them first consider how fatal to Living Sinners it may prove, to see such Encouragement given to the Hopes of Dying Ones; and how naturally This must lead Those who are Witnesses to it, to think assuredly of Salvation and Mercy at last, without being turned from their Iniquities in any Part of their former Life. Who must answer for This great Injury to the Gospel, and to the Men themselves chiefly concerned, but They, who are at any Time guilty of prostituting the Doctrine of Salvation from Sin, to the Service of Sin itself; and substitute a Repentance, which is only a Sorrow, and Dread of Punishment, into the Place of that Repentance, which is Amendment of Life; and which alone their Lord and Master declares to be acceptable?

6. Lastly. Let this practical Argument be ever in our Minds. If this turning of Us from our Iniquities be the Blessing which Reason itself teaches us to expect from Him, who was
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Serm. was to be the greatest Instance of God's Mercy to Sinners; if this be what the Jews themselves had Reason to look for, from their Messiah; if this be the serious and constant Declaration of our Lord himself, and the settled Doctrine of his Apostles; it follows most certainly, That We are not to hope for any Blessing from our Saviour Jesus, the Christ, or Messiah, but as we are turned from our Iniquities to the Practice of all Virtue; That, without this indispensible Condition, we have no Title to the Rewards promised by Him; nay, That against those professed Christians who still keep their Iniquities, the Messiah himself will pronounce the Wrath of God; Depart from Me, ye Workers of Iniquity.

The Conclusion of the whole, and the Sum of all that most nearly concerns Us, We must always remember to be This, If we know these Things, happy are We only, if we do them.

FINIS.