Sixteen Sermons
Formerly Printed,
Now collected into One Volume.

Of the Evils falsely imputed to Christianity. In Two Sermons.
On the Queen's Accession Day.
Of Submission to the Higher Powers.
The Unhappiness of Absolute Monarchy.
St. Paul's Behaviour to the Civil Magistrate.
Of the Extremes of Implicit Faith and Infidelity. In Four Sermons.
The Delusion of Protestants.
The Restoration made a Blessing.
The Nature and Duty of a Public Spirit.
The Nature of the Kingdom of Christ.
At the Funeral of Mrs. Howland.
On Jan. 30, before the House of Lords.

To which are added,

Six Sermons upon Public Occasions,
Never before Printed.

The Nature and Duty of Moderation.
Of God's Dealings with Sinful Nations.
The Duty of Praying for Governors.
Of the Government of God's Providence.
The Mischief of Intestine Quarrels.
The Consideration of our Latter End.

By Benjamin, Lord Bishop of Winchester.

London,
Printed for John and Paul Knapton, at the Crown in Ludgate-Street. MDCCLIV.
A PRELIMINARY ACCOUNT OF AN EXPEDITION TO THE.source...
A Short Account of the following Sermons, now published in the Order of Time in which they were preached, will not, I hope, be thought improper.

The Two first of them were preached at St. Swithin's Church, in the Year 1702, where I then officiated for Mr. Hodges, the worthy Rector of that Parish, during his Absence at Sea, as Chaplain-General of the Fleet. They were occasioned by the great Fury in Party-matters, which then raged: And were honestly designed to shew, that the Violences of Christians ought not to be charged upon the Christian Religion itself.

The Third Sermon was preached at the Church of St. Peter's Poor, on the Accession-day of Queen Anne to the Throne, Mar. 8, 1704-5, when I thought it my Duty to take that first Opportunity, after my coming thither, of declaring against the Abuses of that Day. The printing of it was entirely owing to the earnest Request of some of the Chief Parishioners, who heard it. When it appeared, I was much abused in a Pamphlet, for what They thought so well of, by a then neighbouring Clergyman, to whom I gave no Answer but by a private Letter to a Friend of His.
PREFACE.

The Fourth is, That Sermon about Magistrates and Subjects, preached at St. Laurence’s, on Sept. 29, 1705, which was followed by a long Controversy, upon the Subject of it. I was called to it by the accidental Mention of Me, by a Friend, to Sir Owen Buckingham, then Lord Mayor, with whom I had not Myself the least Acquaintance. The Reader has heard, if not read, enough of this long ago. I shall say no more of it in this Place, than That, from the Date of this Sermon, near Fifty Years ago, a Torrent of angry Zeal began to pour out itself upon Me, which, tho' for the present indeed very disagreeable; yet, opened a Way to such Explications of the Doctrine of it, and Reasonings about it, as have produced What, at the End, makes Me not to repent of having preached it.

The Fifth was preached at the Assizes, in March, 1707-8, at Hertford, at the Request of the High Sheriff, Sir Richard Houblon. The Subjects of it, The Happiness of the present Establishment, and The Unhappiness of Absolute Monarchy, were pointed out to Me, too strongly to be neglected, by the public Writings of that Time; particularly Those of Mr. Leily, then much celebrated by Many.

The Sixth was preached at the same Place, at the Summer Assizes in 1708, at the Request of the same Gentleman. The Subject is, St. Paul’s
Paul's Behaviour to the Civil Magistrate: which was chosen by me, on account of many Passages, relating to that Apostle, in the Political Controversies in those Days very warmly handled; and therefore not unseasonable.

The Four next Sermons, about the Duty of Enquiry, and the Extremes of Implicit Faith, and Infidelity, were preached at my Parish Church, in the Year 1712, on occasion of the many Writings published about that Time, which seemed, on one hand, to attack the Christian Religion itself; and, on the other, to discourage a Free Examination of it.

The Eleventh, called The present Delusion of Many, &c. was preached at St. Peter's Poor, Nov. 5, 1715, and was occasioned by the Rebellion then on foot; and the unaccountable Conduct of many Protestants, with relation to it, which sufficiently justified the Title given to the Sermon, when it was, at the Desire of Many, immediately printed.

The Twelfth was preached on May 29, 1716, at St. James's Chapel, at the Request of the then Lord Almoner, to whose Care the Sermon of that Day belongs. All that I shall say of it is, That the Subject of it, viz. The Restoration made a Blessing by the Protestant Succession, which had then just taken Place; must be allowed to be as pertinent to the Day, as Any that could possibly have been thought of.
P R E F A C E.

The Thirteenth was preached to the Society of the Gentlemen of Wales, March 1, 1716. The Subject of it, The Nature and Duty of a Public Spirit, I thought particularly of Importance at that Time; and, I can truly say, was chosen without the least Thought of reflecting on any One Man, or Set of Men, more than Another; but entirely with a View to the Duty of All equally, to have a Sacred Regard to the Good of the Whole, and to sacrifice All their Passions to That.

The Fourteenth is the Sermon concerning the Nature of the Kingdom of Christ, which is known too well, by the many and public Debates occasioned by it, to need any word about it here. At whose Request it was commanded to be published, I know not. But I know, that it was not, either directly or indirectly, from any Desire of mine.

The Fifteenth was preached at the Funeral of an Excellent Lady, Mrs Howland; and designed, as all such Discourses ought to be, for the Use and Service of All Christians. But here I cannot but think it a Due, in point of Gratitude, to Her Memory, publickly to acknowledge this Singular Obligation to Her, That, in the Year 1710, when Fury seemed to be let loose, and to distinguish Me particularly; She Herself, unasked, unapplied to; without my having ever seen Her, or been seen by Her;
PREFACE.

Her; chose, by presenting Me to the Rectory of Streatham, then just vacant, to shew, in her own Expression, That she was neither ashamed, nor afraid, to give Me that public Mark of her Regard, at that Critical Time.

The Sixteenth was preached on the Anniver-
sary Fast-day, on account of the Martyrdom of King Charles I, and published by Order of the House of Lords. It was not calculated to pro-
vok, but to appease, the Passions of Men.
And, as far as publicly appeared, It was re-
ceived without any Marks of much Displeasure
against it.

Of the Six additional Sermons, never before published, I need say no more, than that the Two first were preached at St. Swithin's, and the other Four at St. Peter's Poor, upon Days appointed for public Fasts or Thanksgivings: And that they are chiefly upon the Subjects of Universal Amendment of our Lives; Good Temper, Union, Love, and mutual Charity, at Home: All, as Practical and Useful, as I could make Them; and equally applicable to All Men and Christians, in the Nation.

If Any shall judge, from some Discourses in this Volume, That I used to entertain my Parishioners, in my Sunday-Discourses, with Political, or Controversial, Points, they will be as much mistaken, as many others were hereto-
before disappointed, who came to hear me,
PREFACE.

with the same Notion. The Sermons on the Terms of Acceptance, printed long ago, may best shew, in how plain, and how practical, a Manner, I endeavoured to instruct Those in whom I was most nearly concerned.

The only Inferences in my own Favor, which I wish to be drawn from what is now published, are, That I never omitted any One public Opportunity, in proper Time and Place, of defending and strengthening the true and only Foundation of all our Civil and Religious Liberties, when it was every Day most zealously attacked; and of doing all in my Power, that All the Subjects of this Government, and this Royal Family, should understand, and approve of, those Principles, upon which alone their Happiness is fixed; and without which, it could never have been rightfully Established, and must in Time fall to the Ground: And also, That I was as ready, whenever Occasion was offered, by the Writings and Attacks of Unbelievers, and by the absurd Representations of Others, to defend a Religion, most amiable in all its Precepts, and most beneficial to Human Society, in the only Way proper; by shewing it, in it's native Light, with which it shines in the New Testament itself, free from all the False Paint with which Some, or the undeserved Dirt with which Others, have covered it.
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Suppose ye that I am come to give Peace on Earth? I tell you, Nay, but rather Division.

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Prayers, Intercessions, and giving of Thanks,
be made for all Men: for Kings, and for all
that are in Authority; that we may lead a
quiet and peaceable Life, in all Godliness and
Honesty.

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pag. 454.

In the Press,
and will soon be Published,

TWENTY SERMONS
Never before PRINTED.

The first Nine of them Preach'd before the KING in Lent.

By BENJAMIN, Lord Bishop of Winchester.
Concerning the Divisions, and Cruelties, of which the Christian Religion hath been made the Occasion.

SERMON I.

Preached at St. Swithin's Church, in 1702.

St. Matthew x. 34.
Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

Or, as it is in St. Luke, Chap. xii. 51.
Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay, but rather Division.

The full meaning of these Words, (spoken by our Lord to his Apostles, when he was giving them Commission to preach his Religion to the World) we shall find to be this; if we consider the foregoing, and following Verses. "You may imagine, perhaps, that the Excellence of my Religion, and the Evidence that accompanies it, will effectually recommend it to the Understanding, and the Affections of Mankind; that the Humility, and Meek-
Of the Divisions, and Cruelties,

S E R M. "ness, which it commands, will influence
I. the World; and that such an Institution
as this will breath Peace, and an universal Calmness, into the Minds of Men. But
it will not be so. How excellent soever
it is in itself; how much Evidence soever
accompanies it; it will not be received as
you would expect: nor will it effectually
contribute to the Peace and Quiet of the
World; though it tends very much in its
own Nature to do so. Nay, This very
Religion, which I came into the World to
plant and propagate, (I foresee, and fore-
warn you of it,) will be made the Occa-
sion, and prove the Cause, of much Divi-
sion and Strife; of the strongest Passions,
Hatreds, and Animosities; nay, of the ut-
most Pitch of Malice and Persecution;
and of the greatest Barbarities, and Cruel-
ties: and this, amongst Men of the same
Nation, of the same Blood, of the same
Family; amongst Men who have the Ties
of Nature, Friendship, Alliance, Interest,
to make them good, kind, and beneficent,
to one another. Think not that I am come
to send Peace on earth, that is, Think not
that the Consequence of my coming into
the World, and preaching a new Religion
in it, will be this, that Men will sincerely
embrace
"falsly imputed to Christianity."

"embrace it; or that it will tame the Passi-
"ons of those who shall pretend to embrace
"it; or that the World will follow the Pre-
"cepts of Humanity and good Nature, laid
"down in it. No, I came not to send Peace,
"but a Sword, that is, The consequence of
"my coming into the World, and promul-
gating this Religion, will not be Peace on
"Earth, and Good-will amongst Men: but this
"very Religion, this holy and peaceable In-
"stitution, will (through the Perverseness of
"Mankind) be often made a Cover and
"Pretence for the greatest Barbarities; and
"often prove the Occasion of Disorder, and
"Pasion, and Malice, and Violence, and of
"all the Evils you can imagine."

We must observe, that our Lord, in the
Text, doth not speak of his Design in com-
ing into the World: for it is very plain that
He came with design to send Peace and
good Nature upon Earth; and to plant the no-
blest and most extensive Charity in the Hearts
of Men. But he speaks of a most unhappy
Consequence of his appearing, and institu-
ting his Religion: that it should be turned,
by the Contrivances of the Wicked part of
God's Creatures, to very bad Purposes,
and ill Uses; to the Disturbance of that
World, which it was designed to com-
pose
Of the Divisions, and Cruelties,

pose and make happy. And because much of this hath been seen in all Ages, and all Nations, in which the Sound of the Gospel hath been heard; and a great deal of it is still to be seen in our own Age and Nation; and because many have been offended at Christ, and his Doctrine, on this unhappy Account, and have blamed Christianity for the sake of this, which it hath unwillingly been the Occasion of: therefore, it may be proper and useful to make some Observations upon this Subject. And what I design upon it, is,

I. To observe the Truth of what was here predicted by our Lord: that Christianity hath been made the Occasion of much Disturbance; and of many fatal Divisions, Hatreds, and Persecutions, in the World.

II. To vindicate Christianity from the Guilt and Blame of this Unhappiness.

III. To consider whence it hath proceeded.

IV. To make some proper Observations, and draw some useful Inferences, from what I shall have said upon this Subject.

I. I shall observe the Truth of what is here predicted by our Lord: that the Christian Religion hath been made the Occasion of much Disturbance; of many sad Divisions, Hatreds, and Persecutions in the World.
It is, indeed, a very moving and uneasy Consideration, that, from the time of its first Appearance to this very Day, such an use hath been made of it, or of something or other supposed to belong to it, as hath tempted some to think that the Mischief it hath given Rise to, in the World, is not counter-balanced by all the Good it hath hitherto brought forth. And there needs but a very little Knowledge in the History of former Times, or the Transactions of these later Ages, to make one wish that there were much less reason to think so, than there appears to be.

What our Saviour chiefly had an Eye to, in the Text, was, probably that Persecution; and those Instances of Malice; which He saw it would occasion in the World, at its first appearance: that Hatred of Christians it would produce in the Breasts of Unbelievers; and those Storms of Persecution, which the Profession of it would raise against them. But, as He could not likewise be ignorant of those Hatreds and Animosities it would, in after Ages, raise amongst Christians themselves, against one another; to the disturbing, and ruining their common Peace and Quiet: so, He did not (we may be sure) exclude these; but
but had an Eye to them all, in the Words of the Text.

When Christianity first appeared, and first was preached; the Prejudices and Passions of Men ran high against it: as it was a Contradiction to their received Ways of Worship; to their former and settled Principles; to the Dictates and Practices of their Forefathers; and to their own indulged Lufts, and evil Habits. And so the very Profession of it, much more the bold Preaching of it, allarmed all Mankind against the Men who professed and preached it. They were hated by their nearest Relations; they were exposed to the greatest Evils in Life: and they were persecuted even to Death: All Countries were disturbed at them; and all Princes, and Magistrates made it their Business to extirpate them. This was their Case almost constantly, till their Numbers increased; till Christianity became the Established Religion of whole Nations; and Princes became the Temporal Patrons of the Church. And thus did this Religion which Jesus came to plant in the World, give an Allarm to the Kingdoms of it: and was made the Handle to unspeakable Disquiet and Disturbance, Malice and Persecution, in it.

But when it came to be the settled Reli-
falsly imputed to Christianity.

...tion; to have the Approbation, and Counte-
nance of Princes; and to enjoy the favourable Look of the great Men of this World: what a glorious Scene would any one expect, who seriously looks into the Design, Nature, and Precepts of it? What a Scene of Calmness and Serenity of Mind; of Mortification, and Conquest of those Passions and Lusts, from whence proceeds all the Mischief in the World? What a Scene of Love and Beneficence to one another; of Joy and Delight in one another's Happiness; of Openness and Freedom; of Sincerity and Kindness; of Humility, Condescension, Humanity, and Meekness? What could Any one expect, who searcheth into the Gospel, more than the Humours and Actions of Mankind, but that Peace and Holiness should have kissed each other; that Contentment and Happiness should have flourished in the Earth; that all that could contribute to the Quiet and Satisfaction of the World, should from this Time have abounded in it?

Would you think, That, as soon as the Christians had Rest from the World about them, their Passions ran as high against one another as the Passions of the unbelieving World had done against them before? Would you imagine that they turned from suffering gloriously,
Of the Divisions, and Cruelties,

gloriously, to biting and devouring; to hat-
ing and condemning one another? That their strongest and most avowed Hatreds, their most fatal Divisions and Animosities, took their Rise from, and had their Founda-
tion in, some Point of Religion, some Point of Faith, or Worship? And that they were often more concerned for some insignificant Matter, or some Point of Speculation, that the Gospel had not so absolutely determined, as to leave no room for Diversity of Opinions; That they were too often, I say, much more zealous to defend, or oppose, These, than to preserve the Obligation, and secure the Prac-
tice, of the weightier Matters of the Gospel? Yet thus it was: and thus it hath been ever since, to that Degree, that it is now hardly a Question whether more Unkindness and Inhu-
manity, more Malice and Hatred, more Vio-
ence and Barbarity, have been shewn by Heathens and Infidels towards Christians for the sake of their Religion; than have been shewn by Christians towards one another, on the score of some Religious Differences.

The contending with the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of Truth, and Meekness, for the Purity of Faith and Worship once delivered to the Saints, was truly commendable and praiseworthy. This sort of Contention for
falsly imputed to Christianity.

the Gospel, in the Spirit of the Gospel, hath ever tended to the increasing of Charity, as well as to the manifesting of Truth. But a false Zeal quickly devoured it, and took its place: and very soon prompted Men of ill Tempers, and worldly Designs, to make a greater Distinction amongst Christians, than need; to stigmatize honester Men than themselves with hard Names, and odious Appellations: and then, to treat them contumeliously, and as Persons unfit to be dealt with in the Ways of Humanity, and Candour. And, on the other side, this same Pretense gave occasion to Men of Parts and Passion, when they saw themselves likely to be oppressed, to strengthen themselves in their Opinions; to form Parties upon a Foundation distinct from that of the flourishing Party; to enter into close Designs and Combinations; and so to help forward the Disturbance and Disquiet of the Christian Church.

If we pass from these first Ages downwards; who can speak, or hear, of such things, as have been publickly transacted amongst Christians, on Religious Accounts, without a very sensible Commotion within? We may read it in Histories, and we may see it with our Eyes, that there is an immortal Hatred; an Uneasiness not ever likely to cease, between Christians of several Denominations. There are
Of the Divisions, and Cruelties,

I.

are Inquisitions and Torments designed, and made use of, by Christians against Christians, beyond the Example of former Ages; and beyond the Cruelty of either Jewish or Heathen Persecutors. We have known Men tortured and persecuted; murdered and massacred; banished from their Possessions; deprived of their Estates; expelled their native Land; separated from their Children and Friends, or their Friends and Children torn by Violence from them; for the sake of Religion, and under pretence of doing Service to the Church of God, by extending and propagating the Faith and Worship of a particular Set of Men. And how exactly hath the Account of this Matter given by our Saviour been verified, in several Countries, in these last Ages, as well as the first Times of the Gospel? A man hath been at variance against his Father; and the Daughter against her Mother; and the Daughter in law against a Mother in law; and a Man's Foes have been those of his own Household, as it follows just after the Text in St. Matth. 35, 36. And as it is St. Luke, ch. xii. 52, 53. There have been five in one House divided, three against two, and two against three. The Father divided against the Son, and the Son against the Father; the Mother against the Daughter, and the Daughter against the Mother; the Mother in law against the
falsly imputed to Christianity.

the Daughter in law, and the Daughter in law's E R M.

against her Mother in law.

We of this Nation, indeed, read, and hear at a distance, of greater Barbarities and Cruelties, than we have ourselves experienced, or seen with our Eyes: but yet we, amongst others, may help to prove the Truth of what I am now observing. For, What Heats, and Passions; what Unkindnesses, and Incivilities; what Hatreds and Variances; what Parties and Distinctions; nay, what Projects and Designs are there often seen amongst us, which, (if the Bottom of things be searched into,) owe their Original, or their Prosecution, to some real, or pretended, Difference in Religious Opinions, or Modes of Worship? Names are invented to distinguish some from others, and make them odious and suspected; and these Names are commonly taken from something that bears a relation to Religion, and the Worship of God: and the Church is too often hooked into Designs, in which it hath little to do; and Sacred Words are made to serve the Purposes of projecting Men. For this is laid down as certain, that tho' True Religion be little regarded, but rather trampled on, by the Generality of the World; yet the Pretences taken from thence are moving, and never fail to allarm the Multitude, and to forward a Design. Any Doctrine, manifestly framed
Of the Divisions, and Cruelties,

framed to serve a Purpose, can at any time easily be made the distinguishing Mark of a true Christian, or the true Church: and all that will not yield to the Truth of it, shall presently be branded with some Religious Nick-name or other. Heretick, and Schismatrick, at the Head; and Multitudes of other opprobrious Names ranked under them; have all been taken from some Difference in the holding and professing the same Religion. And they have been used so freely, and after such a manner, as that they have often effectually contributed to the Destruction of Christian Charity; to the Overthrow of Peace and Concord; to the Ruine of many excellent Designs; and to the promoting many bad ones.

It is a shame to speak of these things: but it is too plain to be dissembled, that it hath fared thus with Christianity ever since it appeared; that it hath not only been made the Occasion of the bitterest Persecutions from the Infidel Part of the World, but also of the bitterest Hatreds, and strongest Malice, and most irreconcilable Divisions, amongst Christians themselves: And these, at length, rooted in the Hearts of Men, to that Depth, and with that Firmness, that it appears next to impossible to extirpate them; or to restore the World to the Spirit of Meekness, and Quiet, and to the Temper of reasonable Creatures. Next to impossible, I say: For what can we think, when
falsly imputed to Christianity.

when all the Attempts Almighty God hath seen fit to make towards it, have hitherto proved ineffectual; when even his last Dispensation by the hands of his Son, sent from Heaven, hath been so far from healing the Wounds and Breaches in the Love and Regards of Men to one another, that it hath been abused to the inflaming and widening them? When God himself speaks to them of Peace, and yet they make themselves ready to battle? When they have taken occasion from this last Tryal of his, designed to plant Peace and Unity in the Earth, to be the more quarrelsome, and the more incensed against one another? when they search into the Bowels of this very Revelation, and fetch Fuel out of this most peaceable Institution, to set themselves, and the World about them, in Flames: What small Hope, I say, can we have of the Restitution and Re-establishment of Quiet and Harmony in the Minds and Actions of Men; whilst they are ever finding something in Religion itself, to exasperate their Minds against one another; to make their Lives unquiet, and Society unharmonious?

The Prophets have invain described the Golden Age of their Messiah, and invain exal ted his glorious and pacifick Reign; unless God himself interpose. The Wolf shall dwell with the Lamb (faith the Prophet Isaiah, ch. xi. 6, 7, 8, 9,) and the Leopard shall lie down with the
Of the Divisions, and Cruelties,

S E R M.

the Kid: and the Calf, and the young Lion, and the Fatling together, and a little Child shall lead them. And the Cow and the Bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together: and the Lion shall eat straw like the Ox. And the sucking Child shall play on the Hole of the Aspe, and the weaned Child shall put his Hand on the Cockatrice Den. They shall not hurt, nor destroy in all my holy Mountain: for the Earth shall be full of the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea.

If this be a Description which relates to the Reign of Christ, and to the Glories of his Kingdom, when it should be set up in this World: we must with grief remark, that either the Prophet speaks only with respect to the Nature and Tendency of Christ's Doctrine; that, if Men would heartily receive and practice it, a glorious Peace and Happiness would be diffused over the Earth: or else, that He prophesies of some happy Times, unknown yet, which future Ages are to be blessed with. For the Earth is, indeed, full of the Knowledge of the Lord, in this Sense, that the Profession of Christianity is very widely spread. There is Opportunity enough for Knowledge: but there hath been yet but little of this universal Charity seen, or felt, in the World. The Earth is full of the Knowledge of the Lord: and yet the Wolf dwelleth not with the Lamb; nor doth
falsly imputed to Christianity.

Doth the Leopard lie down with the Kid; nor doth the Cow and the Bear feed together; nor doth the sucking Child play upon the Hole of the Aspe; nor doth the weaned Child put his hand upon the Cockatrice Den; nor have these rapacious and terrible Creatures left off to hurt or destroy in God's holy mountain. Nor hath any thing of what was intended by this, come to pass: that is, Mens Tempers have not been universally tamed and subdued; but the Wild and Wicked are still wild and wicked, still bite and devour the Innocent; and still a War is carried on amongst Men.

Nay, for what appears, and for all those Advances that have been hitherto made towards a firm Union, and a sincere and universal Friendship amongst all Men; every one of these figurative Expressions of the Prophet may be literally fulfilled, before an universal Calmness reign through the Earth. And the Wolf, and the Lion, and the Leopard, and the Bear, may sooner enter into Terms of Reconciliation and Amity, with the milder Beasts, and with Mankind; than the passionate and violent, the hurtful and venomous, the cruel and malicious, Part of Mankind shall suffer themselves to be tamed and subdued into good Nature and Charity; or be bound up by any Rules of Quiet and Harmony. But tho' we see so little Sign
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Sign of this hitherto; yet we know that not a Tittle of all that is spoken shall fail.

In the mean while, that it may be no Objection against Christianity it self, and no matter of Scandal and Offence to us, that it hath proved the Occasion of so sharp Swords, and so much Division upon Earth; it becomes us to enquire, as I proposed,

II. Whether the Gospel itself be not wholly free from all the Guilt of this great Unhappiness; or whether it be possible, with the least Degree of Justice, to attribute this to the Doctrine, or Design, of Jesus Christ; to the Nature or Tendency of any thing contained in Christianity. A very few Words will suffice upon this Head. For let any Person, of never so little Capacity, look into the Account of our Saviour’s Life, his Actions and his Words, recorded in the Gospels; or into the Sermons, and Epistles, and Behaviour of his Apostles; and see if they find, through the whole, any the least Encouragement given, either by Example or Precept, to any, even the lowest, Degree of that Temper of Mind, or Manner of Deportment, which doth so much as border upon ill Nature, or cruel Usage of our Fellow-Creatures. Did not our Lord himself condescend to all the Offices of Love and Beneficence to all the World of Sinners about him? Do not all his Precepts, which
which respect human Society, manifestly tend to the Peace and Quiet of it? And would they not effectually procure and establish it, were they thoroughly attended to, and universally practised? Doth not He command, upon pain of God's eternal Displeasure against those who neglect it, the Practice of all the peaceable and quiet Virtues; and forbid the harbouring the very Thoughts and Surmises, that may possibly tend to break in upon the Happiness of the World about us? Meekness, Humility, Condescension, Forbearance, Forgiveness, Tenderness, and the like: are they not indispensably enjoined? And the Vices contrary to these, Haughtiness, Pride, Revenge, Unmercifulness, Malice, and Ill-will: are they not strictly forbidden; their Punishment declared to be certain, and intolerable? They are forbidden, in all Cases, and at all Times. Nothing can ever justify them: nothing is supposed in the Gospel ever to excuse those who are guilty of them. Nay, Love, and Beneficence, and a Readiness to be reconciled to our greatest and most violent Enemies, are made the shining and distinguishing Characters of a true Christian. And could He, who came to institute such a Religion, full of such Precepts, and constantly recommending such sort of Virtues above all others, be supposed to come on any other Design, but to compose the jarring Tem-
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pers, and Actions of Men, into Concord and Harmony? And can any one charge such a Religion, that seems to be calculated in all its Parts, chiefly for the planting, maintaining, and increasing, Peace and Love in the World; can any one, I say, charge this Religion with the Guilt of those Heats, and Discontents, which it hath been by Accident made the Occasion of? No, It must be plain, beyond Contradiction, to all who will look into it, that Christiannity itself hath not the least Part in this Guilt: but that we must seek for the true Source, and Foundation of all this Unhappiness somewhere else. This is what I now design, viz.

III. To consider, whence this great Unhappiness hath truly proceeded; and where the Guilt of it is justly to be fixed. And

1. This Unhappiness manifestly proceeded, in the first Ages of the Gospel, from the Prejudices and Passions of the unbelieving World, both Jews and Gentiles. This I mention first, because the Disturbance and Disquiet that sprang from this Original was first in order of Time, commencing immediately with the Gospel itself: and was what our Lord chiefly respected in the Text; which was spoken to the Persons who were themselves to be the first Propagators of his Religion, and the first Witnesses to this fatal Consequence of it. A Scene of Violence
falsly imputed to Christianity.

Violence and Fury immediately attended the opening of the Gospel to the World. The Preachers, and Propagators of it were persecuted, beyond what had been known in the World before; and all the sincere Professors of it hated by their very Friends and Relations, and pursued by all the Evils of this World, and all that is terrible to Flesh and Blood. Indeed this Persecution, and these Diffensions, had not happened in the World, if Christianity had not been preached to the Nations of it. But shall not God do his part to the reforming and amending the World; because there are some in it, that will make this very Attempt of his an Occasion of their growing worse? Shall not God send a Divine Person into the World, to preach a pure and Holy Religion, full of Charity, Humility, and Peace, because some will make this an Opportunity of their increasing in Fierceness and Inhumanity? Had the Christian Religion indeed, given the unbelieving World any reason to be so incensed against it, and so inhospitable to its Professors; somewhat might be said in Vindication of their Practice; and some Blame justly laid at the Door of Christianity. But wicked Men raised this ter-
rible Scene of Persecution against it, not be-
cause they had no reason to receive it; but be-
cause they would not. And they would not receive it, because it was against their Interests,

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Not that it divested any of the Magistrates of this World of their lawful Authority; or dissolved the Obligation of Obedience in their Subjects. Not that it concerned itself with the Rights and Privileges of Kingdoms, and Civil Societies; or brake in upon the Government, or Discipline, of Nations. Not that it tended in its Nature to render Society disagreeable: to make Men ill-natured, or morose, or uncharitable, or unjust, or cruel, or hypocritical; or recommended any thing to Mankind contrary to the Peace and Quiet of the State. Nothing of this could be laid to its Charge by its greatest Adversaries. But the truth of the Case was this. They hated and derided it, because, if it had universally taken place, the Follies and Superstitions of their received Forms of Worship must have vanished; and the whole Fabric of their Forefathers Religion been shaken, and ruined. Let a Form of Worship be never so tedious with pompous Ceremonies; never so full of Fopperies, and ridiculous Circumstances; never so unworthy of reasonable Creatures to offer, or of God to receive; yet there is I know not what Fondness for it, riveted in the Minds and Affections of Men, if it descended down to them from their Forefathers, and can but plead Age and Prescription.
But perhaps Christianity, with the Evidence that at first accompanied it, might have got over this Difficulty; and have born down this blind and senseless Veneration of Antiquity. But this was not all it had to encounter. It opposed the Passions, and Lusts, and present worldly Interests of Men. The Jews saw, it condemned and opposed that Course of Sensuality and Covetousness they were generally engaged in; and that it put an End to their Hopes of Temporal Prosperity, and Fleshly Pleasure, and Triumphs over their Enemies, under the Reign of their Messiah. The great Men of the World found it most opposite to the main Design of their Lives; and irreconcileable with that Ambition, and Pride, and insatiable Love of Riches and Grandeur, which they had entertained, and could not part with. A very small Part of the World, as things went then, found any the least Comfort or Satisfaction in any of its Proposals. These were the Reasons why both Jews and Gentiles made it their Business to crush it in its Infancy; and to persecute, even to Death, the first Preachers and Professors of it: because they carried such Evidence along with them, in the Miracles they everywhere wrought, that they judged it must presently gain ground, if not thus heartily, and inhumanly resisted. This is a plain Account how
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how it came to pass, that the Christian Religion was at first the Occasion of much Disturbance, and of bitter Persecutions, in the World: And whether this proceeded from any thing blameable in itself, or from the unreasonable Prejudices, and deep-rooted Vices, of the Unbelieving World, may be left to any one of Common Sense to judge.
Concerning the Divisions, and Cruelties, of which the Christian Religion hath been made the Occasion.

SERMON II.

Preached at St. Swithin's Church, in 1702.

St. Matthew x. 34.

Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

Or, as it is in St. Luke, Chap. xii. 51.

Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay, but rather Division.

HAVING from these Words, first, made some Observations upon the Matter of Fact, (here predicted by our Lord,) that Christianity hath been made the Occasion of many bitter Persecutions, fatal Divisions, and Hatreds, in the World: and having, in the second Place, vindicated Christianity it self from the Guilt and Blame of it; I proposed, Thirdly, To consider whence this Unhappiness hath truly proceeded; and where the Guilt of it is justly to be fixed. The first Observation was, that the bitter Persecutions, and Animosities...
Of the Divisions, and Cruelties, occasioned at its first Appearance, proceeded entirely from the unreasonable Prejudices, and Passions, of the Unbelieving World.

Let us now turn our Thoughts from the Unbelieving to the Believing World; from the Men that persecuted Christianity, to the Men that have embraced, and do profess it. And, as we have before observed how much Hatred and Division, how many Barbarities and Persecutions, amongst Christians themselves, have taken their Rise from Religion, and been founded on a Sacred Principle: so let us now consider whence this Unhappiness, amongst the Disciples of the same Master, hath proceeded, and from what Root it hath sprung.

2. Secondly, therefore, It is very plain that much of this Unhappiness hath proceeded from the Projects, and Designs, the Ambition, or Pride, or Covetousness, of the wicked part of the Christian World. Christianity never pretended to reform those, that are resolved to be Wicked: and no wonder, that such as these (who have no Conscience, and no Principles of Religion,) when they have any of their own Contrivances to bring to Effect, make use of the properest Means to accomplish them. They know that there is no better, nor more moving, Pretence than the Care of Religion, and
fal Sy imputed to Christianity.

and the Church of God: and therefore, this must be the Engine to set forward their Undertakings; and their unhallowed Lips must profane holy Words, that these holy Words may sanctify their unhallowed Actions. Thus, for instance, if the Bounds of Power are to be enlarged beyond right and just; if a Number of Men must be extirpated, banished, or depressed; something in Religion and the Church is often brought in, to colour over the vile Wickedness; to shelter it from Scandal, and ripen it for Success. If a Prince's favourable Smile be to be obtained for one Sort of Men, and his Displeasure to be kindled against another; it is often seen that nothing will more effectually do this, than some Consideration taken from their Difference in Opinion, or Practice, with relation to Religion, and the Worship of God.

This Method is frequently made use of by those who mean nothing more than the compassing their own Designs; the enlarging their own Credit and Interest; the ingratiating themselves with some whose Favour may turn to good account. And so the Peace of Human Society, the Quiet of the World, and the Satisfaction and Contentment of their Neighbours, are sacrificed, at all Adventures, to their own private Covetousness, or Ambition, or Pride, or Revenge, or some wicked Humour...
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or other. And because nothing better can be pretended, Religion must be drawn into the Quarrel: whilst these Men themselves, who are the forwardest to hide themselves under the Masque of something Holy, are of all others the most ready to reproach Religion itself on this very Account; and the first to object against it the many Disturbances, and Disquiets, it hath occasioned in the World.

It is indeed, absurdly ridiculous, to hear Men of notorious Looseness, Men of profane and Atheistical Conversations, solicitous about the Honour of God: and to see, how Men, who have either never appeared at the Public Worship, or never appeared there with Decency, can, upon Occasion, conceive a mighty Concern for the Credit and Beauty of it; how their Breasts can labour with the Heat of a pious Zeal; and all their Designs and Endeavours, on a sudden, be directed to the maintaining and supporting the Church of God. But this must be expected, we see plainly, whilst there are wicked and designing Men, under the Covert of the Christian Profession, in this World. For they that have selfish, and unchristian Designs; they, that make no scruple of cherishing Ambition, or Pride, or Covetousness, or Revenge, will never make any scruple of using Religion, and the Church, as Instruments to promote the Designs such Tempers
Tempers of Mind will put them upon. Add \textit{serm.} to this,

3. \textit{Thirdly,} That much of the Unhappiness we are now speaking of, may have proceeded from the Passions, and Weaknesses, and Imprudences, of sincere \textit{Christians}; \textit{Christians} that truly design well, and desire to promote the Honour of their Master, and their Religion. A good \textit{Christian} will never indeed knowingly interpose in the promoting any Design, or advancing any Cause, to the Destruction of the Peace and Quiet of the \textit{Christian} World: but a good \textit{Christian} is not always secure, or out of danger of being imposed upon; when this Cause is varnished over, and painted before his Eyes, so as to appear quite another thing. Honest Men are often led by Knaves; and made the Tools of those, whom they would abhor, if they knew their Insides. They are often drawn in, to give Credit to a Cause, which, without their Presence, would not be tolerable: That so their Example may be urged in Defense of what wants better Arguments.

\textit{Christianity} doth not make Men more discerning, or more learned in the Wisdom of this World, than it finds them. But yet, it neither commands, nor disposes, Men to be cheated, and imposed upon by every Pretense. It doth not instruct them to put on an Air
Air of Unconcernedness, or Indifference, in what respects the Happiness of Mankind, or the Society they belong to: Nor doth it educate them in Stupidity; or a Disregard of everything but their own private Devotion and Piety. But, as it is far from sending them into Deserts, and Solitudes; into Places unfrequented by human Society; as it chiefly commends to them the Practice of those Virtues that adorn Conversation, and make the World about them happy: So it recommends to them somewhat of the Wisdom and Cunning of Serpents, as well as the Harmlessness and Innocence of Doves; left the wicked and designing Part of the World should manage their Innocence and Simplicity to the Mischief of others, and the Ruin of Peace; and render their Harmlessness as fatal in its Influence upon the World, as if they were clothed with Barbarity, and Cruelty. It is no advantageous Part, therefore, of a good Man's Character, who is obliged to act in Society, that He sees with other Men's Eyes, or hears with other Men's Ears; or that he is out of an affected Negligence, or fond Opinion of another's Abilities; or want of Resolution, led blindfold by others: because he may often be surprized into Things of very ill Consequence; and, when he little thinks of it, bring a Scandal upon that Religion he heartily loves, by an
an unwary helping to make it serve the Purposes of Hatred, and Division.

What I have said under these two last Heads is, That there are wicked and designing Men in the World, who will, if it be possible, contrive their Designs so, as that Religion and the Church, shall be drawn in, to bear no inconsiderable Part in them; and that there are good and pious Men who will not be at the pains to examine their Designs thoroughly; or who cannot see through all the Colour they can lay upon them; or who are too easily cheated, and alarmed by their Pretenses: And that upon these Accounts it must so happen, that something in Religion will be too often made the Occasion of Disorder, and Uncharitableness, and Dissensions, and Persecutions, in the World of Christians.

4. But, Fourthly, Much of this Unhappiness hath proceeded from Mens not being contented with the Simplicity of Christianity, as it is to be found in the Gospels; from their making new Creeds; their adding new Articles of Faith to those laid down in the New Testament; and laying new Impositions upon the rest of Christians, unknown to Christ and his Apostles. This I may safely affirm, that had Christians been always content with a mutual Agreement in the fundamental Doctrines of their Religion, as they lie in the Gospel itself;
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Of the Divisions, and Cruelties, self; and the indispensable Obligation of the Practice of all the Duties commanded in it; much of this fatal Consequence of it might have been hindred; and very much of the Scandal redounding from it, have been prevented. But there hath ever been an Itch, in some or other of Power and Authority, to alter the Terms of Love and Concord settled by Christ; by framing some new Character, and some fresh Note of Distinction, among Christians: And this hath ever begot Opposition; and Controversies managed (on all sides) with Aggravations and Provocations; and this hath brought forth Variances, and Passion, and Hatred, in the Breasts of those who are sure to be condemned by their own Law, for want of Love and Charity. And it ever so happens, as it hath been manifested by constant Experience, that more Violence, (which hath now, for many Ages passed for Zeal, That more Violence, I say,) is shewn for these Additions, and for these lesser, and undetermined Matters, in which the Difference lies, than for the most fundamental Points of Faith, or the most necessary Points of Practice. In the Practical Duties, especially, Men seem easy enough: and would fain have it thought that the vilest, and most enormous Crimes are more tolerable in themselves; and more inoffensive and harmless to
public Society; than a Difference in the least of their Additions.

The greatest (I would to God I could say the only) Instances of this, are to be seen where the Roman Religion is spread. Ask one of that Religion, why so much Barbarity and Inhumanity is exercised; and an eternal War sworn against some sort of Christians? Why are they hated, tormented, banished, imprisoned, and put to Death? Do they not believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ? Do they not profess it to be their Faith, that there is but one God; that this God sent his Son Jesus Christ into the World to save Sinners; that He lived and died, and arose again and ascended up into Heaven to this Purpose? And that He will come again to judge the World; and that there is a future State of Rewards and Punishments? Or, are they wicked and debauched, immoral and vicious to that degree, that you fear the Vengeance of Heaven will fall on you, if you do not shew your Detestation of them? What Answer will you receive from him? There are few of them that would blush to tell you: (and yet who could do it without blushing?) "These are not the Things we so much concern ourselves about. These Persons you speak of, believe all this and more; and their Conversations may perhaps be regular and exact. But this
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this is not enough. They do not believe the
Change of the Elements into Christ's natural Body and Blood in the Eucharist.
They do not hold themselves obliged to believe whatever the Church shall recommend to them. They do not believe the Pope, or General Councils, infallible. They hold not the State of Purgatory. They will not invoke Saints and Angels: Or pray for the Dead. And therefore they are thus used."

Now these, and the like, are their own Inventions, and Additions to the Law of Christ: and yet these Articles are the Standard of their Love, or Hatred; and always determine their Behaviour to other Christians, whether it shall be human or inhuman, civil or barbarous.

But we must not be so partial to ourselves, as to confine this Observation to that Church; or to such Additions, or Points not essential, as have been determined by it. I fear, it will be found, that too many who profess to have re-formed from that Church, still retain too much of the Spirit of it; and too often make their own Systems and Notions the Measure of their Affections; and confine their cordial Love, and Christian Charity, within the Bounds of their own Creed, or Manner of Worship. It is certainly true, that there have not been greater Hatreds, or more unchristian Malice, amongst Christians, than what have sprung from
from this Root: And therefore, this unhappy Consequence of Christianity must be charged, in great Part, upon those Christians, who, not being content with the Simplicity of Christianity, as they found it in the Gospel, have been perpetually making Additions to it, according to their own various Opinions, or Designs.

5. Fifthly, Another Consideration near akin to this, is, that this Unhappiness amongst Christians hath chiefly proceeded from Men's mistaking the Nature, and main Design, of Christianity. Did Men but understand and consider that it was not the great Design of the Christian Religion to make all the World of one Opinion, in Things of little Moment: but that it was reveled from Heaven, chiefly to restore the Worship of the one Supreme God, in Spirit and in Truth; and to teach Men to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts; and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this World; they could not act the Part, they so often do. Did Men but consider, that the great Branch of Christian Duty, is Love, and Good-nature, and Humanity; and the distinguishing Mark of a Christian, an universal Charity; they could not but own that Jesus Christ came to plant and propagate these in the World. And then, they would abhor the Thoughts of making any thing in his Institution an En-
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Then, they would not think all Things lawful against those that differ from them; nor themselves obliged to crush and ruin them. Then, the Contention between Men of various Minds would not be, who should have the Power of oppressing their Brethren: But the Contest would be, who should Love most; and who should give the most expressive Demonstrations of an unconfined Good-nature, and an unbounded Charity. But these, I fear, are but Dreams and Wishes!

It would found something strange to say that the chief Design of Christianity is too plain to be understood, and too evident to be seen: And yet it is true, that the very Plainness of this makes it the less attended to. Such a Love there is in Men to something not so easy to be understood; nor of such Importance: and such a readiness to find out other Designs of Christianity, more agreeable to their own worldly Projects!

Can any of all the fiery Zealots in the World shew us any Design more worthy of the Son of God's descending from Heaven, than the planting of Love, and Peace, on Earth? more beneficial to the whole Race of Mankind; more for the Ease and internal Quiet of our own Breasts; or a better Preparative for the calm and serene Joys of Heaven; for the Fruition of that God who is Love, and of the Company
Company of those blessed Spirits, who are the Witnesses, and Ministers, of his Love? Can they shew us any Design more plainly revealed in the Gospel, or any one Duty there laid upon us, to which this must at any time give place? If they cannot, then nothing can ever release us from our Obligation to Love, and Charity; or ever excuse the least degree of Hatred, and Malice, and Violence; much less of Barbarity and Cruelty. Nay, how can it possibly be thought by any Christians, that a Religion which lays such Stress upon Peace, and Love; which dwells so eternally upon them; which was founded in Love, and so manifestly designed for the propagating and establishing Good-nature in the World: How can it be imagined, that there is any thing in this Religion, that can give them occasion to hate, or disturb, or persecute, any of their Brethren? Unless they can think that it self is so framed as to destroy its own Design; to oppose its own main End, and Purpose; and to dissolve the Obligation of its own Precepts. These things are inconsistent, and too absurd to be fastened upon Jesus Christ, by any who believe him sent of God. And would Men seriously attend to the Design of the Gospel, they could not fix such Absurdities upon it: Religion would be free from the Scandal of being the Occasion of Hatred, and Disturbance, and
Of the Divisions, and Cruelties, Persecution, amongst Men; and the World would be free from the Trouble and Plague of them; Society would be happy; and God would be glorified in the universal Practice of Love and Peace.

Having thus endeavoured to give some Account, by what Men, and by what Methods, Christianity hath been made the Occasion of Quarrels, and Hatred, and Persecutions, in the World; and by what Means it hath been too much verified, that Christ came not to send Peace, but a Sword: I shall now, as I proposed in the last Place,

IV. Make some proper Observations, and draw some useful Inferences, from what hath been said. And,

First, Since it is plain from what hath been before said, that Christianity hath been the Occasion of Disturbances, Hatreds, and Persecutions, in the World; not by means of any thing contained in itself naturally tending this way; but by Means of the Perverseness, and Weakness of Men, and particularly of Christians themselves: Let us learn to distinguish between Christianity, and Christians; and not blame the one, for the Faults of the other. Were there any thing in the Design or Doctrine of the Gospel, naturally tending to unhinge and confound the World; it ought in
in reason to lie under the Imputation. But it seemed ought not to suffer under such a Scandal, if it be it self wholly free from such a Tendency. Notwithstanding this, it hath fared with Christianity, as it hath done with many other Professions: The Faults of those who have professed it, have reflected Shame, and devolved an ill Name, upon it, whilst it utterly dis- countenances, and absolutely forbids, those very Faults.

Men take it usually very ill, in the Affairs of this World, that any Profession or Calling amongst them, should suffer Disgrace, and fall in the good Esteem of other Men, for the sake of the Crimes, and ill Behaviour, of some of those who pretend to belong it: And they always argue, that it is the most unjust thing in the World, it should do so, unless it can be shewn, that it does command, or encourage, any such Practices; much more, when it condemns, and threatens Punishment to them. And yet they scruple not to deal by the Christian Religion after the manner they think it hard their own Secular Professions should be dealt with; and draw up an heavy Accusation against that, made up of a long Catalogue of the Crimes of its Professors.

Far be such unreasonable Proceedings from all who pretend to judge reasonably. Blame not the Christian Religion for what it most un- willingly,
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willingly, and against its own Injunctions, is

forced to be the Cause of; but blame the Per-

verseness of those, who, wittingly, and will-

lingly, oblige it to be an Instrument to their

Purposes. Inveigh not against a Religion, which is framed to conquer Mens Passions: Bnt inveigh against the Passions of those, who will not suffer it to conquer them; but press Religion itself into the Service, of them. Say not, that Christianity is not good, and of beneficial Influence upon the Happiness of the World: But say, that Men will not suffer it to shew its Power upon them; that Men will not bear to be, what That would have them to be. Be not ready to be scandalized at the Gospel, because it hath thus sent, not Peace, but a Sword upon the Earth: But be offended at those who have brought this Evil to pass, solely for their own Worldly Interest; in order to promote their own wicked Ends, and to satisfy their own private Views. Wo be to the World because of Offenses, for it must needs be that Offenses come; but wo to that Man by whom they come. It must needs be, that the Passions and Wickedness of Men will bring forth Variance, and Disturbance, in the World: And this will reflect a Dishonour upon the Religion itself, under which they hide themselves. But Wo to those Men who are the proper Cause of this Unhappiness to their Fellow-

Creatures;
Creatures; and of this Objection against the Gospel.

I shall only here add one Observation, that it cannot be a tolerable ground of Offence against Religion, that something in it hath been turned to evil Purposes, and to the Disquiet of Mankind; because this is really an Argument, that it is in itself good: It being certain, that the better any thing is, the more willing are designing Men to hide their main Designs under the Cover of it; and the more inclined to use it as an Instrument to make the World about them the more readily fall in with their Measures.

This leads me, Secondly, to observe from what hath been said, how much the best Things may be abused; and to what ill Purposes the Wickedness and Weakness of Men, can turn the most excellent Institutions of God himself. In his Dealings with Men, Almighty God doth not actuate their Wills, or Resolutions, with an irresistible Arm; but proposes to them sufficient Arguments to receive what he offers them, and sufficient Assistance to perform what he commands: Still leaving to them a Place for Reward, if they submit to him; or of Punishment, if they do not. Here we have an Instance (an almost incredible, and very surprizing Instance) of the strange Perverseness of human Nature, and the Ingratitude.
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Serm. tude of Men to the Love of God. He, in

II. Mercy, proposes a Revelation to them, per-
fectly qualified to make them easy here, as
well as happy hereafter. Some not only re-
ject it themselves, but hate, and persecute,
and extirpate, those who preach it, and propose
it to them. Others, indeed, receive it, and
profess it: But, instead of conforming their
Temper and Lives, to its Precepts; and
studying the Advantage, and Happiness, of
the World they live in, they presently turn
their Thoughts upon what private Advantages
they can make of it; what account they can
make it turn to; what there is in it; for their
Ambition, or Covetousness, or Revenge, to
employ in their Service; what there is in it
proper for them to work with, in order to
raise themselves, and depress others.

Thus have the wicked Part of the World
turned into Poison, and Ruine, what was de-
signed for their Health, and Strength; and
converted into a common Plague, and Disturb-
ance, what was exactly qualified to establish,
and confirm, human Society in Quiet, and
Happiness. But whither at length will the
Perverseness of Men proceed, when so sacred,
and useful, a thing hath not been able to
withstand it? For what can be thought of,
that is more truly qualified for other, and
better Purposes; for the universal Interest, and
Peace,
fally imputed to Christianity.

Peace, of the World, than the Christian Religion? What more worthy of God to reveal; or of Man to receive, and practise? And yet, what hath been ever more abused; or perverted to worse, and more detestable Purposes? But this, as it shews us the perverse Tendency of human Nature, when it is once debauched by worldly Principles, and drawn aside from the Paths of strict Virtue: So it leads us,

Thirdly, to consider what an Account some Men have to make: and what a Punishment They have waiting for them, who are guilty of so unpardonable an Abuse of God's Mercy in the Dispensation of the Gospel. Invain do Those who are the proper Causes of these unhappy Consequences of the Christian Religion, think to lie hid, or to escape free, with all the private Advantages they procure to themselves. Invain doth the Atheist, who puts the Guise of Religion upon what He undertakes, flatter himself with the Hopes of Security, and Impunity. Invain do the Sceptics, and Irreligious Men, who colour over their Designs with something taken from Christianity, laugh inwardly at the Multitude, whom they have deceived with these Pretenses. Almighty God sees it all: And knows the unfaithful Turnings and Windings of their Hearts: And treasuries up all, against the Day of Accounts: And then, what Punishment can we believe too great,
Of the Divisions, and Cruelties,

To them belongs the Guilt of greater Ingratitude, that can be expressed in Words; the Guilt of perverting an Institution from the Design of God, to the Purposes of the Devil; from the Purposes of Union and Quiet, to the Purposes of Division and Unhappiness. To them belongs the Guilt of scandalizing many against the Christian Religion: The Guilt of bringing a Disgrace upon it; and of recommending that to the Hatred and Aversion of many in the World, which, if it had not been for such professed Christians, might have made a lasting good Impression upon them, and have prevailed with them to the eternal Salvation of their Souls.

These Men indeed at present cannot be disturbed at the Thoughts of this: Because they can have no Sense of what they do not believe. And that they do not believe this, is plain from their Behaviour. For how can they pervert and abuse Religion to their own wicked Purposes; if they believe any thing of the Punishments it threatens, and the Terrors it proposes? But this Security, and false Peace, will not last for ever. Death will put a Stop to all their Projects: And after Death comes the Judgment; the Judgment before an All-knowing and Almighty Judge; One that cannot be imposed upon, and cannot be resisted; and
and One, who will certainly punish them according to their Works. *They have their Reward* here, if their Pretenses take, and their false Colours delude the World, for a while, at present: But the Scene will quickly change, from a State of Design and Hypocrisy, into a State of that Misery, which hath been denounced, and will certainly be executed, upon Hypocrites. There are some sort of Hypocrites, who do some Service and Credit to Religion, if they be never discovered by Men: But these are a sort of Hypocrites, the Consequence of whose Hypocrisy is as fatal to Christianity, as the most open and profligate Wickedness. For their Hypocrisy, and Pretense to a regard to something in Religion, tends visibly to unhinge the World; and, in its Consequences, brings a perpetual Scandal upon the Religion they profess, by prostituting it to the Service of vile Lusts, and Passions; by procuring great Temporal Advantages to Themselves, and numberless Miseries to Others. Such as these must not expect the Punishment only of ordinary Hypocrites: But somewhat as extraordinary in the Reward of their Hypocrisy, as that hath been Extraordinary in its mischievous Influences upon the World, and its Disservice to Religion.

*Fourthly,* Since this is the Way of bad Men; and Religion, and the Church, are of-
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Of the Divisions, and Cruelties,
Truth of it by our Example. Enough of Persecution, and Violence, and Hatred, hath been founded on Religion. Designing Men have cheated the World long enough: And long enough hath the Gospel lain under the Scandal of the Vices of others; and of encouraging those Passions which it came to tame. It is time now for Christians to consider that their Business is Peace; and their Religion Love: And that Christianity is sufficiently qualified to make them taste of Happiness, even here below, if they do not themselves hinder it. Let us remember this: And think, if we can be too careful to do our Parts towards the retrieving the Good name of Religion; and the restoring it to its primitive and original Design.
We are this Day called upon by Authority, to celebrate before God the Accession of our Gracious Queen to the Throne of these Kingdoms: A Queen, whose admirable Prudence and Conduct; whose tender Care of all Her Subjects, and hearty Concern for their common Interest, have made Her the Delight of Her People, and given us abundant Reason to come before the Presence of God with Thanksgiving. And that we may pursue the true Design of this Day's Solemnity, without the Mixture of the least
A Sermon upon the Day, &c. 47

least Indecency, or of anything that may be displeasing to Almighty God; I design to offer some Considerations, which seem to me proper, and expedient for the end of our present Assembly: That we may neither shew our selves unthankful for the Blessing we truly enjoy under the happy Government of such a Princess; nor express our Thankfulness for them after an improper, or unbecoming manner. It would be base and unworthy in us, not to endeavour to make ourselves sensible of our own Happiness, in order to our offering the Thanks that are due to Almighty God, and to our paying the Acknowledgments, and Returns we owe to that Wisdom which now presides and governs in this Nation: And on the other hand, it would be much more unworthy of Men, and of Christians, to express our Resentments of the Blessings of this Day, after such a manner as is not agreeable to a true Sense of them, or doth not suit with the Solemnity of our Appearance before God. It being my Design, therefore, to guard against both these Evils, I beg leave to mention to you as well the improper, as proper ways of celebrating this Day; that so we may take care to avoid the One, and chuse only the Other. And,

I. I shall
I. I shall but just put you in mind, in general, that all manner of Vice, and Wickedness, is utterly inconsistent with such Solemnities; and that the smallest degrees of Intemperance, Extravagance, and Debauchery, little become such a Day as this. It is an unpardonable Contradiction, to express our Gratitude to Almighty God by forgetting his Laws, and violating his Commandments; and an unaccountable Method of Thanksgiving, to affront and disobey our great Benefactor: And yet it is but too observable, especially on such Festivals as relate to the Civil Estate of the Kingdom, that many think they cannot appear joyful enough without casting off all regard to Sobriety, and letting loose the Reins to Intemperance. But all such Joy as disdains the Bounds of Religion, and Virtue, degenerates into Madness: And whilst it seems to express a Sense of God's Favours, and a Love to our Country, it is, in Truth, the greatest Demonstration of our Insensibility of the one, and our Enmity to the other; putting a stop to the gracious Design of future Mercies, and helping only to treasure up Wrath against the Day of Wrath. There being, therefore, nothing so incongruous and absurd, as to express a Thankfulness to God by wicked Actions; and a Love to our Country, by contributing to the Debauchery, and Ruine
Queens Accession to the Crown.

II. With a more peculiar Relation to this Day, I cannot but observe, (and I hope without Offence to any) that it seems disagreeable to a true Sense of the Mercy of this Day, to celebrate the Accession of Her present Majesty to the Crown, with Reflections; and Satyr, upon the Memory of Her Royal Predecessor. It is the only Thing that casts a Shadow over the Brightness of this Day, that We could not enjoy an Excellent Princess, without being deprived of an Excellent Prince; that the same Day, which began the Happy Reign of our great, and good, Queen, put a Period to the useful, and invaluable, Life of a great, and good, King; that the same Hour which demanded Acclamations of Joy for the one, demanded Tears of Piety and Gratitude, for the other. Never was there a greater, and more dubious, Contest known: between Grief and Joy, than on this Day: For never was there a Reign ended, of more beneficial Influence upon these Nations, than that which this Day ended; and never was there a Reign begun, from which we could promise our Selves a greater Progress towards Happiness, than we have
A Sermon upon the Day of

SERM. have already experienced from that which this

III. Day began. If therefore, it were on any Acc-
count allowable to contaminate a Day of Joy
with any Marks of Grief; surely it might be
allowed to shed a Tear upon the Memory of a
Prince, to whom, under God, we owe the
Enjoyment of all we possess. And methinks,
such a Tribute to his Name might be thought
even an Honour paid to this Day, on which
We should not now be Celebrating the Acces-
son of an Excellent Queen to the Throne,
had not He first sustained the Shock of our
Enemies, and settled us upon that Foundation,
which we, now think of with so much Plea-
ture, and Security. Especially, since the car-
rying our Thoughts backward, can only serve
to raise our Thankfulness to Almighty God,
that, after He had deprived us of a Life, on
which the Fate of Europe seemed, in human
Appearance, to depend, He was pleased to
seat upon the same Throne a Princess so wise;
so skilled in all the Rules of good Govern-
ment; and so regardful of the true Interest of
Her People, that Her Reign hath hitherto
seemed only a glorious Continuance of the for-
mer.

Nothing indeed, can be more incongruous
to the Duty of this Day, than to persecute the
Memory; or to rake into any supposed Mis-
takes, and Mismanagements; or to fix any
the Queen's Accession to the Crown.

Blot upon the Reputation, of Him, by whom only it is, that this Day bears those Characters of Joy it hath now put on. And methinks, if nothing else; if neither Honour, nor Gratitude to our late King; yet Respect, and Veneration for our present Queen, if it be real, should secure His Name from Reproaches, who laid the Foundation of her Reign, and her Glories. Her Throne is settled upon the same Foundation, on which His was fixed: And can it be a proper Method of exalting Hers with Honour, to throw down His with Insignificance? Upon Her Accession to the Crown, She Her self styled Him, in an august Assembly, the great Support not only of these Kingdoms, but of all Europe: And can it become Her Day to contradict that glorious Character? Or can it be accounted an Honour to Her, to deny the Truth of her own solemn Words? And ever since She ascended the Throne, it hath been her Glory to pursue the Cause of her great Predecessor; to insist in the Paths which he had troden before Her; and to oppose the same common Adversary with the same Zeal, and Concern. How injurious, therefore, must it prove to the Glories of the One, to depress, and lessen the Glories of the Other? I would not willingly give leave to too severe a Censure: But there is too much Reason to fear that the same Persons, who
A Sermon upon the Day of 

S E R M. can solemnize this Day with... for the like Invectives, against the present Queen; if She shall continue unmoveably to pursue the same hated Maxims of Government, and to speak too often, and too earnestly, of Peace and Moderation.

But if such Persons think that the Glory of so great, and good, a Queen cannot be raised to a sufficient height, without depressing the Glory of her Predecessor; this is, of all others, the greatest Indignity they could offer to her self, and to her Day. For it is one principal Reason for our present Thankfulness, that our Excellent Queen abounds in so many Graces, and so many noble Accomplishments; is adorned with so great a degree of Conduct, and Wisdom; and appears so admirably fitted for Government, that She will ever shine illustriously by her own Light; that her native Excellencies will add a perpetual Grace to her Name; and that She stands not in need of any such poor, and inglorious, Artifices, to endear her to her People, or to make her Story full of Honour in future Ages. She possesseth what is sufficient to recommend Her to the Affections of all her good Subjects; and owes her Glories to her self, and not to the Defects and Faults of Others.

But it is no great Wonder that so great an
Abuse can be put upon this Day, since we find that some have their Understandings so strangely turned, that they cannot imagine a Veneration for Her present Majesty, consistent with a Respect to the Memory of Her Predecessor. I speak this with relation to such amongst us, as are not content with professing themselves hearty Friends, and Well-wishers, to that Queen who began Her Reign on this Day; but are often insinuating, after some manner or other, that Her secret Enemies are many, and especially amongst those, who profess the highest Respect to the Memory of Her Predecessor. This seems to me so hard a Censure, and so little deserved, that I care not to speak as severely of it, as I justly might: But I must say, that I think it manifest, on the contrary, that those who were truly Friends to the late Government, cannot be truly Enemies to this; and that those, who were hearty Lovers of the late King, can never, without renouncing, or contradicting, their Principles, hate, or revile a Queen, who succeeds Him in the same glorious Designs; who hath the same Regard to the Rights and Liberties of Her Subjects, and the same Zeal against the great Adversary of both. We know, many who help to spread this Evil Report of their Brethren, are publick, and professed, Enemies to the present happy Establishment. It is wonderful that
They should think themselves of all others the fittest Persons to give Information of Friends, and Enemies, to a Government which they cannot themselves wish well to. But it is much more wonderful, that Any who study the Preservation of the Government, and the Interest of the present Governor, can join in a Censure, which cannot but raise the strongest Jealousies against Those who have not deserved them; and greatly increase those mutual Animosities, which are already too violent amongst Us. But I have suffered myself to be carried beyond my first Design, in Opposition to what seems contrary to Decency, and Gratitude, and to the Occasion of this Day. And I shall only add, that all that I have now said hath proceeded, not only from a great Regard to the Memory of our late King, which I am not ashamed to profess: but from a profound Veneration for our present Queen, whose Honour appears to me deeply concerned in it.

III. Having taken Notice of the Abuses of this Day, I come now to observe, that it is one very proper part of our present Duty to make ourselves sensible of the Mercy of God to us in the Accession of our Excellent Queen to the Crown; lest we should seem to draw near to him with our Lips, but to have our Hearts, far from him, whilst we pretend to commemorate so great a Blessing before him.
We need not doubt, but that, if our great, and common, Adversary had been to wish what, of all Things, He could have thought most conducive to the compassing the Ends of his boundless Ambition; He would have wished a Period to the Life of our late King, who had so long stood resolute against his constant Attempts upon the Rights and Liberties of Europe, and made it his whole Employment to prevent the Success of his Mischief as fast as He himself could contrive it. And we need not doubt but that, upon the Death of such a Prince, (so able, and so resolved, to oppose Him) He flattered Himself with a Train of uninterrupted Successes; and a Series of Future Conquests and Triumphs; and imagined all Things bowing their Necks to his Authority; and no Resistance but what He could despise, and easily break through. But Almighty God, who sees not as Man sees, nor judges as Man judges, quickly taught Him to think otherwise. By his good Providence our Queen was peaceably seated upon the Throne; inspired with the same Zeal against the common Enemy, that filled every Hour of the Life of Her Predecessor; and quickly began to shew such Signs of Prudence, and Wisdom, and Conduct, as could not but convince Him how vain, and groundless his Confidences were. Abroad, Affairs have been managed with that singular,
A Sermon upon the Day of

III.

and wonderful Prudence, which hath drawn after it such an Instance of Success, as hath been seldom known in History. At Home, left the unhappy Temper of this Nation should give too much Advantage to the Enemy, universal Love, and Peace, and mutual Benevolence, have been recommended, and cultivated. Great and signal Acts of Piety and Charity have been performed, to invite down the Blessing of Heaven: And we have been taught by the highest Example, our Duty, and our Interest. Upon all which Accounts certainly we have the greatest Reason to pay our hearty Acknowledgments to Almighty God, and to come before his Presence with Thanksgiving. For by his Providence Princes reign, He laid the first Foundation of all their Accomplishments, and all their Designs. He orders the Scene of Affairs so, as that all the Success and Happiness that follows is owing originally to his infinite Wisdom, and Goodness. If therefore, He hath been good to us after so extraordinary a manner; and disposed Things so, in this Critical Juncture, that we must all acknowledge, we want neither Conduct and Courage in our Armies Abroad, nor Wisdom and Temper in our Counsels at Home; let us be sensible of so great a Blessing as the Accession of a Queen to the Throne, who so gloriously maintains the Cause delivered down to
the Queen's Accession to the Crown.

to Her; so wisely governs at Home, and so successfully wars Abroad.

And it will increase our Sense of the Mercy of God towards us in her Accession to the Crown, to consider that happy Constitution, and Frame of Government, which is by this preserved, and confirmed, to Us. She is the first upon the Throne, since the Settlement of the Succession in the Protestant Line: and She hath demonstrated already to the whole World her Hatred of Tyranny and Slavery, and her tender Regard to Liberty. So that we may say, we owe to her Reign the Confirmation, and Establishment, of our happy Estate. Happy indeed, if we look Abroad, and compare it with the miserable Estate of such as are under no Law but Arbitrary Will; and know not what it is truly to possess any Thing; or so much as to enjoy the Worship and Religion they approve. We can have no proper Notion, at this distance, of what hath been suffered, throughout Europe, from the ungovernable Excess of Power, and the burning Zeal of Popery. When we felt in ourselves but the Approaches towards what is known in other Lands, there was hardly a Man to be found that did not disdain the unnatural Principles of a servile Obedience: Nay, many of Those who afterwards returned in their Hearts to Egypt, permitted Nature to have so much force
A Sermon upon the Day of

force upon them, as that they invited Relief, and Assistance; and themselves laid the Scene of our Deliverance. And could we see what others at this Moment feel, under the Influences of Ungoverned Power, and Bigotry, we could not but retain a just Value for our own Happiness; and a just Sense of the Favour of God, in granting us a Queen as truly concerned for the Rights, and Liberties, and Religion, of her Subjects, as her Subjects themselves could wish. It is an invaluable Blessing, and above all the Grandeur, and Magnificence of Arbitrary Power, that we can dare to say, we enjoy any Thing, and have a Title to it; that we can demand it of any that lay violent Hands upon it, and can call for legal Redress of the Injuries of the greatest Persons amongst us. And it is an incomparable Happiness, that we enjoy the Religion we approve; that we can meet undisturbed for the Worship of God, and freely exercise our common Devotions. And what is to be seen answerable to this; in any Country, where there is not the Liberty of Men's Persons, and Estates, and Religion? Nothing but a mock-outside of Greatness (falling so called) in the Prince, loved only by Slaves; but hated, and abhorred, and perhaps marked out to Destruction, if there remain in Any a Sense of Freedom, and of the Dignity of Human Nature? What can com-
the Queen's Accession to the Crown.

penfate the Lofs of fo singular an Happiness as we enjoy, and how great should our Sense of it be? The peculiar Glory of the Crown of these Realms is this, that it is enriched with all those Powers which are necessary for the Defence of the Subject, and the true Greatness of the Prince; and that it wants only Those that tend to the Destruction of Liberty, and the Unhappiness of those that wear it. As therefore, it must be the Interest of the Crown itself, not to affect New, and Illegal Powers; so it is manifestly the Interest of every Subject, that the Crown should never be robbed of the Powers it now possesses. For whenever this comes to pass, it may be found as great an Injury to the just Liberties of the Subjects of this Kingdom, as Arbitrariness in the Crown itself. For then the happy Balance is broken, that keeps all Things in an even State: And such an Alteration in so nice a Constitution must needs give a terrible Shock to the Publick Happiness. And I may add, that Experience hath shewn, that nothing is so agreeable to the Welfare of these Kingdoms, as the antient Constitution preserved unviolated; and that whoever have endeavoured to break in upon it, either by infringing the Liberties of the Subject, or by too great Encroachments upon the legal Province of the Prince, have equally failed of Success; have never been able to establish their own private

Scheme,
Sermon upon the Day of Scheme, but fallen a Sacrifice to their own Im-
prudence. This being, therefore, our peculiar Happiness; and an Happiness which this 
Day confirmed to us; it becomes us this Day to fill our Minds with a Sense of it, and to ex-
press our Thankfulness for it. But last of all,

IV. If we be truly thankful to Almighty God for so excellent a Governor as this Day 
ascended the Throne; it is most agreeable to this Solemnity, to kindle in our Breasts a strong 
Resolution, and a zealous Desire, of making Her a Great, and Glorious Queen. Not by 
prostituting our Rights and Liberties to Her Will; (an Offer which She hath Greatness 
-enough to disdain;) for that would be to give Her only the external Appearance of Gran-
deur: but by contributing all we can to Her true Happiness, and Satisfaction. To 
make our-selves a happy People by the Universal Practice of all that is virtuous and prais-
eworthy; This is truly to make our Queen happy. For how can it be that the Ruler of 
a Religious People should not be happy? And 
such a Ruler, as knows the Value and Importance of Virtue, and Religion? But if You 
would be more particular, She Herself hath directed You to a Method, in which you can-
ot fail of making Her an happy and glorious Queen. Pursue the Paths of Peace, and 
Union;
Union; Love, and Concord; avoid all Quarrels, and mutual Difensions; entertain Candour, and good Nature, and a true Christian Moderation: And as this will make You an Happy People, so You have Her own Royal Word for it, This will make Her an Happy Queen. Indeed She seems to have ascended the Throne in order to compose the unhappy Heats and Violences amongst us: And if Her Hand do not heal our miserable Breaches, I fear no other may have the like Advantages; or any Possibility of attempting it without raising Jealousies, and Passions, and meeting with insuperable Difficulties. She hath not been wanting, on all Occasions, to make this the Subject of Her publick Conversations with Her Subjects: And, as if nothing delighted Her more than the Thought of Planting, and Establishing Peace amongst Her People, She constantly dwells upon it, and is ever inculcating it. Peace was the Subject of that last most affectionate Speech, which was the Legacy, as it were, of Her Predecessor to these distracted Kingdoms: And She hath, with great Zeal and Earnestness, pursued the same Divine Subject. And can it become those who pretend any Love to Her Majesty, to neglect all Her passionate Entreaties, and instead of Peace, to sow the Seeds of Discord in the Land? Far be this from any such! If they love not
not the good Work of Peace inwardly; yet, let the Respect they profess for that great Name which gives Credit to it, engage Them not to oppose and discourage it; left, while they profess a Veneration for their QUEEN, they should seem to renounce it all in their Actions.

To conclude all, Let us value our Happiness in such a QUEEN, and pay the profoundest Respect to so much Merit; Let us assist Her with all Readiness against the common Adversary of Her Throne, and our own Peace; Let us make Her the QUEEN of a Religious and United People; and Let us pray to God long to preserve Her a Publick Blessing to these Kingdoms, and the Guardian of the Liberties of all Europe, and finally to recompense the Cares and Labours of Her earthly Crown, with a Crown of eternal Glory in the World to come.
SERMON IV.

Preached before the Right Honourable the Lord-Mayor, &c. September 29, 1705.

ROMANS xiii. 1.
Let every Soul be Subject to the Higher Powers.

In the seven first Verses of this Chapter, the Duty of Subjects to Persons in Authority is plainly laid down; and the End of all Government, and the Duty of all Governors, plainly implied. And it is my Design to draw some useful and proper Observations from what the Apostle hath here delivered upon these two Heads.

I. With respect to Governors.

II. With respect to Subjects.

I. With respect to Governors. And here,

1. The first Thing I observe, is, That the Apostle declares that they are ordained of God, ver. 1. That their Authority is the Ordinance of God, ver. 2. That they are the Ministers of God, ver. 4, 6. And since an Apostle hath so far
Sermon preached far concerned himself with the matter of Government, as to say this; it cannot be amiss in Us, who are to be guided by his Directions, to examine, in what Sense this must be understood. Now, one would think it next to impossible that any should understand these, and the like Expressions, to signify that God had himself appointed, for all the Kingdoms of the Earth, one particular Form of Government; and that all Deviations from that, or Alterations in it, are unlawful, as they are Transgressions of the positive Institution of Almighty God. For I may, I think, venture to say, that there is not the least Footstep of this Divine Institution in all the Accounts we have of the Dealings of Providence with Mankind; nor the least Ground for such an Opinion from History, or the Reason of the Thing. And in the Words of the Apostle now before us, supposing he had confined them to the Form of Government then in being at Rome, can any one imagine that he intended to declare that the Roman Emperors, who at first manifestly usurped and maintained their Authority by force of Arms, had their Commission immediately from God? Can any one imagine that He would not have said the same Things, had the Republic continued in all its former Rights, and antient Liberty? Or that He would not have
before the Lord Mayor.

have pressed Obedience and Submission upon the Subject, from the same Topics? Nay, that he meant this of all sorts of Supreme Powers, and of Magistrates in all Forms of Government, is evident from this, which he makes, as it were, the Ground of all these Forms of Expression, ver. 1. That there is no Power but of God: Which certainly extends equally to all who are possessed of any sort of Power, to be exercised for the Good of the Public, and to all Species of Governments. So that it cannot be meant here of any one Form, that it is of God, in any other Sense, but that in which it is true of all. And it being true of all, in no other Sense but this, That no Persons are possessed of any Governing Power for the Good of Human Society, but by the Providence of God, and by his Will either permitting or decreeing it: It can in no other Sense be here meant of any one sort of Governors, that they have their Authority from God. It is his Will certainly, that there should be Government in Human Societies, for the Peace, and Happiness, of Mankind. And so all Governors, of what sort ever, may be said to be ordained by God, because it is his Will that there should be Governors. They may be stiled the Ministers of God, because they act his Pleasure whilst they do the
A Sermon preached

SERM. the Duty of good Governors. And their Authority may be said to be the Ordinance of God, because it is his Will that some Persons should be vested with Authority, for the good of Human Society. And thus St. Peter seems to understand this Matter, in his first Epistle, Chap. ii. 13, where he expressly calls the King, and Governors under Him, by the Name of an Human Ordinance, because the particular Forms of Government are of Human Determination: And makes them no otherwise of Divine Appointment, but by saying, ver. 15. That it is the Will of God they should be obeyed. Nay, it is evident that what St. Paul faith here, is spoken of all in Power and Authority; of the lowest Degree of Magistrates, as well as the highest Prince upon Earth. They are all equally ordained by God; their Authority equally the Ordinance of God; and themselves equally the Ministers of God. But these Expressions cannot be meant of Inferior Magistrates, in any other Sense, but as they are by God's Providence possessed of Power and Authority; and as it is God's Will they should be obeyed in the due Execution of their Office: And therefore, cannot be meant of the Highest, in any other.

2. We may observe that it is declared here, That the sole End and Business of all Govern-
before the Lord Mayor.

ing Power, is to consult the good of human society, by maintaining Peace and Virtue in it, ver. 3. Rulers, i.e. those who faithfully perform the Office of Rulers, are not a Terror to good Works, but to the evil. And ver. 4. He, that is, One who is truly a Governor, is the Minister of God to thee for Good, and the Minister of God likewise in another Sense, viz. A Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doeth Evil. And ver. 6. These Rulers are said to be continually attending upon this very thing. In which account of Governors it is not to be supposed that the Apostle meant, that All of them did always perform this good Part; but that this was their great Business, and the only End of their Institution, as He makes it the Ground of the Obedience to be paid to them. You see here, that He doth not give an account of the Princes and Governors of this World, as of Persons exalted by the immediate Direction of Heaven, to a heighth above their Neighbours, to be Arbitrators, at their own Pleasures, of the Lives and Fortunes of their Fellow-Creatures, and to receive the servile Homage of whole Nations; but as of Persons called by the Providence of God to a difficult and laborious Task; not to live in Ease and Delicacy, but to watch Day and Night for the good of that Society in which they
A Sermon preached

they preside; to be distinguished indeed from others by the Ensigns of Greatness and Authority, but this only to make them more capable of serving the Public, and consulting the Interest of the Whole. Their Office indeed is a glorious Office: But the Glory of it doth not consist in the outward Majesty of the Governor, and the Servility of the Subject; but in the Happiness, and Peace, that is derived from the Cares and Labours of the Supreme Head, to all the Members of the Body Politic. And that Governor who contradicts the Character here laid down by St. Paul; who is not a Terror to evil Works, but to good; who is not the Minister of Good to the Virtuous, and of Vengeance to the Wicked only; and who is not continually watching for the Good and Happiness of human Society, is not the Governor whom St. Paul means in this Place, or to whom He here presseth Obedience; And much less, if he manifestly act contrary to the only End of his Institution; and endeavour to ruine the Happiness of that Society over which he is placed. And this may serve to explain yet farther, in what Sense these higher Powers are from God; viz. As they act agreeably to his Will, which is, that they should promote the Happiness and Good of human Society, which St. Paul all along supposes them to do.

And
And consequently, when they do the contrary, they cannot be said to be from God, or to act by his Authority, any more than an inferior Magistrate may be said to act by a Prince's Authority, whilst he acts directly contrary to his Will. Having thus laid before you what the Apostle hath here delivered, with respect to Governors; I come now, as I proposed,

II. To consider what is here said, With respect to Subjects, and their Duty. And,

1. The Duty of Submission, and Non-resistance, is laid down in such absolute Terms, that many have been induced from hence to think, That the Christian Religion denies the Subject all Liberty of redressing the greatest Grievances. Thus, ver. 2. Whosoever therefore resiñeth the Power, resiñeth the Ordinance of God; and they that resiñ shall receive to themselves Damnation; And, ver. 5. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for Wrath, but also for Conscience sake; i. e. Not only for Fear of Punishment, but out of a Sense of Duty. Those who do not examine into the Foundation upon which the Apostle builds this Doctrine, and into the Whole of what he delivers, may indeed be apt to think, that in these Words there is little Relief allowed to Subjects, tho' lying under the greatest Oppressions imaginable:
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And yet methinks, on the other hand, if the Apostle had done nothing but enforced the Duty of Obedience upon the Subject, it would be reasonable to judge, from the Nature of the Thing, and the Absurdities of the contrary, that He meant this only as a general Rule in all ordinary Cases, rather than to imagine that He should absolutely conclude whole Nations under Misery and Slavery without hopes of Redress. But I observe,

2. That the Apostle doth himself so explain his own Doctrine in this very Place, by the Reasons he gives for this Obedience in Subjects, and the Account he gives of the Duty of Governors, as to leave Subjects all the Liberty that they can reasonably desire. For tho' he doth at first press upon them in unlimited Words, an Obedience and Non-resistance to the higher Powers; yet he manifestly afterwards limits this Obedience to such Rulers, as truly answer the End of their Institution. The Reason He gives for Submission is this, ver. 3. For Rulers are not a Terror to good Works, but to the Evil; and ver. 4. Their Business is declared to be the Execution of Wrath upon him that doeth Evil; and the Necessity of Submission is inferred from hence, ver. 5. Wherefore ye must needs be Subject, not only for Wrath, but for Conscience sake: that is, it is your Duty to obey the Supreme
before the Lord Mayor.

Prime Power, because the great End of all human Authority is the Good of the Public; that honest Men may be protected in their Properties; and all Violence, and Disorder, and Unhappiness in human Society be prevented and punished; and because it is your Duty to promote that good End. Now, this being the Argument of the Apostle; all that we can possibly collect from his Injunctions in this Place is this, That it is the indispensable Duty of Subjects to submit themselves to such Governors as answer the good End of their Institution; to such Rulers as He here describes; such as are not a Terror to good Works, but to the evil; such as promote the publick Good, and are continually attending upon this very Thing. To these the profoundest Reverence, and the lowest Submission is due, as to the greatest Blessings a Society can enjoy; and Resistance to these is a most unpardonable Sin. Thus far the Apostle's Reasoning holds, and it holds equally under all Forms of Government. For the End of all Government is one and the same, whether it be lodged in the Breast and Will of a single Person, or in the united Counsels and Decrees of many. And if the End of it, which is the public Happiness of Mankind, be truly answered; all Disobedience, and Resistance, is inexcusable.
The Argument indeed which the Apostle first uses for this Obedience in Subjects, seems distinct from this, viz. that their Governours are of God, and ordained of God, and the Ministers of God. But having shewn that the Meaning of this can only be, that it is his Will that they enjoy this Power for the public Good, it will only follow from hence, that therefore they are to be obeyed in the due Execution of his Will. As far as they deflect from his Will, so far they lose their Titles to these Declarations of the Apostle; and so far are they excluded out of his Argument, as He himself afterwards explains it. It is a good Argument, These Persons are the Ministers of God for the Happiness of human Society; Therefore, they must be obeyed. But it will not follow from hence, that Obedience is due to them, if they destroy, and ruine, the Happiness of human Society.

But let us suppose, that they are of God in the highest Sense possible; that by his immediate Direction, They particularly are appointed to Rule and Govern in the Kingdoms of this World. Well, let us then consider, for what End and Purpose, they are appointed to this Honour: And that, it is agreed on all Hands, is the public Happiness of Mankind. I cannot see, even upon this Supposition, that an unlimited
before the Lord Mayor.

mitted Submission is due to them. For they were placed in Authority for this good End only; and they had Power given them by God for this Purpose only. If therefore, They use their Power to any other Purpose; to the Hurt and Prejudice of human Society, as they may do, unless they are immediately directed, and their Wills forced by God himself; They act not in any such Instances by Authority from God; but contrary to his Will: Nor can they, in such Instances, be called his Vicegerents, without the highest Profaneness: And therefore to oppose them in such Cases, cannot be to oppose the Authority of God. Nay, a Passive Non-resistance would appear, upon Examination, to be a much greater Opposition to the Will of God, than the contrary: For though He himself, upon the present Supposition, appointed this Person to govern; yet his chief Design in this, being the Good and Happiness of Society; tamely to fit still, and see that entirely ruined and sacrificed to the irregular Will of one Man, seems a greater Contradiction to the Will and Design of God, than any Opposition can be: For it is a tacit Consent to the Ruine and Misery of Mankind, whose publick Peace and Happiness is the sole End of Government; as well, if it be appointed by God himself, as if it be purely of hu-
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SERM. man Institution. But the Apostle makes no
iv. such Supposition as this, but only determines,
that it is the Ordinance of God, that there
should be Governors; and that as long as they
act agreeably to the End of their Institution,
it is a great Sin to disobey, or resist them.
We may judge from what I have said, how
little Ground there is from any thing here de-
ivered by St. Paul, to argue to so unlimited a
Submission as some inculcate. For we see,
he hath his Eye all the Way upon the End of
all Government; and founds his Precepts upon
this Supposition, that the Rulers answer that
good End. If they do not, or if they let
themselves to contradict it by Oppression, Vio-
ence, and Injustice; by invading, and de-
stroying, the public Happiness, and by bringing
on public Miseries; the Apostle seems not to
think of recommending Submission to the Sub-
ject. For whilst he commands Submission,
he puts no Case of Princes acting contrary to
the Purpose of their Institution, and the sole
Business of their Office; much less of Princes
who make an express Contract with their Peo-
ple, and take solemn Oaths to preserve their
Rights and Liberties; and afterwards break
through all these Ties to invade their Happi-
ness. Nor doth he mention any thing of a
Passive Submission in such Cases; but plainly
leaves
leaves Nations to the Dictates of common Sense, and the powerful Law of Self-preservation: And this, under all Forms of Government equally. For the most Arbitrary Prince in the World hath no more Right to make his Subjects Miserable, than the most Limited; though the one may attempt it with greater Aggravations than the other. The former is tied up by the Laws of Nature and Reason, and obliged, by the very End of his Exaltation; as truly as the latter is by written Laws, or by solemn Promise: and Submission to the one, in Instances of Violence and Oppression, is no more due, than Submission to the other. For tho' his Authority in carrying forward the End of his Power, cannot be resisted without the highest Guilt; yet his Power in acting contrary to that End may be opposed without the Shadow of a Crime; nay, with Honour and Glory. He is secure no farther than Force and Power secure him; and what he gets by Violence may be demanded again, and can only be maintained by the same Violence, which first put him in the Possession of it. And as this is true of an absolute Monarch; so is it as true, that, should all who are possessed of Power, in any other Form of Government, consent and agree to enslave the People committed by Providence to their Care,
and to make them miserable; there is nothing in Nature, or in the Christian Religion, that can hinder that People from redressing their Grievances, and from answering the Will of Almighty God, so far as to preserve and secure the Happiness of the public Society.

But some may say, Where then is the great Virtue of Submission to Governors, if it be to be practiced towards none but such as answer the End of their Institution; But it is easy to reply, That there is an indispensible Duty upon all, Subjects, as well as Others, to regard the publick Interest; and if their Submission help to destroy and ruine that, their Submission cannot be a Virtue. It is due to Governors, not for their own sake, but merely for the sake of public Happiness: and therefore, can only be praise-worthy when it joins to promote that; and must degenerate into a Crime, (though it may be accompanied with many Virtues) when it forfakes the View of that, and betrays it into the Hands of Ambition and Violence.

The great Objection against this, though it be all founded upon the Will of God, who sincerely desires the Happiness of publick Societies, is this, That it may give occasion to Subjects to disturb and oppose their Superiors. But certainly, a Rule is not therefore bad, because
because Men may mistake in the Application of it to particular Instances; or because evil Men may, under the Umbrage of it, satisfy their own Passions, and unreasonable Humours; though these latter, as they are disposed to public Disturbances, would certainly find out some other Pretense for their Behaviour, if they wanted this. The contrary Doctrine to what I have been delivering, we know, by an almost fatal Experience, may be very much abused; and yet that is not the Reason why it ought to be rejected, but because it is not true. Every Man is to give an Account for his Sins: And the Guilt of those, who, under any Pretense whatsoever, disturb the Government of such as act the Part of good Rulers, is so great, that there cannot be a stronger Motive than this against Resistance and Opposition to such. For they that resist shall receive to themselves Damnation, is pronounced against such a Resistance; and if Men will not regard such a Declaration, who can help it? The Truth ought not to be concealed, or to suffer in the Opinions of Men, for the sake of such an accidental Inconvenience.

Thus have I endeavoured to give a just Account of what St. Paul hath, in this Chapter, delivered concerning Governors and Subjects. And though some may perhaps be apt to call this
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Sermon. this by the Name of Politics; and to cenfure it as Foreign to our Office, and this Place, (which they are sure to do then only when their own Notions are contradicted;) yet I must declare, that I cannot think it an unbecoming, or even an unnecessary Part, of our Care, to settle the Measures of Christian Duty in all Cases, or to endeavour to give a true Explication of what so great an Apostle hath delivered with some Vehemence, and as a Matter of great Importance. All that I have now attempted, is to explain what an inspired Person wrote: And if this Explication be just, the Censures must light at last upon the Apostle himself; who, I cannot but think, knew very well what became his Office, and what belonged to his Province.

But though I have finished what I at first proposed, yet I still intreat your Patience, whilst I offer to you some farther Considerations not unsuitable to the present Occasion. And these are such as naturally flow from what hath been discoursed concerning the End and Purpose of all Government, whether that of Princes, or that of inferior Magistrates; and will serve to give us a compleat Idea of a good Governor: As,

1. It is highly requisite that all in Authority should be happy in a public Spirit, and a true
Regard to the public Interest. For it being the only End for which they are cloathed with Authority, to serve the Public, and promote the Happiness of That: if they be led by private Interests of their own; if they be Slaves to Covetousness, or Ambition, or Effeminacy; if there be any thing in the World which they have more in their Eye, than the Advantage of human Society; This must warp them extremely from the main Design of their Institution. And, as far as they are tainted with a vicious Self-Interest, so far do they decline from the Dignity of their Character. But when their Breasts are thoroughly fired with a Love to the Public Interest, and a Resolution of prosecuting that; happy is the Nation that obeys such a Prince, and happy the Society that enjoys such a Governor. But,

2. There ought to be also in a Governor a deep Sense of Religion; of the great Importance of Virtue, and of the bad Influence and Malignity of Vice, and Immorality. For since one great End of his Office is the Punishment of those who do Evil, and the Praise of them who do Well: there will be but little Heart to prosecute this, unless there be first a full Persuasion that there is an essential Difference between Good and Evil; that the Practice of all Virtue will make a Nation happy; and
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and the Practife of Vice derive Curses and Ruine upon a People, as well in the Nature of the Thing it self, as in the Decree of Almighty God. A Ruler that firmly believes this, will act his Part with some Zeal and Concern; and it will tenderly affect his Mind, to see his Country likely to be undone by Debauchery: And He will employ his Thoughts Day and Night, how to reform the Manners of Men; or at least, how to put a stop to the Impudence of those who will not be reformed. But particularly,

3. There must be a great Love to Justice, and a great Regard to Peace. The one engages a Governor to do that which is exactly right between Man and Man; and the other influences him to reconcile the contending and quarrelling Parts of Mankind; and soften the Hearts of Men into Love and Friendship. This Justice, which I here speak of, though it must not act blindfold; yet it must be blind to all outward Regards, and all Persons: And nothing of Interest, or of Party, or of personal Respect or Prejudice, ought ever to sway in the Distribution of Rewards and Punishments: Which do but little Service to the Cause of Honesty and Virtue, unless when it is apparent that they are dispensed for the sake of Virtue itself, and not on any base and fordid Account.
Account. And if the strictest Justice should once be disregarded, and unjust Judgments come into use; the great End of Magistracy is perverted, and the Happiness of Society shaken: And every Step this Way would be a Step to public Misery. And then, where there is not a sacred Regard to Peace, there will be no Compasion for the Divisions and Heats of a Nation; and consequently no Advances made towards an universal Love and Friendship: the want of which alone must one time or other bring about the Ruine of a Nation.

4. To all other Qualifications there must be joined a blameless Example. The Reason is, because every thing that tends to promote Religion and Happiness in a Society, is the Concern of all who have Authority in it. Now it is with Those who are to punish Vice, and protect Virtue, just as it is with Those who are to teach the Practice of Virtue, and the Abhorrence of Vice. It is an Observation easy and obvious to every Body, that those who are the Preachers of Righteousness do no great Service to the Cause, but perhaps the contrary, if their Examples unhappily contradict their Precepts. And it is certainly the same with Respect to Those, whose Business it is to punish Vice. If, whilst they punish it in Inferiors, G They
They themselves are known to be guilty of it, the Correction indeed may make the Offender avoid the Light; but it will never make him in Love with Virtue. He will be apt to think, He is punished only because He is Poor; and not considerable enough to be in Office himself: And may be hardened to Vice, whilst He sees Men making use of their Authority in punishing others, only as it were for a Screen to their own greater Indulgence.

You see from hence what a Concern there lies upon all in Authority from the Higheft to the Lowest; that Magiftracy is not a Matter of Pomp and Retinue to attract the Eyes, and raise the Wonder of the Multitude; but a Business of Labour and Difficulty, to be undertaken with Seriousness, and to be managed with the greatest Prudence and Conduct.

It is the invaluable Happiness of this Kingdom, to see all these Qualifications united in its Supreme Governor; who seems to know no greater Satisfaction than what arises from the good Estate of the Publick, and who directs all her Cares, not to make herself Great, but her Subjects Happy. Such an Example, one would think, cannot but influence all who are in Authority under Her, to promote the same good End, the public Happiness. We are in many Things the Envy, as well as the Wonder,
Wonder, of other Nations. Our Liberties still preserved; Our Constitution still happily tempered; and the profession of our Religion still secure. But we want many things to make the Possession of these great Blessings certain and lasting to us; but especially an universal Practice of Virtue, and a Spirit of Peace and Love. It is your great Concern (I speak to all who bear any Office in this great City) to promote the Practice of Virtue, and Peace. The former is discouraged, and endangered, by every public Act of Profaneness and Irreligion: which ought therefore, to be severely punished, lest the Poison should work itself insensibly from some Parts into the whole Body. And the latter is highly endangered by all Men of Passion and Violence; by those who vent such Principles as, in effect, call in question Her Majesty's Title to the Crown; by those who deride and expose the Principles upon which our present Establishment, and all our future Hopes, are founded; and by all whose Business it is to raise mutual Jealousies and Heats amongst us. Such as these, it is too well known, discover themselves every Day in open Light. And shall not others be as ready to preserve the public Happiness, as these Men are to destroy it? Or, is there no Way of redressing such public
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and such destructive Evils? It is a Shame to a Nation not to have good Laws: But it is a much greater Shame to have them, and not to put them in Execution. It is a Shame to a Nation, that there should be any Persons belonging to it, so little sensible of the Happiness it enjoys, as to libel and disturb such a QUEEN, and such a Government: But it is a greater Shame, that no Method should be found of effectually punishing what so highly deserves it. Let it therefore appear, that you are truly sensible of the Nature and End of your Trusts, by your hearty Endeavours to promote the Happiness of the Public. Let a true Regard to that discover itself in all your Proceedings. Let your Examples allure to Virtue, as well as your Punishments deter from Vice. Let your Zeal discover itself against the Enemies of Religion, and of the public Peace. Let it be seen that you bear not the Sword in vain. Thus you will make this City a Praise in the whole Earth, and draw down Blessings from Heaven upon the whole Nation.
The Happiness of the present Establishment, and Unhappiness of absolute Monarchy.

SERMON V.

Preached at the Assizes at Hertford, March 22, 1707-8.

1 Sam. viii. 9.
Now therefore, hearken unto their Voice: Howbeit, yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the King that shall reign over them.

IT is my Design to take occasion from these Words,

I. To lay before you the History recorded in this Chapter.

II. To apply it to Ourselves, and this whole Kingdom, by some proper and useful Observations.

I. I beg leave to lay before you the History recorded in this Chapter: And this will be comprized under the Four following Remarks.

G 3 1. We
The Happiness of the present Establishment,

S E R M. I. We find the Israelites, after all the Miracles wrought by Providence in their behalf, so little sensible of the Difference between Slavery and Liberty, as to betray the greatest Uneasiness under a Government, in which God himself presided, and on all Occasions shewed himself in a peculiar manner their King. The Pretense indeed, was taken from the Wickedness of the Sons of Samuel, who took Bribes, and perverted Judgment, ver. 3, 4, 5: but it is manifest that their chief Design was not to rectify this; but to introduce the Scheme some amongst them had laid, and to indulge their own foolish and weak Desire, of being ruled after the manner of their Neighbours. For, 2. Instead of desiring a Redress of their Grievances, or leaving it to the Wisdom of Almighty God to prescribe a Remedy; they come to his Prophet, peremptorily demanding a King to judge them like all the Nations round about, ver. 5. that is, as appears afterwards, an Absolute Monarch, governing by his single Will, without the Restraint of any Co-ordinate Legislative Powers. The Prophet, in great Uneasiness, applies himself to God. Upon this Occasion therefore, we have the juiciest Reason to expect to know the Thoughts of Almighty God concerning Absolute Monarchy; whether those other Nations were subjected to it by his Original and Immediate Appoint-
Appointment; whether the Lineal Succession of Males ought inviolably to be preserved, upon Pain of incurring his Displeasure; whether he created Thousands of Men to be Slaves for the sake of the outward Grandeur of One, as weak and as mortal as themselves; whether this Form of Government be the greatest Security to the Liberty and Happiness of Subjects; and the like Opinions and Notions embraced by some Persons, since that Time. Now, upon enquiry, we find, 3. That Almighty God is so far from applauding this Form of Government as the Best, or as his own Institution; that he gives by his Prophet a very sad, and lamentable Account of the Miseries and Unhappinesses peculiarly belonging to it, and consequent upon the Establishment of it: Such an Account as must be a Demonstration to all, who have not the most unworthy Notions of Almighty God, that he could have no Original Design of appointing such a Form of Government, sacredly and inviolably to be kept up in any Nation; much less, in all the Nations, of the World. This Account is set before the Israelites from the 10th Verse to the 19th, in which the Prophet doth not intend to infinuate that every particular Absolute Monarch will use his Power after so very ill a manner as is there described; but to paint before their Eyes some of the ma-
The Happiness of the present Establishment, 

ny fore Calamities, which are too probable Consequences upon the Establishment of absolute Monarchy in any Nation: And these may be all summed up in one comprehensive Word, and that is, Slavery. A State opposite to Liberty, and void of Property; in the Description of which, Subjects are here represented as Slaves in their Persons; and their Children, their Possessions, and the Labour of their Hands, forced from them, usurped, and converted to the private use of their Monarch. This is set before the Israelites, as the Condition of Subjects under that sort of Government which they were now desirous of, in order to deter them from so foolish a Thought. But, the People still persisting, notwithstanding so plain a Representation; Almighty God, as a Punishment for their Folly, and former Ingratitude, under the Best of Governments, grants their repeated Desire; and resolves to establish the Government among Them, which they so much admired among their Neighbours, ver. 22.

But then in doing this, it is very remarkable, in the following History, that he doth not recur to the Patriarchal Scheme, so celebrated of later Years; that He doth not point out to them (which He could most easily have done) the Eldest Son of the Eldest House, amongst them, and command them to keep inviolably to
and Unhappiness of Absolute Monarchy.

to the Male Line in a regular Descent; but that, without mentioning any thing of this, He chuseth Saul in his Father's Life-time: after him, David, the Youngest of many Brethren; after him, Solomon, and his Posterity. So that, in this Kingdom, establiished by God Himself, it was so ordered, that there never was one King lineally descended of that Branch, which alone could lay claim to Pre-eminence and Government by Right of Primogeniture. It is a very unlikely matter, therefore, that the Jews could have any strong Impressions concerning this unalienable, unalterable Right, which They saw superseded for ever by God Himself, without any Notice taken of it; and much more so, to be sure, that the Heathen Nations should have any such Notion, who had so much less Light concerning the Will of God. But, to let this pass, it is certainly very well worth our observing, that, in this Part of Sacred History, and upon an Occasion (the only Occasion, I may say,) given to Almighty God, by Mankind, to declare his Mind plainly concerning the Institution of Absolute Monarchy; and the Usefulness of it to human Society, and the unalienable Right of Primogeniture; we meet with nothing but what tends to depress it lower than any other Human Form, and to induce us to think that it is no Part
The Happiness of the present Establishment,

Part of God's Institution, that the Lives and Fortunes of the Inferior Part of Mankind must be sacrificed, at all Adventurers, to the imagined Right of First-born Males. This I could not help taking notice of, whilst the Representation of this History, which I have made, is fresh in your Minds. But now I proceed, as I proposed, in the second place,

II. To apply it to ourselves, and this whole Kingdom, by some proper and useful Observations. And these shall be such as are suitable, first, to the happy Establishment which we live under; and secondly, to the unhappy Notions of some amongst us.

First, The happy Estate of this Island, under the present Establishment, offers itself to our Consideration, and deserves, in a particular manner, to be reviewed, and valued by us. In our Government, indeed, we do not come up to that Happiness the Jews enjoyed, before they extorted a King from Heaven. They were governed, in an extraordinary and particular manner, by God himself: And to be governed by God, is to be governed by a Being void of all Passion, and Prejudice, and Weakness; by a Being that could not injure them, either out of Malice, or Ignorance: and if any Grievances were permitted
mitted under his Inspection, by means of frail Men employed under him, He himself was at hand, free of Access, and most willing, and able to redress them. To be absolutely under the Government of such a Prince, and Lord, implies in it the truest Liberty; because it is exactly what reasonable and sociable Creatures ought to wish for: And Absolute Monarchy, administered by such Power, and Wisdom, is the strongest, and most unmoveable Security of the Happiness of those who live under it. But, setting aside this extraordinary Interposition of Almighty God, and speaking of Government as in the Hands of Mortal Men, under his ordinary Providence, we must say, that that Form comes the nearest to his Pattern, and his Will, which best answers the Ends of Government; and secures and establishes most effectually the Liberty and Property, the Quiet and Happiness, of the Subject, and that that is at the greatest distance from Him, which is most of all others likely to introduce those Evils, and Miseries, which it is his Will should be prevented by Government. The Description he gives, by his Prophet, of the Evils consequent upon the Establishment of Absolute Monarchy in the Hands of weak and frail Men, is as contrary to the Government of God, or to the Government of good Angels, under his Inspection,
The Happiness of the present Establishment, as the greatest Darkness and Slavery is to the truest Liberty. And therefore, it is the weakest thing in the World to argue from Almighty God's Absolute Monarchy, or from imaginary Monarchies amongst the good Angels, to the Necessity of the same amongst mortal Men: for tho' they may agree in being Absolute, yet they may be as contradictory as Absolute Light, and Absolute Darkness. But certainly, it is no such Weakness to argue that That Form of Government, whatsoever it be, under which the Civil and Religious Rights of Subjects are most likely to be effectually preserved, is the Form, which bears most Resemblance to the Example, and most Conformity to the Will of God. Had it pleased Almighty God to have pointed out any particular Form, as of necessity to be submitted to by all Nations; I should certainly think that this was the best, and happiest that could be devised, for the carrying forward the Ends of human Society. But since he hath rather seen fit to leave Mankind in this, as in many other Cases, to the Dictates of their own Reason, joined to the Pressure of their own Wants, it will be proper for us to consider, in order to judge the better of our own Happiness, the following Particulars:

1. That the great End of Government is the Happiness of the governed Society.

2. That
and Unhappiness of Absolute Monarchy.

2. That the Happiness of a governed Society consists in the Enjoyment of Liberty, Property, and the free Exercise of Religion. And,

3. How far this Happiness is attained under our present Establishment.

I say, The great End of Government is the Happiness of the governed Society. Let not any here so mistake me, as to think I mean by this to exclude the Happiness of such as undertake, and truly discharge, the laborious and difficult Task of Governing: For the Happiness of these is never so established, and so unmoveably secured, as by the Happiness of the People whom they govern. But I mean it against such as shew a Willingness to distinguish between the Happiness of the one, and of the other; and who argue, as if they thought Government instituted chiefly for the outward Glory and Grandeur of some particular Mortals, with so little Regard to all others of the same Flesh and Blood, as if they had no Part in Human Society, and were made for nothing but to gaze, and adore, and serve. Upon this Foundation, we see, Monarchs have been induced to engage in Wars merely for their own Glory; and vainly to attempt to increase the Number of their Slaves, as a pleasing Sacrifice to their own Vanity. Upon this Foundation Monarchs have been encouraged to break
break through all Laws, Divine and Human; and to extirpate, or torment their best Subjects, for their own imaginary Honour. But the great Governor of Heaven and Earth knows no such End of their Institution as this; and consequently no such Reason for the Submission of their Subjects. The Degrees of Superiority established in the World, either by Nature or Custom, are designed for the good of Families and Societies: And if any Superiority be supposed to be established immediately by God himself, it is still more certain that it is not possible He should have any other End in view, but the making Society happier than it would be without it. I need not be any longer upon this, because it is seldom denied, unless it be unwarily and consequentially, by Men who are resolved at all Adventures, to defend the Cause they have once espoused.

2. I come now, secondly, to observe, that the Happiness of a governed Society consists in the Enjoyment of Liberty, Property, and the free Exercise of Religion. And under this Head there will be little requisite, unless it be to consider what we mean by Liberty, and Property.

Now when we speak of Liberty in a governed Society, this we must understand to be something as really different from that Licentiousness which
and Unhappiness of Absolute Monarchy.

which supposeth no Government, as from that Sar M. Slavery which supposeth Tyranny; and consequently to be a State, between Servitude on the one hand, and Lawlessness on the other: A Condition, perfectly consistent with the good Government of the Society; and containing in it all that Freedom which is truly, and reasonably to be desired by any Member of it. On the Confines of this State, I say, on the one side stands Slavery, which is an absolute Subjection to the Will of another, not bounded by any wholesome and good Laws; which, we are assured by the Prophet, is not likely to consist with the Good and Happiness of the governed Society. On the other hand stands Confusion, or Licentiousness, without Law, or Government; a State in which every Man is his own Judge, and his own Avenger. Between the two Extremes stands that Liberty, which alone ought to be valued; a Freedom, restrained by beneficial Laws, and living and dying together with Public Happiness. It is necessary to say this, because many take delight to misrepresent the Cause of Liberty; and to make the World believe that nothing is aimed at, by the Advocates for it, but a Licentious State of Anarchy, and Lawless Confusion: Whereas it is manifest, that Liberty, in a governed Society, is something as different from this, as from the other; and that
The Happiness of the present Establishment.

S E R M., that the Friends of Anarchy (if there be any such) may as well represent the Patrons of Liberty, as the Patrons of Tyranny and Oppression, because they are in earnest for the Restraint of Laws and good Government. Now, if any one please to say, as some have done, that this is but the Pretence and Shadow of Liberty, because every Man in this State cannot do just what He always could wish to do; but is in many Actions restrained and curbed; I answer, that this will equally prove that Obedience to the Laws of God is not Liberty; which it may certainly with Justice be called, because by Liberty we understand something valuable and desirable; and his Service, is a Freedom from such things, as we ought in Reason, and true Love to ourselves, to desire to be free from. So likewise, in the Case before us, the Liberty we speak of is the Liberty of a Society rescued from the Inconveniences, and Evils, of Confusion, and Equality: And the Liberty I have described, is a Freedom only from such Evils as it is our Interest to be free from; not a Freedom from such good Restraints, as it is reasonable for us to wish and desire sociable Creatures to be under: Which would be a State of Misery, not to be desired by any reasonable Creatures; and such a State, as, if we were once reduced to it, we should study
and Unhappiness of Absolute Monarchy.

This Account of true Liberty, as it respects Civil Society, will lead us to the like Account of Property, considered likewise with relation to a well-governed Society. This I take to be such a Possession of what we call our own, as cannot be shaken by any Humour or Arbitrary Will of One Man; or Party of Men; but yet must be subject to the Determination of such Laws as are for the common Good and Interest of the whole Society. Nor is this Subjection any thing but what is desirable in Society: because, though it be possible that a particular Member of it may accidentally suffer by them, yet he might expect to suffer much more without them; and indeed could have no Hopes of that secure Possession of any thing, any longer than he could defend himself by Force and Cunning. So that Property, in a well-governed Society, is something as different from Nominal Possession under Absolute Monarchy, (which, according to God's own Description, consists in the being Tenants at Will, to one weak, and passionate Man, and in the Enjoyment of nothing any longer than till he comes to imagine it necessary to his private Pleasure, or Glory;) as it is from that momentary Possession, which belongs to a State in which all are equally
The Happiness of the present Establishment, equally without Law, or Government. It stands between the Two Extremes, as secure as the Uncertainties of this World permit the Affairs of Mortals to be; and guarded, at least in most Instances, against all Attempts of Mere Violence, and Apparent Fraud, from whatsoever Hands the Injury may come. I know this Difference is ridiculed by some: and it is said that Subjects have Properties under the most Absolute Monarchs, as well as under other sort of Governments. I grant that they may have Properties secure from the Attacks of other Subjects, unless such as are protected by the Monarch: but these Properties are only during his Pleasure, which is as uncertain as his Humour, or his Passions; and are described by Almighty God himself to be fixed on so precarious a Bottom, as that the Subjects Possession of them is entirely at his Mercy.

To Liberty, and Property, I added the free Exercise of Religion, as necessary to the Happiness of a governed Society; because, as there is no Tyranny so odious to God as Tyranny over the Conscience; so is there no Slavery so uneasy and ignominious, as a forced Religion, or a Worship imposed upon weak Men by the Fear, or Application, of outward Inconveniences; besides that nothing promotes the flourishing Condition of a Nation more than the
the Indulgence of this Freedom to all whofe Principles are not manifestly inconsistent with the Public Safety. And that this Freedom, together with the Enjoyment of Civil Liberty, and Property, as before described, must be an invaluable Happiness to a Nation, needs no Proof; unless it be to those who are grown weary of their own Happiness by Use, and have forgotten what Terror there was once in the Fears of the contrary Unhappiness. But this may more plainly appear from what will offer itself upon the third Particular, under which I proposed,

3. To consider how far this Happiness is attained, and secured, by the present National Establishment. Now here it must be acknowledged, that this World was never designed for a State of Perfection; and that there cannot be any Form of Government contrived and managed by fallible Men, which will not be liable to Inconveniences. But certainly it may be said, that the Ends of Government will hardly ever be answered under Any, if they be not, under that Excellent Establishment we can at present boast of. It is certain, there might be Liberty and Property under Absolute Monarchs; were they all, as good Angels, or as God himself. But we know, from his Prophet, that it is not likely there should be Either,

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where they are once established. On the contrary, by the peculiar Mercy of God, our Constitution is so framed, that we enjoy all the Liberty that is consistent with good Government; without lying at the Mercy of any one Person. By the same good Providence, we can much more justly call our Possessions, and our Labours, our own, than they can, who are liable to the Invasion of an Absolute Monarch, whenever He pleaseth. Again, it is possible that we might have a Freedom of Religion under a Popish Government, and a Popish Direction: but I hope I may say, It is for ever certain to us all, under an Administration entirely Protestant. Some indeed seem to think our Liberties most safe, our Properties most secure, nay, our very Religion best guarded, under Arbitrary Power, and Popish Faith. But it is wonderful to Others, how they can unite together such disjointed, such irreconcilable Things. And it is to be hoped that Common Sense is not so wholly lost amongst us, as that any such Fallacies can be put upon our Understandings, as may make us undervalue our unparalleled Happiness. These Blessings are made more diffusive, and lasting, by an Union of two Kingdoms, whose Separate Interests used to portend Public Calamity: And all rendered yet more secure to ourselves, and our latest Posterity, by Establish-
Establishing the Succession in the Protestant Line; without which it is too probable that all that we have been hitherto labouring, at great Expense of Money and Blood, would be of no Importance to succeeding Generations. So that this great Island is One Kingdom, governed after the most desirable manner, and the least liable to great Evils. True Liberty flourishes; Property is securely possessed; and all enjoy the Freedom of Worshiping God as their Consciences direct: and a Prospect of a long Enjoyment of all these Happinesse is afforded us by the distant View of succeeding Princes, Who, we may hope, will learn from the present Example to account it their chief Glory to preserve these Blessings; and their own greatest Happiness, to make their People happy. And need I tell, to what it is that we owe these singular and invaluable Happinesse? Is it not too plain to need any Proof, that we owe them all entirely to the late Revolution, founded upon the Principles of Liberty? Without This, Absolute Power had been by this Time firmly settled, and secured by Force of Arms; and that Popish Pretender, whom we all now profess to detest, and abjure, been the Established Monarch of this Kingdom. Without This, it had been impossible for us to have known the Blessings of the present Reign, or
The Happiness of the present Establishment, to have hoped for any succeeding ones under the Protestant Line. In one word, Without This, our Liberties, and Properties, had long ago been nothing but Words; and our Religion nothing but Passive Obedience. Could one think it possible for Any to be insensible of our present Happy Estate; or of the Unhappiness of the contrary? Yet, the Notions of some amongst us are too plain to be covered, and of too great Importance to be overlooked, which leads me to what I proposed in the next Place, viz.

Secondly, To make farther Application of the History, which I have just now been considering, to Ourselves, by some Observations arising from the apparent Uneasiness of some amongst us. For, as the Jews were ungrateful to the God who ruled them; and so insensible of the happy Government they were under, as to desire a Change from Liberty and Property, to Slavery and Vassalage: As under every little Trial of their Faith they repented, and regretted that Glorious Revolution which freed them from Egyptian Slavery; reviling their great Deliverer, Moses, and wearying out his Successors with their perpetual Discontents, till they brought themselves to a State of Servitude again: So we find amongst ourselves but too much Ingratitude, too much Insensibility, too much Desire of Future Slavery, and too little
and Unhappiness of Absolute Monarchy.

an Aversion to a Change of the Happiness Establishment; this Island ever yet enjoyed, into the most unhappy. And that this Complaint may not seem a groundless Imagination, I must observe, 1. That such Schemes of Government are publickly and daily proposed, and maintained, amongst us, as are absolutely inconsistent with the Security of the present Establishment; and these bound upon the Consciences of Men by the pretended Will of God; and the Terrors of his Displeasure; and these applauded and recommended by many, who, it is to be charitably hoped, are not sensible of their Consequences. The Right of Primogeniture in the Male Line is set up above any other Right, and above the Happiness of Thousands of People united. This is declared to be the Voice of God; though where it is to be found, I know not, unless it be in the secret Whispers of a Dream. But what then must become of the Title of our present Gracious Queen, to whose Support all Her good Subjects are now offering their Lives and Fortunes? She is in Possession indeed: But, according to this Scheme, there is always a better Claimer than Herself. For, Can a Woman be a Male Heir? Or, May not any Pretender, whether Legitimate, or not; May not any neighbouring Patron of Pretenders, nay, any mad First-born, of her own Subjects,
The Happiness of the present Establishment,

serm. 4. upon this absurd Scheme, be a better Claimer than Herself? For it is possible that any such Man that can be named may be the Eldest Son of the Right Branch even from Noah himself; but absolutely impossible that a Woman should. Behold at once that Sex for every cut off from all possible Claim, to which this Nation must own itself extremely indebted, both for Glory Abroad, and Wise Administration at Home! Behold at one Stroke the Protestant Line defeated, and set aside; and the Popish Branches recalled, by the modest Pleadings of some, who, you are desired to believe, wish extremely well to their Country. But, lest this should be too gross to be easily swallowed,

2. We are frequently entertained with the great Praises of an Absolute Monarchy, as the only Legitimate, and Jure Divino Government; the only Form agreeable to the Will of God; and assured, over and over again, that all other Forms are no better than Bastard Governments. Behold again, our whole Constitution absolutely at one Blast overthrown! For if so, what have we to do, but, under Pain of God's Displeasure, to dissolve all Appearances of Parliaments, as only Encumbrances, and Checks upon Absolute Power? But, lest the People should not embrace this with an Implicit Faith; the Patrons of this Doctrine condescend to argue from
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from publick Good, and even to appeal to their Judgment, so much ridiculed and exposed by them on other Occasions. We are told therefore, that Absolute Monarchy is the only Government for our Good; nay, the strongest Security to our Liberties and Properties; against the Judgment even of God himself. But who will not easily believe so plain a Point as this, that We of this Kingdom are greater Slaves than the Subjects of France? And that it is our greatest Interest to receive with open Arms the mild and gentle Government, under which They are so free, and happy? Thus do some amongst us, like the Jews, solicit Heaven for an Absolute Monarchy. But neither will this so easily be swallowed; and therefore, 3. It is publickly taught, and inculcated with great Earnestness, and Repetition, that it had been better for this Nation never to have departed from Absolute Passive Obedience; and that Nonresistance in all Cases is for the Interest of Ourselves and Posterity after us: Though it be to Resistance justly called for, and prudently managed, that we owe our present Queen, and the Hopes of a good Succession; our free Parliaments, our Liberties, our Properties, and the secure Profession of our Religion. I desire therefore to know, What this is, but to tell us plainly, that it had been for our Interest to
have permitted a late King to have overturned our whole Constitution, and to have imposed upon us a pretended Son; to have wanted the Blessings of the present Reign, and the Hopes of any future Security; and to have been, even to this Day, under the Sway of that Pretender, who hath now alarmed us? And what is this but to tell us, at this seasonable Juncture, that it is for our Interest to recal, and submit to, Him, returning with penitent Hearts to that happy State, in which we should have been, had Non-Resistance been entirely practised. Others, who will not go so far as this, yet join in blackening that Resistance, and that Revolution, on which our present Establishment is founded. Nay, If they detest the Invasion threatened by a pretended Prince, they think they cannot sufficiently do it, unless at the same Time they detest that Resistance, without which the Invader had now actually been upon the Throne; and boast of their constant Adherence to such Doctrines as condemn the late Glorious Revolution, and naturally tend to shake the hearty Affection of Men towards an Establishment, founded, according to them, upon what was perfectly displeasing to Almighty God. It is with Reluctance that I speak after this manner. But why should such Persons take it amiss, if others equally detest those Doctrines,
the Practice of which would unavoidably have s[e]m. excluded our Excellent Queen, and the whole Protestant Line; and established that very Pre-tender upon the Throne, whose Attempt is now detested? Doth not our Queen herself place her Security in the Cause of Liberty which She maintains? And doth not She profes, that Her chief Dependence must be upon those who have, upon all Occasions, expressed their Zeal for the Support of the late Revolution? And shall we tell Her that She is not safe, if the Revolution, which saved her, can be defended: or that Subjects are not Dutiful, if they be not Slaves? Whereas the present Establishment cannot be secure, unless the Revolution be a good Foundation; and the Duty of Subjects is something vastly different from the Vassalage of Slaves; and their Liberty at once the Ornament and Support of the British Crown. Pardon me, if Respect for so good a Queen, and Concern for so excellent an Establishment, and Regard for the Happiness of Ourselves and Posterity, have led me to express some Zeal against Principles and Doctrines which have of late been as warmly espoused, as if the Revolution had in its Consequences proved the greatest Misfortune to the Nation; and it were now high Time to get rid of all the Effects of it yet remaining, by submitting to
The Happiness of the present Establishment, 

SERM. to the Pretensions of a Nominal Prince, supported by a Monarch, who seems not much to delight in any other Obedience of Subjects but what is Passive, and what groans under the Burthen either of his Glory, or his Cruelty.

I have now laid before you some Observations, respecting as well the present Happiness we enjoy, as the unhappy Notions of some amongst us. Almighty God thought it a good Argument against Absolute Monarchy, to shew the Israelites the Unhappiness and Servitude of Subjects, introduced by that Form of Government. In Imitation of so unexceptionable a Pattern, we can do no less than protest solemnly to Persons like-minded, and shew them the Manner of the King they would have to reign over them; and the Manner of the Kingdom they would gladly see established amongst us. And this I thought peculiarly agreeable to this Time, when the Nation hath been alarmed by the Pretenses of One, whose Success must have been accompanied with Absolute Power, and the Ruine of our present happy Establishment; but whose Attempt hath by this Time, we hope, sufficiently convinced Him of its own Weakness. Our happy Estate therefore, I have set before your Eyes, that you may the better judge of the Unhappiness of the contrary. Which I have likewise shewn as I passed.
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passed. But, without these Assistance, you may easily imagine to your selves the blessed Effects of French Instructions, and French Force, and a Popish Faith, should any Future Attempt prove more successful to this Pretender; and judge from former Precedents, how exactly he will answer all his Obligations; how sincerely he will promise to maintain the Church of England, as by Law established, meaning the Popish Church established in former Days; how inviolably he will preserve your Laws, by dispensing with them; how strenuously he will maintain your Properties, by esteeming and using them as his own; how glorious he will make the Union, by enlarging it to the Gallican Church, and State; and how indulgent he will be to tender Consciences, by allowing them the Liberty of chusing exquisite Torments, or the Profession of his own Religion. Let Men consider whether this be not the very State they are to expect under Him; and then, voluntarily chufe it if they can.

This is a Subject of great, and universal Importance: And, if it be needful to add any Apology, let it be remembered, that it is foreign to no Man's Office, upon all just Occasions, to inculcate such Doctrines as promote the Happiness of human Society; and particularly not Foreign to ours, to consider a Subject to which Almighty
Happiness of the present Establishment, &c.

Serm. Almighty God, by his Prophet, so plainly leads our Thoughts. But, to conclude, Whatever Influence the Considerations, I have urged, may have upon some Minds, I hope they may at least animate such as are well-disposed already to follow the noble Example of our First British Parliament, in their Approbation of the late Revolution; their Zeal for Her present Majesty; their Concern to support the just Title of Herself, and Her Protestant Successors; And their Resolution to do all in their Power to maintain the Happinesses we enjoy, and to convey them down unviolated to our Posterity after us.
SERMON VI.

Preached at the Assizes at Hertford, July 26, 1708.

ACTS xxii. 25.
And as they bound him with Thongs, Paul said unto the Centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a Man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?

IT being my Design to speak something at this Time concerning the Nature of Laws, and the great Advantage of them to the well-being of Human Society, I think it not improper to found what I have to say upon the Behaviour of St. Paul, as it is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, with respect to his Civil Privileges, and to his Civil Superiors, and Judges. And I chuse to do so, because this will at once give us some Light into the true Interpretation of the Doctrine delivered by himself and others in the New Testament, concerning Government; and lead us into some useful Observations
I propose to give you a brief View of the Behaviour of St. Paul, as it is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, with Respect to those Civil Rights, and Privileges, to which the Laws of the Roman, or Jewish, State entitled Him; and to those Civil Magistrates, and Judges, before whom He had occasion to appear. And,

1. In the Chapter now before us, the chief Captain, who appears to have acted the Part of a Civil Magistrate as well as of a Commanding Officer in Jerusalem, resolving to find out what it was that had so much incensed the whole Multitude against St. Paul, commanded him to be scourged, in order to his own Confession of his Crime. St. Paul could have borne this Usage with as great Christian Patience, and Roman Fortitude, as any Man living: And no Man knew the true Glory of Suffering wrongfully better than He. But, instead of this, He seems to think it a much more becoming Part to insist upon those Civil Privileges which the Laws of the State entitled him to, as He was free of the City of Rome. Is it lawful for you to scourge a Man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? Was the Question which He thought fit at that Time to ask.
ask. If a certain Sett of Notions had been embraced in those Days, some of his Fellow-Christians might perhaps have informed Him, that the Laws were but a dead Letter; that what the Executive Power ordained was Law, tho' contrary to all the Laws then in force; that He who was but a Subject, was no proper Judge of his own Rights, and ought not to give so ill a Precedent to other Subjects, as might encourage them to dare to judge when their Privileges were invaded; and much more, that He, being a Christian, and an Apostle, a Follower of a crucified Master, and a Preacher of the Doctrine of the Cross, ought not to shew any Concern about worldly Rights and Privileges; but think it a Glory rather to give them up to the Invasion of his Superiors. Thus, I say, might some Christians have taught St. Paul to have behaved himself. But He, we find, was of another Opinion; and had very different Sentiments concerning these Matters. He thought it no Argument of a Christian Spirit, to suffer any thing which he could honourably avoid; and He thought it honourable to plead the Privileges of a Subject against the Encroachments of the Higher Powers. And so He appeals to the Laws, and claims the Right of being used by the Executive Power, no otherwise than as they direct.
St. Paul's Behaviour towards

2. If we follow him a little farther, we shall find Him, in the next Chapter, brought, by Order of the same Chief Captain, before the Chief Priests, and Council of the Jews, to see how he could acquit himself to Them. Upon his declaring his Sincerity, and Uprightness, the High-priest Ananias commanded them that stood by, to smite Him on the Mouth. St. Paul's Reply was very severe, God shall smite thee, thou whitened Wall: For sittest thou there to judge me after the Law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the Law? ver. 3. And tho' He afterwards repented of the reproachful Word he gave the High-priest in his Anger; yet he repented not of the just Sense he had, of the illegal Indignity offered him; or of his Zeal against all such Magistrates as acted against the End of their Office, and against those Laws by which they ought to be governed in the Execution of it. Here again it is evident, that this great Apostle had the Spirit of Liberty in him; and thought that those Laws which were made for the Security and Guard of it, were not to be dispensed with, at the Pleasure of those whose Business it was to execute them. Here again we find him pretending to know, and judge of, his own Civil Privileges; and not tamely submitting to the Violation of them. If some Christians of later Ages
Ages had lived in his Time, and been Witnesses of this, they would not only have said, Re-ceive thou God's High-priest? but would have asked him, how He, being a Subject, and a Christian, could answer to his own Conscience, his thinking any Subjects fit Judges of the Invasion of their own Privileges? They would have reprehended him severely for placing himself above his Judges, and turning the World upside down; for making Subjects Rulers, and Rulers Subjects, as they love to speak, by this preposterous Way of pleading his Privileges, even whilst he stood before a Court of Judicature. But it is very plain, that, as no Man was more zealous for the Honour and Veneration of such Magistrates as answer the Ends of their Office, which is the Good of Human Society: so no Man could express a more hearty Dislike of those who acted a contrary Part; or a greater Concern for the Temporal good Estate of Subjects, even amidst his continual Labours and Cares for the Eternal Happiness of all Men. Once more,

3. If we look back as far as the xvi\textsuperscript{th} Chap. we shall find a yet greater Proof of this. The Magistrates of Philippi commanded Paul and Silas to be beaten with many Stripes, and cast into Prison, ver. 23. but the next Morning sent to the Keeper of the Prison to let them go,
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Serm. ver. 35. St. Paul's Answer is very observable,

VI. They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into Prison: And now do they thrust us out privily? Nay, verily, but let them come themselves and fetch us out. He was just now delivered out of Prison by a wonderful Shock of the Earth about it; and so might have escaped before this Release was brought from the Magistrates: But after such a good-natured Message from them, one would think, He might have quietly departed. It would have been but the Compliance of a Subject with a lawful Request of his Superiors. Yet this great Apostle did not think it honourable to go away, without expressing some Resentment against the Invasion of the Privileges of the Subject, which the Magistrates had been guilty of; and without pleading the Cause of injured Inferiors. He continues resolute till these Magistrates themselves had waited upon him, and desired him to depart out of the City, ver. 39. And here again, How would some, who pretend to found their Notions of these Matters upon this very Apostle, have reprehended any other Man in the same Circumstances? Answerest thou the Vicegerents of God so? Where is the profound Respect due to that Order instituted by God himself? Where is the Sense of the Duty of Subjects? Nay, where
is Government itself, if Subjects may be allowed to judge of the Invasion of their own Privileges; if Laws must be placed above the Determinations of the Executive Power? But above all, where can there be a Stop, when Obedience is refused to a lawful Injunction of the Magistrate, and to what might without Sin be complied with? Whom therefore shall we follow? Those who speak after this manner, or St. Paul; who knew, as well as they, the Duty owing to Magistrates, and yet gave not up his own Judgment to them? But tho' a Subject, and acting the Part of a Subject, took upon him (by what these Persons might perhaps call a stubborn Behaviour) to bring the Magistrates themselves to a Sense of that Invasion they had made upon the Rights and Privileges of Roman Subjects; and this, tho' the Invasion appears to have been made merely through an hasty Mistake. Of so great Consequence did He think it to oppose one single Instance of illegal Oppression!

Thus have I given you a true Account of the most remarkable Passages recorded concerning St. Paul's Behaviour, with Respect to his Civil Privileges; and to those Magistrates, before whom he had occasion to appear. If any one say, that all this relates only to Deputed, or Inferior Magistrates, not to the Supreme;
St. Paul's Behaviour towards SERM. VI.

I answer that it cannot relate to one without relating to the other, because Government cannot be managed in the World but by Deputed and Inferior Officers; because the Christian Religion (as St. Peter testifieth) commands the Obedience required in it, with Respect to both; because otherwise, the Argument urged by some for the Magistrate's uncontrollable Authority, drawn from our Lord's acknowledging the Power of Pilate to be from Above, who was but a Deputed Governor, must fall to the Ground; because both Supreme and Inferior are said, by many, to act as one Authority, by the same Divine Commission; and so are equally borne out by it against all Opposition, or at least equally elevated above all Pretenses of Subjects to judge concerning their Conduct: And because it is as impossible, according to the Reasoning of some Men, to oppose in any Instance the lowest Officer in Authority, without opposing the Supreme; as it is said to be, to oppose the Supreme, without opposing God himself, whose Vice-gerent he is. I proceed, in the second Place,

II. To consider if this Account of St. Paul's Behaviour will not give us Light into the true Interpretation of the Doctrine delivered by Himself, and others, in the New Testament, concerning
concerning Government; and lead us to some Observations of Importance to Governed Societies, and to that in particular to which we belong. For can any one think that these Passages were recorded for nothing, but to serve for an Embellishment of St. Paul's Story? Or can any one think, that St. Paul had a regard to his own particular worldly Interest in these Parts of his Conduct? He, that had suffered, and knew he was to suffer, much greater Hardships? He, that was ready to give up his Life for the sake of Christianity, and to follow his Master through all Indignities, and all Persecutions, when the Glory of God should call him to it? No, it was something more than his own Part in this World which engaged him to shew himself after this manner; for this he could with the greatest Ease have neglected. But the Happiness of Human Society, and the good Estate of the Inferior Part of Mankind, moved his Soul to a generous Indignation against every thing in Government which favoured of Tyranny; and kindled in his Breast a Zeal for every thing which it was fit for Subjects to enjoy. Let us therefore see, if his Behaviour will not lead us to some useful, and important Thoughts, relating to Christians incorporated in Civil Societies.
St. Paul's Behaviour towards

1. I need not take particular Notice that St. Paul thought it not beneath a Christian, and an Apostle, to concern himself with his Rights and Privileges, as He was a Subject of the Roman State. He knew, as well as any since his Time, that he belonged to a City above, whose Builder is God; He knew that his chief Concern was Eternity and Heaven; He knew that no Tyrannical Magistrate could rob him of his Innocence, or of his Salvation: And yet he considered himself likewise as a Member of Human Society, and acted the Part of one who had a just Sense of the Privileges of his Citizenship here on Earth, as well as of that Citizenship in Heaven, which he speaks of to the Philippians, and Ephesians. And why should it be thought unworthy of any other Preachers of the Gospel, to imitate so great an Example, in the same great Concern for the Good of Human Society? To proceed,

2. Let St. Paul himself answer all those who have on his Authority pretended to exalt the Executive Power above all Laws; and above the very Ends of that Office for which they were instituted. He, it is plain, knew nothing of this; Nor did he carry the Obligation of a quiet Submission to any such Instances as were contrary to the Design of that Office.
Let them learn from himself, that when he speaks highly of Magistrates, it is of such who are Gods indeed in Human Society; such as maintain the Character and Dignity of their Station, by answering the Ends of it; and that when they descend to invade the Privileges they were ordained to guard, He knew no such profound Respect to be due to them. Let them learn from Him, that the Laws of the Roman State were above the Executive Power; and that mere Authority of the Magistrate could not make That to be Law, which was against the written Laws; or oblige Him to comply with what was injurious to his Civil Privileges: and consequently, that he understood not his Master's Doctrine concerning the Governors of this World, to be destructive of the Privileges and Happiness of the governed Society; and that he himself, in his own Doctrine, delivered in other Places, meant nothing contrary to these. Let them learn from his Practice, which is certainly the best Interpreter of his own Doctrine, and that of his Master and Fellow-Apostles, that when He faith, there is no Power but of God, the Powers that be are ordained of God; and that when his great Master acknowledges the Power of Pilate to be from Above, no more could be meant, than that it was agreeable to God's Will that some Persons
St. Paul's Behaviour towards

Persons should be invested with Power for the good of Human Society: but not that God had made them uncontrollable in acting against his Commission, and to the Ruine of their Fellow-Creatures. And let them remember, that when St. Paul commanded Respect, and forbad Opposition to the Higher Powers; and that when St. Peter commanded the same Subjection both to the Supreme and Deputed Magistrates; They were considered as acting the best Part in the World; and nothing intended by this to oblige Subjects to a Quiet Submission to such illegal and unjust Conduct, as affects and shakes the Universal Happiness. And,

3. If they still repeat the old Question, Who shall judge of the Invasion of Privileges? Let the same St. Paul answer them, who, in the Capacity of a Subject, more than once is recorded (in the short History we have of his Actions) to have presumed to judge concerning his own Privileges, against the Invasion of the Magistrate; and to have done this, as by a Right belonging to every Member of the same Society. His Christianity did not make him forget that he was a Roman: And as a Roman, he judged that he had the Privileges of a Roman: And that his Christianity did not oblige him to give up these to any Mortal, as long as He could with Honour keep them. The Possibility of his mistaking
mistaking in this, in which he acted not as an Apostle, was no Argument to him against this Right: Nor did the Weakness of other Men's Judgments prevail with him not to set them an Example of judging in the like Circumstances. What Confusion, what Disorder, say some, must ensue, if Subjects be allowed to judge concerning the Invasion of their own Rights and Privileges? But let them believe St. Paul for once, that much more Misery must ensue upon Human Society, if it be a settled Point that the Executive Powers may absolutely, and without Controll, determine what they please concerning the inferior Part of the World. If any one ask where he faith this, I answer, his Behaviour speaks it aloud: for he never would have acted the Part which He did, could he have thought it more for Public Good, that Subjects should give up all their Judgments to the Determination of their Magistrates, than that they should judge concerning the Violation of their common Rights after the best manner they could. Let not Men therefore forget Modesty so much as to laugh out of Countenance this Right of judging in Subjects, which St. Paul himself claimed merely as he was a Subject.

4. Let those learn it from St. Paul, who will not bear it from others, that Rights and Privileges,
St. Paul's Behaviour towards Serm. vi. 

vileges, Liberty and Property; and the like, are not Words fitted only to raise the Spirits of the People, and to foment Disturbances in Society; but that they are Things worth contending for. Some may think (unless Respect to an Apostle a little divert them from it) what great Matter if St. Paul had born a little Scourging? Or why could not he pass over the Injuries offered him by his Governors? To which I know no better Answer than this, that his Behaviour was what it was, merely because they were Magistrates; i. e. because it was a Case not of Concern to Himself only, but to Human Society. For he could bear, and pass by, Injuries as well as any Man: and had they been private Persons who had offered him any as great Indignities, I doubt not, He would have borne them without any Return but that of Forgiveness. But when the Civil Privileges of that Society to which he belonged, were invaded by Those, whose Duty and Profession it was to maintain them, He thought it a just Occasion to shew his Sense of so great an Evil; tho' it immediately touched only himself. The Consideration of the Character and Office of Those who offered the Injuries, was so far from determining him to pass them over with Silence; (according to some Mens way of arguing) that it was the very thing that made him look upon
the Civil Magistrate.

upon them not as private Injuries; but with a Resentment due to Injuries of a publick and universal Concern. And however some may ridicule the Liberties of Subjects; St. Paul*, it is plain, was for standing fast, not only in the Liberty with which Christ had made him free from the Jewish Law of Ceremonies; but also in that Liberty with which the Laws of Nature, and of the Roman State, had made him free from Oppression and Tyranny. For,

5. It is another Observation which we may make from his Example, that He thought the End of written Laws to be the Security of the Subject against any Arbitrary Proceedings of the Executive Power; and that This could not be, unless the Executive were governed by these Laws, as well as the Subject. If this had not been his Opinion; it had been frivolous for him to have urged his Privileges founded upon the Laws: by urging of which he plainly implies, that they were the Measure of the Magistrate’s Behaviour toward the Subject. And I hope, it is the same in all the like Establishments. But how contrary is this to the Maxims of Some, who make the Laws insignificant Trifles; and place the Will of the Executive Power above them: declaring that otherwise there can be no such thing as Government? By which Word they

* Gal. v. 1.

generally
generally seem to understand something beyond such a Government as is for the good of the governed Society. How contrary is this to Such as make written Laws only an Encroachment upon the Absolute Power instituted by God; and study to make their Power as contemptible as they can, that the Necessity of Absolute Monarchy may the better appear; and boast of their Services this way, as if they were of the greatest Importance? If these Notions be embraced, what must be thought of St. Paul under the Roman State, who thought it his Happiness to have Rights and Privileges settled by written Laws? What must we think of the wisest Nations in former Times, who could devise no greater Security, against Oppression and Unhappiness in Societies, than Laws? And if we come home to our selves, What must we think of the envied Constitution under which we live; and, by the Virtue and Power of Laws, all enjoy the chief Happinesses that Human Life can wish for? What must we think of that Revolution in which High and Low so unanimously joined, chiefly to rescue our Laws from a Dispensing Power; and to divest the Executive from all Pretences to a Superiority over the Legislative? And what must we think of those Magistrates, whom the present Age beholds with Veneration, and Ages to come
will remember with Eternal Honour; who, tho’ commissioned by the Supreme Executive Power, yet acknowledge no Rule of their Conduct but what is prescribed to them by the Legislative; and account it their chief Glory, to be the Guardians of the Laws, as They are of the Liberties of the People?

The judicious Mr. Hooker * thinks that Human Societies first made a Trial of Government by the Will of one Man; (as their first Essay might well be the worst and most imperfect;) and that They were constrained to come to Laws as a Remedy against the Evils of that kind of Regimen, after they had found (as his Expression is) That to live by one Man’s Will was the Cause of all Men’s Misery. This agrees with St. Paul, who plainly thought that Laws were designed as a Curb to the Arbitrary Will of the Executive Power. But invain did He contend in his Days; invain have the wisest of Men discoursed in all Ages; and invain is Absolute Power controlled by Success of Arms in our own Times; if we can live to be persuaded, either that there is no Difference in Governments; or that there is no Guard in Laws against Arbitrary Power; nor any Force in them but what must bend to the Will of those whose Office it:

St. Paul's Behaviour towards

Sermon is to execute and defend them. A lasting Liberty is founded upon Laws; and is the result of a good Constitution of Government, as Health is of a right Constitution of Body. In this also like Health; that it is valued most by Those who have known the Taste of it, under the first Apprehension, or Sense, of the want of it; but little prized by thoughtless Men, under a secure and unshaken Enjoyment: whilst Slavery, like Sickness, to Those who never tasted it, seems nothing; and to Those who have been oppressed long enough to forget what Liberty is, becomes the more tolerable, as a Bodily Indisposition doth to such as know not, or despair of, a better State. But is it not very unaccountable, that Blessings should be undervalued by weak Men, for that Security which should recommend them; nay, that Curses should be invited down from Heaven in the room of them? That, when the Inconveniences of Absolute Monarchy made Men first fly to Laws for Refuge, they should ever fly back again from what they must acknowledge their Happiness; and call for that Absolute Power to dispense with these Laws, which these Laws were purposely designed, and instituted, to control and confine. But thus it is even at this Day, after the Experience of so many Ages; even amongst our selves, after so grateful
ful and pleasing a Taste of the Blessings of a Legal Constitution; even under the most uncorrupt, unblameable Administration of Justice and Equity, that ever any Nation was blessed with. But, to return,

6. St. Paul's Behaviour should, methinks, upon second Consideration, make some Persons a little more cautious of affirming Absolute Monarchy, invested with a Power above all the Encroachments of written Laws, to be the only Form agreeable to the Will of God; nay, if you can hear it without smiling, the most beneficial to the Subject. For let any one tell me, whether upon this Principle it had not been the Duty of St. Paul to have taken the Opportunity offered him of owning the superior Power of the Magistrate; of acknowledging the little use of Laws to Human Society; and of shewing the Christian Religion to be a great Friend, tho' not to the lawless Confusion of the Multitude, yet to the lawless Power of the Magistrate. This had been a noble piece of Service, not only to Truth, but to Human Society; according to some: And I presume St. Paul knew the Will, and the plain Revelation, of God, as well at least as any Modern Christian; and would gladly have suffered a few Stripes, in order to bear Testimony to so important a Part of God's Law. Nor need He have
have doubted this way to have turned the Anger of the Magistrates into Favour, and a kind Regard both to himself, and his Profession. But He appears to have been a Stranger to all this: And his Zeal for the Laws shews that He thought both the Will of God, and the Good of Society, to require another Scheme than that of an Unlimited Executive Power.

Thus have I laid before you a true Account of the Behaviour and Notions of that Apostle, in favour of the Rights of Subjects, who hath been long, and often, represented by many, as the greatest Asserter of an unlimited Authority in the Executive Power. And tho' I have been treating of Civil and Secular Concerns, yet, I hope, I may be safe under the Patronage of St. Paul's Example, and of those Scriptures which gave us this Account of his Conduct and Behaviour, as of something not unuseful to Men and Christians. Nor is it a small Satisfaction to speak upon this Subject before those who understand the Value and Importance of wholesome Laws; and know how to scorn all the Homage or Respect of Men, but what results from an unbiassed, and uninterrupted, Administration of Justice.

And now, if St. Paul shewed so great a Respect to the written Laws of that State under which He lived; if He thought it worth his
the Civil Magistrate.

his while (whose grand Affair was to propagate a New Religion, and the Belief of a Future State) to concern himself so much with this World, as to insist upon his Rights and Privileges, as He was a Subject, and to shew no ordinary Regard to them; if He thought it the Happiness of a Kingdom to have such Privileges as are fit for Subjects, settled by Law, and an Happiness not to be shaken at the Will of the Executive Power; if He thought that Subjects might judge concerning the Invasion of the Privileges, and were not brought into Being to submit to everything imposed upon them: Let us learn from so great an Example, to value our own Happiness in that Legal Establishment under which we live, and live so as to enjoy Life. His Example bids us plainly stand fast in our Liberty supported by Laws. Let this move us more than the fallacious Disputations of Those who are continually declaring against this Happiness, and endeavouring to persuade us to change it for another sort of Government; arguing the Benefit of this to ourselves, and the Right of it in others. And, lest we should not be moved to a Change, the Argument is sometimes turned; and we are to be informed that our whole Notion of Liberty, is a mistaken Chimera, and Nonsense: That, whereas
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whereas we think that we have Laws to govern us, it is only the Will of the Executive which rules; that, whereas we think these Laws are made by the Consent and Authority of the Representatives of the People, it is no such thing; that it is the Prince only who Enacts; that no others have any share in the Legislature; that it hath all the Treason possible in it, to say that the Parliament hath a co-ordinate Power in Legislation; that our Constitution abhors co-ordinate Legislative Powers; that our Constitution is one Sovereign, whose Supremacy is indivisible, and both the Legislative and Executive are in it, notwithstanding that all our Laws are said to be enacted not only by the Prince, but by the Authority of the Lords and Commons, in the same Sentence; and consequently, that the Executive, being the only Legislative, can dispense, annul, destroy Laws as it pleaseth; that the People, without Distinction, are the Sons of Belial, a Company of Vassals; that live and subsist by the Concession of their Master only, and the like. Positions, which I would not mention, but that they are exposed to Light, and propagated with Heat, every Day: Tho' I hope not with such Force; as to disengage our Affections from an Happiness, without which, I know not whether it had not been as well for us to have
have been born to a Wilderness and a Den.

As Laws therefore, have turned the Desert of this World into a Paradise, and the Wilderness of Mankind into Human Society; so, let us of this Kingdom acknowledge our Part in this Happiness to be much above that of others; and let our Zeal for it rise in Proportion to the Value of the Thing itself. Let our Government by Laws be the chief Object of our Worldly Concern; and as we value that, let our Value, and Estimation, rise for the Supreme Head, and every Branch of the Executive Power, under which we live so happy and easy at Home, whilst they all join in making the Laws the Measure of their whole Administration. But above all, let our Thankfulness at this Time rise to the great Disposer of all Events, who hath given us a farther Prospect of the Continuance of the same Happiness to future Generations, by a great and important Victory Abroad, in which Justice, Laws, and Liberty, have triumphed over Injustice, and Arbitrary Power; and which we may reasonably look upon as a growing Security of our good Estate, against the Designs and Attempts of all who fight against it, both at Home and Abroad: Which God grant it may be, for the Sake of Jesus Christ, &c.
Concerning impartial Enquiry in Religion: and the two Extremes of implicit Subjection and Infidelity.

SERMON VII.


1 THESS. V. 21.

Prove all Things: hold fast that which is good.

S E R M. VII.

There is no greater Sign of the sincere Intentions, and generous Design, of the first Preachers of the Gospel, than those frequent Appeals, which we meet with, in their Preaching and their Writings, to the Evidences and Supports of that Religion, which they preached to the World. It shews that they neither knew, nor suspected, any thing like a Cheat, in it: It shews both that they thought it true, as well as important; and that no Enquiry or Examination of any impartial Man could do it a Prejudice. When they preached to the Jews, who were to be convinced, in great part, by their former Notions, as far
far as they were grounded upon former Pro-\-s\-e-r\-m. phecies; we find that they of Berea were highly commended for searching the Old Testament, to see whether what the Apostles reported from thence, were true; and that their Enquiring Temper was esteemed an Instance of a generous, well-born Soul. They of Berea, faith the Author of the Acts of the Apostles, Chap. xvii. v. 11. were more noble, i. e. of a better Make and Disposition of Mind, than some others. They were, as the Word imports, of too generous and well-tempered a Spirit, either to embrace blindly what was proposed to them; or to reject it as blindly without farther Enquiry. St. Paul, in his Speech before Agrippa, makes the same Appeal to the Prophets, Acts xxvi. 27. which implied in it the same Desire that the Matter should be determined by an Impartial Enquiry into them. When He preached to the Gentiles, who had the natural Light of Reason to direct them in their Searches, He did not appeal to those Prophets, of which they knew nothing; but to a Matter of Fact, into which they might enquire. Nor doth he expect them to believe that God shall judge the World, upon his own Word: but only as they should find it true, that he had given Proof of it, by raising Jesus Christ from the Dead. Acts xvii. 31.
When Christians increased; and many Pretenders to mighty Spiritual Gifts appeared amongst them, some of which were Deceivers and Impostors; the same St. Paul requires it of Christians in the Text, to prove all things that come to them, under the Notion of Divine and Spiritual; which he could not do with any Decency; unless it were so, that the Christian Religion itself desired and invited all Men to examine into the Proofs upon which it stood. St. John requires the same of Christians, to try the Spirits, i.e. to examine all Pretences to Miracles; and supernatural Revelation: and to receive, or reject, them accordingly, 1 John iv. 1. St Peter is likewise very express, even with respect to Christianity itself; that Christians should be always ready to give an Answer to every Man that asketh them a Reason of the Hope that is in them, 1 Pet. iii. 15. which supposed that their Religion and their Faith in Christ are built upon the best Evidence; and that their Faith was not required of them; but upon that Evidence; and that it is their Duty to enquire into, and remember, those Grounds upon which their Hope is built. And this whole Conduct was agreeable to that of their Master, our Blessed Lord himself: who constantly called upon those about him to examine into his Works; to try him whether he were from
from God or not; and who declared, that the
Guilt of those who rejected Him, consisted in
their rejecting that Evidence He brought along
with Him, and those Proofs which he gave of
his Divine Commission. Neither did He, nor
any of his Apostles, (as far as we have any Ac-
counts of what they either said, or did,) ever
require of any Men to believe in Him, upon
his own Authority or Assertion: or upon any
Ground, separate from that which I have now
mentioned; I mean, the Evidences, and Proofs
which He gave of the Truth of his Preten-
sions.

Now it is very observable, that there are Two
Extremes, which Men have run into, with
respect to this Matter. The one is, that of
those Professed Christians, who, contrary to
the whole Conduct of their Master, and his
Apostles, require the Asent of their Inferiors
to every thing which they please to define and
settle; as to a thing dictated by God himself:
and this under the Notion of Authority and In-
fallibility; without allowing any Questions, or
Enquiries, about it. The other is the Extreme
of those who, under Pretenfe of Examination,
but, without the Reality of the thing, explode
all Belief in Jesus Christ; and recommend In-
fidelity to the Minds of Men. In the middle,
between these Two Extremes, is that happy
Temper
The Duty of Impartial

Sermon. Temper of Mind, which renders Men impartial: which is equally an Enemy to that Spiritual Tyranny, which commands and terrifies Mankind into an open Profession of any thing; and to that partial and unequal Bias, which makes Men catch at any Trifle, and set up any little Objection, as of force enough against those moral Evidences, and plain Proofs, upon which the Truth of the Gospel relies.

In speaking farther, therefore, upon the Words, I have now chose, I shall be naturally led to these Three Particulars:

I. To make some just Observations, relating to that Impartial Enquiry and Examination, spoken of in the Text.

II. To consider the unreasonable Proceedings of Those, who are in either of the Two Extremes, I have just now mentioned.

And,

III. To draw some useful and important Observations, from what I shall have said.

I. I shall endeavour to make some just and useful Observations relating to that Enquiry and Examination, spoken of in the Text: and this, under these Three Heads.

1. The great Advantage, and Necessity, of Enquiry and Examination, into what we are, in
Enquiry into Religion, &c.

in an extraordinary Manner, called upon to embrace, as Religion, and the Will of God.

2. The Temper of Mind, absolutely necessary to this Enquiry: without which, we can neither embrace, nor reject, any thing proposed to us, with Justice, or Innocence. And,

3. The Subject of this Enquiry, with respect to the Offers made to us in that Religion, in which we have been educated.

I say, The great Advantage, and Necessity, of Enquiry and Examination into what we are, in an extraordinary Manner, called upon to embrace, as Religion, and the Will of God.

That Almighty God hath a Right to call upon his Reasonable Creatures in any Method, which may seem best to his Wisdom, cannot be denied. That it may possibly seem best to his Wisdom, to call upon them, by a Person sent into the World, and commissioned, in an extraordinary Manner, must be granted by all, who believe the Existence of any such Being in the Universe. That it is not only barely possible, but probable, that he would do so; is what will easily be assented to, by any who know the Nature of God, and consider the State of Man in this World. But, let us put it as low as possible. The bare Possibility of the Thing, is enough to shew us our Interest, and Duty, in this Case: Because it is always
The Duty of Impartial

S E R M. the Interest, and Duty of Reasonable Creatures, to act as such.

VII.

The Advantage and Necessity, therefore, of this Enquiry we are speaking of, is the Reasonableness of it. And the Reasonableness of it lies upon this, that it is at least possible, that Almighty God may call upon his Reasonable Creatures, in an extraordinary Manner; that, if he should so call upon them, it is of the utmost Importance to them to regard his Call: that therefore it behoves them to attend to what comes to them in a very extraordinary Manner, under that Appearance and Profession: that it is their Interest, as well as their Duty; that Gratitude, as well as other Obligations, draws them to this; that, without it, they may possibly lose the greatest Opportunity of being made happy in the Favour of God; that from it they cannot possibly receive any Harm or Detriment either to Soul or Body; but that they will certainly receive at least the Reward of a good Disposition, and reasonable Temper of Mind. From all which, I say, follows the great Reasonableness, that is, to Reasonable Creatures, the great Necessity and Advantage, of examining into what is proposed to them, in a very uncommon, and a very extraordinary Manner, as a Message from the Great God, whose Creatures they are; and Creatures, endowed by Him
Him with that Reason, which constantly directs Them to follow the safe and secure Method of Acting. This being premised, I come now,

2. To speak of the Temper andDisposition of Mind which is necessary to all Persons, who would behave themselves, in this Affair of Examination and Enquiry, after a Manner acceptable to God. And this, I think, in one word, must be aDisposition of Mind, removed, on one side, from Credulity, or a foolish Readiness to believe every strange thing that offers itself: and, on the other side, from those outward Vices; or that inward and unreasonable Bias, which are as so many Chains and Fetters upon the judging Faculties of a Man.

1. I say, It must be a Temper of Mind, removed from what we call Credulity; or a Readiness to believe every uncommon and strange thing, that offers itself, to be really what it pretends to be. This CredulousDisposition cannot be suitable to a Reasonable Creature: because it is so well known that many have been, and many more may be, the Cheats put upon a credulous World, by Men fitted for that Purpose. Reason hath some certain Maxims to appeal to, in judging: and these are all invain, unless they are regarded by an Enquirer. Invain is it, that we know the Nature
Nature of Almighty God, if we must not examine, whether what proffeth to come from Him, be worthy of Him. Invain is it, that we know Virtue, and Vice, to be direct Opposites; the one, the Happiness, the other, the Misery, of understanding Natures; if we must not consider whether the encouraging Vice, or the discouraging Virtue, be not a sufficient Reason for rejecting any Proposal made to us. Invain do we speak of Truth, and Falshood; or of the Differences of things; if all things be alike to us: and We swallow every thing that offers, without Distinction or Difference. True, and False, are, indeed, but Mock-founds to a Man that believes every thing equally, that any Man, or any sort of Men, will put upon him for Divine. And if such an one pretends to enter into an Enquiry; it is only a Search after something to fill his Head with. It is not an Enquiry into what is built upon good grounds; or what not: but only a seeking after a little present Food for his Credulity.

Nor can this Temper of Mind be any more acceptable to God; than it is agreeable to the Nature of Man. For, tho' a Person of this Disposition will believe what comes from Him, and receive it as such: yet, this will be by Chance, and not by Reason and Evidence. This will be, because he is disposed and resolved,
to believe every thing: not because he finds more reasonable, or more accompanied with Evidence, than the most monstrous Absurdities, or greatest Falshoods, imaginable. And then, this same Temper of Mind will lead the Man to believe the grossest Absurdities of Almighty God himself; and to embrace every Pretender with a Zeal equal to that which he shews for the Person who brings the justest Credentials, and the plainest Characters of Gods Mission, along with him. Now, what Thanks, or Praise, can be due to such an Enquirer; with whom all will be Equal? unless perhaps, which is often seen, the more unaccountable, or the more absurd and monstrous any thing is, the more fond and tenacious will he be, of it. The Result of such a Man's pretended Enquiries, is not what can be called Faith; which is a Virtue, as it is worked by due Means, and as it is the Consequence of our attending to proper Evidence: but rather Superstition, prompted either by Fear, or Folly, to take all Pretences equally for Truth; all Uncommon things equally for Miracles wrought by God; all Appearances equally for Realities. This is such a Submission of Reason and Understanding, below the Dignity of Human Nature, as They only want to be exercised, who have nothing to shew that can bear an Enquiry, or stand the Test.
The Duty of Impartial Examiner: but such an one, as cannot be required by Almighty God, who expects that we should distinguish His Truths from the Falshoods of Men; and make a Difference between His Works, and those which are not so; and receive, with Discretion, as well as Humility, what He faith; discerning between Tricks, and Great Works; between the Person who truly bears his Character, and him who only pretends to do so.

But,

2. On the other side, the Temper of an Enquirer into any Offers made to Mankind, in a very extraordinary Manner, in the Name of God, must be likewise far removed from those Outward Vices; or that Inward Pride, and Unreasonable Bias; which are as so many Chains and Fetters upon the judging Faculties of a Man.

I here mention, not only those notorious open Vices, which will often blind a Man's Eyes; and make him reject whatever contradicts or condemns them; but also those more secret Sentiments of Pride, or Prejudice; Resentment or Revenge; which have often proved as strong Bars against receiving Truth, as the Prosecution of Sensual Pleasure; or the greatest Covetousness, or Ambition, or Worldly-mindedness. And I mention these particularly, because there have
have been Instances, even in these later
knowing Ages, of Men, who, merely out
of an inward Pride, or Resentment against
others, have denied the Evidences, even of
Mathematical Knowledge itself; and rejected
it, either in whole, or in part, because it hath
brought some Shame upon themselves, and
their own Understandings. It is really true,
and what shews the Corruption of Human Na-
ture, that Light shall be Darkness; that Four
shall be more than Six; or any thing like to
these shall be affirmed; nay, and pretended to
be proved; by Men, who have Pride, or Re-
sentment, or Indignation, working within. So
that it is not enough to say, that a Man is not
what we call commonly grossly vicious and im-
moral, in the way of Pleasure, or Worldly-
mindedness, to prove him to be impartial, and
free from Bias. For Pride, and Revenge, are
Immoralities within; which bend the Mind
as strongly as any other Vices in the World.
Personal Prejudice will often put a Bias up-
on it, as powerful as Debauchery: and
Pique, and Resentment, will hinder Eye-fight
itself: and turn the plainest Evidences into
Doubts, and often into Falshoods, with the
Man that is actuated by them. Having
thus mentioned the Dispositions of Mind
which should be, in All who enquire into any
The Duty of Impartial

Proposals offered to the World in God's Name;

3. I shall now say something of the Subject Matter of our Enquiry, with respect to that Religion particularly, in which we have been educated; or, the Proposals made to the World by Jesus Christ.

The first thing which offers itself, is this, Whether He gives sufficient Evidence of his coming from God. For, without this Foundation, all He faith, concerning the express Promises of God, and the Conditions of his Favour to us, will be, at best, no more than so many probable Conjectures; or such Arguments as Reason and Philosophy can supply the World with. Under this Head, therefore, you must consider his Doctrine. If this be, in all respects, worthy of an Holy, Just, and Good, God; if it tends to the Interest, Ease, and Quiet, of Rational, Intelligent Creatures; if it tends to the Interest, and Peace, of Human Society, by making the Members of it what they ought to be; In a word, if it be the Revival of the great Law of Reason, upon stronger Motives than ever it was plainly promulgated upon, before: This will incline you, in favour of such a Teacher, to own that his Doctrine is worthy of God; and bears upon it the Characters of that Being, by whom He professeth to be sent.

You must, in the next Place, consider the Number,
Enquiry into Religion, &c.

Number, Nature, and Openness, of his great
Works, to which He appealed constantly him-
self: particularly his Resurrection from the Dead;
which he foretold, as the Sign, or Mark, up-
on, which he would put the Truth of his Pre-
tensions. You must enquire into the Evidences that you have, that the Historical Account of these things is worthy of Credit, as transmitted down to us.

These are the main Subjects of Enquiry, un-
der this Head, relating to the Truth of our Lord's Mission. And, upon Enquiry, it will be evident to any one, that we have such moral Evidences of the Truth of these Histories, recorded in the Gospels, as would be thought sufficient to influence Human Conduct, in any other respect; and that, from the Truth of the Facts recorded in those Histories, an Impartial Enquirer cannot but find ground to believe in Jesus Christ.

The next Subject of Enquiry after this, will be, What it is, that He himself delivers to his immediate Followers, as his Religion, and the Will of God: Because, if we do not confine our selves to what is his true and pure Religion, we may wander eternally in Mazes of Human Contrivance; and never extricate our selves out of those Difficulties, which may be brought upon us, in our Enquiries. To whom can we go for
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for the Words of Eternal Life; but to Him, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life? When we once acknowledge Him sent from God, it is at his Mouth only, that we can seek certain and useful Knowledge; to settle our Faith, and secure our Practice. It is to no Purpose for us to enquire after the Doctrines of Men, which They would make necessary to Salvation; when we have his Words, and his Decrees, to have recourse to. But, our only Great Concern, in order to the secure Conduct of ourselves, is to enquire what it is that He himself layeth upon us, as necessary; what He himself requires of us in God's Name, to believe, or practise, as a Condition, without which we shall not be happy: and what his Apostles, in their Epistles, or Conversation, in the World, do expressly lay upon us, as a Condition of Happiness; and as received from their Master, to that very Purpose.

This Rule will be of vast use to us, with respect, both to such, as will be objecting Things against the Religion of Jesus Christ; and to such as will be imposing Things, as of Necessity to Eternal Salvation. For, as the Enquiry then is natural, Whether those Things objected against Christ's Religion, be really in it, as He delivered it to the World: So, if we find them not there; we cut off, at once, the whole Ground
Ground of the Objection. On the other hand, Are these things, which others would impose upon Christians, as Laws of God and Christ, any where to be found in the Gospel, as delivered to the World, by Himself? If not, the Answer is easy to Those who would add, to his Laws, unreasonable Burthens; and bind them upon Men under the severest Penalties. Thus, when we see, in the Gospel itself, the great and only Design of bringing Men to Happiness, by believing in Jesus Christ as sent of God, in order to a constant and regular Practice of all Virtue; of whatever is reasonable and becoming: this will give us such a View of Christianity, as will make us able to reply to all Objections against it, taken from any such Representations of it, as are different from, or contrary to, this.

These Two are the Subjects of Enquiry, to all who hear of the Offers made in the Gospel. Of these they are competent Judges, for the most part; if they will but apply the same Care, and Diligence, and Caution, which they use in any Worldly Affair. But when they are sent farther; and called upon, to enter into the particular Disputes between the several Sects and Parties of Christians; and, on every Side, required to give their Assent, with equal Positiveness and Assurance: When they are carried
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serm. carried into the Difficulties of other Parts of the Bible, which have exercised the Understandings of the most learned Part of the World for many hundred Years, without being conquered, and explained; and when an Explicit understanding all these, in one particular Sense; (and this never to be settled, or established, with any Certainty;) is equally required of them: Then, I confess, Enquiry, and Examination, may well seem frightful and discouraging. But then the Question recurs, for the Eafe and Satisfaction of all Persons concerned: viz. Did Christ himself, and his Apostles, put these Matters upon the same foot with believing in Him; and doing the Will of his Father? Did He come into the World to require Impossibilities? Either to perplex the Understandings, or to distract the Consciences, of Men? When the Question is answered, What doth He require, as a Condition of Happiness; all such Points will be seen to be but secondary ones; in which Honest, and Understanding Men may differ; without losing their Charity for one another, or their Title to the Favour of their common Master.

If any one, therefore, should object, that Enquiry and Examination, into Christ's Religion, are full of endless Difficulties; it is easy, upon this Foundation, to give a satisfactory
factory Answer to such an Objection. As,

1. It is a great Satisfaction to consider, that the very Disposition of Mind ready to receive Truth, when it appears so to be, is highly, in itself, acceptable to God; and will be rewarded by Him. So that, supposing the Search, or Examination, into the Christian Dispensation, to require Length of Time; or to be full of Difficulties: yet, here is a perpetual Satisfaction, that the Sincerity of Mind, and Intention, which every honest Man carries about him, is it self of that value in the Eyes of God, that it will make the Man the Object of his Favour. It is this inward Integrity, which God, who sees the Heart, values above all Things. Even under the Cloud of great Mistakes, God mercifully looks upon this; and is ready to reward it with his Favour. Otherwise, How hard would be the Condition of a weak and fallible Creature, if his Eternal Happiness were to be put upon his being in the Right in all Things; i. e. upon his being Infallible: and not upon his Sincerity, or Honesty; which is the only thing he hath thoroughly in his own Power? The best Human Understandings may err; and may be very slow in finding out and apprehending some Truths: and the meanest, much more. But then the meanest Understandings may have Honesty, and Sincerity, and Integrity, accom-
The Duty of Impartial Service.

panying them. And supposing them not to have arrived at the Knowledge, or Perception, of the Truth, they are searching after: Yet, the very Sincerity, and Integrity, with which they are pursuing this Search, is the Thing which Almighty God highly values in them; and which He will certainly reward. So that, you see, there is nothing discouraging in the supposition of the Length and Difficulty of a serious Enquiry into the Truth of the Christian Religion; because the Honesty, and Integrity, of the Enquirer, will always render Him acceptable to God; and intitle him to his Favor. But,

2. The Enquiry, I am speaking of, requires no length of Time; nor contains any Difficulty in it, worth the naming. It cannot be long, before the Falseness of any Man's Pretenses, who comes, without Authority, as God's Messenger, must appear to a serious Person: either from his Doctrine carrying along with it the Marks of Falseness, and being unworthy of the Nature of God, or the Nature of Man; or from his Want of sufficient and well-attested Works to prove his Mission. But where the positive Proofs are plain and evident; and the moral Evidences such as convince Men, and influence their Lives, in parallel Cases: there is no need, either of a great Capacity, to comprehend
prehend these Proofs: or of a great deal of serm.
Time, to perceive their Force. And this, I say, is the Case of Christianity; as instituted by Christ.

Nor ought these Proofs, and Evidences, to be esteemed so burthensome, or of so little Importance, as to be sent out of the Memory, or forgotten, under the Notion, that they were once considered, and found true: but always remembered, as the Reasons of that Hope, which is in Christians; according to St. Peter's Advice. For, What great Burthen can they be, to Men, who are concerned so much in them, as Christians are? What great Task, to any one of an ordinary Capacity, if he be questioned, Why he believes in Jesus Christ, and expects a future State? to answer, Because He himself arose from the Dead, after a Life of Holiness, and great Works; and after delivering a Doctrine to the World, worthy of God in all Respects? And, if he be asked, Why he believes these Things? to answer, Because they are Matters of Fact, delivered, with the greatest Marks of Sincerity, by Persons, who professed they saw, and heard, what they relate; by Persons, who had no Interest to serve by this History; who endured bitter Persecutions, and Death, to attest these Matters of Fact:
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Fact: and because, in any other case of Human Conduct, these would be accounted the most prevailing Evidences possible? I say, Where is the great Burthen of this, to the Memory, or Understanding, of any common Man?

I doubt not, if the Riches and Grandeur of this World, were to be purchased upon such a Foundation; it would never slip out of the Mind of the meanest Person: but always be uppermost; and discover itself superior to all other Concerns that could come in his Way. And if any Persons should employ their Leisure, and their Wit, to persuade the World, that there is nothing in all this: not by invalidating such Testimonies about Matters of Fact; but by puzzling Mens Brains with abstruse, metaphysical, Shews of Reason; (of which the greatest Understandings are perhaps but very imperfect Judges, and the vast Bulk of the World no Judges at all;) I doubt not, but that if Worldly Interest were concerned, Men would presently answer to such Niceties; that they are only like such Trials of Skill, as some Disputers used of Old, to prove, that there could be no such thing as Motion; that these are not the Arguments, upon which Human Life ought to be conducted; and that the Moral Evidences, upon which such Facts rely, are
are a more lasting and effectual Conviction, to a Creature so framed as Man is, than any, of another sort, that can be opposed to them.

But I have said enough to shew you, upon what good Grounds, and with how much Justice, the Christian Religion may encourage, and demand, your serious Examination into it; and with what Dispositions of Mind, it ought to be performed. I shall proceed, in my following Discourses, to examine the Conduct, on one side, of Those, who bring a Scandal upon it, by putting their own Inventions, and Absurdities, upon an equal foot with it; and then cry out upon the Danger, and Impiety, of any Enquiry into Religion: and, on the other side, of Those, who reject it, without any apparent Reason; comparable to those Evidences which support it, and make it a Matter worthy of all Men to be received. For the present, I shall only add, that, if what I have offered, carries any Satisfaction along with it; if it leads to the Discovery of any thing sufficient to influence the Conduct of Human Life; and to revive that Hope, and Expectation, which we have been taught to have, in Christ Jesus: Nothing remains, but that, when we have proved it, and found it true, We hold fast that which is Good; and direct all our present
The Duty of Impartial, &c.

S E R M. fent Views, and all our Actions, by this VII. Hope of Happiness to come; which God, that cannot lye, hath promised to Those, who truly believe in his Son, and conscientiously obey his Will.
Concerning impartial Enquiry in Religion: and the two Extremes of implicit Subjection and Infidelity.

SERMON VIII.


I Thess. v. 21.

Prove all Things: hold fast that which is good.

Come now, as I proposed in the Second Place, to examine the Conduct of those, either of those Two Extremes, which I mentioned in my last Discourse.

The first Extreme, is that of those Professed Christians, who pretend, with great Zeal, that they have a Right to demand an Unlimited Submission to all their Doctrines, and Appointments: and condemn all Trial, and Examination, in their Inferiors, as a Crime of very fatal Consequence. The Conduct of these Persons, and the Grounds which they are known to
Of the Extreme of

Ser. M. to go upon: I design now to enquire into: and

viii. at the same time to shew the great Vanity, and

Absurdity, of such monstrous Pretences.

Now, in that Church, which alone openly declares this Blind, Implicit, Submission to all its Decrees, and Determinations, to be the true Faith of a Christian, You will presently find it all resolved into that Infallibility, and Unerring Judgment, which is affirmed to be lodged somewhere in it. If you ask the Advocates of this Cause, how they came by this Infallibility; and how they prove their Pretences to it to be well-grounded: you will receive such sort of Answers, as themselves would be ashamed to give, in any Worldly matter; or any Affair of common Importance.

1. Some of them will tell you, that our Saviour promised, Matt. xxviii. 20. to be with his Church, i. e. with Their, to the End of the World: and consequently, this Church is Infallible: and may justly claim an Implicit Submission from all Men; without any Questions, or Enquiries, about her Impositions.

To this it will be easy to answer, that the utmost that can be proved to be intended in that Promise of our Lord's, is this, that He would be assisting to his Apostles; and those who should succeed them, in the Propagation of his Religion, in their due Execution of that great and

important
important Office; that He would be their Sup- porter and Protector, in it. And, besides that nothing more than this can possibly be proved to be the Intent of this Promise: If you consider the Absurdities which must follow from the differing Turn that hath been given to this Passage, by the modern Pretenders to Infallibility, or to any Authority not to be gainsaid; you will be the more convinced of the Weakness of this Proof. For they, who fix so enlarged and unbounded a Sense upon those Words, do, in effect, represent our Saviour, as speaking to this Purpose, “Lo, I am with you; I will not only be your Director, and Guide; but the Director and Guide of all who shall succeed you, in professing to teach, or propagate, my Religion. I will be with them, in whatever they shall say, or inculcate upon Men; whether contrary to what I have taught my self, or not. I will be with them, in all their Contradictions of one to another; in all their Absurdities and Follies; in all the Methods they take of propagating Religion; whether by Fire, and Murther, or by Instruction, and Argument. Let them say what they will, let them do what they will, in their Zeal; Let them decree Black to be White, and White to be Black; still it is my doing; it is my Will it should be submitted to:
Of the Extreme of

SERM. " to: For Lo, I am with them to the End of
VIII. " the World."

What Absurdities, We may justly ask, what Blasphemies, may not Men lay upon this Text, if they will put such an absolute, and unlimited, Interpretation upon it? Whereas the Office of the Apostles, and those who succeeded them, in the Ministry of the Gospel, was that of being faithful Witnesses of what they had seen and heard of our Blessed Lord; of his Life, and Death, and Doctrine. They themselves had a Trust committed to them; and that was, to preach to the World his Resurrection, and his Religion: the Religion delivered to them by himself. They had no Authority to add to his Words, themselves: but their Commission was, to instruct Mankind, as they should have opportunity; and to impart to the World those concerning Truths, which they had received from Him. This Promise, therefore, could not convey, even to Them, any Authority, in saying or doing whatsoever any of them pleased; but only an Assurance of Help, and Support, in their due Performance of that Office, which was intrusted to them; that of preaching the Laws of Christ, without adding to them, or diminishing from them. And that this was not a Promise of Infallibility, even to the Apostles themselves, in their whole Conduct, is plain from
Implicit Subjection.

from the Behaviour of St. Peter, after this, with respect to Jew, and Gentile; and from the Necessity St. Paul found, to withstand him to his Face, in that Part of his Conduct, which St. Paul thought to the Prejudice of the Gospel at that Time. Yet, notwithstanding this, we have seen this Infallibility, even confined peculiarly to St. Peter; and to his pretended Successors, considered as such: which He himself never claimed, in that absolute Sense, in which They have, since his Time, done it.

2. In the next Place, if you be not contented with such Interpretations of this Place of Scripture, as are utterly inconsistent with the Design of the Gospel; They refer you to another, in which Our Lord speaks, of hearing the Church, and of accounting those, who hear it not, as Publicans and Sinners, Matt. xviii. 17. And here again, they infer an absolute unlimited Duty, from a very limited and particular Expression; and shew as much Absurdity, as they can well shew, about the Interpretation of any one Text of Scripture.

Our Blessed Lord is here speaking of private Quarrels between Man and Man; and the Method of bringing Persons to Reconciliation one with another. And they presently interpret what is here said, as if it related to Articles of Faith; and an Authority in themselves, to make M Terms
Terms of Salvation: Which Our Saviour never sends us to learn from any Man, or any Collection of Men, upon Earth; any farther than as they may faithfully report, what He himself, alone, was authorized to require, and ordain.

The Word Church, in this Place, plainly signifies a Congregation, or Assembly of Brethren, in whose Presence the Matter is related; and to whom it is referred: And from hence, They presently collect something about the Church, in another Sense of the Word; as it signifies the Ecclesiastical Rulers, whose Business it is to perform Spiritual Offices amongst Christians; which was not indeed formed, or instituted at the Time when these Words were spoken. He that is not willing, after the Method here proposed, to listen to the Determination of his Neighbours and Fellows; and to come to Peace and Reconciliation; is said to be One justly to he looked on, as a very bad Man: And from hence, They absolutely and indefinitely conclude, that whoever shall not blindly give himself up to the positive Determinations which They, under the Name of the Church, shall please to make, about Articles of Faith, and Terms of Salvation; whosoever shall not swallow all their Decisions, without any Questions, or Enquiries, is to be accounted
Implicit Subjection.

ed as an Heathen; and what is more, to be treated with such Severity, and such Inhumanity, as cannot lawfully be practised towards any Heathen; and such as the Gospel abhors, upon any Pretence whatsoever.

3. After this, they will carry us to those Texts, in which our Lord declares to his Apostles that, as his Father sent him, so sends he them; and that, He that heareth them, heareth Him; and the like: And from hence, They will conclude resolutely, that what they call the Church, hath the same Right to be heard in whatever it decrees about Religion, or that which it pleases to call Religion, as the Apostles themselves had, in delivering that to the World, which Christ entrusted to them. For, it is but resolving, that whatsoever was said to the Apostles, is to be interpreted as said chiefly to St. Peter; and after him, to the Rulers, of one particular Church in the World: And they think the Work done.

Now, there are several Ways of putting a stop to such weak Sophistry as this. The first is, That, supposing the Apostles commissioned, by such Expressions as these, to exact an Implicit Belief of every thing They should say; it doth not follow from hence, that They, who succeeded them in some Parts of their Office, can have such a Commission: Because their

M 2 Assistances
Of the Extreme of

Assistances and Powers from Above, were greater than can be claimed, since their Time; because They had the Power of Miracles, on extraordinary Occasions, to appeal to; in a word, because many things were, and might well be, said to Them, which could not belong to any, but Themselves peculiarly.

But another thing is this; which, I believe, will be found to be very true: That the Apostles themselves had no Authority to publish any thing, but what they had committed to them by Christ. They were Witnesses, entrusted with what He thought fit. They were not the Makers, or Decreers, of that Religion which was to be delivered to the World. But that was settled by our Lord himself before; and only committed to them, to be reported to Mankind: And they were to be heard, only as they were the sincere Preachers of what they had received from him. Besides this, as I have already observed, the Apostles themselves never claimed, by Virtue of any such Words of our Lord, any Power of demanding an implicit Belief of what they delivered: But always referred to the Proofs they gave of the Truth of it; always spake to Christians (in the Way, little used by those who pretend to succeed them in their greatest Powers,) of Reasons for their Hope; of trying
trying the Spirits; and of proving all Things, SERM.
and holding fast only that which is good. So VIII.
that the Result is this. Supposing the Apos-
tles had required Implicit Faith; or an Im-
plcit Submission to every thing they should
decree: It would not be a good Argument,
why others should afterwards do so; who had
neither their Instructions, nor their Assurances.
But this Supposition is groundless. For the
Apostles claimed no Privileges, but to be heard
as faithful Relaters of the Doctrine, and Reli-
gion, delivered to them by their Lord: And
always encouraged their Auditors to examine
into the Reasons of Things; and to try, and
prove, in general, whatever came to them, un-
der the Notion of Divine, and Supernatural.

So vast a Difference is there between Those,
who had no Interest to support, but that of
Truth and Righteousness; and Those, who
have Worldly Pomp, and Grandeur, and
Riches, to procure, or preserve, or increase.
The one is for Tryal, and Examination:
Which never can hurt, nor injure Truth.
The other is for an easier Method: For yielding up all Pretence to Understanding, and
Reason, and going into that Way, which
will encourage all the Absurdity and Folly in
the World; and make Truth and Falsity, Light
and Darkness, the same Things, and
equally
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serm. equally eligible. For, let there be but an

viii. Universal Readiness to swallow whatever shall

be ordered; the Question among those who

are to decree, will seldom be, what is rea-
nonable; or what is fitting; or what is the Gos-
pel of Jesus Christ: But what is most for the

Advancement of their own Power, and Honour, and Riches.

4. But, to return: If these Texts, to which

the Pretenders to Infallibility in themselves,

and an Implicit Subjection in others, appeal,

seem to fail them at any Time; they then are

forced to appeal to that hated Reason, which

at other Times they so much explode. They

will tell you, that it is highly reasonable and

fitting, that there should be this Method of

putting an End to all Doubts, and all Contro-

versies; that Men, being subject to Mistakes

and Errors, it is very necessary there should be

somewhere a Judge, to whose Determination

they should all blindly submit; and that, this

being so necessary, to be sure, Almighty God hath

been pleased to take care, that there should be

such a Judge; and consequently such a

blind Submission should be due from all Per-

sons: And that, one Church only pretending

to this Infallibility; it belongs to that, and to

no other. But this way of treating Mankind,

cannot be compared to any thing better, than
to the dealing of some Empiricks, who should set up upon this Bottom, that Mankind is subject perpetually to a Multitude of Diseases, which render their Lives very uneasy, before the Time of their Natural Death comes; that it is highly convenient, there should be an infallible Way of curing all these Diseases; that, therefore, it is not to be supposed, but that God hath, in his Providence, taken Care that there should be such a Way: And that, consequentially, no other Persons but themselves, pretending to Cure all Diseases infallibly, They ought to be looked upon, as the Infallible Directors of Physick; and all Persons concerned, ought to apply to them, in their Distress. But alas! this is but insulting the Misfortunes of Mankind, instead of curing them; it is a sort of triumphing over their Miseries, rather than shewing them a Way out of them.

For, in the first Place, supposing Man so framed by Almighty God, that, after all his best Enquiries, and his most serious Examination of things, he may err; this ought to teach us, that Error, in an honest Mind, is not that damnable thing which some Men would make us believe; that the great Design of true Religion, respects Practice, and not Theory; and that the Father of all Things knows
Of the Extreme of

S E R M. knows how to make all reasonable Allowances for the involuntary, and undesigned, MisA

takes of his imperfect Creatures:

In the next Place, the Argument is not good, that, because a thing would be highly convenient, therefore God hath certainly ordered it. For it is plain in Fact, that there are Multitudes of Unhappinesses, and Inconveniencies, belonging to weak and mortal Men, for which He hath appointed no certain Remedy. And, in the Case before us, it is fully sufficient to say, That He punishes Men only for their wilful, and obstinate Sins; and that He leaves their unavoidable Errors, and Frailties, to be the Subject of their mutual Charity, as they are of his own divine Compassion.

But then, in the third Place, supposing the Premises; How shall we know, Whither to have Recourse? Supposing such a Judge, or such an Infallible Church; where shall we find it? Why, certainly, they answer, Where there is but one, that so much as pretends to it, That must be it. Which is, as I said just now, as if an Empirick should tell us, There is no other Person in the World, that so much as pretends to cure Diseases infallibly, besides myself; Therefore, I certainly can; and you ought all to come to me. As if the Modesty, or Humility, of Others, who cannot thus in-

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Implicit Subjection.

sult the common Sense of Mankind, were an s e r m. Argument against them; and, as if They, v i i . who pretended to most, had always most Reality in them.

But, supposing another Judge, or another Church, should set up for Infallible; and claim the same Subjection; (which is not an impossible Supposition;) Whither should we then go? The Argument would be destroyed: And we could take no other Method, but to examine, first, Whether there is Reason to expect to find any such Infallibility any where; and, secondly, which of the Pretenders to it, have the real Title. And this would reduce us to that Necessity of Examination, by Reason, and Revelation, which I am contending for; and destroy the End for which this Argument is alleged.

But again; Supposing us to come, ready furnished with all Implicit Submission, to the only Church, which ever pretended expressly to such an Authority; even in this very Church, with all its Boasts, They cannot tell us exactly, where to apply for the Comfort of this Infallible Authority. Some send us to One Person at the Head; some to whole Councils; and some to both. Whichever way they pitch upon; it is not more certain that Light is contrary to Darkness, than that what hath been decreed by
Of the Extreme of

SERM. by one Pope, hath been reversed by Another; that what hath been determined in one Council, hath been annulled in Another; and so, forwards and backwards, from the Beginning, to this Day. To what Distress then, would they reduce Men; first, to persuade them, that a weak frail Man, or a Collection of fallible Men, are Infallible, and unerring in their Decisions: And then to lead them a Round, from Contradiction to Contradiction; and from the Belief of one Age, to the contrary Belief of another; without Satisfaction, and without End? How much more like Men, and like Christians, would it be, to acknowledge themselves to be but Men; to leave the unavoidable Errors of Mankind to the Mercy of God, as He himself hath done; and to claim no more Subjection, than what Reason, and the Gospel, give them a Title to.

I must not here forget another Pretense, which comes much to the same: viz. That the great Divisions, and Differences of Opinion, amongst other Christians, are owing to their not acknowledging such an Implicit Subjection to this Infallible Judge. The Answer is easy, and plain: For, 1. That this would be no certain Cure, is evident, from those many and high Divisions, amongst Themselves, who plead for this Subjection: Which are, in these
Implicit Subjection.

last Days, come to a very great and flaming Height, in many Instances. And, 2. How can it be otherwise, when in one Age, Favour is shewn to one Opinion; and in another, Favour is shewn to the contrary: When one Infallible Judge is of one Party; and the next that comes, is of another: And when Determinations are perpetually made, according to Interest and Favour. And then, 3. If Jesus Christ, and his Apostles, have not so plainly determined many Points; but that there is room for Differences amongst honest Believers: Why should any Judge, after them, pretend to settle Religion, better than They did; or, why should Christians be harder, and more severe, upon one another, than God himself will be upon any of them? Sincerity, and Uprightness of Heart; Righteousness, and Holiness of Life; Humility, Charity, and universal Love and Friendship: These are the Things, which the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, seeks after. And the truly honest Christian needs not be afraid of the Terrors of those, who take not their Maxims from the Doctrine, or Example of Christ; but from this World, and the Interests of it.

I mention these Terrors, because, when every Art fails, then, last of all, the Ignorant are to be terrified, into this Submission: And
And to be told, that it is a Sin to entertain the least Doubt about this Authority; and such a Sin, as will be their utter and eternal Ruin. It is paralleled with rejecting the Gospel, and opposing Christ: And so They are to make up by Terror, what is wanting in Argument. To which, I confess, nothing can be replied; but that there is nothing like all this in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He came into the World to reconcile Men to God, by leading them to Amendment, and to all Holiness. Many Works did he perform, to convince the World of his Authority. He appointed his Apostles, and Ministers, to go on in the same good Design. He feared not the Light; and therefore appealed to it. He hath given no Commission to any, to pretend to a Lordly Authority over the Understandings, or Consciences, of Mankind. But, as his Religion consists not in Niceties; and aims at nothing but the Happiness of Mankind; and is founded upon Truth: He hath left it to the Evidence that supports it. Vaft and unconceivable Prejudice hath been done to it, by Men's pretending to be wiser than He; to add to his Institutions, and his Doctrines: And to impose upon Men their own Additions, under Pretense of an Incontestible Authority; and under any sort of Worldly Penalties. I have
Implicit Subjection.

I have now sufficiently shewn you the great Absurdity of Those, who have run into this Extreme: And the Contradiction of it to the Behaviour of our Lord, and his Apostles. I shall take the next Opportunity to speak of the Other Extreme, I mentioned at first.
Concerning impartial Enquiry in Religion: and the two Extremes of implicit Subjection and Infidelity.

SERMON IX.


1 Thess. v. 21.

Prove all Things: hold fast that which is good.

In my last Discourse, I considered and examined, the Grounds, upon which those professed Christians go, who set up themselves for Guides to their Brethren; and require, under the Penalties of this World, an implicit, and Blind Submission, without any Enquiries, to all their Determinations. And, I hope I shewed you, how void of all Support, either from the Light of Reason, or the Gospel of Jesus Christ, such Pretenses are; how contrary to the Nature and Interests of Truth, which ever desires to be looked into; and how contrary to the Conduct of our Lord, and his Apostles, who encourage, and applaud, a sincere
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cere and inquisitive Temper, with Respect to Religion.

Secondly, I come now to the Conduct of Those Men, who are in the Second Extreme, I mentioned at first; and to consider those Grounds, upon which such Persons profess to go, as under the Appearance and Pretense of Examination, but, without the thing itself, reject the Gospel; and recommend Infidelity to the World. And this I shall do, in such a Method, as that these pretended Grounds, which they go upon, may appear; and, at the same Time, the real Design, and very great Partiality of those who go upon them. Of this Conduct, I shall give Three, or Four, particular Instances: Which are constantly seen to be the chief and avowed Supports of this Extreme.

1. One principal Point, I shall mention, is this. When the different or contradictory Notions, or absurd Opinions, of Divines, or other Christians, are represented so, as to lead unwary Persons to make them an Argument against the Gospel itself: It is very evident, that the Design is not to recommend Truth; but to prejudice Men's Minds against what ought only to be proposed to their fair Examination.

I confess, it is very shameful to consider; that Men should not be contented to be Men; and
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and to think for themselves; One, one Way, and Another, another; that so many should, with Violence and Passion, be seen to lay the same Stress upon their own Interpretations, and Conjectures, which they do, upon the main Design, and plainest Declarations, of the Gospel; and others, to oppose them with their own particular Schemes, of another sort, in the common Methods of Heat and Violence. But these are the Movements of Human Nature, got loose from the Guidance of Reason, as well as of the Gospel: And therefore, let Them take the Shame of this, to themselves, who deserve it. But what is this to Christianity itself: Which contains in it, neither their Doctrines, nor their Spirit?

If a Man should collect all the contradictory Opinions, and absurd Notions, of the Philosophers of Old; and of Those who profess to follow only Natural Light; and represent the foolish manner, in which the Text of Reason hath been explained by its Interpreters; and if these Absurdities should be made an Argument against Reason itself, and its plainest and most uncontroverted Maxims: Would not this be more absurd, than even those Absurdities themselves; which are pretended to give Ground to it? Would it not be easy to reply, that Reason is very ill treated by such Opponents;
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ments; that the Law of Reason remains firm and stable, notwithstanding that its professed Interpreters have erred grievously; that it is highly absurd to deny the first Principles of all Science, and all Certainty, because Some who profess to build upon these Principles, have grossly mistaken in the Consequences they have drawn from them; that it is the most unfair, and unsincere Thing in the World, to lay that upon Reason itself, which ought to be charged solely upon the Weakness, or Passion, of Those, who, professing to follow it, could not keep up to it, either through Incapacity, or Inadvertence, or Prejudice, or Vice. But, tho' the same Persons will not, (as indeed they ought not to,) allow this to be a good Argument against the Use of Reason: Yet we find them, too often, treating the Christian Religion, after this manner.

Let us then, upon this Occasion, apply what hath been said, in the Case of Reason, to that of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: And we may safely put it upon this Issue; which is but equitable and reasonable. Let the Gospel be charged with nothing, but what itself contains. Let Jesus Christ, and his Apostles, who were the Preachers of his Doctrine, be charged only with what themselves preached and taught. But let not the Absurdities, or Follies,
Serm. Follies, of Christians, be laid at the Door of that Religion, which, in its Original, knows them not. By this means, the ground of such Sort of Objections, is wholly removed. For the Answer will presently offer itself; when the Enquiry is about the Truth of our Blessed Lord’s Pretensions; and not about the Understanding, or Conduct, of his Followers.

What is this to the Purpose? What, if Christians have thus contradicted one another? What, if they have opposed, anathematized, and destroyed, one another, by a furious Zeal for their own particular Explications of their Master’s Doctrine? What, if many Absurdities have been vented, and propagated? How very unfair, and unjust is it, to charge those upon our Blessed Lord, or his Apostles, who have nothing like them in their preachings; who have none of these Contradictions; none of these Absurdities; in their Settlement of our Religion: And never gave the least Encouragement to any such Conduct, in their Followers?

I grant, indeed, if the Dispute were about the Behaviour, the Understanding; or Impartiality, of all who have professed to interpret the Gospel; or to frame Schemes and Systems of it: If our Faith were to be made for us by These; then, the Objection would have some
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some Force; and these Contradictions, and Absurdities, might well be so often brought in. But, God be thanked, this is not the Point. What hath been said by weak, and fallible Men, tho' affirmed with never so much Positiveness; tho' backed with never so much Worldly Authority; tho' strengthened with all the Penalties of this World, and of that which is to come: All is nothing to Men heartily concerned about their Religion. The Point is, what our Lord himself requires; and what his Apostles themselves deliver, as from Him. This is the important Enquiry: And this ought to be strictly observed by All, who profess to examine into His Doctrine. It is a most equitable Rule, not to lay That upon his Religion, which He never himself put into it: Because it was He himself, who was to deliver it from the Father, ready framed; and because He never gave Authority, even to his Apostles themselves, to make any Addition to that Scheme of Doctrine, and Salvation, which He delivered to Them. St. Paul expressly affirms this, that the Apostles themselves were only Stewards of the Mysteries of God: In whom He affirms Faithfulness to be the principal Point. Moreover, it is required in Stewards, that a Man be found faithful, 1 Cor. iv. 2.

N 2 Nothing.
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Sermo. Nothing, indeed, can be more unjust, than, in pretended Enquiries after the Truth of Christianity, to cast upon our Lord himself, and his Religion, all those Contradictions which have been vented by any of his professed Disciples; or those Absurdities, which weak Men have unhappily fastened, as Interpretations, and Commentaries, upon what He said or did: Unless the Case were so, that the World had no Account of his Proceedings, but what was to be picked out of the Commentaries, and Systems, of numberless Writers. Whereas, it is far otherwise. His Gospel lies open. His own Declarations of what God absolutely requires, are as plain as well can be, before Art, or Passion; Ignorance, or Learning; have perverted them. If any thing can justly be offered against his own Conduct, or his own Doctrine; He himself refuseth not to hear it. But it is but just to demand, that the Faults of others be not imputed to the Faultless; nor the Follies of Men to Him, who never encouraged them.

They who will not consent to this Equitable Rule, may as well charge all the Vices, and Villainies, of any professed Christsians, upon the Gospel itself. But then, the true Method is, to look into that: And it will be quickly found, that they are not only not encouraged, but
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absolutely condemned, there. How would it be liked, by some Persons, if all the Luxury, and Intemperance, and Wickedness, of those who have professed themselves Epicureans, should be charged upon Epicurus, their Master. Would it not presently be answered, that this could not fairly be done: Because he certainly placed Pleasure and Happiness, in Temperance, and many of the Moral Virtues: As is plain from the most Authentic Accounts we have, of his own Life, and Doctrine; which ought to be the Measure of our Judgment and Censure of him. I cannot indeed deny, but that this is common Justice, due to all. But if his Advocates will contend for this, in his Case, who certainly taught Men to cast off that Regard to any superior Being, which might have been a great Bar against Vice, and a great Inducement to Virtue, amongst his Followers: Then, certainly, must they themselves be ashamed of not following the same Rule, in judging concerning a Greater than He; One, who had all his Personal Virtues, in Perfection, with none of his Follies and Absurdities; and One, who taught a Doctrine worthy of all Men to receive, upon Principles able to support them in the Practice of it.

I grant, indeed; nay, I contend for it; that these great Differences of Opinion,
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Serm. amongst many Honest and Learned Enquirers; that these Contradictions to one another, and absurd Notions, fixed by many of them upon their Religion; are excellent Reasons for mutual Forbearance; great Arguments that God will not judge Christians at last, by the Truth of their Speculations, but by the Sincerity and Integrity of their Searches after Truth: And strong Inducements to all, to look impartially into the Gospel itself; in order to know what our Lord himself hath taught, and what He requires. Thus far these Differences, and Absurdities, may justly be urged. But when, under Pretenfe of all this, these Contradictions have another Turn given to them; when many Insinuations against the Gospel itself, are interspersed; when some of the greatest of these Absurdities are represented as the Fundamentals of the Gospel itself; and, at the same Time, Infidelity, and Atheism, artificially recommended, as the Result of Just Reasoning: Then, it is more than suspicious, that these Particulars are so carefully collected, merely as Arguments, or Prejudices, against the Gospel itself. But there cannot be imagined a more unjust Procedure, than this is: Which is no better, than casting off a Religion, not for what is in it; but, for what is not in it; I mean,
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I mean, the Weaknesses, or Absurdities, of some who have professed it. But again,

2. Of a piece with this Procedure is, the picking up Multitudes of little Stories, which have not half that Evidence to support their Truth, which the Facts of the Gospel have; and which, supposing them true, signify nothing to the first Institution of Christianity: And the embellishing and venting these, in such a Manner, as manifestly tends to the Prejudicing the Minds of unwary Persons, against Christianity itself. An Art, in which many of those excel, who seem disposed to banish all Belief of the Gospel, out of the World! But, how unjust this is, a very little Consideration will shew us.

For, is it a wonder, that, in the course of many hundred Years, many Things have happened, in the Conduct of Men, (who are ever weak, and often prejudiced, and passionate,) which may be justly enough turned into Ridicule; or which cannot be justified by the Rules of that Religion which they have professed. Suppose, for Instance, that some, in process of Time have turned Christians, for low Ends; or with false Views, and base Designs: Either for worldly Advancement; or to find a Refuge from the Sins which they had committed in other Professions? Or, suppose that others
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others have turned Apostates from Christianity, because of the vile Behaviour of many Christians; and their pretending to greater spiritual Powers, than could be justly claimed by them? Or, suppose, that a professed Christian hath sometimes talked, as if he had little Belief of some or other of the main Articles of Christianity: I say, supposing these, and the like Facts; yet, What are these to the Gospel, as delivered to the World by Jesus Christ? In that, there may be sufficient Reasons for honest Men to believe in Him; notwithstanding that, many Years after his Death, some became Christians upon other Grounds. In that, there may be sufficient Reasons against any Believer's apostatizing from his Religion; notwithstanding that there have been Apostates, upon other Reasons, which do not at all affect his Religion, as He left it. In that, there may be sufficient Evidences of a Resurrection; notwithstanding that some of his professed Followers may have talked, with some Doubtfulness, or great Uncertainty, about it.

I might here observe, that such sort of Stories are not always reported from the most credible Authors; or that they are often represented, and magnified, beyond what Simplicity, and Integrity, can justify. But I chuse to put it upon this, That, supposing the Truth of them,
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them, or of any like to them; the Gospel may, and doth, still, stand untouched, and free from any Disadvantage from them. Let it be true, that it hath been professed upon weak or worldly Grounds, by some Men; let it be true, that some Things in it have been disbelieved by others. These are not the Points in Debate between the Men who believe it; and those who profess to reject it: But whether, there be not great and sufficient Arguments for our embracing the Profession of it; and for receiving Him, who instituted it, as sent from God. Whoever pretends to bring a Disreputation upon it, ought, in Justice, to take his Arguments, if he can find any, from what is really in it, as it lies in those Books themselves, which profess to acquaint us with it, in its pure Original. But when, instead of this, Men have recourse to little Stories, and Tales, of Men, or of Things, many Years after the Institution of it; as if they were Points which ought to affect the Gospel itself: This is a certain Sign of the utmost Prejudice; and not of any thing like an impartial and just Examination; which the Gospel itself never refuseth to undergo. Again,

When a long and tedious work is made about false Miracles, and pretended Wonders, and Impositions upon the Senses, and Understandings,
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SERM. standings, of Mankind; and, at the same

X. Time, no Distinction allowed in Favour of

those recorded, in the Gospel-History; nay, when many Insinuations are given as if all

Pretences were alike; and especially, when

Infidelity and Atheism are, at the same Time, complemented as the Effects of great Sagacity, in those who have professed them: Then is it a plain Sign, that the Gospel is not recom-
mended to be ingenuously and fairly examined; but to be condemned, upon unjust and unequal Grounds. For, before the Gospel Miracles can be justly condemned, the Point would be, to shew, that our Lord refused to do his great Works before his Adversaries, or those who had an Heart to examine them; as Impostors have done: That He avoided the Light; and required of his immediate Followers Faith without Sight; that He did not give sufficient Evidence to those about Him, that He was neither an Impostor, nor an Enthusiast; that his Conduct was like that of those, who refuse all

Trial, and give manifest Proof that nothing of those great Things are true, which they pretend in their own Favour. For, how doth it follow, that, because there have been many Cheats in the World, therefore there is no such Thing as Truth? or, that nothing truly great and uncommon, sufficient to demon-
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strate the Favour of God, hath ever been s e r m. wrought in Confirmation of what is excellent and good; because many vile Persons, have, at several Times, for worldly Ends, and secular Purposes, play'd Tricks with Mankind; and imposed upon the Minds of the Vulgar? Why should this be produced as an Inlet, and Introduction, to Infidelity? Or what is there like it, in our Lord's Conduct, that can justify such a Procedure?

The Design of Impostors is presently seen through: To keep up a temporal Authority; to maintain or increase, Power, or Riches. But He could not but be void of any such Design; whose Low Estate, and utter Renunciation to every Thing in this World, and certain Expectation of Death itself for his Pretenses, were as remarkable, as His Great and Mighty Works themselves. The Doctrine of False Pretenders appears plainly to tend to magnify themselves; and to set up a gainful Kingdom over Mens Consciences. But His Doctrine was Humility, and Contempt of this World; a preferring one another in Love: It led to a Scene of Self-denial, in many Cages; to the Expectation of Rewards in another State, and of Persecution, in this. He aimed at no other Kingdom over Men, but the Government of their Passions, and of their Actions, by the Rules
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Serm. Rules of Reason; and the Hope of Glory; and the Fear of God's Displeasure. And, therefore, the Suspicion of Imposing upon the World could not lie upon Him: As the Appearance of it plainly lies upon other modern Pretenders to Miracles. And, therefore, His Works themselves, should be examined: Which, neither, in their Number, nor Kind, bear any more Resemblance to the Pretended Works of Impositors; than a vast Variety of Beneficent, Divine, Charitable, Open, Acts, do to one single Trick repeated yearly; or to Empty, Useless Appearances; or to Clandestine, and Dark Proceedings, without any Witnesses, but such as have an Interest to serve, a worldly Cause to carry on, by endeavouring to support the Credit of them. This makes a vast Difference: And should, in common Justice, be taken into the account, by all who pretend to examine into so important a Matter, as that of Religion.

If it should be replied, that it is for the worldly Interest of those who have corrupted Christianity, and made the Riches and Grandeur of this World a Part of the Gospel; that it is for their Interest, and for the Continuance, and Support, of all that they shall think fit to put upon Mankind, under the Notion of Christianity, that the Miracles recorded in the Gospel,
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Gospel, should have Credit given to them; and be supported by such Persons: Which may bring a just Suspicion upon them: I answer,

1. No just Suspicion, certainly, with any, who will consider, that it is plain, from all Antient Writers, that the Gospels were in being; and the Miracles in them recorded, before any such Abuses came into Christianity; nay, long before there was any Temptation to impose upon the World; that is, long before the Princes, or the Favors, of this World came into the Church; whilst little besides Persecution could be expected by Christians; and little Hopes could appear of ever having it otherwise: That, from the Beginning, during all that Scene, when nothing was promoted by these Miracles, but Believing in a Crucified Saviour, whose Kingdom was not of this World; then, I say, these Miracles were recorded in the Gospel-History. From whence it is plain, that they have no Relation to any such Corruptions, as came not into the Church, till very many Years after these Miracles were done; and these Books were written. But then,

2. The Miracles which Christ himself did, can confirm no Doctrine, but what Christ himself delivered to the World. They have no more relation to what hath been, or
SERM. may be, fixed upon his Religion, by any who profess to follow Him; than if such Persons were not called Christians. This is very plain to all who weigh Things equally. For, otherwise, they might be supposed to support Pretenses and Doctrines, directly opposite to his own: Because Christians, so called, (I mean, many of those who profess themselves so,) are capable of being moved by Worldly Considerations, to enter into Measures directly opposite to those of his Institution; and to contradict his good and great Design, as much as if they were called by any other Name in the World; the Name Christian not altering either Men's Principles, or their Manners. It being, therefore, impossible that our Lord's own Miracles can be the Support of Doctrines, or Designs, directly contrary to his own; it being certain, that they confirm nothing but what he designed they should confirm; viz. His own Pretensions, and his own Religion, as delivered by Him; and, consequently, that they cannot support any thing contrary to the Laws of God, and Universal Righteousness: There can be no ground of Suspicion in His Case; nor any Excuse for bringing them under the same Head, with Works only pretended to be done; and this, manifestly for the Support of Designs, which neither He,
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nor his Apostles, acknowledged to be agreeable to his Religion. Nay,

3. Those who have taken upon them to add their own Inventions to his Religion; and to appeal to any sort of Tricks, or pretended Miracles, for the Support of those Inventions; and for the keeping up a Temporal Interest in the World; have never had the Assurance to appeal to our Lord’s own Miracles, for the Support of what they have aimed at; but have always thought it necessary to have additional Miracles, for additional Articles of Faith; and New Works, to support their New Designs. So that they themselves give no ground to any Person to suspect our Blessed Lord’s Works; as having any unworthy Design to support: But plainly confess, by this Procedure, that the Miracles which He did, go no farther, and were designed no farther, than to support the Doctrine which He himself taught; and to promote the End for which He came into the World.

It is, therefore, I say, manifestly unjust, to put the Miracles of our Blessed Lord, recorded in the Gospels, upon the same foot of Suspicion, with Those, which, not only want the same sort of Testimony, as to their Reality; but also, are professed to be done, in order to support Worldly Ends, and such Designs, as we cannot
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Serm. cannot but judge to be unworthy of God: IX. When, at the same Time, it must be acknowledged, that no such Designs can be supported by our Lord's Miracles; nor any indeed, but that noble Design, worthy of God, of Redeeming us, first from the Power, and then from the Punishment, of our Sins. To return,

4. When the Persons, who pretend to be great Enemies to the Notions, and Speculations, which have been brought by some Christians into Religion; nevertheless, embrace, and greedily catch at, any subtile, metaphysical, and abstruse, ways of Arguing, about Necessity, and Fate; or such like Subjects; not level to the Capacities of any number of Men; and perhaps not certainly intelligible to Men of great Understandings; when these puzzling, and mysterious Arguings, are advanced, and set up, against all the Moral Evidences of the Gospel; when, together with the Pretense of rejecting every thing that is not plain in Religion, fine and unintelligible Subtilities of Disputation are introduced: Then, is there Reason, from such contradictory Proceedings, to suspect great Partiality, and little Love to a Just Examination of Things. When, instead of these Moral Evidences of Christianity, other sort of Arguings are put into Men's Heads;
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of which they never were, nor ever will be, tolerable Judges: This is a partial, and unequal, Procedure; and what the same Persons would not perhaps be guilty of, in any other Case, but that of Religion. For the Conduct of Human Life is guided and influenced by such Moral Evidences, as are sufficient to put Men beyond reasonable Doubt; by the Testimony of credible, and unexceptionable, Witnesses; and the Absence of all real ground for Suspicion; and the like. Of which Things, a little common Sense makes most Men pretty good Judges.

It hath pleased God to deal with Men, in the Christian Dispensation, in this easy Method; in which they are so well satisfied in many other Cases. That our Blessed Lord lived, and died, and arose again; that, before his Death, He wrought many great and wonderful Works; and this with a Design, and Doctrine, worthy of God; we learn from such Testimony, as hath no Objection against it, that would be accounted good, in any other parallel Case. Now, supposing that it had pleased Him to have taken another Method; and to have spoken to us in an Abstruse and Subtle way of Reasoning; without any such Facts or any such Testimonies to them: I should not have wondered, if the same Persons should
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have been the first Complainers; and the first to have represented this Method, as not likely to come from God; as too hard, and too unintelligible, to the greatest Part, if not the Whole, of Mankind. But if this would have been reasonable; how much more so is it, not to neglect the Facts, and Testimonies, upon which the Gospel relies, for the sake of any of those subtle Speculations, or Arguings, which are wholly unintelligible to the greatest Part of Mankind; and by which the Conduct of Human Life is never guided, in any considerable Instance: Not to enter into a Method which cuts off all Examination into the Truth of Christianity, at once; and builds an Infidelity upon Cobwebs, as thin, or as intricate, as any Modern Schoolman ever wove for his own System of Christianity.

Thus have I produced several Instances of a very unreasonable Proceeding against Christianity: Which doth not tend at all to the Examination of the Truth of the Gospel; but to the positive Condemnation of it, upon such Grounds as, I have shewn you, cannot reasonably affect the Foundation upon which that is built. And, as unreasonable, as these are; yet, (as far as I can see, or hear,) They are the chief of the Modern Pretenses of Unbelievers, whenever they are endeavouring to bring a Disreputation
reputation upon the Gospel itself. This is so
true, that, if you take away their little Stories
of Persons, and Things, many Years after
Jesus Christ; their Harangues about Absurdi-
ties, and Contradictions, of some weak and pas-
sonate Men, which are not in the Gospel;
their long and jocose Accounts of Modern Mirac-
cles, and Tricks, played to support Designs,
which the Gospel doth, not only not own, but,
condemn: I say, that, if these be all taken
away; together with a Word or two of myste-
rious Reasoning, (of which the Bulk of Man-
kind are not Judges;) nothing of Import-
ance will be found to remain against the Gospel
itself, or those Evidences which support it.
And this must be ever accounted a vast Advan-
tage to Christianity; as it was delivered, by
Christ, to the World.
Concerning impartial Enquiry in Religion: and the two Extremes of implicit Subjection and Infidelity.

SERMON X.

I THESS. V. 21.
Prove all Things: hold fast that which is good.

In my Former Discourses upon these Words,

I. I have, under the first General Head, shewn you the Duty, and Nature, of a Just Examination into our Religion.

II. Under the second, I have considered, on one Side the Conduct of those professed Christians, who would impose their own Additions to the Gospel, as of equal Importance with it; and this by way of such Authority, and Infallibility, as to demand an Implicit Subjection, without any Enquiries: And, on the other hand, the Conduct of some others, in the contrary Extreme, who seem to have rejected the whole of Christianity, under the Shew,
Inferences from the foregoing Sermons.

Shew, but without the Reality, of Impartial and Just Examination.

III. I propose now, to draw some useful Inferences, or Lessons, from what hath been already said.

1. The first that offers itself, is this, That it is but too probable, that many, and especially the Chief, of Those who are in the former of the Two Extremes, which I have treated of, have no more real Belief of the Truth of the Gospel; than Those who professedly reject it. I would not be understood to mean, that there may not be many simple, and otherwise honest Men, acting, under These, for the bringing all the World to Implicit Subjection; who may think that they truly believe the Gospel, and are doing God Service: Or that there may not be many sincere Persons amongst those who profess this Implicit Subjection. But, if you examine into the great Worldly Interest; the Riches, the Power, the Grandeur, that are supported meerly by these Additions; as well as into the Cunning and Understanding of Those, who enjoy the greatest Share of these Advantages; and consider how plain a Contradiction, their whole Scheme is, to Christianity itself: You cannot forbear suspecting, that all their Zeal against others; all their Persecution of
Inferences from the foregoing Sermons.

Of those they call Heretics; all their Madnesses, and Extravagancies; their Inquisitions, and Tortures; are founded upon Infidelity: and that nothing could induce them to be guilty of such Proceedings, but an Opinion that this World is their all; and that there is no Account to be given in another.

That Truth is not their Concern, is very plain: Because Truth neither wants such Advocates, as outward Torments; nor is ever helped by them. An outward Profession may be obtained and forced by them. But then this will be only Hypocrisy: For the inward Persuasion will be rather diverted another way, than towards any thing that is to be worked into Men by such Methods. Fire and Faggot; Imprisonment, and Confiscation of Goods; Hardship andPressure; Hunger and Thirst; Cold and Nakedness; may make Human Nature yield; and extort a Confession from the Lips: But the Heart will be farther from going along with it, then it would be, were the Methods of Gentleness, and Goodness, applied to it. The only thing, therefore, aimed at, by the great Patrons of Implicit Submission, is an outward, uniform, Profession of the same things; that is, an Agreement in Sounds: Which is no more to Truth itself, than the most distant thing in the World,
Inferences from the foregoing Sermons. 199

World. Were the Belief of the Truth of the Gospel, the Matter aimed at; or Faith in Jesus Christ, the great Design; nothing of all this could be seen in the World. But because so much of this is seen; that whoever will profess the same Things, and utter the same Sounds in Public, is safe, and well received by those who gain most by Implicit Subjection: Therefore, I say, is there little Reason to judge that any sincere Belief of the Gospel itself is either embraced, or aimed at, by Them.

This is so apparent in all those Countries, where Implicit Subjection is at its Height, and yet Polite Learning flourishes in any Degree; that it is a very common and professed, as well as profane, Notion amongst themselves, that Faith and Folly go together. The true Account of which, is this, That they think of no other Faith, but that which is conversant about the monstrous Opinions, and ridiculous or absurd Tenets, which support the Power and Riches of their Ecclesiastical Governors: And have lost all Regard to the Gospel, in its Simplicity; and all Desire to enquire into it. For,

2. As there is little Reason to suspect any true Faith amongst those, who, either gain so much of worldly good things, or, avoid so many worldly Evils, by Implicit Subjection:
Inferences from the foregoing Sermons.

So the patronizing such a Blind Faith naturally tends to a Total Infidelity; as a Total Infidelity tends reciprocally to the Support of such a Blind Faith, and Implicit Subjection. For, is it not very evident, that, when Men are kept in such Ignorance, or in such Dependence, that they hear little; or nothing at all, of any other Religion, but of one which sets up an Infallibility amongst weak and passionate Men; which is big with such Doctrines, as Transubstantiation, and the Worship of Saints and Angels; which vests Men with a Power of indulging Sins before they are committed, and absolutely releasing Men of their Guilt after they have been committed; which tends directly to nothing else, but to magnify the present Grandeur, and increase the worldly Pomp and Riches, of its chief Patrons; and when the Profession of such a Religion as this, is not left to Men's Choice, or to be determined by Argument; but is to be forced upon them by the Application of outward Evils; which, in many Cases, are terrible, and next to intolerable, and yet not to be avoided: I say, when this is the Case, Will not this View of things incline many to wish, that Religion may all be as much without Foundation, as these Points which they cannot embrace, or believe? Will not this Inclina-
Inferences from the foregoing Sermons.

Inference, and Worldly Interest, carry them still farther: And blind their Eyes, or their Hearts, so that they will not see any Difference; but condemn equally, in their Thoughts, all that is called Religion; and cast off that Belief of a Future State, and that Expectation of a Judgment to come, which they see others to have cast off before them? Will they not thus be carried away, by Inclination, and worldly Hopes and Fears, to turn Infidels first; and then Implicit Believers? First, to believe nothing, that they may with the more Grace profess to believe every thing.

It can hardly be supposed otherwise, amongst those who will not go out of their way far, to search after Truth; and have been educated, or find themselves placed, in the midst of a Religion, that imposeth such Absurdities, and applies such terrible Instruments of Persuasion: And have Understanding enough to see, that there can be no Ground for such Doctrines, or for such Methods of teaching them. It can hardly be supposed, I say, but that such Persons must incline to a Disbelief of every thing; in order to profess all that is required of them: Which can be done by none but such, with so much Grace, and so good an Appearance. Thus doth the Cause of Implicit Submission, backed by Terrors, and Torments, naturally beget In-

fidelity
Inferences from the foregoing Sermons.

Sermon x.

Fidelity in the Mind, as well as Profession from the Lips: And this Infidelity, in order to requite the Kindness, gives itself back again, as the main Support, and Prop, of every thing relating to the Scheme of Infallibility, and Submission. It teacheth Some, to lay every thing they can think of; upon their Votaries, or Inferiors. And it teacheth Others, to bear every thing that can be laid upon them, rather than to hazard their all in this World; which they take to be their only Concern. It not only permits; but deviseth, and frames, the greatest Usurpations for the Benefit of Superiors. And not only this: But the same Infidelity frames and fashions, likewise, a Spirit of Slave Submission, and Outward Subjection, in Inferiors, ready to receive every such Usurpation; of what Sort, or of what Nature, soever it be.

Thus is true Religion, between the one Extreme, and the other, stabbed to the Heart; and left without Life, or Strength. For the pleasing Part of Religion to Almighty God; and that, in which alone He delights, being the Voluntary Reasonable Submission of a Man, to Him; and to his Laws: Where Force prevails, and the Argument is taken from Terror, and Human Punishment; what Place can remain for any Freedom of Choice? And, without Freedom of Choice, where is Virtue,
Inferences from the foregoing Sermons.

or Honour? and, without Virtue, where can be the Approbation of God?

Is it not, therefore, an excellent Topic, which we often hear of, that these Methods of Severity keep all things quiet; that they enforce an outward Uniformity; that they procure an external good Appearance; that they banish all Differences, and Disputes; and the like? But, for God's sake, What is all this to Truth, and Religion: Which are seated within; and are of no account, but as they are chosen, upon due Grounds, by Men? Not but that, with all these Terrors, many still are, and must be, the Differences; which often are seen to flame out, to a great degree of Violence. But, What if they did not? Is Truth Nothing? Is Religion, within a Man's Heart, Nothing? Is Wickedness, or Cruelty, ever the less so, because it keeps Men in Awe? Is the Power of some, and the Vile Submission of others, the Point aimed at by our Saviour? And, Is the Worship of his Father, in Spirit, and in Truth, (which He declareth to be what God seeks after,) all dwindled into an External Agreement; without any Regard either to Understanding, or to Truth? Are his Spirit; and his Method of propagating his Religion, by preaching his Doctrine, and Works; found at last to be unworthy of God: And to be ex-
Inferences from the foregoing Sermons.

SERM. changed for the more rational Method of Torture, and Terror? Is all the Poverty, and Misery, caused by these Methods, to be forgot? Is all the Atheism, and Infidelity, and Wickedness, which are occasioned by these, not to be charged to the Account? But, a mere Outward Submission, and tacit Subjection, of Terrified Creatures, to be magnified, as a Blessing; and to be called Religion: And the End of the Son of God's living, and dying, in the World? No, It is impossible to conceive a greater Indignity to Religion, than this is: And impossible for any, who understand what they say, to treat it after this Manner, without having first thrown off all the Impressions both of Reason, and Revelation.

Since, therefore, this Implicit Subjection to every thing ordained by fallible Men, cannot be supported and carried forward, but by Force, and Tortures, and great worldly Inconveniencies; and since, when it is so supported, it so evidently tends to worldly Ends only; and since, on these Accounts, it is the great Introduction to a Total Infidelity, which both teacheth some to enjoin it, and others to submit to it: It is evident, that it is so far from being a Part of True Religion, that it is the greatest Enemy to it; and ends in that Inward Infidelity,
Infidelity, the outward Profession of which, it pretends to forbid, and put a stop to.

3. The great Injury, therefore, done to true Religion, by both these Extremes; and the Patrons of them; is plain and evident. The one, for, professedly cast it off: Charging upon it Things which it knows nothing of; and many of them, the Corruptions, which Infidelity itself hath fixed upon it. And the other, do not indeed professedly cast it off: But, under Pretense of supporting it, destroy all inward Sincerity, (without which it is dead,) by outward Force; and introduce an Hypocrisy, which must be founded upon a Disbelief of all True Religion.

The Methods, in which they Both deal with it, are highly injurious. They, on one side, pretend to talk mightily for it: They magnify it's Glories; and are full of Zeal for it's Honour. But then, they will have no Questions asked about it: Which is no great Honour to what they profess themselves to believe as a Truth. But the Reason is, because by Religion they mean their own additional Doctrines, not to be found in the Gospels; (which therefore they will not have too generally looked into:) And such Doctrines as they think may not stand the shock of an Enquiry: but, when they are weighed in the Balance, may
Inferences from the foregoing Sermons.

may be found wanting in some great and essential Points belonging to Truth. While the Others charge upon Religion, the Faults and Abuses of Men; and bring it into Dispute that way. This is highly injurious, Because Christianity itself invites, and desires, our Examination, and Trial; and only as it is found to be Truth, claims to be received: And because nothing ought to suffer, in our Judgments, for the sake of what doth not belong to it. Yet, I think, verily, the Injury is greater to Religion, from Those, who forbid and hinder all Enquiries; than from Those, who profess to encourage them, tho' themselves are not just and impartial in them: Because One, who is under the Direction of the former sort, hath nothing left but to profess to believe equally every thing dictated by his Guides; (no Difference, in Matters proposed to Him, being allowed;) whereas, the general and professed Principle of the Others may lead a Man, without their Prejudices, to a sincere Enquiry into the Gospel; and to an hearty Profession of it. But, tho' the Injustice of both these Methods of Proceeding, be manifest; yet,

4. I must observe, that, amongst such as think justly, and will be but at a little Pains in so important a Matter, Christianity itself will
Inferences from the foregoing Sermons.

will receive no Disadvantage from either of them. For, when a Man comes to examine, and finds that the Gospel itself refuseth not the Light, and loves not Darkness; that, on the contrary, it gives Encouragement to honest Minds to try, and see, whether it be not worthy of God: A Person, I say, who finds this, will not put it upon a Level with any Religion, which hates the Light; which refuses and condemns all Examination into it; which relies upon Force, more than upon Argument; and allows not to any the least Judgment concerning what concerns them so much. When, in the Prosecution of this Enquiry, the Man finds that the Doctrine of it is so far from being absurd, that it is highly reasonable; so far from tending to any base worldly Purposes, that it only promotes the true, and lasting, Interest of all Mankind equally: He will not place it to the Disadvantage of such a Religion, that Some, who profess to own it, promulgate and enforce upon Men, Doctrines, absurd in themselves; pernicious to the World; and tending to aggrandize the Imposters only. When He finds the Miracles that support it, beneficent, great, open, Acts; done in the Sight, often of Adversaries, and always, of Competent Witnesses: They will not suffer, in his Opinion, for
Inferences from the foregoing Sermons.

S E R M.  for the sake of pretended Miracles; done in a Corner; before only Friends; and Those whose worldly Interest they support. The great Difference, I say, will, by these means, presently appear, to an Impartial Man, between a Religion that loves to appear in the Light; and one that worketh in Darkness. Nay, the unjust Procedure for the Support of the one, will be an Advantage to the other: And help to satisfy him, that the Gospel, which useth different Means, and very contrary Methods, of recommending itself to the World, hath not any of those Marks of Cheat, or even Suspicion, upon it, which will ever stick upon any Religion, that requires a Blind Submission to every thing it enjoins.

Again, When the Enquiry, and Examination, of an honest Man, convinces him, that there are none of those Tricks, and Follies; Absurdities, and Contradictions; in the Gospel itself, which some Persons generally so much talk of, when they are designing to bring a Disrepute upon it: He will think it a great Advantage to Christianity, that They, who would disgrace it, do not think it fitting to treat it, as they find it delivered by its Author to the World; but bring in Matters, wholly foreign to it; and not so much encouraged by it, as by any Religion, or Infidelity, that is, or can be,
Inferences from the foregoing Sermons.

he, set up in Opposition to it. And, as he finds no such Things in the Gospel, as are sometimes urged as an Inducement to a Disbeliev of it: So, He will be apt to conclude, that They, who are Adversaries to it, could find but little amis in itself, and but little to object against it, taken either from the Life, or Doctrine, or Works, of its Author; when they are obliged to have recourse to Doctrines, and Stories, which have no Foundation in them, in order to weaken its Credibility.

Thus may the Procedure of Men, which is unjust in itself, and of bad Consequence with weak Minds, tend to settle the Judgments of more considering Persons, in Favour of Christianity. That which was designed to overcloud the Gospel, may make its Glory shine. That which was intended for the Temporal Ends of Worldly Men, may advance the eternal Good of those who are sincere and upright: And, that which was designed to pull down, may build up. The Errors, and Follies of Some; the Insincerity, and Madnefs of Others; the Partiality, and Injustice of Others; may all administer an Occasion to an honest and sincere Enquirer, to believe and practice that Gospel, which He finds, in itself, free from those Errors, and Barbarity, which Some would place upon a Level with it; as well as
Inferences from the foregoing Sermons.

from those Follies and Wickednesses, which Others would charge upon it.

5. One more Inference I shall make, from what hath been already said; and that a very interesting one, and very important to all Christians; viz. Since we see that the greatest Objections against Christianity itself, are taken from the Conduct of Christians, and of Those who pretend to believe and receive it; since we see that the main of what is insinuated against the Gospel, is taken from the Behaviour of Those, who profess it: since all their foolish Notions, or Additions to it; all their furious Zeal and Madness; all the Violence and Ill-will against others; all that is bad amongst profess'd Christians; is perpetually made Matter of Objection against Christ himself, and his Religion: How unreasonable, and unjust forever this be; yet, how much doth it behave us all, not to give an Handle, or Occasion, to any, who wish not well to the Gospel itself, to attack it through our Weaknesses, Follies, or Passions?

We must consider, that We are not guiltless of their Unreasonableness in thus dealing with the Gospel, on our Accounts: If we unnecessarily, or unreasonably, lay Stumbling-blocks in their Way; and prejudice them, by any Conduct of ours, against the way of Salvation.
Inferences from the foregoing Sermons.

For, as all wicked Christians, must expect to answer, at the great Day of Judgment, for their Sins, and Wickednesses; not only as they respect themselves, but others also; not only as they are Transgressions of their holy Law, but as they tend effectually to make Men blaspheme that holy Name, by which they are called; not only as they make Themselves guilty before God, but as they are seen to encourage, or promote, what is bad in Others: So, must all Christians, who teach, for the Commandments of God, the Doctrines of Men; who make their own Additions to the Gospel, of equal Importance, and Authority, with the Gospel itself; who bind upon Men heavy Burthens of their own contriving; who enlarge the Faith once delivered to the Saints, or contract the Charity absolutely enjoyned to Christians: So, must all, I say, who act this Part, expect to be judged, at the last Day, not only for their great Presumption, as it respects Themselves; but for the evil Effect of it upon Others; for the Infidelity, and Atheism, and Wickedness, which, by means of their Misbehaviour, hath entered into the World.

How little Prejudice would there be left, in the Minds of the Worst of Men, against the Gospel of Christ, if nothing were found amongst Christians, but what is to be found there; if
Inferences from the foregoing Sermons.

The Spirit of the Gospel were always seen, where the Profession of it is; if the Gospel itself were truly the Creed, and the Law, to Christians; the only Measure of their Faith, and the only Rule of their Actions; and if Love and Benevolence swallowed up, or covered, all lesser Differences, amongst those of the same Denomination: How few, I say, would there then be left, of the common Topics against Christ's Religion; and how many of those Handles, which unreasonable Men lay hold on, against it, would then be taken away?

But, when another Scene is perpetually before the Eyes of the World; when many of the Stewards of Christ's Dispensation, make themselves Lords and Masters, and claim an equal Authority with Christ himself, whose Stewards only they are; when These are found beating their Fellow-servants, (as the Parable expresseth it,) and abusing them, when they should be giving them their Meat in due Season; when Worldly Ends are brought into the most Heavenly Religion that ever appeared amongst Men; and any Doctrine, tho' never so absurd, if it be for the Increase of Power or Riches, is enforced upon Men, by the severest Penalties of this present World; and all, under the common Name of Him, whose Kingdom
Inferences from the foregoing Sermons.

dom is not of this World; when the Faith of 
Christians is new settled, by weak and fallible Men, many hundreds of Years after Christ left it settled by Himself; and the Charity of Christians so confined, by these new Settlements, and by the Decrees of those who make them, that Christians of later Ages have been as effectually known by their hating and abusing one another, as their great Master desired they should be, by their loving one another: When this is the Case, I say, then we find Infidelity gaining Strength, not from any Arguments of its own, but from those which it draws from the Conduct of professed Believers; and many induced to doubt of, or cast off, the Whole, (which they are not at Leisure thoroughly to examine,) for the sake of these additional Evils; which, tho' not belonging to Christianity itself, yet, will ever be treated of, by the Enemies of it, in such a Manner, as if they did.

Thus, it is probable enough, that Julian himself became an Apostate, from the Christians of his Time, rather, than from Christianity itself: I mean, that their Behaviour growing then worse and worse, and especially their Animosities against one another, occasioned his Relapse; and provoked the unthinking Man to what He could not have been moved to,
Inferences from the foregoing Sermons.

X.

SERM. upon the same Accounts, had he consulted the Gospel only, and the Conduct of that Master, whom they professed to follow. And how much, how very much, of the Atheism, and Infidelity, of these later Ages, hath the Church of Rome to answer for? Whose Additional Articles of Faith, and Rules of Discipline, backed with the Terrors of this World, and fixed upon Christ himself by his pretended Vicegerents, cannot but, with Men who think enough to see their Falsity and Barbarity, and yet not enough to distinguish between them, and Christianity itself, weigh down the Scale to the side of a Total Infidelity: Which must be charged, not only upon the Infidels themselves, but upon all who have given them this Handle.

Christians cannot too often think of that Denunciation of their Master's; Woe be to the World, because of Offences: i.e. Great Mischief, and Evil, will come to Men, by Stumbling-blocks, laid in the way of the Gospel; over which, They will fall; and be themselves condemned, for not taking more Care and walking with more Caution. For it must needs be that Offences will come: i.e. For, such is the Corruption; and such are the various Passions, and Designs, of Mankind, that they will often lay such Stumbling-blocks in the way of
Inferences from the foregoing Sermons. of their Brethren. But, Wo be to that Man by whom they come. Wo to that Man, or that Church, or Body of Men; who, without Reason, and without Authority, cast in the Way such Stumbling-blocks, as are the occasion of falling to Others; the occasion of their turning out of the Paths of Christianity itself. This one Declaration of our Lord's, should, methinks, make all Persons afraid of deviating one Step from those Lines which He hath marked out in his Gospel; or of venturing to enforce upon Men, any thing which is not truly and plainly His.

Our Church, which was reformed from Popery; not upon the Bottom of Infallibility, or Incontestable Authority, but upon that of Appealing to Christ himself, in his Gospel; professeth, that the Scriptures are the Rule to all Christians; and that nothing can be lawfully required of them, to believe, or practise, as peculiar to their Religion, but what is in Them plainly enjoyned. If any, therefore, of the professed Members of this Church, have gone farther; either pretending to Powers, which the Gospel gives them not; or imposing Systems of Religion, about which the Gospel is not express; either enforcing doubtful things, as certain; or Matters, not made necessary by Christ, as of Necessity to eternal Salvation: It is plain, the main and general Principle, by
Inferences from the foregoing Sermons.

Serm. x. which the Church itself desires, and declares, that all ought to be conducted, doth by no means bear them out; but indeed condemns and disapproves them.

Let us, therefore, consider, seriously, that as often as we forlack this Rule; as often as we pretend to be Wise above what is written; and, in any degree, or any sort, to add to Christ's Laws, or new model his Doctrines; as often as we do, in any Measure, approach to the Violence, or Cruelty, or Censure, which we constantly condemn in others, when they practise them against ourselves; as often as we abuse and vilify our Brethren, judging others before the Time, instead of judging ourselves; as often as we make, what should be the Subject of Charity, and mutual Forbearance, the Cause of Unchristian Fires, and Unchristian Animosities, against One another; in a word, that as often as our Lives contradict, in any known Instance, the Moral Laws of our Religion; or our Understandings set themselves up for Infallible, or Decisive, Guides to all others: That, so often we are probably making our Religion itself suffer in the Opinion of others; raising up new Enemies to God, or making his old Enemies, a-new Blaspheme; and laying such Stumbling-blocks in Mens way, as may be fatal to many about us. Let us consider this seriously;
Inferences from the foregoing Sermons.

oufly; together with the great Work we have upon our own Hands, to prepare ourselves for that tremendous Day, when we hope that God will not be to mark what is amiss in ourselves: And We shall not easily be induced to have any Hand, upon any Pretense whatsoever, in setting Men at a Distance from that Holy Gospel, by which otherwise they might be made happy; or, in increasing that Infidelity, which might otherwise happily end in embracing the same Faith, and laying hold on the same Hope of Salvation, which We have ourselves embraced, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
SERMON XI.

Preached at St. Peter's Poor, Novemb. 5, 1715.

2 THESS. ii. 11.

And for this Cause God shall send them strong Delusion, that they should believe a Lie.

T HIS Day hath so just a Title to every Sentiment, and every Signification, of Joy and Gratitude, We can possibly entertain or express, as We are Christians, as We are Protestants, and as We are Men; that I could heartily wish that every Thought and every Token of Uneasiness, might be banished far from it. But since it is so, that it bears upon it, not only the Signatures of God's repeated Mercy to this Nation; but the Marks of an Ingratitude and Stupidity, perhaps not to be e- qualled in all History: Since it doth not more effectu-
effectually call to our Mind that Great Wonder of Providence, to which it gave a Beginning within our own Memory, and which our own Eyes have seen compleated; than it points out to us that Scene of Iniquity and Rebellion, which is now opened, in order to perplex and unravel that lovely Frame of Things, which Heaven itself hath wrought for us: The Commemoration of the Blessings of this Day, cannot but lead our Thoughts, at present, to the Attempts of Those, who would rob us, and all our Posterity, of them; and must create in us an Astonishment, mixed with Pity and Indignation, at the Conduct of many amongst Us, from whom the Ties of Religion, the Solemnity of Oaths, the Security of all that is valuable in this World, the Interest of their Native Country, and all the Obligations of Honour, and Conscience, required and demanded another manner of Behaviour.

It is a Conduct, indeed, which can hardly be resolved into any thing, but a Fatal Delusion, sent down upon them, as a just Punishment of their Ingratitude for the greatest Public Happiness that every any Nation enjoyed; and will at least give us a sensible Demonstration, that, as in Religion, according to the Apostle, a perverse and wilful Opposition to Truth, naturally, as well as by the Justice of God,
God, leads, in the End, to a Belief, and Confidence, in every Thing absurd, and unreasonable: So, in worldly Matters, Ingratitude, and Insensibility, under the Publick Blessings of Providence, lead Men, step by step, to mistake Evil for Good; to court Misery for Happiness; and to pursue their own Ruine, under the Notion of something desireable: And that, in both Cases, it is but just in Almighty God, to punish Men for their wilful Baseness of Spirit, by leaving them entirely to the Conduct of it; and, in the Scripture Phrase, to send Them, who will not know the Value of Truth or Happiness, freely offered to them, a strong Delusion, that they should believe a Lie; and be led blindfold, by the greatest Absurdities, against all the Evidences of Reason, and Experience, into the Paths of Ruine and Destruction. Nor were there ever indeed more surprizing Instances of this, than what our own Eyes may, at this Time, behold, in this Kingdom.

The Wonder is not, that the professed Members of the Church of Rome, unite their Hearts and Hands; and leave no Methods, whether of Deceit or Violence, unattempted, for the Service of that Cause, which, in all their lowest Fortunes, they never suffer to be removed out of their Sight; that They put on all the Forms of Complaisance, and Dissimulation,
many Protestants, considered. 

Download of Civility and Good Humour, even to Hereticks themselves, to inveigle them into their own Ruine; that They flatter, and promise, and swear, every thing that is good and kind, to their Fellow-labourers; and, at the same time, enter into all the Resolutions of Destruction, and Desolation, whenever the Opportunity of Power shall come. This is nothing, but what is worthy of Themselves, and of that Church, to the Slavery of which They have devoted themselves. It is no more, than what They fairly, and publickly, profess; if Protestants will but open their Eyes, and see it. It is their Religion, and their Conscience: It is inculcated upon them, as the Great Condition of their Acceptance with God, That no Good-nature of their own; no Obligations from others; no Ties of Oaths, and solemn Assurances; no Regards to Truth, Justice, or Honour; are to restrain Them from any thing, let it be of what sort soever, that is for the Security, or Temporal Advancement, of their Church.

The Case with Them is not, as it is with Protestants, who, to their Shame, have indeed been unmerciful to one another, on all Sides: But then, their mutual Violences have been rather the sudden Effects of Passion and Revenge; And still there hath been a Principle left, by which,
which, in the Time of calm and cool Reflection, there may be Hope of curing so great an Evil. And every Sort of them, when they are undermost, disown, and disclaim, the Lawfulness of all such Proceedings.

But in the Romish Church, it is firmly settled, upon never-altered Principles; it is an Established Article of Religion; equally believed, and owned, and inculcated, in their Adversity, and low Estate, as in the Height of their Power. It stands unrepealed, upon Record; and it is confirmed by Experience, that They are most likely not to fail of the Honours of Saintship, and the Applauses of that Church, who act the most uniformly, and the most steadily, upon that Foundation. Every Weapon they use, is sanctified; every Instance of Fraud, and Perfidiousness; every Degree of Violence, and Fury; is consecrated. It is not only allowed; but first recommended, and afterwards rewarded.

This, therefore, is not the Wonder, that Men devoted to such a Church, keep up to their antient Character, and Profession; that They don't deflect a Step from the Glories of their Illustrious Ancestors; that They are not at all moved by the Peace and Interest of their Country; nor by that Security and Quiet, which even Themselves might enjoy, by the Indul-
many Protestants, considered.

Indulgence of a Government. They will not support; that they are still the same implacable Adversaries; and still set on fire, by the Principles, and the zeal, of their Religion, to scatter ruin, and destruction, round about them; and to deprive their neighbours of every thing that is good and valuable.

But the wonder is, that so many of those, who call themselves Protestants; and of those, who have violently wrested the name of Church-men, out of the hands of their brethren, and appropriated it to themselves, as its only advocates and patriots; of those, whose cares for its interest, and fears for its safety, have been swelled and magnified, above those of all around them, to a degree almost romantic; and even of some, amongst them, who have solemnly given their faith to the present establishment, and not only sworn themselves to that, but abjured all contrary pretensions: That so many, I say, who will take it amiss not to be called Protestants, and much more amiss, not to be called Church-men, have shewn too great a readiness to joyn, some, their hands, some, their hearts, and some, their indifference, with the worst of enemies, in the worst of causes; and to be deluded themselves, as well as help to delude others, into utter destruction, by the weakest, and most groundless insinuations, and all
The present Delusion of
all the most absurd Methods, that ever any Cause
was supported, and propagated by. It cannot,
therefore, but be of use, at this Time, to con-
sider more particularly,

I. The Cause, now openly avowed by our
Enemies.

II. The Marks of a strong Delusion, in the
Behaviour of Those, whom I have just now men-
tioned, with relation to it.

I. The Cause is now openly avowed. It is
no longer either denied, or dissembled. It is;
to set upon the Throne of these Kingdoms, a
Pretender, at whose first Appearance in the
World, the whole Nation of Protestants, of all
Parties, and all Orders, and all Degrees, was
filled with universal Dissatisfaction, and Unea-
siness, by the Concurrence of all the suspicious
Circumstances that could well be united in one
Matter of Fact; and whose Imaginary Title our
Laws abhor, as absolutely inconsistent with
Themselves, and ruinous to our whole Constitu-
tion: And not only this, but a Pretender,
who, to make Him the fitter to govern this
Protestant Nation, and to be the Patron of this
Protestant Church, hath received all his first,
and deepest Impressions, from That of Rome,
to which He hath devoted Himself with an un-
common Bigotry.

And
many Protestants, considered.

And this Church, from which alone He hath learned all his Obligations, and every thing that He accounts Religion, is the Same, which keeps up an eternal Claim to the Riches, as well as the Obedience, of this Nation: The same, which hath assured Him, with the assumed Authority of God himself, that He not only may, but must; that it is not only lawful, but his Duty, by all the Methods of Dissimulation and Force, to extirpate Heresy out of our Religion, or Our selves out of the World: the Same, which hath taught Him, that Promises, and Professions, made to Hereticks, in order to the obtaining his End, are good, and laudable; but, after that is obtained, become Sin, by being observed: the Same, in one Word, which knows no Virtue, but, that which is the Meanest Vice and Disgrace of Human Nature, a blind Submission of the Conscience to Man's Authority, where Man can have no Authority; and which knows no Vice, but, that which is the Supreme Virtue and Glory of an Understanding Being, the standing fast in that Religious Liberty, with which Almighty God, both by the Law of Nature, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, hath made us Free; that Freedom of Choice, and Honest Use of our Reason, (the neglected Gift of God,) which alone can render
If the Impressions of this, are so much decayed with Any amongst Us, that They ask, Where, or When, That Church hath taught Him all this: Let any of its Advocates, answer, and tell us, Where, or When, that Church ever taught the contrary: Let them name any one Instance, in which, the public Authority, or the most celebrated Writers, of that Church, ever disapproved or condemned; or ever did not encourage, and applaud, any sort of Wickedness for their own Temporal Interest: Let them shew us, where their Leaders inculcate it, as an Indispensable Duty, that Oaths taken, and Promises solemnly made, to Such as they please to account Hereticks, are to be Religiously observed: Let them produce their Authentic Condemnations, and Anathematizations, of Those of their own Church, who have dealt in all the Arts of Perfidiousness and Cruelty, to enlarge, or recover, Dominion, and Riches. This might justly be expected; if it were just to expect what is impossible.

They themselves know that this is no Imaginary Satyr, merely to embellish a Discourse; or to raise the Passions of Men: but that it is too plain to all, who will open their Eyes, and
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fee. It is writ too deep in Characters of Blood, and Ruine, to be so much as denied even by Themselves, that the Methods, of Diffimula-
tion, to inveigle unhappy Men into a Trust and Confidence; of Perfidiousness, to cut in sun-
der the Ties of all Security; of Barbarities, and Inhumanities, in cold Blood, and upon ma-
ture Deliberation, have been all consecrated to Glory; blessed, applauded, and rewarded, by the Public Voice of that Church: Whose true, and legitimate Son, we acknowledge Him to be; who now claims our Destruction, as his Right; and comes forth to assert it, Sanctified by the Benedictions, and prepared by the Lef-
tons, of so Holy a Mother; and fired with the Madness of Revenge, made Ten times Hotter by the Fury of such a Religion. This is a short View of that Scene of things, which not only may, but must come, if the Cause now avowed by our Enemies should be crowned with Power and Opportunity.

One would think, indeed, if either the Sense of Feeling, or of Gratitude, were not wholly dead amongst Us, it might be enough to a-
alarm the coldest Breast to think only upon what the same Cause professeth, and attempts, to remove from Us. To deprive Us, of a King, who is possessed of all the Royal and Humane Virtues, that any Nation could wish to see U-

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s e r M. nited in a Governour; and possessed of them, in so great a degree, that were his People but as willing to be made happy, as He is, to make them so, nothing upon Earth could equal the Blessings of his Reign; of a King, who hath given the World, the sensible and certain Demonstration of Experience, that no Heighth of Power can corrupt the Equity of his Nature, or disorder the Temper of His Soul: To deprive Us of such a King; and with Him, of a Prince, whose Noble Passion for the true Interest of this Nation, makes His Name dear to every true Briton, and every True Protestant: Of a Princess, Whose Private Virtues give Light, and Pleasure to all around Her; and Whose Greatness of Soul taught Her long ago, to disdain the Allurements of Popery, tho' clothed in all this World's Majesty, and Glory: And of a Numerous Race, to be formed for the support of our Religion, and Liberties, by these Examples: Such a Scene of Good, in Possession, as Few Nations upon Earth have ever experienced! And such a View of Good to come, as calls the Blessings of Future Times into our own; and adds to the Happiness of the Present Generation, a Taste of the Happiness of their Posterity! And, what is this, in other Words, but, to deprive Us of every present Good, and every
many Protestants, considered.

If we sum it up, therefore, and shew it in one View; the Cause now entered into, by our Enemies, is, To remove from Us, a King whose Right is the very Essence, Band, and Fundamental Law, of Society; and whose Inclination, Nature, and Religion, all conspire to make Him the Father of his People, delighting in their Happiness, as in his own: And to place in his stead, a Pretender, whose Imaginary Title is founded upon the very Supposition of our Ruine; and Who, if He were possessed of all the Good Qualities with which His Best Friends could wish, at this time, to paint Him out, yet, is Himself possessed by such a Religion, as must destroy them all; such a Religion, as teacheth Him not to expect either Favour from Those who profess it here, or Mercy from God hereafter, unless He makes the Destruction, both of our Church and State, the Great Business of his Life, whenever He hath Power in his Hands: Nay, assures Him of the Wrath both of God and Man, should He be so Wicked, as ever to think of observing those Protestations, or keeping those Promises, which are only allowed to delude unwary Men into their own Ruine. This is the Aspect, which it hath upon our selves, at present.
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And then, for the future, It is not only to remove from Us, those Royal Pledges of Good to come, which our Eyes now behold; but it is to banish far out of our Sight, the most distant Prospect of any Protestant Royal Family, for ever; and to place over Us, a long Chain of Popish Successors, never to be dissolved, or interrupted; in which the latter Branches may be sure to compleat any Part of our Ruine, in which the Former may have failed. So that it is, in deed, and in truth, to rob Us, and our latest Posterity, of every thing We can Value, in this World; and, at the same time, of all Thought of ever enjoying it again: And it is, to bring upon Us, and upon all after Us, every Evil that Human Nature ought most to fear, without so much as the faint Glimmering of any Hope of Future Redrefs.

This is the Cause now set on foot by our Enemies. And, I am very sure, not aggravated beyond Truth; because it is a Cause, too bad to be capable of Aggravation. No Colours can make it more black, than it is, in it self. No Words can represent it worse, than it represents it self now to the World, supported by the Zeal of Popery: whose only Strength lies in the One Comprehensive Principle, of Holy Perfidiousness, and Iniquity; which tears every Good Principle up by the Roots, and sanctifies
many Protestants, considered.

and strengthens every bad one. I might have placed before your Eyes, a Scene of those Evils, which the constant Experience of this Nation it self, as well as of All around Us, assures Us, have always accompanied it. But I chose rather to shew it in another Light; that Such as are deluded with the smooth Words, and fair Promises, of its Advocates, may be convinced, from those Obligations of Religion, and Conscience, which it layeth upon its Disciples, that It not only always was, in fact, so fatal, wherever it hath prevailed; but never can be otherwise. And yet, even with respect to this Cause; the Worst, in all its Circumstances, that any Nation under Heaven can be witness to; how astonishing is the Conduct of Many, who call themselves Protestants, and perhaps think Themselves so? Let us now, therefore, consider,

II. The Marks of a strong Delusion, in the Behaviour of Those, who join either their Hands, or their Hearts, or their Indifference, to carry on the Work of our Worst Enemies; whilst they expect to be thought Protestants, and Churchmen. And,

1. How strong a Delusion must be upon the Minds of those Men, who have shewn themselves as ready to swallow all the most ridiculous,
The present Delusion of

and groundless Stories; as the Disciples of Popery
have been to invent, and propagate them?

If one reflects upon what hath passed amongst
Us of late: one would be apt to think, that
the whole Conduct of the Machine for making
and distributing False Reports to the Credulous
People, had been lodged, and entrusted, with
the Managers of the Popish Cause, in this King-
dom. I forbear to look back farther. It is e-
ough to remember, that His Majesty had no
sooner taken Quiet Possession of that Throne,
which God hath given Him, but that all the
Scandal, and Infamy; every thing that could
tend to make Himself, and his Illustrious Fami-
ly, contemptible, or hateful, was scattered a-
about, with a Diligence and Zeal almost incre-
dible. No matter how inconsistent; how self-
contradictory; how much beyond the common
size of Credibility; from that Day to this, it
hath been dealt about, with so uninterrupted
an Industry, that, I believe, no Age ever was
witness to so many, and so extravagant Inven-
tions of Malice, crowded into so short a Period
of Time: And every one of them so visibly,
and palpably, framed to serve the Cause of
Popery; and so hugged, and enjoyed, by the
Papists; (who all the while are laughing at
the Credulity of their Fellow-Labourers;) that
no Protestants, of what Church soever, but
such
many Protestants, considered.

such as are wilfully, or fatally, blind to their own Preservation, could shew that Greediness, which hath been observed, in swallowing, and spreading all the Fictions of their Worst Enemies; and that resolute Backwardness to believe the contrary, to which even their own Senses might be Witnesses. I have an Eye particularly now, to that Heap of Mean, and Low Calumny; to that immense Number of the most groveling Fallhoods, (not fit to be mentioned) calculated for the Population; some for a Week, some for a Day, or even for an Hour: in order to alienate their Affections from their only true Interest, and to turn their Passions another way.

2. But this alone would not do. The Great Artifice of the Romanists, who are ever obliged, in Conscience, to keep our Ruine in their Eye, hath been to give a false Scent to Many Protestants, who might otherwise join in opposing their constant Designs; to turn their Jealousies to Shadows of their own raising; and, in order to remove their Thoughts from real Danger, to make them Fear, where no Fear is. And, acting this part, with their usual Dexterity, in conjunction with the Fire of Ambition in Some, and the Consciousness of Guilt in Others; they have had too much Success in it, amongst Those, who seem little to care what becomes
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becomes of the Public, if Theyselves be not
pleased in all things.

I shall mention only One, or Two, of the
most remarkable Instances of this. In order
to turn the Jealousies of weak Men, from
their own Quarter, upon the Government itself,
it hath been one Great Piece of their Art, to
represent all Attempts in favour of the Preten-
der, as Chimaeras, and Impossible Imaginations;
and, at the same time, to give Assurances to all
trusty and faithful Friends, that the Attempt
was certain, and too deeply laid, to miscarry.
This, they knew, would be of Service to Them,
two ways. The One Part of it would keep up
the Hearts, and Spirits, of the Friends of his
Cause; and prepare Them for his Assistance:
Nay, and increase their Number, and their In-
solence. And the Other, would be sure to bring
Reproaches upon any such Preparations of De-
fense, as would be absolutely necessary to oppose
such an Attempt. This was carried farther:
even to the charging, or insinuating, Designs of
Arbitrary Power, to be supported by an Army,
here at Home. So that this was the Hard
Lot of Those, who had the Care of the Na-
tion in their Trust. If They made no Provision
for our Security, before such an Attempt was
opened; our Enemies might the better promise
Themselves Success. And if they did; the
many Protestants, considered.

same Enemies were sure to Tax them with such Designs, as might Fire the People against their Rightful King: the Consequence of which, They well knew, would be, to dispose them the more readily to receive the Pretender. But what a Delusion must this be? For, as, on the one side, The greatest Enemies of the King cannot name any one thing that looks like so much as a Disposition that way; and, as He hath given Us, and all Europe, the greatest Proofs, and the greatest Security, of the contrary: So, on the other side, They suffer themselves to be persuaded to throw themselves headlong into the Arms of Arbitrary Power, under Pretense of running from it. For this is certain, that, should the Cause of the Pretender ever succeed, it is so big with the Miseries of Popery and Revenge, that nothing but Arbitrary Power can possibly support it: nor will it ever trust itself here again, under the Influences of Law, and Liberty.

But the Great, and perhaps the most Prevailing; I am sure, the most Astonishing, Delusion of all, is, That of those Protestants, who suffer the Papists to possess them with an Imaginary Fear about the Security of the Church of England; and then, with blinded Eyes, and darkened Understandings, to expect its greater Security, in the Pretender’s Cause. This, I should think
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SERM. think enough to cure any Protestant of this Jealousy; that, from the beginning of that Groundless Cry, it was very observable that the Sons of the Church of Rome, joined with their loudest Zeal and Noise, in it. For, what a shameless Insult is this upon the Common Sense of Mankind, for Them to put on an Air of Concern, and Tenderness, for a Church, which they not only Hate, with an implacable Hatred; but which, it is a Meritorious Part of their Religion, to destroy from the Earth. I would appeal to any of the most deluded Protestants, who will but promise to recollect their Thoughts for a Moment, whether the Papists joining in spreading this Jealousy of the Danger of a Church, which they Hate, be not a certain Proof, that They think it really in a Flourishing Condition; much too secure for their Designs, and their Interest, unless, by such frightful Fictions, They can entice Protestants themselves to join with them, in it's Destruction.

It is fruitless to observe to such Protestants, unless They will lay aside their strong Prejudices against their own Interest, that the Worst Enemies of the KING, and the Administration, cannot produce one Instance, I will not say, of an Injury, but of any Disregard, to this Church; but might produce many, if they would be so just, of the contrary: As many, as
many Protestants, considered.

as in so short a Time could be possibly given. But if they resolve to swallow all the groundless Jealousies of this sort; yet, what a degree of Infatuation must it be, to think of Security, where there can be none? To fly from the Imaginary Suspicion, to the real Certainty of Ruine? To run from Those, who, they weakly suspect, may; to Those, who, They know, must, destroy it? Or, Is there any new League of strict Love and Friendship, now made, between the Church of Rome, and Us? and tied by closer Bonds than Protestations, and Promises, which it is their Duty, to break, as soon as They can? or, Is all the Cunning and Policy of Rome sunk at last into this, of furnishing Money, and Arms; and of hazarding the Lives, and the Estates, of her true Sons, in this Nation; out of pure Love and Kindness to the Church of England, and solely to Establish That upon a lasting and strong Foundation? Or, do Men trust once more to Vows, and Assurances? If they do, They trust to what the Experience of this Nation hath felt to be No Security; and what their Enemies themselves profess to be none. And, do They think that the Number of Romanists, who venture their All in this World, for the Service of the Pretender's Cause, have not had much better Assurances and Security, that Their Interest, and Their Religion, is to
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§ E R M. to Reign in Triumph in this Land, before they

would engage themselves, in so desperate a manner? But, I confess, I should not wonder if They, who can come to be so deluded, as to think their Church secure, in the Method of Utter Destruction, should come to believe that the British Papists are inflamed with a Zeal for the Church of England; and undergo all the Fatigues, and Hardships, and Dangers, of a Rebellion; not to Establish, or serve, their own Church, which They love to Death; but the Church of England, which they Hate with an immortal Hatred. Even this may not be too hard for the Faith of Those, who can trust to any Promises and Vows of Good, or Security, to any Protestant Church upon Earth, from such as cannot, and, indeed, dare not, keep them.

3. The same Persons may be deluded, if they resolve upon it, by the reproachful Word of Foreigners, and Strangers to our Laws; and the like; cast upon our Royal Family: without considering, how nearly, and how certainly, They are descended from our Kings; Or, without remembering that He, who throws out this Reproach, never had any better Opportunity, Himself, of knowing Us, or our Laws; Nay, that He hath very particular Reasons to hate, and destroy Them: That He cannot come, without
many Protestants, considered.

out being followed by a Line of Popish Princes, Serm.
Foreigners, in every Sense; and that neither He, nor They, will come, without a Religion, For-
reign and Superior to all the Laws both of God and Man.

4. They may, if they please, be deluded by the general Word, of redressing Grievances; which yet His Adherents themselves mention but very sparingly: because they well know that We have no Grievances, in His Eye, but the Security of our Constitution, in Church, and State; no Grievances, for Him to ease Us of, but our Laws, Liberties, and Religion. These He sincerely promises Us, to remove. And I truly believe, that His Religion it self will permit Him faithfully to observe such Promises.

But I have said enough. I have shewn you, what that Cause is, and how many Evils are contained in it, which is now opened, and avowed, by the Friends of the Pretender. I have considered those Weak Pretenses, and False Innuations, by which Many who call Themselves Protestants, have been deluded; as they have been managed by the Artifices of Popery, Guilt, and Resentment: And, I hope, I have made it appear, that it must be a Fatal Delusion indeed, if They do not see, that to join their Hands to the Efforts of our Ene-
The present Delusion of

Serm. mies, in this Cause, is to hasten to the future 

Xi. Ruine of Themselves, and their Posterity, through a Sea of present Calamity; that to join their Hearts and Wisbès, in it, is to call down every Curse upon Themselves, and all that are to follow them; and that to put on an Indifference, upon this Occasion, is to put it on, in a Cause that doth not admit of an Indifference. It is, indeed, to profess an Indifference to Life, or Death; Pleasure, or Pain; Happiness, or Misery. And tho' They may inwardly applaud their own Wisdom, who cautiously wait for the Event of things: yet They must remember, that their Return to their Senses, from this State of Indifference, will have but an ungraceful Appearance, when All shall be secure; and that little Thanks will be due to Them, (of what sort forer they be,) from their King or their Country, when the Danger shall be over, that They have neither opened their Mouths, nor lifted up their Hands, nor so much as their Hearts, against the Enemies, not of Us only, but of all Human Society.

If it should be told, in any Part of the Earth where the Histories of our Nation have not been before known; could it possibly be believed, or could it pass for any thing, but an invented Satyr upon Human Nature; that there is a Sort of Men in the World, uneasy at their own
many Protestants, considered.

own Happiness: either labouring to tear it in pieces, themselves; or, wishing Success to those who are engaged in that Work; or supinely negligent, cold, and indifferent, what becomes of it: Begging a Deliverer, in the Agony of their Distress; and reviling both the Deliverer, and Deliverance, as soon as it is well accomplished: Shaking off Fetters, in one Generation; and calling for them again, in the next: Tiring out Heaven itself, with Petitions for their own Misery; inviting and imploring every Evil upon Themselves, and their Posterity: making loud Professions of the most submissive Passiveness, under the greatest Worldly Hardships; and unable to bear even so small a one, as the Want of all Power: Speaking much, and often, and zealously, of the Security, and flourishing Estate, of their Church; and, in the same Breath, giving it up into the Guardianship of Rome, whose Disciples openly acknowledge themselves bound, in Conscience, to destroy it: Believing the Promises of Those, who Themselves assure them, they are not to be believed; Trusting the Pretenses of Those, whose Religion professeth to destroy at once all the Foundations of Trust; and uniting with Those, by whom They are sure to be undone, and miserably treated, themselves: Some, striving and fighting; Some, wishing and desiring; and
The present Delusion of SER M. and Others, contented, to part with Ease, Quiet, Laws, Liberty, Property, Religion, and all the Blessings of Government, administered by Justice and Goodness; And, in their Stead, Some, not opposing, and Others, contending earnestly, for Chains, Banishments, Massacres, Slavery; and for every Evil, contained in the Two Great Comprehensive Engines of Misery, Unchristian Persecution in Church, and Lawless Tyranny in State: And, in order to all this, Some, taking a Pleasure, and Others, satisfied and easy, to see their Native Country laid Waste, and made a Scene of Blood, and Confusion; and the Seat of a Civil War, which, in its lowest degree, must unavoidably bring along with it many unhappy Instances of Devastation, and Mourning; which God, the Righteous Judge, will charge to Their Account, who neither will know their own Happiness, nor can bear with that of Others: In a word, Some openly attempting to destroy, and Others not attempting to defend, a Government, upon which the Happiness of their own Lives, as well as of their Neighbours and Posterity, entirely depends; and an Administration, which Themselves do not charge with any one Instance of Illegal or Arbitrary Proceeding.

If it be possible to cast a Veil over the Shame of our Country; let not this Scene of Blindness, Absur-
many Protestants, considered.

Absurdity, Contradiction, and Inconsistency, make a Part of its History. But if this cannot be hid; let it be told, at the same time, with how steady a Greatness of Soul, and how calm a Constancy of Mind, the King received the Insults, and Ungrateful Returns, of Men, whom He came disposed to make happy: Like a Rock, unmoved by those Waves that dash themselves to Pieces against it. Let it be told, with how ready, and sincere, a Zeal, his Parliament hasted to vote every thing for His, and the Public Security; with how faithful, and vigilant a Care, His Ministers detected the secret Contrivances, and opposed the Open Designs, of His Enemies: Nor let it be forgot, that, in the midst of all the Madness of Some, supported, and increased, by the Indifference of Others, there were Multitudes of Good Subjects, truly sensible of the Invaluable Blessings They enjoyed in Him, and His Administration; full of Gratitude to Heaven for their Happiness; and ready to hazard all the Concerns of this World, in the Defense of it.

May the Number of such, daily be seen to increase! As it must do, if all Common Sense be not lost from the Earth: And, may We, from the Principles of Conscience, and Honour, be of that Number! As We must be, if We consider what either Conscience, or Honour, mean.

Let
Let us be just to This Day, which once was blessed by every Protestant Mouth in this Nation, for the present Relief and Respite from impending Ruine, which it then brought along with it: And which ought now much more to be blessed, as it hath laid the Foundation of Happiness, not only for Us, but the Children yet unborn; as We have seen, and now feel, the Great End aimed at by it, to be crowned with Success; and the Mercies that it first conveyed to Us, (even every thing We enjoy in Church, and State, and the very Possibility of enjoying it,) secured against every human Attempt, but our own Stupidity, and Ingratitude, by the Settlement of that Protestant Succession, which alone could give Us any Prospect of Good.

May Almighty God, the Great Governor of all Things, watch, in a particular Manner, with the Eye of his Providence, over those Sacred Lives, upon which All Our Happiness is suspended! And guard them against every Attempt of Secret, or Open, Violence!

May He direct All, to whom the Administration of Affairs is committed, to go on, with Wisdom, Courage, Unanimity, and Constancy, to consult, and secure, the Public Interest! And whether the Influences of it reach to our particular Concerns, any farther, than as They are mixed
many Protestants, considered.

mixed with the Public; Whether We taste of its Beneficence, any otherwise, than as Members of the Whole; or not: let us always remember that it is our Duty, not to measure our Obligations to Thankfulness, by any private Considerations, distinct from the Common Good; but to rejoice, with as much Sincerity and Zeal, for the inestimable Blessing of Public Security, in which All partake, as God, and Justice, and Reason, require, from a People, the most happy in the whole World, if They would but know their own Happiness! Which, God grant They may, before it be hid from their Eyes!
The Restoration made a Blessing to Us, by the Protestant Succession.

SERMON XII.

Preached before the King, at the Royal Chapel at St. James's, May 29, 1716, being the Anniversary of the Restoration.

Psalm cxxvi. 3.

The Lord hath done great Things for Us; whereof we are glad.

S E R M. XII.

In all great Revolutions of States and Kingdoms, which We are called upon to commemorate in a Publick Manner, We must consider what Concern we ourselves have in the lasting Effects or Consequences of them; and what ought to be the real Ground of our Joy upon such Occasions. If we feel no kindly Influences from them upon our own Affairs; it will be impossible to warm ourselves into any Disposition of Mind that can be called Thankfulness: Which must always be founded upon Something,
The Restoration made a Blessing to Us. Something, in which We ourselves have a Part. They will be only like other Historical Matters of Fact; Something to amuse and entertain Us; serving to please our Curiosity, but not to raise our Gratitude. And if We feel the Sentiments of Joy and Thankfulness, rising in our Breasts, from such Principles and Motives, as no true Christian, Protestant, or Briton, ought to entertain: Our Joy then becomes the Same with the Joy of our Worst Enemies; and the Expressions of it no better than the Tokens, either of our Blindness, or of our Corruption.

In this Nation particularly, it is certain, that, in all Affairs which concern our Constitution, either in Church or State, nothing can be more absurd, than for the Friends of both, and the Enemies of both, to have the Same Movements and Passions upon the Same Occasions. It is impossible for a Protestant, if He knows what that Word means, to raise his Joy upon the same Foundation with a Papist. It is impossible for a Lover of his Religion, and his Country, to rejoice with Those who firmly believe it to be their Duty to rejoice in nothing more, than in the Ruine of both.

As our Joy, therefore, could not possibly discover itself upon this Day, if the Providence of God had done great Things, not for Us, but for our Forefathers alone; and had permitted Them
The Restoration made a Blessing to Us,

S E R M. to stop the Blessing from descending, or to convey down a Curse instead of it: And as Our Joy cannot, in the Nature of Things, be the joy of our Enemies; because it must be raised upon Something of Our own Happiness, which They have hitherto always made inconsistent with Theirs: Let Us now proceed upon this Foundation, and consider,

The Great Things God hath done for Us, in that whole Scene of Providence, which this Day opened.

This will naturally fix our Minds, in a more particular Manner upon the Blessings, in which We are immediately concerned.

And this will unavoidably lead Us to some Thoughts, of Importance to the present and future Interest of the Nation.

Now the whole Scene of Providence, which This Day opened, and which, taken in one View, can alone be said to make this Day a Blessing to Us, is indeed a Scene full of a long Train of Incidents, and a vast Variety of Circumstances, enough to make both Prince and People, in this Nation, for ever Wise and Happy.

The first Part of it, is a King restored to his Kingdom; with his Brother in view to Succeed Him:
by the Protestant Succession.

Him: but this, not till, on one hand, He had seen, both by Example, and Experience, how terrible in its Effects, the popular Dread of Arbitrary Power could shew itself, when ever it was set on fire; and not till, on the other hand, his People had sufficiently felt, how great an Evil the Want of their Legal Government was.

One would think here was a plain Middle Way of Wisdom and Happiness, pointed out even by Sense it self. But there was another, and a very different Turn given to this Affair, by the indefatigable Workings, and Artifices, of our Enemies. An universal Madness of Loyalty (falsly so called,) as well as of Manners, presently took place: And the People came pressing in Throngs, beseeching to be accounted Slaves, rather than Subjects; and begging, in Words, for Opportunities of unlimited Submission, as if they were begging for Acts of Grace and Favour. The View in Those, who then had the Direction of their Passions, was to keep that Spirit up to a Pitch, till a Popish Heir was secure of the Throne. Nor could all the Knowledge of the Nature and Principles of Popery; nor the avowed Contradiction of it to the Religion and Liberties of their Country, engage the Hearts of many; or divert them from the Resolution of trusting the whole Concerns of a Protestant
The Restoration made a Blessing to Us,

Protestant Nation, in the Hands of a Popish Prince: who at length took Possession of the Throne, to which He was thus called.

Nor had he enjoyed the Power long, before He obliged His Friends with frequent Trials of the Sincerity of their Professions. For, as it appears, He had so much better an Opinion of their Integrity, than his Predecessor had, that He really thought them in earnest; and resolved to hazard all, with a Dependence upon the Honesty of their Solemn Promises of Unbounded Submission. This, indeed, proved fatal to Himself in the Event: But, in all human Appearance, was much more likely to have proved fatal to the whole Nation.

If We stop a little here, and consider this Unhappy Prince, possessed of all the Power our Laws could vest in Him, and flattered with a Power above all Laws; and armed, in all human Appearance, with a sufficient Force to put his Resolutions in Execution; We may ask any Protestant in the Nation, if He will but put himself into that Posture of Mind, in which every one felt himself at that Season, What was then become of the Blessing of this Day? And, what would it now have availed Us, that our Forefathers saw their Legal Constitution restored to them, and rejoiced to see it; if the very Restoration of it had proved, in
the Issue, the Ruine and Destruction of all the Legal Rights of their Posterity.

But the Grand Design of Providence extended much farther. There is a Principal Part of it yet behind: And this was, to make it a lasting Blessing. And the Way was laid for this, in a Method, if you consider it in itself, the most easy and natural; as Providence always loves to work by human Means: if you consider it in that great Variety and Vicissitude of Circumstances attending it, the most instructive and useful to a Nation: And if you consider it with regard to the many Probabilities that seemed to weigh against the Success of it, little less than miraculous. When it was fixed by Providence to bring about the Restoration of the Royal Family, and the Legal Constitution of this Kingdom; and to continue it a Blessing to the Generations to come; it was necessary, in order to this, to make such a Disposition of Affairs, as might be suitable, and adapted, to the Accomplishment of it. But first, the Nation was to feel many and various Trials; many Vicissitudes of Hope, and Fear; many Conflicts between the Attempts of Popery, and Slavery, on the one hand, and the Strugglings of true Religion and Liberty, on the other; before so great a Work could be concluded. And then, at length, the Embarrassments of Human
The Restoration made a Blessing to Us,

man Madness were to be disentangled, and all the Plots and Efforts of Cunning and Power, united, in order to intail a Curse upon all Posterity, where God designed a Blessing, were to be dissipate, and scattered into Air.

With a View to this, a Prince was born Some Years before the Restoration, that He might be ripe, both in Age, and Abilities, for the performing the great Design, just when those Attempts should be ripening into Execution: And was afterwards, by a kind Disposition of Providence, to make the Way the easier, married into the Same Royal Family, from which He descended. And accordingly, when the Scene of Ruine was opened so plainly, that no Eye was then too blind to see it, He appeared in all the Maturity of Wisdom, and Vigor of Action: A Prince, inured to Labours and Hardships from his Birth; prepared for the great Work, by his personal Accomplishments; directed to it, by his Descent, and his Marriage; and qualified for it by his Intrest and Authority Without, as well as by an Uncommon Greatness of Soul Within. Such a peculiar Conjunction of every thing desirable in the Person to Undertake a Work, hazardous enough, one would imagine, to deter the Greatest Minds from thinking of it; and Such a Disposition of the various Interests of the States and Kingdoms of
of Europe, as both required and supported the success of Undertaking; must appear very surprizing, in so critical a Moment of Time: When, if we speak within the compass of Human Views, nothing but so unparalleled a Combination of Circumstances could have afforded even the least hopes of Success.

The Event of this was happy beyond Expression: And the Madness of Popery and Arbitrary Rule, was stopped in the Vigour and Warmth of all its Power, and Hopes. But even yet, Something farther was wanting; and That was, to fix the Succession to the Crown, in such a Manner, as the Experience of Feeling, and Common Sense in Judging, of necessity directed the Nation to do. This Day must have been marked with something very different from a Blessing, if the Revolution had stopped where it began; and, after a little present Respite, had delivered the Nation back again, into Popish Hands. And where indeed should We now search for the Blessing of the Restoration; if We did not see it, and feel it, in the Blessing of the Protestant Succession?

This was the Great View of Heaven, in its first Design. And, therefore, We see with Pleasure, that when it was resolved by Providence to make this Day memorable, by the Restoration of the Royal Family, and our Legal Constitu-
The Restoration made a Blessing to Us,

it was resolved by the same good Providence, that, in the very same Year, upon the very Day before this Great Work was to be accomplished, a Prince should be born, in Whom that Restoration, should in due Time centre, and to whom alone it should be reserved to compleat the Blessing for Us, and to transmit it down secure, to our Posterity, in his own Illustrious House.

This, I say, is the whole Scene of Providence which this Day opened; and which, taken in one View, can alone be said to make it a Blessing to Us, or to our Children after Us. If you view the Restoration, without the Revolution, and the Protestant Succession; it leads you directly to a Popish Prince, holding an Arbitrary Hand over all your Liberties: tearing up the Fences of all your Laws; fixing all Right in his own Will and Power; and persecuting all his Subjects into the Exercise of his own, Superstitious, Idolatrous, and Cruel Religion. And this is the whole of the Blessing, in which you would see it end at last. A Blessing, which may be a fit Reward for the Slavish Bigotry of Papists! But for Protestants — fit only for Those of them who deserve it. And They deserve it, who chuse it; whom no Experience, no Consideration, no Miracles of Providence,
by the Protestant Succession.

can engage to prefer their own Happiness before their own Destruction.

But if We view the same Restoration, in another Light, as the Restoration of our Legal Constitution, secured by the late Revolution, and fixed by the Settlement of the Crown in the Protestant Line; it appears a Blessing to Us indeed, by leading Us to the Happiness which We ourselves at present see, and feel; but cannot describe.

We have now, therefore, by an easy and natural Train of Facts, brought down our Thoughts to the present Times, in which our Eyes behold the Grand Design of this Day, brought to Maturity; and Plenty of Happiness held forth to Us, if We have any Sense or Notion left of what Happiness means, by the Protestant Succession now taking place. A Blessing recommended to Us, by the immense Difficulties cast in its Way, before it could be settled by a Law; and the various Hazards of losing it, since it was so! And a Blessing, which, unlike the other Blessings of this World, fully answers, in the Enjoyment, all the Expectations which it raised in the Prospect.

If it be the greatest Happiness that can be tasted in Human Society, to be governed by Laws; We feel our selves, and all our Concerns, under the Influence of a Legal Government.
The Restoration made a Blessing to Us,

If it be certain, that Those Princes are best qualified to govern well by Written Laws, who have governed well without them; this is a peculiar Part of our Happiness, to have the Execution of our Laws, and the Preservation of our Rights, vested in a Prince, who never betrayed, even when his Will was his Law, the least Inclination towards any Designs, but what are the Dictates of the strictest Justice. And if it redoubles a Blessing, to foresee it flourishing amongst our Posterity in future Ages; let this be acknowledged a great Addition to our present Happiness, that We may promise it to our Children after Us, under the Influences of Those who are to succeed Him.

This is such a System, such a Collection of Blessings, as ought, in Justice, to be viewed with the most passionate Sentiments of Joy and Thanksgiving. A King upon the Throne, formed for the Happiness of All, who live under the Shadow of his Authority: By his experienced Virtues, entitled to the Love and Affection of his Subjects; and by the Laws of their Country, (built upon the Fundamental Laws of Human Society) entitled to their Allegiance: Great in Himself, if the Perfection of Justice, and Honour, and Equity, be true Greatness; and Great in his Illustrious Family, if the Prospect of transmitting Blessings to Posterity, by a Line
by the Protestant Succession.

a Line of Princes descending from Himself, makes up any Part of Greatness: And, in a peculiar Manner, Great in his Influences upon the present State of this Nation, as He stands possessed of an unshaken Steadiness of Soul, not to be moved from his People's Interest; and of a Firmness of Mind, incapable of the Impressions, either of Fear, or of Inconstancy. Without which Noble and Happy Accomplishments in the First Possessor in that Illustrious House, which the Providence of God hath now fixed upon the Throne, it may justly be feared, that this Happy Settlement might by this Time have been Shaken, and the Blessings of the Protestant Religion, and our Legal Liberty (for which We have been so many Years contending,) might once more have been in danger of vanishing from our Sight.

And even still, the Suspicion of So much Happiness Ceasing in Time to come, might be very uneasy to Us, if We did not see, in his Royal Heir, and Successor, a Noble and Generous Zeal, avowed with all the Tokens of the most Sincere and Upright Heart, for the same invaluable Goods.

Nor will I ever omit, when I am recounting the Instances of our Publick Happiness, to mention that Race of Princes to come: From Whom, what is it that We may not expect?
Serm. When We not only think of the Examples of Good Government, they will have Seen; but consider them now under the Eye and Direction of a Princess, in whom the Perfection of Good Sense, and the Perfection of Good Nature, are united; and out done by nothing, unless by that Sacred Regard to True Religion, which will make her Story the Delight of Good Men in Ages to come.

This is the Fabrick of Happiness in which our Souls may take their Rest. How much less than this, might We our Selves have been well contented to hope for: And indeed, What more than this, could any Nation under Heaven well wish for? And yet, Against this whole Scheme of Blessings; against their own, and their Neighbours Security; against their own Laws and Liberties; against the Establishment of every thing valuable in this World; We have seen a Rebellion raised, by the Wick-ed Perverseness of Men, without the Pretense of a Provocation, besides the Single Provocation of offering them Happiness, in a Way, and by the Hands, which They were not pleased to like: And this, before their Passions had any thing offered to them, to set them on Fire. And We have Seen an Administration reviled, and insulted, by Thoſe, who themselves had tasted nothing but Good from it.
When one reflects with Coolness upon what hath lately past amongst Us, it seems as if the Fullness of Happiness had it self set on fire the restless Malice of Those, who were resolved not to acknowledge or enjoy the Blessing offered them; and that the Rage of Enmity hath been forced to be raised the higher, and the louder, by all the Management of Artifice, because there was so little to Complain of.

But this is the Glory of an Administration; when Those who most revile it, cannot do it without bearing Testimony to it themselves. It is the Glory of an Administration, when the Reproach, with which it is to be loaded, are cast into Future Times; when the bitterest Enemies it hath, are forced to call in the Help of the most fruitful Invention; and, for want of present Grievances, to fill the Minds of Men with the Suspicions of Evils to come. It is the Glory of an Administration, when, before it can be blackened, and made vile, the Names, and Natures, and Boundaries of Things, must be altered and removed: Light put for Darkness, and Darkness for Light; Legal Justice, (though mixed with more Temper, than ever yet was seen, in any Nation, upon a like Occasion,) treated with the Indignity, due only to the Height of Injustice; the most necessary Self-defence reviled as Cruelty; and a False Compassion placed
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Serm. in the Seat of Mercy; the Safety of a whole Nation, and all its Concerns, weighed in the Balance against Trifles; and even Popery itself painted with Truth, and Meekness, and Love, in its Face, as an harmless agreeable Thing, worthy to be received with the open Arms of Friendship, by Those, it would devour.

When these are the Methods of attacking an Administration, it is a very happy Sign, that They, who make use of them, have occasion heartily to wish it much worse than They find it; and a very strong Argument to all Good Subjects, to wish as heartily that their Country may never know the want of an Administration, which is not reviled by its Greatest Enemies, unless it be in such a Manner, as to add to its Reputation and Honour.

What is it, that an Uneasy, Thankless, Generation of Men would have? Blessed be God, the Publick Efforts of their Malice are once more dissipated. They are conquered in the Field. But their Spirits, and their Tempers, and their Designs, do not at all appear to be conquered: If We may judge from their Indefatigable Diligence and Art, in filling the Heads of their Well-wishers, as Soon as one Desperate Attempt is over, with Hints and Expectations of Another; and from the Unparalleled Insolence of their Agents and Followers; even
even whilst they are begging and waiting for Mercy.

It may be very hard, to find present and effectual Remedies for so great Evils. But this One thing, I am sure, is very plain, and very proper to be mentioned, that, in order entirely and successfully to conquer such Enemies, We must first conquer Ourselves. — Did all, who truly wish well to the present Establishment, unanimously pursue the Same good Ends, there would be no ground for Fear. But whilst the Passions of Well-meaning Men, upon every Trifling and Private Occasion, join themselves with the Designs of Those, who certainly mean our Ruine; it is this that swells the Current; and that feeds the Insolence and Expectation of the Common Enemy.

But to conclude: If a long Series of Experience can make any Nation wise, We, of all Nations in the World, have that Advantage. We are not only made happy; but made happy in those Methods, which cannot but teach Us to value our Happiness; whilst, That which Others learn by Reflexion and Judgment, We have had brought home to Us, by the Sense of Feeling, and Eye-Sight. The Enemies of our Happiness themselves, ought to learn Conviction, from All that this Nation hath been Witness to; and to become Friends. And for

S 3 Those,
Those, who are truly Friends, in the main and essential Points of our Happiness; certainly it is Time for all of them to think it Wisdom, to give up even their private Schemes and Notions, as well as their private Resentments and Views, to the Publick Good; and, at length, after so many Vicissitudes of Hope and Fear, so many Struggles between Life and Death, so many Hazards and Dangers escaped, to unite in strengthening, instead of weakening, the Hands of Those, who have it in their Will, as well as in their Trust, to establish Us upon a Foundation never more to be shaken: That so, the Best of Kings may have the Best of Subjects; and, Authority and Law, Obedience and Liberty, may be seen united, in all their Vigour and Glory; and descend down, with the Blessings which accompany them, to all Future Generations. Which God grant, for the Sake of Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord!
The Nature and Duty of a Public Spirit.

SERMON XIII.

Preached at St. James's, Westminster, on St. David's Day, March 1, 1716. before the Honourable the Stewards and Others of the Society of Antient Britons, established in Honour of Her Royal Highness's Birth-day, and the Principality of Wales.

PHIL. ii. 4.

Look not every Man on his own Things: But every Man also on the Things of Others.

There are hardly any Words, more common in the Mouths of Men, than a Public Spirit; a Regard to the Public; the Good of the Public; the Love of our Country; and many others of the like Sort: Which are indeed, in their Original Design, but different Expressions for One and the Same Thing. The Great Point is, what these Words
Words ought truly to signify; what Temper and Disposition of Mind; what Practice and Conduct of Life, They ought to represent and design. And, as I think that the great End of such Societies and Assemblies, as the present, is to cultivate that Good Spirit of Love and Humanity, which may diffuse itself thro' the whole Tenor of Men's Actions; I have, upon this Account, thought it proper to choose these Words of St. Paul: In which He condemns that Vicious Selfishness which teacheth Us to confine our Views to Ourselves alone, considered as separated from the Rest of the World; and, at the same Time, directs Us to the contrary good Temper and Disposition, of a Diffusive Regard to All Mankind around Us. And I choose Them, as They will give Us Occasion to consider, in a more general Way, than perhaps He at that Time directly intended, and with a particular View to Human Society, The true Foundation, Nature, and Extent, of a Public Spirit; the Bad Disposition, and Vice, opposite to it; the Effects in which It will shew itself; and the Motives there are, to the cherishing and improving it in Ourselves.

The Foundation of it is laid in that Virtuous Love of Ourselves, which is joined with the Love of Others, united with Us in Human Society:
Society: And it must be supported by that great and god-like Disposition of Mind, which desires and labours to plant Happiness, where it is not; and to continue it where it is. And this is the same Thing with that Comprehensive Love and Charity towards Others, which the Gospel came to restore, and to inflame. But this, I say, not so, as to exclude that Reasonable Regard to ourselves, and our own Concerns, which never is, nor can be, a Vice. So far from it, that, as long as we are Members of Human Society, nothing can more secure and improve our own Happiness, than this Regard to the Happiness of that Human Society, of which we are Members. We can do nothing for that good End, but what will reflect back its happy Influences upon ourselves, in some Degree or other: As Every Law for the Preservation, and Glory, and Happiness, of the Public, is a Law, in which All the Members of the Public must find their own Account, and their own Security. So that a Public Spirit is not founded upon a Regard to Others, inconsistent with a Regard to Ourselves, in a good Sense; but really takes in that virtuous and praise-worthy Self-love; which considers our own True Lasting Interest, (as well as the Peace, and Applauses of our Mind within,) closely united with
This may appear with more Light, if you consider the very Method, and End, of Mankind's Engagements with one another, in their entering into the Terms of Human Society. Before you suppose this Engagement, or Compact, or whatever you will call it, Every Man was, properly speaking, One by Himself; guarding Himself alone, against Others; taking every thing for his Support, which could come within his Reach; and having Himself alone, under his own Care and Protection. The first Step towards Human Society must arise, in the Nature of the thing, from a Desire of a more settled Security, than Every Man, by Himself, could find in his own Defense and Protection; joined with a Benevolent Desire of the same Good to Others, which Every One found the want of, in Himself. And the Nature of the Stipulation, or Agreement, must have been this; not, to profess or pretend to throw off All Concern for Themselves; or to regard the Happiness of Others, in a way inconsistent with their own: But to engage for that mutual Strength and Support, which should be the Happiness of All the Members of Society; that is, of Themselves, as well as of Others.
The Public Spirit, therefore, we are now speaking of, as it respects Human Society, must be founded upon the Original Design, and End, of Human Society; which was, in the Intent of every Man, the Good and Happiness of Himself, considered in Conjunction with the Good and Happiness of Others.

2. This will lead us to the True Account of the opposite Vice. For it is plain from what hath been said, that this doth not consist in regarding Ourselves; provided we regard Ourselves as Members of Society, united in the Bonds of Friendship and Union with many Others, for the same End of Mutual Preservation and Happiness; But that the Crime consists in regarding Ourselves in such a manner, as doth in effect take Us again out of that Society, into which We were entered; and shews that we consider Ourselves, as retired back again into that State, in which We were originally Our own Supports, and Our own Defenders, without Regard to Any but Our selves. This, Every one sees plainly, in the Case of Notorious Offenders; in Instances which public Infamy and constant Punishment have marked with Disgrace; such as Open Robbery, and Violence, and Rapine. But it is as true, and as certain, in all other, less observed, and less notorious, Instances. For, as Men professing those Vices, have,
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Serm. have, for their own present Humour, or Passion, voluntarily removed Themselves out of that Society, in which They were once engaged: So, Whoever, out of a false regard to Themselves; either for a present Gratification of Covetousness, Pride, Ambition, Revenge, or the like, hinder the least Good, or procure the least Evil, to the Public; These Men are, in that Instance, and in that Degree, upon the same foot with the Others. They are so far got loose from the Bonds of Human Society. They so far regard Themselves as Particulars, standing by Themselves. They have so far torn themselves from the Ties and Concerns of Social Engagements. And, tho' they may avoid the Infamy of Common Discourse, which generally follows nothing but Public and Shameful Punishment; yet, in reality They are but just where the Others are; that is, They are again got back into a State directly opposite to that of Human Society; and are divested of All Real Title to the Advantages of a Condition, from which They have voluntarily separated Themselves.

The Question therefore, to any Man upon this Subject, is only this, Whether, upon any Occasion, He will regard Himself, and his own immediate Passions and Views, (which He supposeth His present Good,) in Distinction and Opposition to the Good of Society;
of a Public Spirit.

ciety; or, Whether He will be content to re-
gard Himself, as a Member of Society; and his own particular Good and Happiness, as united and consistent with the Good and Happiness of Others. In the former Case, His Choice immediately dissolves the Relation between Him and Others, and gives Them a Right to look upon, and treat Him, as a Public Enemy. In the latter Case, His Choice is directed by a Benevolent Temper to Himself, as well as to Others; and by a Desire of the Happiness of Others, as united with his own, in the same Great Concerns.

3. It follows naturally, upon what hath been said, to observe, that it is this Desire of the Happiness of Others, this Generous and Diffusive Love of Mankind, which, in all Seasons, and upon all Occasions, will be our chief Defense against falling into the Vice, I have been now speaking of. For tho', at the Beginning, the first Thought of entering into the Terms of Society, was owing to the Wants, and Defects, which Every particular Man found in Himself, for his own particular Support and Preservation; yet the End of that Society must be answered, and maintained, by that Equitable Rule, of not expecting from Others, what We ourselves are not ready to afford Them, in all like Circumstances.
And, in order to afford Them, what We think reasonable to expect from Them, We must feel, and improve, in our selves, the Love and Desire of the Happiness of the World about Us; and fix it as a steady Principle of our own Conduct, that it is not only strictly agreeable to the very Engagements of Human Society, in which We are entered; but that it is highly glorious, and honourable, to add to the Happiness, and to diminish the Miseries, of Others, as far as our Power and Influence can extend Themselves.

The Great Necessity, and Usefulness, of having such a Support, laid deep in a Well-disposed Mind, will appear to Any, who will give Themselves the Trouble of remarking the many Powerful, and too often Successful, Enemies there are, to this Good and Benevolent Spirit. Sometimes Covetousness, and sometimes Pride; sometimes the Ambition and Thirst of Power, and sometimes the Revenge and Rage of Disappointment, will overturn the Minds of Men, on a sudden; and make them forget, that They are entered into Society with their Neighbours: Unless They have firmly fixed it in their own Judgments, that it can never be dishonourable for them to promote the Happiness of Others; nor ever be honourable for Them, in any Degree, to take
of a Public Spirit.

They have once entered into All the Engagements of Human Society. And this can never be firmly fixed in any Mind, in which that Vicious Selfishness reigns, which banishes All Disposition towards making others happy; and plants in its room a cold Neglect of All the Rest of Mankind. Many a One, who would start at the Thought of being an open Robber, or Cut-throat, yet is sometimes found to indulge Himself, out of some poor private View, or Resentment, in acting a Part, which puts Him as much out of Society; and is, in its Effects, perhaps of more fatal Consequence to the Happiness of Mankind, than Thousands of Robberies, and Private Violences. 

The same Law of Equity, Condemns the One, which Condemns the Other. The same Reasons engage Us against the One, which engage Us against the Other. The same End of Society, and the same Desire of the Happiness of Others, rightly considered, and thoroughly imbibed, would effectually prevent or cure them both. And in Cases, where no public Temporal Punishment follows, nothing but a Good Principle within, can be of any lasting good Consequence.

4. As for the Effects, that will be seen to flow from hence; a Public Spirit, or the Love of Our Country, or whatever it may be called,
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S E R M. called, will not shew itself, as if it were the

XIII. Love of a particular Climate, or Soil; or of a

particular Constitution of Government, whatever it be, merely because we happen to be born under it: But it will appear in All the Genuine Effects of a sincere Desire of the Happiness of Society, and of Ourselves, considered as Members of Society. It will answer those Ends and Engagements of Human Society, upon which it is built; and produce All the Fruits of that Love of Mankind, which We can never forbear to extol and applaud wherever We meet with it. It will Act with a View to Our own Happiness, considered as tempered in such a manner with that of Others, as that We can never destroy our own Lasting Interest, whilst We promote the Common Interest, in which Our own lives and breathes. It is Something as far removed from Noise and Passion in Words; as it is from Pride, Ambition, Covetousness, or Revenge, in Actions. It doth not always, indeed, soothe and flatter our present Passion, or Every Immediate View of Personal Profit, or Power; but it always tends to secure, even our Private Good, which We have, by entering into Society, mixt with the Good of Others. In a word, It is seen in a Constant Regard to the Interest of that Society, from which Our own cannot
of a Public Spirit.

cannot be separated: And consists, not in a

Neglect of Ourselves; but in a Regard to Others,
closely united, in the same Common Happiness,
or Common Misery, with Ourselves.

5. I come now to the Motives and Inducements to this Disposition, and Practice. And, as I have hitherto considered a Public Spirit, with regard to Human Society; so, the first Motive naturally ariseth from hence, that the Ends and Engagements of Human Society make This the Duty of every Man, who is not willing to appear false to his Honour, and to his Assurances. There is no need of any Explicit Formal Contract in this Case. For, whoever thinks, He hath Reason to expect the Privileges, the Protection, the Support, arising from Society, (which, I believe, Few will think they have forfeited,) doth, by that very Thought, effectually give, or renew, the necessary Assurances, on his own Part. He acknowledges Himself bound by all the Ties of that Society; and consequently obliged, in Honour and Conscience, to regard Himself, not as a Person by Himself, with his own private Passions and Humours only to gratify, but as One of a Number of Men, whose Happiness and Interest is one and the same. Whenever, therefore, He separates his own Good, from that of the Whole, into which he professeth
The Nature and Duty

S E R M. proffefleth voluntarily to throw it, every Hour that He lives under the Benefit and Protection of Social Laws; He sins against Those useful Obligations; with much more Dishonour, and many more fatal Consequences, than a Man who breaks his private Agreement, or revokes his Verbal Promise, or his written Bond. It is invain, indeed, that Men are entered into the Ties of Society, unless They look upon that very Entrance into them, as a strict Obligation upon them, to Act agreeably to those Ties.

So that, if You only consider yourselves as Members of Human Society, You have the strongest Motive, which Honour, and Reason, and Equity, can suggest; that is, the Motive taken from the Bonds, and Engagements, You have brought yourselves under; to perform, on your Part, what in Reason you may expect from Others in the same Circumstances; and what is agreeable and answerable to the Privileges and Protection You think yourselves entitled to, from the Body Politic. To claim the Benefits of Laws, and the Supports arising from Human Society, is absolutely unreasonable and absurd, for any One to presume to do, who hath any Sense of Virtue and Honour left; unless He be ready, on his own Part, to pay back again all the Reciprocal
cal Duties respecting the Good of the Whole: Which He doth, in Effect, Promise and Vow to do, whenever He expects those Benefits. The first Motive therefore is this. You are entered into the Engagements of Human Society. You are obliged in Conscience and Honour to answer those Engagements. And consequently, are obliged to regard the Happiness of that Society, in which your own is concerned; and your own private Inclinations or Passions, no farther, than as they are consistent, not only with the Security, but with the Happiness, of the Public.

If from hence we proceed to consider Ourselves as Reasonable Creatures, brought into Being by the Great Father of all Things; and capable of finding out his Existence, Nature, and Perfections; We shall be persuaded, that We can never be so Great in Ourselves, as when We conform Ourselves to his Will, or imitate his Perfections. And, when we know that He loves to communicate Happiness; and that His great Glory is, Mercy, and Goodness, diffused to all Beings, who do not make Themselves incapable of them: This will be a powerful Motive to all who know his Name, to esteem it as their own great Glory and Honour, to resemble Him, in that Good and Benevolent Disposition, to which
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which They themselves owe All that they enjoy, and all that They can hope for.

If we now consider Ourselves as Christians, We shall find that the Best Religion is founded in Love; and that this Love is not a Passion, or a Fancy, or an Enthusiasm, of the Mind, but the Beneficence of Practice; that it consists, not in Profession, and Words, but in Deed, and Action; that it hath no other Signification, in the Law of Christians, but doing Good, that is, adding to the Happiness, or diminishing the Miseries, of Others. This is that true Friendship, with regard to particular Persons, which alone deserves that Name; and this is that true Public Spirit, with regard to the whole Society to which We belong, which comprehends and enlivens every Duty we owe to it. If we have Christian Charity, We have that Beneficent Temper which promotes the Good of Others; and the more Diffusive and Extensive this is, the more Christian it is: And if We feel nothing of the Desire of the Happiness of Others, in Us, We are certainly void of All that Love, which is the Foundation, and Essence, of the Gospel.

The last thing I shall mention, is, Self-Love, and Self-Interest, rightly understood. For I am persuaded that, if this be wholly left out of the Question; and All regard to Themselves be excluded,
excluded, so that Men shall find that they are neither to reap Profit, nor Pleasure, nor Honour, nor any Advantage, from the Part they are to act, it is invain to enter into Argument with Them. Their Practice must be determined another way; and the Passions of their Hearts will easily hurry Them, whithersoever They please. And here, if Men have any native Goodness and Probity of Mind, They will feel within Themselves the Pleasure and Honour of keeping strictly to those Engagements, which the Nature of Human Society layeth upon them; and for which alone They receive the Supports and Protection of it. They will have the Reward within, of a peaceful Breast, undisturbed with the Tumults of Passion, Pride, Covetousness, or Revenge. They will feel that it is, truly speaking, much more happy to Themselves, to give Bounds to their own Desires and Views, in Conjunction with the Ends of Society; than to break through their own Obligations, to ruffle and discompose their own Breasts, merely for the sake of laying hold on every Opportunity of adding, for the present Moment, either to their Riches, or their Power.

The Difference is this, that They will not indeed have the Satisfaction of gratifying every present Humour, or Inclination, or Rage;
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(if that can be called a Satisfaction, which often brings so much Private, as well as Public, Evil along with it:) but They will have the Satisfaction, even as to Themselves, of pursuing their present Interest in a more steady and secure, as well as a more honourable, way; and at the same Time of continuing down those Goods to their own Posterity, which They enjoy themselves. Whereas every Breach, or Violence, made upon the Scheme of Public Good, hath appeared, in Multitudes of Instances, to have ended even in the Temporal Disadvantage, or Ruine, of the Persons Themselves who have been tempted to join in it. So it may probably be always, because in its Nature it tends to it: But it will certainly affect many hereafter, in whom They ought to think Themselves nearly and deeply concerned.

If, therefore, Men have any Regard to inward Peace and Tranquillity; if They have any Sense of Contentment within, or Security without; if They will consult their Understanding, and not their Passion, about their Interest; if They are not lost to all Sense of the Good of their own Posterity; if They have not thrown off all Regard to their Reason, as well as all Belief in God; They will think even their present Interest, (as well as their
of a Public Spirit.

their Future Reward,) sufficiently consulted and secured, by such a Temper of Mind, as will teach Them to disdain to accept of the Benefits of Society, without adding to the Happiness of it; and to pursue their own present Good, always in Conjunction with that of the Public, to which They belong.

I must not make an End, without saying something upon the present Occasion of our meeting together. This Society hath many Circumstances of Advantage above Others of the like Nature, not only as it comprehends, in its Intent, a very great Number of the most Antient and Noble Families of this Island; but as it flourishes under a most Illustrious and Royal President; as it was first instituted to the Honour of a Princess, whose Name carries every happy Influence along with it; as it is expressly founded upon a Principle of Affection, as well as Duty, to that Royal Family, in which We are now so happy above all the Nations around us; and as it is peculiarly design-ed to diffuse and propagate that Public Spirit, or Love to our Country, which is inseparably the same with Their Interest. If You consider Yourselves in this View, You will from hence receive new Supplies of Zeal, and fresh Motives to every Thing, You owe to Yourselves, Your Fellow-Subjects, and Your Posterity.
When *this Day* leads your Thoughts from a *Dead Saint*, whose Virtues You ought to celebrate, as far as the *History* of so remote and dark an *Age* will permit, to that *Living Example* of Virtue, whose Birth gives it its present Lustre and Brightness; to a *Saint*, not dressed up in the Pageantry of a blind Superstition; but adorned with those real and substantial Graces, the Practice of which You can see with Admiration, and the Effect of which the World feels with Happiness: When *this Day* directs your Thoughts in this Manner, the Honour You pay to *Her* is paid to *Virtue*: And the Pleasure you perceive, in paying it, ariseth from a Regard to the *Public*; when You are carried by the same Thought to view *Posterity*, made happy, perhaps in many Countries, by *Those*, whose Minds and Manners *She* is now forming to every Thing *Great*, and Beneficent; as well as to remark the Influences of *Wisdom* and Goodness upon the present Generation.

When You consider *Yourselves*, as under the *Presidency* of His *Royal Highness*, *His* Zeal for the Good of *Great Britain*, will animate and inflame your own. In the Calm of Prosperity, He will always praise and extol your Love of *Your Laws* and of *your Country*. In the *Times of Hazard* and
and Distress, if any such should come, He will lead You on to Glory by his Example. And if You follow Him through the Paths of Honour and Courage, You will make Your selves, and your Posterity, as happy, as He wishes You to be; and that is, as happy as You can wish yourselves to be.

Your Thoughts will now naturally lead you to that truly Great and Good King, whom the particular Providence of God hath placed, and preserved, upon the Throne of these Kingdoms. If You consider Him in His Disposition, His Temper, His Resolutions; how much Encouragement will You find in all these, to your improving and inflaming a true Public Spiritedness in Yourselves? And how much need of it will you discover, if you reflect upon that Scene of Behaviour towards Him, to which our own Eyes have been, and are, Witnesses? He came to Us, clothed with all the Circumstances that could recommend Him, even to our Passionate Love. Power and Authority He had enjoyed, in its Supreme Heighth, long before, in his own Country. But He always chose to Reign, not by His Power, but by His Goodness: And They who lived under his Influences, loved Him too well, to be sensible They obeyed Him. His Beneficence made every Part of their
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their Behaviour, result from Affection, rather than Duty. And yet, tho' this was His known and experienced Conduct; and tho' He came hither disposed to cherish Our Happiness, as His own; and to establish this Nation, by Justice, and Temper, and Wisdom: We have seen Those amongst Ourselves, who have been ready to prefer the Certain Enemies of their Religion and Liberties, before the Greatest Friend, Those invaluable Goods ever yet could boast of. They have been willing to call in the Bigotry and Revenge of Popery: And, when that alone hath failed, even to invite in a Deluge of relentless Destruction, and Desolation, in order to get rid of a State of Happiness, which they are conscious They do not deserve, and have shewn themselves not able to bear.

But let not the Zeal of some, to tear in Pieces that Scheme of Blessings which Heaven hath put into our Hands, exceed our Zeal to stop its Passage from Us, and to secure it to Ourselves and all Posterity. As We have a Prince upon the Throne, who, unlike most of the Princes of this World, desires nothing of Us, but to make ourselves happy; as We have all the Inducements that Men, and Christians, and Protestants, can have; as We have all the Terrors, and Evils, that the strongest
strongest Imagination can invent, to fear for our Country, if the Cause of Religion and Liberty should be overturned and oppressed; as We are ourselves, in our own Persons, deeply concerned in all the miserable Consequences of such an Event; and are under all the Obligations of Honour, and Conscience, to promote the Happiness of the Public, of which We are Members; and as We must expect to answer to God, as well as to our own Consciences, for our Stupidity and Madness, in neglecting so great and invaluable Good Things: Let Us not permit the Zeal of a true Public Spirit to cool in our Breasts; let Us not only improve it in Ourselves, but let us kindle and increase it in Others; till it may come to be too powerful for that Narrow, Vicious, Selfishness, which is the Root of all Public Evil; and settle Us at last upon the unmoveable Foundation of Peace and Happiness.
The Nature of the Kingdom, or Church, of Christ.

SERMON XIV.

Preached before the King, at the Royal Chapel at St. James's, on Sunday, March 31, 1717.

St. John xviii. 36.

Jesus answered, My Kingdom is not of this World.

ONE of those great Effects, which Length of Time is seen to bring along with it, is the Alteration of the Meaning annexed to certain Sounds. The Signification of a Word, well known and understood by Those who first made use of it, is very insensibly varied, by passing through many Mouths, and by being taken and given by Multitudes, in common Discourse; till it often comes to stand for a Complication of Notions, as distant from the original Intention of it, nay, as contradictory to it, as Darkness is to Light. The Ignorance and Weakness of Some, and the Passions and Bad Designs of Others, are the great Instruments
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Instruments of this Evil: which, even when it seems to affect only indifferent Matters, ought in reason to be opposed, as it tends, in its Nature, to confound Men's Notions in weightier Points; but, when it hath once invaded the most Sacred and Important Subjects, ought, in Duty, to be resisted with a more open and undisguised Zeal, as what toucheth the very Vitals of all that is Good, and is just going to take from Men's Eyes the Boundaries of Right and Wrong.

The only Cure for this Evil, in Cases of so great Concern, is to have recourse to the Originals of Things, to the Law of Reason, in those Points which can be traced back thither; and to the Declarations of Jesus Christ, and his immediate Followers, in such Matters as took their Rise solely from those Declarations. For the Case is plainly this, that Words and Sounds have had such an Effect, (not upon the Nature of Things, which is unmoveable, but) upon the Minds of Men in thinking of them; that the very same Word remaining, (which at first truly represented One certain Thing,) by having Multitudes of new inconsistent Ideas, in every Age, and every Year, added to it, becomes itself the greatest Hindrance to the true understanding of the Nature of the Thing first intended by it.

For
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For Instance, Religion, in St. James's Days, was Virtue and Integrity, as to Ourselves, and Charity and Beneficence to Others; before God, even the Father, Jam. i. 27. By Degrees, it is come to signify, in most of the Countries throughout the whole World, the Performance of every thing almost, except Virtue and Charity; and particularly, a punctual Exactness in a Regard to particular Times, Places, Forms, and Modes, diversified according to the various Humours of Men; recommended and practis ed under the avowed Name of External Religion: Two Words, which, in the Sense fixed upon them by many Christians, God hath put asunder; and which, therefore, no Man should join together. And accordingly, the Notion of a Religious Man differs in every Country, just as much as Times, Places, Ceremonies, Imaginary Austerities, and all other Outward Circumstances, are different and various: Whereas in truth, though a Man, truly Religious in other Respects, may make use of such Things; yet they cannot be the least Part of his Religion, properly so called, any more than his Food, or his Raiment, or any other Circumstance of his Life.

Thus, likewise, the Worship of God, to be paid by Christians, was, in our Saviour's Time, and in his own plain Words, the Worship of the
the Father in Spirit and Truth; and this declared to be one great End proposed in the Christian Dispensation: The Hour cometh, and now is, when the true Worshipers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him; John iv. 23. But the Notion of it is become quite another thing: and in many Christian Countries, that which still retains the Name of the Worship of God, is indeed the Neglect, and the Diminution of the Father; and the Worship of other Beings besides, and more than, the Father. And this, performed in such a manner, as that any indifferent Spectator would conclude, that neither the Consciences nor Understandings of Men, neither Spirit nor Truth, were at all concerned in the Matter; or rather, that they had been banished from it by an express Command. In the mean time the Word, or Sound, still remains the same in Discourse. The whole Lump of indigested, and inconsistent Notions and Practises; Every thing that is solemnly said, or done, when the Worship of God is professed, is equally covered under that general Name; and, by the help of using the same Original Word, passeth easily for the thing itself. Again, Prayer, in all our Lord's Directions about it, and particularly in that Form, which He
himself taught his Followers, was a calm, undisturbed, Address to God, under the Notion of a Father, expressing those Sentiments and Wishes before Him, which every sincere Mind ought to have. But the same Word, by the help of Men, and voluminous Rules of Art, is come to signify Heat and Flame, in such a manner, and to such a degree, that a Man may be in the best Disposition in the World, and yet not be devout enough to Pray: and many an honest Person hath been perplexed, by this Means, with Doubts and Fears of being uncapable of Praying, for want of an Intenseness of Heat; which hath no more relation to the Duty, than a Man's being in a Fever hath, to the Sincerity of his Professions, or Addresses to any Earthly Prince.

Once more; the Love of God, and of our Saviour, was at first, in his own Words, and those of St. John, many Times repeated, the keeping his Commandments, or doing his Will. John xiv. 15, 21, 23. Ch. xv. 10. 1 John ii. 5. Ch. v. 3. 2 John 6. But the Notion of it was, it seems, left very jejune; and so hath been improved by his later Followers, till the same Name, still kept up in the Language of Christians, is far removed from the Thing principally and first intended; and is come by degrees to signify a violent Passion, Commotion, and Ec-
or Church, of Christ.

flaky, venting it self in such sort of Expressions and Disorders, as other Passions do: and this regulated and defined, by such a Variety of Imaginations, that an ordinary Christian, with the utmost Sincerity in his Heart, is filled with nothing but eternal Suspicions, Doubts, and Perplexities, whether he hath any thing of the true Love of God, or not.

I have mentioned these Particulars, not only to shew the Evil it self; and to how great a Degree the Nature of Things hath suffered, in the Opinions of Men, by the Alteration of the Sense of the same Words and Sounds: but to give you Occasion to observe, that there can be no Cure for it, in Christians, but to go back to the New Testament it self; because There alone we shall find the Original Intention of such Words; or the Nature of the Things design- ed to be signifyed by them, declared and fixed by our Lord, or his Apostles from him, by some such Marks, as may, if we will attend to them, guide and guard us in our Notions of those Matters, in which we are most of all concerned.

It is with this View, that I have chosen those Words, in which our Lord himself declared the Nature of his own Kingdom. This Kingdom of Christ, is the same with the Church of Christ. And the Notion of the Church of Christ,
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Christ, which, at first, was only the Number, small or great, of Those who believed Him to be the Messiah; or of Those who subjected themselves to Him, as their King, in the Affair of Religion; having since that Time been so diversified by the various Alterations it hath undergone, that it is almost impossible so much as to number up the many inconsistent Images that have come, by daily Additions, to be united together in it: Nothing, I think, can be more useful, than to consider the same thing, under some other Image, which hath not been so much used; nor consequently so much defaced. And since the Image of His Kingdom, is That, under which our Lord himself chose to represent it: We may be sure that, if we sincerely examine our Notion of his Church, by what He faith of his Kingdom, that it is not of this World, we shall exclude out of it, every thing that he would have excluded; and then, what remains will be true, pure, and uncorrupted. And what I have to say, in order to this, will be comprehended under Two General Heads.

I. As the Church of Christ is the Kingdom of Christ, He himself is King: and in this it is implied, that He is himself the sole Law-giver to his Subjects, and himself the sole Judge of their Behaviour, in the Affairs of Conscience and
or Church, of Christ.

Eternal Salvation. And in this Sense, therefore, His Kingdom is not of this World; that He hath, in those Points, left behind Him, no visible, human Authority, no Vicegerents who can be said properly to supply his Place; no Interpreters, upon whom his Subjects are absolutely to depend; no Judges over the Consciences or Religion of his People. For if this were so, that any such absolute Vicegerent Authority, either for the making New Laws, or interpreting Old ones, or judging his Subjects, in Religious Matters, were lodged in any Men upon Earth; the Consequence would be, that what still retains the Name of the Church of Christ, would not be the Kingdom of Christ, but the Kingdom of those Men, vested with such Authority. For, whoever hath such an Authority of making Laws, is so far a King: and whoever can add new Laws to those of Christ, equally obligatory, is as truly a King, as Christ himself is: Nay, whoever hath an absolute Authority to interpret any written, or spoken Laws; it is He, who is truly the Lawgiver, to all Intents and Purposes; and not the Person who first wrote, or spake them.

In human Society, the Interpretation of Laws, may, of necessity, be lodged, in some Cases, in the Hands of Those who were not originally the Legislators. But this is not abs
because the Legislators can resume the Interpretation into their own Hands, as They are Witnesses to what passes in the World; and as They can, and will, sensibly interpose in all those Cases, in which their Interposition becomes necessary. And therefore, They are still properly the Legislators. But it is otherwise in Religion, or the Kingdom of Christ. He himself never interposeth, since his first Promulgation of his Law, either to convey Infallibility to Such as pretend to handle it over again; or to assert the true Interpretation of it, amidst the various and contradictory Opinions of Men about it. If He did certainly thus interpose, He himself would still be the Legislator. But, as He doth not; if such an absolute Authority be once lodged with Men, under the Notion of Interpreters, They then become the Legislators, and not Christ; and They rule in their own Kingdom, and not in His.

It is the same thing, as to Rewards and Punishments, to carry forward the great End of his Kingdom. If any Men upon Earth have a Right to add to the Sanctions of his Laws; that is, to increase the Number, or alter the Nature, of the Rewards and Punishments of his Subjects, in Matters of Conscience, or Salvation: They are so far Kings in his stead; and I Reign
or Church, of Christ.

Reign in their own Kingdom, and not in His. SERM. xiv.

So it is, whenever They erect Tribunals, and exercise a Judgment over the Consciences of Men; and asume to Themselves the Determination of such Points, as cannot be determined, but by One who knows the Hearts; or, when They make any of their own Declarations, or Decisions, to concern and affect the State of Christ's Subjects, with regard to the Favour of God: this is so far, the taking Christ's Kingdom out of His Hands, and placing it in their own.

Nor is this matter at all made better by their declaring Themselves to be Vicegerents, or Law-makers, or Judges, under Christ, in order to carry on the Ends of his Kingdom. For it comes to this at last, since it doth not seem fit to Christ himself to interpose so as to prevent or remedy all their Mistakes and Contradictions; that, if They have this Power of interpreting, or adding, Laws; and Judging Men; in such a Sense, that Christians shall be indispensably and absolutely obliged to obey those Laws, and to submit to those Decisions; I say, if They have this Power lodged with them, then the Kingdom, in which they rule, is not the Kingdom of Christ, but of Themselves; He doth not rule in it, but They: And, whether They happen to agree with Him, or [to differ from Him,
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Serm. Him, as long as They are the Law-givers, and Judges, without any Interposition from Christ, either to guide or correct their Decisions, They are Kings of his Kingdom, and not Christ Jesus.

If therefore, the Church of Christ be the Kingdom of Christ; it is essential to it, that Christ himself be the Sole Law-giver, and Sole Judge of his Subjects, in all Points relating to the Favour or Displeasure of Almighty God; and that All His Subjects, in what Station forever they may be, are equally Subjects to Him; and that No One of them, any more than Another, hath Authority, either to make New Laws for Christ's Subjects; or to impose a Sense upon the Old Ones, which is the same thing; or to Judge, Censure, or Punish, the Servants of Another Master, in Matters relating purely to Conscience, or Salvation. If any Person hath any other Notion, either thro' a long Use of Words with Inconsistent Meanings, or thro' a Negligence of Thought; let him but ask himself, whether the Church of Christ be the Kingdom of Christ, or not? And, if it be, whether this Notion of it doth not absolutely exclude all other Legislators and Judges, in Matters relating to Conscience, or the Favour of God; or, whether it can be His Kingdom, if any Mortal Men have such a Power of Legislation and Judgment in it. This Enquiry will
will bring Us back to the first, which is the only True, Account of the Church of Christ, or the Kingdom of Christ, in the Mouth of a Christian; That it is the Number of Men, whether Small or Great, whether Dispersed or United, who truly and sincerely are Subjects to Jesus Christ alone, as their Law-giver and Judge, in Matters relating to the Favour of God, and their Eternal Salvation.

II. The next principal Point is, that, if the Church be the Kingdom of Christ; and this Kingdom be not of this World: this must appear from the Nature and End of the Laws of Christ; and of those Rewards and Punishments, which are the Sanctions of his Laws. Now his Laws are Declarations, relating to the Favour of God in another State after this. They are Declarations of those Conditions to be performed, in this World, on our Part, without which God will not make us Happy in that to come. And they are almost All general Appeals to the Will of that God; to his Nature, known by the Common Reason of Mankind; and to the Imitation of that Nature, which must be our Perfection. The keeping his Commandments is declared the Way to Life; and the doing his Will, the Entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. The being Subjects to Christ, is to this very End, that We may the better
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better and more effectually perform the Will of God. The Laws of this Kingdom, therefore, as Christ left them, have nothing of this World in their View; no Tendency, either to the Exaltation of Some, in worldly Pomp and Dignity; or to their absolute Dominion over the Faith and Religious Conduct of Others of his Subjects; or to the erecting of any Sort of Temporal Kingdom, under the Covert and Name of a Spiritual one.

The Sanctions of Christ's Law are Rewards and Punishments. But of what Sort? Not the Rewards of this World; not the Offices, or Glories, of this State; not the Pains of Prisons, Banishments, Fines, or any lesser and more moderate Penalties; nay, not the much lesser Negative Discouragements that belong to Human Society. He was far from thinking that These could be the Instruments of such a Persuasion, as He thought acceptable to God. But, as the Great End of his Kingdom, was to guide Men to Happiness, after the short Images of it were over here below; so, He took his Motives from that Place, where his Kingdom first began, and where it was at last to end; from those Rewards and Punishments in a future State, which had no relation to this World: And, to shew that his Kingdom was not of this World, all the Sanctions which he thought fit to give to His Laws, were not of this World at all.
St. Paul understood this so well, that He 


gives an Account of His own Conduct, and that 


doing others in the same Station, in these Words, 


Knowing the Terror of the Lord, we persuade 


Men: whereas, in too many Christian Countries, 


since his Days, if some, who profess to succeed Him, were to give an Account of their own Conduct, it must be in a quite contrary Strain; Knowing the Terrors of this World, and 


having them in our Power, We do, not persuade 


Men, but force their outward Profession against 


their inward Persuasion.


Now, wherever this is practised; whether 


in a great degree, or a small; in that Place there 


is so far a Change, from a Kingdom which is 


not of this World, to a Kingdom which is of this 


World. As soon as ever you hear of any of the 


Engines of this World, whether of the greater, 


or the lesser sort, you must immediately think 


that then, and so far, the Kingdom of this World 


takes place. For, if the very Essence of God's 


Worship be Spirit and Truth; If Religion be 


Virtue and Charity, under the Belief of a Su-


preme Governour and Judge; if True Real 


Faith cannot be the Effect of Force; and, if 


there can be no Reward where there is no Will-


ing Choice: then, in all, or any of these Cases, 


to apply Force or Flattery, Worldly Pleasure 


or Pain; is to act contrary to the Interests of 


True
The Nature of the Kingdom,

Serm. True Religion, as it is plainly opposite to the Maxims upon which Christ founded his Kingdom; who chose the Motives which are not of this World, to support a Kingdom which is not of this World. And indeed, it is too visible to be hid, that wherever the Rewards and Punishments are changed, from Future to Present, from the World to come, to the World now in Possession; there, the Kingdom founded by our Saviour is, in the Nature of it, so far changed, that it is become, in such a degree, what He professed, His Kingdom was not: that is, of this World; of the same sort with other Common Earthly Kingdoms, in which the Rewards are, Worldly Honours, Posts, Offices, Pomp, Attendance, Dominion; and the Punishments are, Prisons, Fines, Banishments, Gallies, and Racks; or something Less, of the same sort.

If these can be the true Supports of a Kingdom which is not of this World; then Sincerity, and Hypocrisy; Religion, and No Religion; Force, and Persuasion; A Willing Choice, and a Terrified Heart; are become the same Things: Truth and Falseness stand in need of the same Methods, to propagate and support them; and our Saviour himself was little acquainted with the Right way of increasing the Number of such Subjects, as He wished for.
for. If He had but at first enlightened the **Powers of this World**, as He did St. Paul; and employed the **Sword** which They bore, and the **Favours** They had in their hands, to bring **Subjects** into his **Kingdom**; this had been an Expeditious and an **Effectual** Way, according to the **Conduct** of some of his **professed Followers**, to have had a **Glorious and Extensive Kingdom**, or **Church**. But this was not his **Design**; unless it could be compassed in quite a different way.

And therefore, when You see **Our Lord**, in **His Methods**, so far removed from Those of Many of his Disciples; when You read Nothing, in his **Doctrine** about his own **Kingdom**, of taking in the **Concerns** of this **World**, and mixing them with those of Eternity; no **Commands**, that the **Frowns** and **Discouragements** of this present State should in any Case attend upon **Conscience** and **Religion**; no **Rules** against the **Enquiry** of All His **Subjects** into his **Original Message** from Heaven; no **Orders** for the kind and **charitable Force of Penalties**, or **Capital Punishments**, to make Men think and **chuse** a**right**; no Calling upon the **secular Arm**, whenever the **Magistrate** should become **Christian**, to inforce his **Doctrines**, or to back his **Spiritual Authority**; but, on the contrary, as **plain a Declaration** as a few **Words** can make,
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SERM. that *His Kingdom is not of this World*: I say XIV. when You see this, from the whole Tenor of the Gospel, so vastly opposite to Many who take his Name into their Mouths, the Question with you ought to be, Whether He did not know the Nature of his own Kingdom, or Church, better than Any since his Time? whether you can suppose, He left any such Matters to be decided against Himself, and his own express Professions; and, whether, if an Angel from Heaven should give you any Account of his Kingdom, contrary to what He himself hath done, it can be of any Weight, or Authority, with Christians.

I have now made some such Observations, drawn from the Church being the Kingdom of Christ, and not of any Men in that Kingdom; from the Nature of his Laws, and from those Rewards and Punishments, which are the Sanctions of those Laws; as lead us naturally into the true Notion of the Church, or Kingdom, of Christ, by excluding out of it every thing inconsistent with His being King, Lawgiver, and Judge; as well as with the Nature of his Laws, and of his Promises and Threatnings. I will only make Two or Three Observations, grounded upon this; and so conclude. And,

1. From what hath been said it is very plain in general, that the Grossest Mistakes in Judg-
ment, about the Nature of Christ’s Kingdom, or Church, have arisen from hence, That Men have argued from Other Visible Societies, and Other Visible Kingdoms of this World, to what ought to be Visible and Sensible, in His Kingdom: Constantly leaving out of their Notion, the most Essential Part of it, that Christ is King in his own Kingdom; forgetting this King himself, because He is not now seen by mortal Eyes; and substituting Others in his Place, as Law-givers and Judges, in the same Points, in which He must either Alone, or not at all, be Law-giver and Judge: not contented with such a Kingdom as He established, and desires to reign in; but urging and contending that His Kingdom must be like Other Kingdoms. Whereas He hath positively warned them against any such Arguings, by assuring Them that this Kingdom is His Kingdom, and that it is not of this World; and therefore that No one of His Subjects is Law-giver and Judge over Others of them, in Matters relating to Salvation, but He alone; and that We must not frame our Ideas, from the Kingdoms of this World, of what ought to be, in a visible and sensible Manner, in His Kingdom.

2. From what hath been said it appears, that the Kingdom of Christ, which is the Church of Christ, is the Number of Persons who are Sincerely,
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serenely, and Willingly, Subjects to Him, as Law-giver and Judge, in all Matters truly relating to Conscience, or Eternal Salvation. And the more close and immediate this Regard to Him is, the more certainly and the more evidently true it is, that They are of his Kingdom. This may appear fully to their own Satisfaction, if They have recourse to Him himself, in the Gospel; if They think it a sufficient Authority, that He hath declared the Conditions of their Salvation, and that no Man upon Earth hath any Authority to declare any other, or to add one Tittle to them; if They resolve to perform what They see, He layeth a Stress upon; and if They trust no Mortal, with the absolute Direction of their Consciences, the Pardon of their Sins, or the determining of their Interest in God's Favour; but wait for their Judge, who alone can bring to Light the hidden things of Darkness.

If They feel themselves disposed and resolved to receive the Words of Eternal Life from Himself; to take their Faith from what He himself once delivered, who knew better than All the rest of the World what He required of his own Subjects; to direct their Worship by his Rule, and their whole Practice by the General Law which He laid down: if They feel themselves in this Disposition, They may be very
or Church, of Christ.

very certain, that They are truly his Subjects, and Members of his Kingdom. Nor need They envy the Happinefs of Others, who may think it a much more evident Mark of their belonging to the Kingdom of Christ, that They have other Law-givers, and Judges, in Christ's Religion, besides Jesus Christ; that They have recourse not to his own Words, but the Words of Others who profess to interpret them; that They are ready to Submit to this Interpretation, let it be what it will; that They have set up to Themselves the Idol of an unintelligible Authority, both in Belief, and Worship, and Practice; in Words, under Jesus Christ, but in Deed and in Truth over Him; as it removes the Minds of his Subjects from himself, to Weak, and Passionate Men; and as it claims the same Rule and Power in his Kingdom, which He himself alone can have. But,

3. This will be Another Observation, that it evidently destroys the Rule and Authority of Jesus Christ, as King, to set up any Other Authority in His Kingdom, to which His Subjects are indispensably and absolutely obliged to Submit their Conciences, or their Conduct, in is what properly called Religion. There are some Professed Christians, who contend openly for such an Authority, as indispensably obliges All around Them to Unity of Profesi-
The Nature of the Kingdom,

that is, to Profess even what They do not, what They cannot, believe to be true. This sounds so grossly, that Others, who think They act a glorious Part in opposing such an Enormity, are very willing, for their own fakes, to retain such an Authority as shall oblige Men, whatever They themselves think, though not to profess what They do not believe, yet, to forbear the Profession and Publication of what They do believe, let them believe it of never so great Importance.

Both these Pretensions are founded upon the mistaken Notion of the Peace, as well as Authority, of the Kingdom, that is, the Church, of Christ. Which of them is the most insupportable to an honest and a Christian Mind, I am not able to say: because They both equally found the Authority of the Church of Christ, upon the Ruines of Sincerity and Common Honesty; and mistake Stupidity and Sleep, for Peace; because They would both equally have prevented All Reformation where it hath been, and will for ever prevent it where it is not already; and, in a word, because both equally divest Jesus Christ of his Empire in his own Kingdom; set the Obedience of his Subjects loose from Himself; and teach them to prostitute their Consciences at the Feet of Others, who have no Right in such a manner to trample upon them.
The Peace of Christ’s Kingdom is a manly and Reasonable Peace; built upon Charity, and Love, and mutual Forbearance, and receiving one another, as God receives us. As for any other Peace; founded upon a Submission of our Honesty, as well as our Understandings; it is falsely so called. It is not the Peace of the Kingdom of Christ; but the Lethargy of it; and a Sleep unto Death, when his Subjects throw off their relation to Him; fix their Submission to Others; and even in Cases, where They have a Right to see, and where They have a Power to see, his Will, as it really is, shall shut their Eyes, and go blindfold at the Command of Others; because those Others are pleased to make Themselves the Sole Judges of the Will of their great Lord and Master.

To conclude; The Church of Christ is the Kingdom of Christ. He is King in his own Kingdom. He is sole Law-giver to his Subjects, and sole Judge, in Matters relating to Salvation. His Laws and Sanctions are plainly fixed: and relate to the Favour of God; and not at all to the Rewards, or Penalties, of this World. All his Subjects are equally his Subjects; and, as such, equally without Authority to alter, to add to, or to interpret, his Laws so, as to claim the absolute Submission of Others to such Interpretation. And All
All are His Subjects, and in his Kingdom, who are ruled and governed by Him. Their Faith was once delivered by Him. The Conditions of their Happiness were once laid down by Him. The Nature of God's Worship was once declared by Him. And it is easy to judge, whether of the Two is most becoming a Subject of the Kingdom of Christ, that is, a Member of his Church; to seek all these Particulars in those plain and short Declarations of their King and Law-giver himself; or to hunt after Them, thro' the infinite Contradictions, the numberless Perplexities, the endless Disputes, of Weak Men, in several Ages, till the Enquirer himself is lost in the Labyrinth; and perhaps sits down in Despair, or Infidelity. If Christ be our King; let us shew ourselves Subjects to Him alone, in the great Affair of Conscience and Eternal Salvation: and, without Fear of Man's Judgment, live and act as becomes Those who wait for the Appearance of an All-knowing and Impartial Judge; even that King, whose Kingdom is not of this World.
SERMON XV.

Preached at the Funeral of Mrs. Elizabeth Howland, in the Parish-Church of Streatham in Surry, on Friday, May 1, 1719.

REVELATIONS xiv. 13.

I heard a Voice from Heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the Dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that They may rest from their Labours; and their Works do follow them.

THERE is nothing in which the Weakness of Mankind is more betrayed, than in the Notions commonly received in the World, about Happiness and Unhappiness. We all profess ourselves engaged in the Pursuit of the one, and the avoiding the other; and consequently very much concerned to fix the justest Notions of Them in our Minds. We all feel what a kind of World we now inhabit; and what a sort of Life
Life we now live: How full of Vexations, Troubles, Uneasinesses, and Uncertainties; that is, in other Words, how utterly inconsistent with Happiness. And yet we are commonly so foolish as to call the Living only Happy; as to think Those Blessed, who have Fields, and Houses, and Treasures, in Possession; who yet breath this gross Air, and enjoy the good Things of this fordid Earth. If we see any of Those taken away, in whom we have any Concern; and an End put to their Designs, and a Stop given to the poor Prospect of Happiness They had here below; We are apt to Mourn over This, as some sort of Misery, tho' We know not what; and to think of Them, as the Unfortunate; and of Ourselves, who remain, as the Happy.

This Frame of Mind is owing, indeed, to that strong Love of the present Life, which the Author of our Nature has Thought fit to implant in Us, in order to make Us bear a Life, which otherwise We should not, in many Cases, be able to sustain, so as to answer, in any degree, the Designs of his Wisdom, in placing us in this Scene of Things. But tho' there be somewhat in this, which unavoidably results from the Nature of Man; yet the Excess of this Weakness is to be corrected by Reason and Religion; Both designed for the ridding
ridding Men's Minds of all false Apprehensions, especially in Matters of so great Importance. Sense itself, indeed, is sufficient to satisfy Us very effectually, that this World is not so desirable a State, as that We should be solicitous to confine either Ourselves, or Those whom we wish Happy, to it: And there needs but very little Experience, and the Trial of a very few Days, to make Us feel this Truth, without the Trouble of much Thought, or Reflexion. And then, Reason and Religion open to Us another Scene of Things; a future State of Stable Happiness: A State of Ease and Quiet; of Freedom from Pain, and Grief, and Trouble, and Uneasiness; without Uncertainty, or Anxiety, or Fear, or Terror; out of the Reach of what We call Fortune, or Malice, or Envy, or Detraction, or any Evil; and full of all the Real Goods that We can be capable of enjoying.

And as Religion opens to Us the Prospect of such a Scene; so it assures us, it is prepared for the good and virtuous Part of Mankind; for Those who, by patient Continuance in Well-doing, have sought after Honour, and Glory, and Immortality. And consequently, it teaches Us to correct these Unjust Conceptions, and Partial Notions, about Happiness;
not to call any Persons Blessed before their Death; nor to fix that Appellation upon Any, tho' never so Rich, never so Honourable, never so Good, whilst They are in a State full of a Succession of hazardous Trials, and Uncertain Events; of Tormenting Cares, and Uneasy Disappointments: And to account Those only properly Blessed, who have lived, as Men ought to live, in the Practice of all Virtue, and Goodness; and are removed out of such a State as this; and safely arrived at a better.

This is the Lesson which the Words I have now read to you, will easily lead Us to: If We consider Them, not with Regard only to those Times to which They may be supposed peculiarly to relate, in their first Intention; but as a General Lesson, extending itself to all Times and Places, and adapted to the Ordinary State of the Christian World. They are introduced in a Manner so solemn and extraordinary, as to raise such a Surprize in the Hearers, as naturally increases their Attention.

I heard a Voice from Heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the Dead, which die in the Lord: ---- Yea, saith the Spirit, that They may rest from their Labours; and their Works do follow them.
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In prosecution, therefore, of my present Design, in so general an Extent, it will, I think, be natural and proper, from these Words,

I. To consider, Who they are that may be truly said, according to the Terms of the Gospel, to Die in the Lord: So that We may judge, Who They are that have a Title to that Word Blessed, so solemnly here pronounced upon Them.

II. To shew on what Accounts They may be said to be Blessed, from what is included in the latter Part of the Words, That They may rest from their Labours; and their Works do follow them.

I. The first Point is, to consider, Who they are that may be truly said, in the Sense of the Gospel, To die in the Lord: So that We may judge, Who they are that have a Title to the Word, Blessed, so solemnly here pronounced upon Them. And if we be sincere and in earnest, This Enquiry will quickly come to an Issue; and presently end in a certain Resolution. For every honest Christian, who searches in order to find the Truth, will presently collect from the original Design, from the whole Tenor, and from the express Words of the Gospel, that They only can be properly said to Die in
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**in the Lord**, who may truly be said to have lived **in the Lord**; that is, to have lived so, as that Our Blessed Lord will own Them at the last Day for his true Followers. **To Die in the Lord**, is **To die** in the Happy relation of a sincere Disciple to **Jesu Christ**, and of a good and faithful Servant to our Great Master. And who can be said to **die** thus, but They who have contracted that Relation by a former **Life**, led by his Rules, and conducted by his Will? They, who have shewn themselves **His Disciples** by such plain Marks and Characters, as He himself has declared to be the only Marks and Characters by which He will know them?

This then We may certainly conclude, That **To die in the Lord**, cannot signify merely to **die in the Faith of Jesu Christ**; believing and confessing Him to be our Lord and Master; acknowledging him the Saviour of the World; and confidently applying, at last, the Remedy of his Merits to the Evil of a Life spent in the willful and habitual Transgression of his Laws. If the Reason of the Thing, and the Nature of God himself, did not lead Us to this, the express Declaration of Christ himself would be sufficient, **Not every one that faith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven**, but **He that doth**...
the Will of my Father which is in Heaven. And to do the Will of his Father, is to live in a sincere and uniform Obedience to all God's Commands, and all his Laws equally, as far as They are made known to Us.

Nor is it a more secure Presumption in Men, to imagine that, in order to die in the Lord, or to die a happy Death, it is enough to take Refuge in the Sorrow and Contrition of a Death-bed; or in confessing and detesting those Sins in Death, which They would never be once persuaded to quit through their whole Life. For to die in the Lord, being to die in the Relation of a True Disciple to Him; and the Marks and Characters of that Relation having been settled and declared by Himself, and established long ago upon the Nature of his Design, and the End of his Appearance in the World: The Imaginations of Men are not to be consulted; but his Will, and his Declarations. And as the great End of his Appearance was to preach Repentance to the Living, and not to the Dying; as Men are not called in the Gospel only, or chiefly, to grieve for their Sins; but to forswear them, and amend their Lives, by bringing forth Fruits meet for Repentance; and as the Wrath of God is revealed in it from Heaven against all Wilful and Habitual Sin: It is impossible for Any, who are
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not resolved to flatter themselves into Destruction, to conceive that to die in the Lord, or to die happily, can possibly be the Result of Sorrow and Grief at the last Moments; or that any such Frame of Mind can be the End aimed at by the Dispensation of the Gospel, or any good Foundation of that Blessedness which is declared in it.

No one can be said, with any sort of Priety, to die a happy Death, or to die in the Lord, who, at the Time of his Death, has not a Title, upon the express Terms of the Gospel, to Eternal Life. And there are otherguise Conditions of Eternal Life laid down to Christians, than Sorrow and Confession for Sins which They can now no longer live in. If thou wouldst enter into Life, keep the Commandments. Ye are my Friends, if ye do what I command you. The Righteous shall go into Life Eternal, and the Wicked into Everlasting Punishment. And He only, who doth Righteousness, is Righteous, in the Sense of the Gospel. These are Declarations sufficient to awaken any Christians out of so fatal a Dream, as They are in, who have Recourse to Inventions of their own; who indulge Themselves in laying Schemes inconsistent with the whole Design of Christianity; and in forming Projects of Salvation, which the Gospel of Salvation
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For as They only shall inherit Eternal Life, who have patiently persevered in Well-doing; as far as the Terms of God’s Favour have been made known to Us: So it is as plain, as Words can make it, that the only Road to a happy Death, is a Christian Life; and that they only can, with any Degree of Assurance, he said to Die in the Lord, who have lived with all the Essential Characters of his Disciples upon them; whose Lives have been conducted by his Laws, and filled with the Fruits of his Spirit. I come now to the Second Thing I proposed,

II. To consider, on what Accounts They may be said to be Blessed, from what is included in the latter Part of the Words, That they may rest from their Labours; and Their Works do follow them.

1. They rest from their Labours. This Life is as full of Cares, and Fears, and Uneasinesses, and Disappointments, as it is of Days: And, in the Scripture-phrase, Man is born to Trouble, and as naturally tends to it, as the Sparks fly upwards. Consider a little the Conditions and Terms, upon which, generally speaking, We live in this World; and You will see, it is no very inconsiderable Thing to rest from the Labours of such a Life. If We continue in this
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this State for any Time, We live, not in order to die one single Death at last, at the End of our Term; but rather to die a Thousand Deaths, through the several Days, and Months, and Years, We are said to live. We live, indeed, in Name and Appearance: That is, We breath, and move, and perceive, and have Senses. But We live, either to feel such Degrees of Misery in Ourselves, or to see such Scenes of Unhappiness in Others, as are sufficient often to interrupt our Course of Joy, and to embitter the few Pleasures this State can pretend to. We often live to inherit Sickness and Pain; to be Burnt by Fevers; or to be Tormented by the Returns of Stone or Gout; or to be consumed and wearied out by some other Distemper, which has it in its Power to make Us uneasy to Ourselves, and troublesome to those about Us. We often survive the Loss of our Estates, our Health, our Reputation; Every one of which, to Many, is worse than Death itself. We live sometimes to see Ourselves sacrificed to the Fraud and Perfidy of Others; to be forsaken by Professed Friends, and insulted by Outrageous Enemies; to be persecuted by the Malice of Evil Tongues, and covered with the Reproaches of Men.
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We spend perhaps some Years; and watch Days and Nights, in projecting some Scheme of Happiness: And in bringing this to a tolerable Perfection. And when, by much Labour, We think We are come to the End of our Wishes and Desires; somewhat almost always intervenes between Us and Happiness; and is appointed to stop Us in our Career. After much Labour in a tempestuous Sea, We are perhaps shipwrecked in the Port itself: And are either taken off within View of the Possession; or else the Possession itself is so far from answering our Expectations, that our former Expectations, by being disappointed, do Themselves only serve to make Us the more completely miserable, in the midst of Possession.

But as these daily Disappointments never weary out the natural Desire and Pursuit of Happiness; but it returns, after numberless Trials, to Fresh Proposals and New Projects, with the same Eagerness of Expectation and Assurance; there is nothing more common than for Men still to go on to imagine, that the Accomplishment and Success of such and such particular Wishes and Designs, would go a great Way towards a perfect Ease and Contentment. But when again, these are permitted to have Success; (as they are sometimes,
times, to convince Us of our own Incapacity of Judging in this Case;) What are We the nearer? Something or other again invades our Repose: And We find it in the Power of a Multitude of Accidents, never to be foreseen, to Discompose and Ruine the whole Fabric of Happiness which We have raised in our Imaginations. Nay, whatever it be, from which We have any Expectations of Happiness, it is frequently seen that This itself, upon that very Account, is what serves to make Us most Unhappy.

Such is the Condition of our Life here! Either, not to have our most passionate Wishes granted Us; which is present Unhappiness: Or, if We have them granted, to find, by a comfortless Experiment, that We have fought Misery instead of Happiness; and embrace a vain Shadow, where We expected a substantial Good. Our Enjoyments, at best, are but Few: And those Few continually dashed with the Mixture of many Ills, and the Intervention of Unforeseen Misfortunes, which are powerful enough to spoil our Good, and change it into Evil. In the mean while, Iniquity often triumphs; and extends its Conquests over all that can be called Virtuous and Praise-worthy. The Best that can be said is, That, tho' Virtue always tends, in its Nature,
to Peace and Happiness, yet here below, S E R M. There is one Event to the Righteous and the Wicked: But Worse may too often be said, That the Good Man, who alone has a Claim to the Favour of Providence, seems, sometimes, in this State, to have little Title even to its Protection. In the midst of Life, are We thus in Death: In the midst of Virtue itself, encompassed with the Punishments of Vice: In the midst of Enjoyment, under the Apprehension of Loss and Disappointment: And the higher We are seated in what We have Thought fit to imagine our Happiness, so much the nearer are We to a Precipice, and liable to a so much greater and more terrible Downfal.

When We take a View of Life, encompassed with all these Circumstances, Who would not, in Reason, be led to rejoice in the Thought of Resting from the Labours of such a Life? And were We happily removed out of it; how unkind an Office of Love should We think it, were it possible, for the Wishes and Desires of Friends to call Us back again? To live, indeed, even in such a State as this, is made the Natural Desire of Men: And to Die is appointed to carry somewhat of Terror along with it, for wise and good Reasons. But were We once successfully delivered from the Waves
Waves of this Tempestuous Sea; what could move Us to trust Ourselves to their Mercy again? Were we once gone off this Stage of Combats and Hazards, with Glory; What could incline Us to renew our own Dangers and Labours? Were we once dead in the Lord, with the Conscience of a well-spent Life, and a virtuous Conversation; What could be of Force enough to engage Us willingly to revive our Acquaintance with a World of Cares and Troubles; and to live a Life over again, attended with all Those Unevenesses, Sollicitudes, Disquiets, Expectations, Disappointments, Hopes, Fears, Despairs, Small Goods, and Great Evils, which We have before seen and felt to make up its Train; and to be inseparably united to it? Blessed are the Dead which die in the Lord: For they rest from their Labours. This is one Consideration.

2. The other Consideration is, That They not only rest from their Labours of such a Life as this is; but Their Works do follow them: that is, The Life of Good Works which they have led here below, and without which They could not be said to die in the Lord; (as I have before explained it;) This Life of Universal Virtue is remembered, by the Mercy of God, to their Eternal Honour and Advantage. Thos
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Those Works follow them, to which the Promise of Glory and Immortality is made; to which the Favour of God is annexed, and the Rewards of Heaven solemnly promised: And these are the Works of the Spirit; the Effects of Noble Principles, and the Fruits of a well-grounded Faith; the Works of Love, Beneficence, Justice, Patience, Humility, and all the Train of Virtues, the End of which is declared in the Gospel to be Eternal Life, and Blessedness for ever.

This is the State of those who die in the Lord, if we take in both Parts of what is here pronounced, to prove and denominate them truly Blessed. They rest from their Labours: They cease from a Life of Impertinence, Imperfection, and Misery. And Their Works follow them: They change this Life, for the Rewards of those Virtues which they practised in it. They Change this Miserable, Low, Unsatisfactory, and Uneasy State, for Another, in which neither Misery, nor Dissatisfaction, nor Uneasiness, are known: But, in their stead, All that can be wished for; and Every thing that can result from the Favour and Love of God; from a Mind filled with the Remembrance of a sincere and upright Conduct; from a Conscience at Peace with itself; and from the Assurance of a last-
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Sermoning and certain Happiness, communicated by never-failing Goodness, and guarded by Almighty Power. How Blessed therefore, above what We can express or conceive, must the Good Christian be, when, instead of the Images of Death which fill up the Scenes of what we call Life here below, He shall know, in Himself, what Life is; and be satisfied, by his own Experience, that to Live is to be Happy! When, instead of the Uncertainties and Disappointments; the Vicissitudes of Pain and Pleasure; the Changes of Sorrow and Joy; the Returns of Evil; the Afflictions, Calamities, and Reproaches, in the midst of which he has passed his Hours here on Earth; He shall meet with the Certainty of a stable Habitation; with Unmixed and pure Happiness; with an Unmoveable State of all that is truly Good, without the Fear or Suspicion of Loss or Diminution; out of the reach of Tempests and Convulsions, and sudden Turns of Empire and Fortune! With a State, in which the Established Favour of God is the Security; and in which the Perfection of Mutual Sincerity and Unbounded Charity cannot fail to make Society the greatest Delight, of which Rational Creatures are capable!

The Time will not allow Me to enlarge farther upon this. I have endeavoured to give
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give you as useful Lessons as I could, from the Words I first read to You; and as proper, as any can be, to the present Occasion of our meeting together. But I must not end here. Whilst we are paying our last Regards to the Remains of an excellent Person, who is gone before Us to a Blessed Immortality, I esteem myself particularly engaged, in Justice and Gratitude, not to pass over in Silence what I think, or know, to be due to the Memory of One, who has a Right to our Remembrance; and to the Example of One, in whose Life and Death We may see the Truth of what I have been laying before you.

I will begin where all true Religion either does, or ought to begin. As it pleased God to bless Her with an uncommon Degree of Good Sense and Understanding; so, it was manifestly her great Endeavour to make a proper Use of so great an Happiness, by laying the Foundation both of her Faith and Conduct in the most rational, the most just, and most certain Notions of God, and of his Perfections, within her own Mind. By these She judged of Doctrines, and of Practices: And by These She was led into that Just and Lovely Notion of Religion, which supported her under the Evils of this Life, and carried Her forward to the Enjoyments of a Better.

Upon
Upon this Foundation She embraced Christianity, with her Understanding as well as her Heart; as agreeable to the Natural Notions of the Supreme Being: And upon This, she esteemed it the Glory of the Gospel, that it was worthy of a Good God; Plain, Practical, and Useful. Nor did I ever observe Her to be better pleased, than when the Great Duties of it were preached, and inculcated; in their native Plainness and Simplicity.

It was by these sound Notions of Almighty God, and his Will, that She was truly Religious, without any of the uneasy Mixtures of Superstition; and truly Pious, without any of the undue Heats of Enthusiasm. It was by these same Notions of God and his Providence, that She preserved her Soul in that Uncommon Composure, in all the Events, and under all the Evils of Life, which is very rarely seen. Such a Courage and Presence of Mind, in the many Attacks of Pain and Sickness which She experienced, (much greater than She would ever discover by any of her own Complaints;) such a Resignation, and such a Fortitude, beyond what may strictly be called Patience, under all that was laid upon Her, are seldom equalled, and never exceeded.

And as it was to these just Notions of God and his Perfections, that She owed her own Christian
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Christian Conduct; so it was by the same, that She was led, uniformly and constantly, to be of the most favourable and charitable Disposition towards all Persons, in whom the Marks of Sincerity and Honesty appeared, amidst all their differing Sentiments concerning the Methods of worshiping and pleasing God. Those Divisions upon Religious Accounts, which She lamented, She thought might be covered with Charity; but never could be cured by Violence and Oppression, without bringing in much greater Evils than such Methods could pretend to extirpate. And therefore, the Doctrine of Universal Love, and Mutual Forbearance, was That which She always expressed the greatest Pleasure to hear inforced upon Men's Minds; and from which alone She expected any Remedy to the Evil Tempers and Passions of Men.

Of her compassionate Regard to the Outward Miseries of the Poor and distressed Part of the World, were I to speak only from my own Knowledge, This I could say, that I myself ever found Her disposed both to hear and to relieve; and have myself known, in many Instances of Distress which have come before Her, very liberal Supplies, afforded with the Heart of a cheerful Giver. And I can appeal to many now living, who, I know, in many more
more Cases; (in which the Removal of Misery, or the procuring some Good to the Afflicted Part of Mankind, were concerned,) have received very large and very Noble Proofs of her Charitable Disposition, to be applied to those good Ends. But They will speak most feelingly, who themselves have partaken of it: They particularly, in these Parts, whose Families have been chiefly supported by her Bounty, whose Pains and Sicknesses have been abated or removed by her Compassion, and Remedies; whose Children have been Clothed and Taught at her Expence; and whose repeated Wants have received Redrefs from her repeated Goodness: Whose Condition I was going now to lament; but I consider that They may still Promise Themselves the Continuance of the same Beneficence, and the same Supplies.

She had too great a Soul, and too comprehensive a Compass of Thought, not to judge well of the Public Interest of her Country; and not to think Herself too deeply concerned in it; to sit by an Unconcerned Spectator of its Condition. She understood, as well as any One, in what Point True Liberty was placed; between Licentiousness on one hand, and Tyranny on the other. She knew, as well as any One, the Value to be set upon such a Li-
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berty; of being governed by Laws framed by Consent; and not by Arbitrary Will. And She was sensible, to the highest Degree, of how great Consequence and Necessity the present Establishment was, to make so great a Happiness lasting to Us and our Posterity. I speak this to her Honour, as I think it none of the least Parts of her Character, that, with Respect to her Country, She was full of such Sentiments as naturally arise from an Extensive Love to the Happiness of Mankind; from a Benevolent Temper, and Good Disposition towards Posterity itself; and from a Tender Regard to the Good of Human Society. And Her Joy or Grief, her Pleasure or Uneasiness, were proportionable to these Sentiments; and such as shewed Them to be sincere. Nothing hardly was ever seen to give Her a more sensible Delight, than the Good Success of any thing which tended to establish so great an Happiness. Nothing hardly was ever seen to give Her a more sensible Pain, or to force from Her more Uneasy Expressions, than even the least Appearance of any thing which interrupted the Prospect, or tended to shake the Foundation, of Public Good.

Of her Uncommon Prudence in her Private Affairs, I need say the less, because her Name has been long known in this Part of Y 4 the
A Sermon preached at the

Sermon preached at the SE.R.M., the World, and celebrated with Honour upon that Account. It pleased God, that She was left, almost at her first Appearance in the World, with the entire Management of a very great Estate; enough to try the Strength of any Head, and the Force of any Heart. But with what Applause to her Conduct, and with what Approbation of her Behaviour, She passed through Circumstances of so delicate a Nature; the World has been Witness: Whilst She acted like a Person disengaged from Herself; regardless of all the Amusements, and Pleasures that such a Fortune could Place in her Way; and centering all her Thoughts in Another, over whom She first watched with the Regards of the Tenderest Mother, and with whom She afterwards lived in the Endearments of the most intimate Friendship; partaking in her Cares, and her Counsels, for the good of that Noble Young Family, who already Promise to the World all the Fruits that can be expected from so much Sollicitude.

And here, indeed, the Part She acted was one almost Uninterrupted Scene of the most serious Concern, tempered with a Pleasing Affability, and a constant Good Humour, which made Her the Love of Those whose Improvement and Accomplishment She was making
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making the Labour of her Life. Her End was to lead them gently into the right Path; xv.

and to the willing Choice of that Virtue, which She knew would be their Great and only lasting Good. And it seemed, indeed, from her never ceasing Care, as if all her Happiness depended upon the Success of her Concern here. Her Words and Looks were Pleasure itself, when She spoke of the Improvements She at any Time saw in Those She so truly loved. And the Promises of Future Good, in the Virtuous Dispositions and great Endowments, which She perceived to answer, if not to go before, her Wishes, seemed to give Her a more touching Delight than all the World besides could afford Her.

But it did not please God to continue her Life to that * Age to which many arrive; and in which She might have hoped to see those Promises made good. She was seized with her last Illness, and called out of the World, at a Time when She might have found very peculiar Reasons to desire Life some few Years longer. But yet, far from imaginating Herself the Judge of this, She never once indulged the Thought of Life, from the

* She died in the Fifty Eighth Year of her Age, April 19, 1719.
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first Attack to the last Moment. In the midst
of all her Illness, which was of that Nature
as sometimes to indispose Her; one would
think, to such a Guard over Herself, Her
Great and Constant Care was to render Her-
self as little Uneasy to Others as possible; to
appear Fearless, in order to cure the Fears of
Those about Her; and to keep all the Signs
of what She felt in Herself, from shewing
Themselves to Those who, She knew, would
have but too much to bear when the Stroke
should come. Every Thing was Easy, Quiet,
and Prepared within. She resigned Herself to
(what, from the Beginning, She looked upon
as certain) Death, with all that Composedness
and Calmness which might accompany any
ordinary Action of Life. And whilst She
was all along persuaded of her own dying
Condition, She watched over all her own
Words: And suffered not any one Mark of
that Persuasion to proceed from her, in the
Presence of those who were most Dear to
Her; nor any one Sign of Uneasiness, which
might discompose Those, for whom, at
Death, She retained the same True Tender-
ness which She had ever demonstrated through
her Life.

She is now removed from Us. She is at
rest from the Labours of a Life, which, in the
Funeral of Mrs. Howland.

midst of an Affluence of Riches, She experienced to be full enough of Cares within, and Pain and Affliction without. She rests from her Labours: And her Works follow her. Her Example remains to Those who are left behind her: And the Memory of her Excellencies, to Those who follow Her.

May Almighty God support Those, who are most nearly concerned, under so great a Loss! And may They, and We, all prepare Ourselves, by a Life of True Religion, and Universal Obedience to God's Laws, for a happy Death: That it may be said of Us, when that Hour shall come which must come, Blessed are the Dead which Die in the Lord -- For They rest from their Labours, and their Works do follow them!
SERMON XVI.

Preached before the House of Lords at St. Peter's: Westminster, on Jan. 30, 1720-21. being the Anniversary of the Martyrdom of K. CHARLES I.

I Cor. X. former Part of ver. 11.

Now all these things happened unto Them for Examples.

You will easily perceive, from my choosing these Words, as an Introduction to what I am now going to say, That it is my Design to make use of that Black and Unhappy Part of our English History, which we are commanded by Authority to call to mind on this Day, in such a manner, as to make such Observations upon it, and draw such Lessons from it, as may be of most Service to Ourselves, in order to prevent and avoid those Evils, which happened unto our Forefathers, for Examples to Us their Posterity: just as the Unhappinesses and Wickednesses of the Jews in former Ages, are here in the Text set
A Sermon Preached before, &c.

set before the Eyes of their Followers by St. S E R M. Paul.

To open unnecessarily any old Wounds that are now closed up, and make them bleed afresh; To widen any that are now open, and to inflame them still more and more: These Things are as far from my Inclination and Temper, as They are contrary to All that I know of Religion. I had much rather pour Oyl into Any that remain, and apply Nothing but soft and healing Medicines: Nay, if it were possible, I would cast a Veil over every Mark of past Infamy, or even Imperfection, on all Sides; were it not for Fear, We might at the same Time lose some of the Best Lessons, and most Useful Observations, for our own Conduct.

To run with Violence against Any One Sort of Men now in being: To fix the Guilt of That upon All of one General Denomination, which All the Chief of them detested by a public Remonstrance at the Time of the Transaction: To lay That upon the Generality of a Nation, which even in the First Zeal against it, was declared by public Authority to be the Work of a Few, at that Time possessed of Power: Or, to load with all possible Aggravations the unjustifiable Proceedings on One

*Proclamation. King Charles II. 1660.
Sermon Preached before the

S E R M. Side only, and to clear the Other of every Thing

that looks like Guilt: These are Points, which

common Justice and Equity (not to mention

Compassion and Charity) forbid Us to do.

But to teach Ourselves to avoid what we

rightly blame in Others; to take Care that

True and Just Principles of Public Good do not

suffer in the Esteem of Men, thro' the Mistakes or Wickedness of Such as were Strangers to them, or only pretended to make use of them; and that the Memory of true Patriots may not be cursed, for the Sake of the

Infamy of Usurpers ruling by mere Power and Armed Force: To learn, from the Review of former Unhappinesses, every Thing that can be of Use to help Us in the Preventing Any the like Miseries for the Time to come, or the Curing any present Evils: These, and the like, are Points worthy of Persons concerned for the Good of their Country; and Such, as may render this Fast, not a Fast for Strife and Debate, nor merely a Fast for Shame and Reproach; but a Day of Useful Instruction, in the Paths which lead to Public Peace, and the Establishment of all that is valuable in human Society.

The main Points which this Day recalls to our Minds, I shall connect together in the following Manner, in order to introduce the Ob-
That there was, in the Days of our Forefathers, to which we now look back, a Zeal in the Representatives of England, in Parliament assembled, to oppose Every Arbitrary Encroachment upon the Legal Liberties and Properties of the Subject:—That, by Degrees, and by the Concurrence of many Accidents, the Passions, and Rage, and Revenge, of Some, by the Help of mutual Provocations, mixed themselves too much in the Contest:—That Ambitious, and Designing, and Desperate Men, took occasion from hence to set their own Machines on work:—That the various and contradictory Schemes of Belief and Worship, embraced at that Time, (All equally honoured with the Name of Religion,) were called in, to heat the Imaginations of Men, and to help forward the common Ruine:—That at length this ended in the Destruction of the Legal Constitution; in confounding even all Appearance of Freedom in what remained of a Parliament; in an Usurped Power, supported by Force against the Consent of the Nation, and with the Abhorrence of the greatest Friends to Legal Liberty; and in the Murther of the King, against the Voices of All, but Such as then began to find themselves to have no Security but from an Armed Force. A Fact, which, as I truly detest; and am led to do so by
A Sermon Preached before the Ser. all the Principles I know any thing of: so, if any Words of mine could aggravate, considered in all its Circumstances, They never should be wanting. These are the Main Parts of the History now before Us; upon which I shall proceed to build some Observations. And,

I. I shall take leave to Warn against One Use which may sometimes have been made of this Part of our History; and That is, The arguing from the Bad Event of Things, contrary to the Wishes and Designs of the Best and Wisest Men, against all such Opposition to Illegal Encroachments, and Arbitrary Proceedings, as first opened the Scene. For, As, in Argument, nothing is more injudicious, than to plead against One thing, because Another thing of a quite different Nature, succeeded to it, thro’ the wicked Designs of some Men; and the unaccountable Concurrence of a thousand Accidents: So, in Political Affairs, nothing can be more fatal, than to draw a Conclusion, from such Events, which must lay the Foundation of Uninterrupted and Hopeless Slavery. The Nature and Reason of Things abhorrs such an Inference: which would at once take away all the Right of a Free Nation; and make their Meeting together in Parliament, only
only a more Solemn Form of Absolute Submission to whatever the Will of Another shall lay upon them. All in the Administration of Government, who are Wise, would not wish to have such a Temptation to Evil laid in their Way: All, who are Good, would even oppose and prevent such a dangerous Piece of Servile Subjection: and All, who are Bad enough to wish for it, deserve, for that very Reason, to have the Terror of the Contrary before their Eyes; that so, what They will not refrain from for Conscience, yet for Wrath's Sake may be avoided. Let that Lesson, therefore, of Good, remain untouched, which under an Administration, by which the Liberties and Laws of the Country are preserved unviolated, can do no hurt; and under One, which assumes the Power of acting without or against Law, is of Absolute Necessity to prevent Public Ruine.

There is the less Occasion for Argument upon this Head, because the Best of Those Historians, and Other Writers, who have shewn the greatest Warmth against what followed, yet have been far from condemning those Beginnings of Zeal for the Public, which tended in their natural Consequences to the lasting Good of the King and the Whole Body; and could not have been diverted from attaining that End, but by the Unreasonableness, and
private Views, of such on each Side, as had nothing less at Heart than either the Greatness of their King, or the Good of their Country: Two Things, which in our Constitution are so happily joined together, that They can never be put asunder.

And what is still a Greater Consolation, is, that, tho' such Lessons of Subjection may have been taught by Persons of Leisure, little versed in the Affairs of Human Life, yet We have seen with Pleasure that All Sorts, and Parties, (if I must use that Word,) of Men amongst Us, have, (to their Honour be it spoken) in their several Turns, and as constantly as any Opportunity offered it self, openly and zealously made Opposition to Any Attempts, which They either knew, or imagined, to affect the known Laws and Liberties of their Country. Nay, it must be acknowledged, that None have shewn more of this Spirit in Parliament, than Those who have seemed fearful of giving too great Encouragement to Liberty, for fear of the ill Consequences of it: And it ought ever to be accounted one Part of their great Glory, that out of Parliament, in the greatest and happiest Struggle for Public Liberty, that the present Generation, or perhaps any other, ever was witness to, Their Part was great and remarkable, in opposing the Encroachments of
of Arbitrary Power, and even in inviting an Armed Force to make that Opposition successful: The only appearing Difference between Them and Others, if we may judge by Practice, being This, that, whilst They are Both equally jealous of Every supposed Attempt against their Liberties, the One sort may imagine That to be so, which the Other do not; and the One sort may be fearful lest the Defense of their own Practice should impress too great a Sense of Liberty upon the Minds of Men; whilst the Other may think it best not only to vindicate what is in it self praiseworthy, but to scatter the Light of Legal Liberty into all Corners of the Land, and to inspire the Love of it into the Heart of Every Subject.

If We, therefore, consider such Lessons of Submission with regard to the Practice of the Wifest and Best on all Sides; We may see how Vain, as well as how Reproachful, on All equally, they are: If we consider them in a Political Light; They present Us with nothing but Certain Slavery without any possible Chance for the contrary: If We consider them in the way of Argument merely; They are no better than This; That We ought not to do what is necessary for the Preservation of a Whole Nation, because it may happen that We may be ruined afterwards in another way; or, That a Man
Man ought not to save himself from present Imminent Death, because it is possible that in the Struggle He may put himself into a Fever, which may afterwards prove mortal; Or, That a Good Thing ought not to be attempted, because a Bad Thing may possibly happen some Time afterwards, which is neither the natural Consequence of the Former, nor could be foreseen by the Wisest of Men. This leads us to observe,

II. The Unreasonableness of casting the Reproach of this Day's Fact, and of every Thing before and after it, upon the Principles of True Liberty, in general; and upon the Defenders of them: Whereas it will appear, upon a serious Consideration, (however it may found at first hearing,) That, of all Men, These are led by their Principles, if they understand them, to an utter and settled Disapprobation of what They have the Reproach of favouring. For, what is the Liberty contend for, by all Men of Honesty, and Understanding? Not Licentiousness: Not a Right to overturn Laws and Constitutions, whenever Passion or Rage dictate; and the favourable Opportunity of Power offers itself: Much less, a Licence, under Pretext of Liberty, to destroy all Freedom in Parliament; to set up
an Arbitrary Power, and maintain it by Force of Arms. Nothing of all this; but every thing contrary to it. It is the Liberty which results from being governed by Laws, made by Consent; the Liberty which results from these Laws being settled in such a manner, that the Innocent shall always know their own Defense from Injuries, and even the most Guilty know before-hand upon what their Guilt shall be founded: It is the secure Enjoyment of Property, and Privileges, granted by Laws, free from every thing that looks like Violence.

The End of these Laws is to guard against the worst of all worldly Evils, Arbitrary Power, in whatsoever Shapes or Degrees it may pretend to shew it self, and upon whatsoever Pretext it may found such Pretensions; to preserve Judgment and Justice from the Influences of Passion, and Private Resentment; and Punishment it self, in the Case even of the meanest Subjects, from becoming Cruelty. A Scheme of Happiness, not known in the Nations round about Us, either under Absolute Monarchies, or Republics; depending, one would judge from hence, entirely upon the Nature of that Mixt Form under which We live.

But what was the Case now before Us? We find plainly that a Fact, as shocking in it self, as it was opposite to the Temper of English-men,
A Sermon Preached before the

SERM. \\
men, and contrary to the Maxims of the En-

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glish Government, could not be so much as at-
ttempted, till the Freedom of Parliament was
totally destroyed; the Balances which keep
our Government in an even Situation, torn
asunder; and an Armed Force made the Sup-
port of what remained of Civil Government.

This Proceeding is much more agreeable to
the Maxims of Those who think and teach (if
any such still remain) that Arbitrary Power is
the best and fittest for the Government of Man-
kind; than to the Sentiments of Others of a
contrary Judgment. For in this Case, All of
Legislation, as well as of Government, that re-
mained, was influenced and supported by mere
Force, which is always Absolute. Nay, the
Crime and Evil of Usurpation it self, upon their
own Scheme, is so qualified in process of Time,
that Prescription or Possession, maintained for a
Term of Years, relieves Them at length of
very much of their First Ahorrence of it.
Whereas, No Length of Time, No Tenure
of Prescription, can reconcile the Minds of
Those who understand what Legal Liberty is,
to the total Destruction of a Legal Constitution,
and to the Settlement of mere Power. The
very Thing which, at the End of some Years,
would have comforted Others, if a long Pos-
session of Arbitrary Power had continued a-
among Us, seems to Them so big with Public Misery, and Calamity, that it heightens and inflames their Detestation of all Proceedings which were thought necessary to such an Evil: an Evil, which, if one Cunning and Daring Usurper had been succeeded by Another, might probably have cleaved to Us, and our Seed for ever; and have come at length to have been the Subject of Fulsome Panegyrict to All the Admirers of Uncontrollable Power; and left to be lamented in private only by Such as Those, whose Principles are sometimes reproached as if They favoured what is absolutely inconsistent with them. This leads Us,

III. To observe the perfect Consistency which there is between a well-grounded Disapproba-
tion of that Scene of Things, which We this Day lament; and a settled and hearty Appro-
bation of that Great Transaſſion in our own Days, upon which the present Establishment of our Constitution is founded. There may be Those, who are so little used to consider a Cause thoroughly, and to pursue it thro’ all its Consequences, that They may be surprized to hear a thing so distant from what they have been used to. But yet it will be found cer-
tainly true, that These two Things are so far from being Inconsistent; that the very Same Principles which lead Men of Consideration to

Z 4 Approve
Approve the Latter, Direct and Influence Them to Disapprove the Former. For Instance, The Maxim, that there is in the Whole Nation a Right to preserve Themselves and their Constitution of Government, from Ruine, is so far from implying in it, that a Particular Party of a Nation has a Right to possess itself of the Governing Power by Force, or Trick; or to tear in Pieces a Legal Constitution; or to commit Acts of Violence against Every Branch of that Constitution, as well as against Private Men: It is so far, I say, from implying these things, that it strongly implies, and inforces the Contrary. As therefore, in the One Case, there was the Concurrence of All Ranks, and All the Differing Sorts, amongst Us, against all the Armed Force in the Land, contending whose Cries and Calls should be loudest for Relief; and in the Other, the Conjunction of a Few, secured only by their having all the Armed Force, then in being, on their Side: As, on the One hand, the Concurrence of the Whole was directly and truly designed for the Preservation of our Legal Constitution; and, on the Other hand, the Views of particular Men were to be carried on by the Destruction of that Constitution, and the extinguishing all Freedom of Parliament: As the One ended in the antient Form of Legal Government, and a stronger Establish-
Establishment of the Rights of Subjects, and Serm. Parliaments; and the Other in a direct Avowal of Arbitrary Power, where any of the Legal Rights or Privileges, belonging to Parliament or People, stood in the Way: As there are These, and the like, Essential, and Irreconcilable Differences between the One and the Other; (too many to be now enumerated;) it is evident that the Proceedings of the Whole Nation, in the One Case, stand approved and supported by the same Principles, which lead most effectually to the Condemnation of the Proceedings of a Part possessed of Power, in the Other Case. But,

IV. As these Things happened to our Forefathers for Examples; so let Them be Examples to Us, not only to chuse what was Good in the Conduit of Some, but to avoid what was Evil in Others, and what indeed hindred all the Good which was proposed. The Great Lesson is, that on all Sides Men suffer not their Personal Resentments, Passions, Disappointments, or Private Interests, to enter into their Contests, where the Public is concerned: At least, Let them guard against their Influences, as much as it is possible for Human Nature to do. I say, As much as possible, well knowing how hard a Lesson this is, and how seldom the Practice
A Sermon Preached before the

Practice of it is to be hoped for. There is something in Self-Love so deeply rooted, that Private Interests and Private Views have often a silent and effectual Influence upon Men, even when their Movements are not distinctly felt within. Nor would I be understood to intinuate, that it is always impossible that These should happen to fall in with what is truly for the Public Good. But this is by Accident: and it being really the Satisfaction of our Passions, which gives Life to all Proceedings in which These mix themselves, the Experiment upon this Account, is always dangerous. For the Nature and Operation of These Principles is such, that They will obscure or discolour the brightest Object: They will make That appear reasonable, which is profitable, or agreeable to some Present View; and throw a Disgrace upon whatever does not tend to satisfy Them-selves. Take away These; and Public Good appears naked and open to every Eye, free from all Difficulties and Embarrassments: But let These enter in their full Strength; and Public Good becomes only Another Word for our own Private Views and Passions. But of All Principles of Action in Human Nature, Revenge for Personal Injuries is seen to make the greatest Havock in all Public Disputes and Dis-orders. For, as it is naturally blind against all
all Light, and Deaf to all Argument; so, it can be Sated by nothing but some one particular Sacrifice which it proposes; after which is compassed, it generally ends in Shame and Repentance. The Power of these Principles is known to be so great in Civil Affairs, that one main Foundation of all Civil Government, is, That Men ought not to be the Avengers of their own Personal Injuries; And this Fundamental Maxim of Society is sacredly observed through the Whole Tenor of our English Laws: and never transgressed or neglected, but upon Extraordinary Occasions.

How terrible was the Force of These seen to be in the Days of our Fathers; Especially, when they were set on Fire by that mistaken Zeal, (the true and genuine Enthusiasm,) which at once inflames and consecrates the Passions; at once actuates them into Rage to all Extremities, and sanctifies that Rage by the sacred Names of God and Religion: By which it came to pass, that the Cause of every heated Imagination became the Cause of God; that whatever Men thought well of, in Religious Affairs, for Themselves, They came to think it their Duty to force upon others; and that Mutual Toleration was declared by Some, who once wanted it themselves, the Greatest of all the
We have much to learn from these Things; and much to avoid. Let us imitate all that Zeal of our Forefathers for our Legal Constitution, which was visibly designed, and naturally tended, to prevent future Encroachments of Power, either against, or without, Law: And let us fly far from all those Methods which naturally paved the Way to the Loss of all that Freedom which they pretended to secure. Let us value our Liberties, as Honest Men: Not only for the Pleasure and Security They afford to Ourselves; but as a Trust reposed in Us for our Posterity, much more Sacred and Important than Any other Legacy of this World, that we can leave them. Let not our Passions be our first Instructors in any Step of our Public Conduct: But let them Themselves be instructed and guided by our Reason. Let our Love to what we justly approve, and chuse for Ourselves in Religion, engage Us to such Charity and Forbearance towards Others, as may demonstrate our Gratitude for our own Happiness; and our deep Sense that Whatever we may account the Cause of God is to be promoted by None but the Methods of God.

In a word, As Britons, enjoying the Blessings of a Constitution unknown to all the Countries...
tries around Us, even where the Word Liberty is still used; and, As Christians, enjoying the Light and Liberty of the Gospel; Let us secure, as much as can be, the Repose and Comforts of this present Life, by valuing and preserving that Form of Government which administers so much Good to Us; and let Us press, with unwearied Steps, to the Rewards of the Life which is to come, (free from all the Vicissitudes, and Confusions, of the happiest Kingdoms of this World) by walking worthy of our Holy Vocation, and adorning our Profession by a truly Christian and unblameable Conversation.

Which God grant, for the Sake of Jesus Christ our Lord, &c.
Of Christian Moderation.

SERMON XVII.

Preached at St. Switbin's Church, on Jan. 30, 1702-3.

PHILIPP. iv. 5.

Let your Moderation be known unto all Men.

THE Word which is here translated Moderation, signifies an Easiness and Gentleness of Mind, disposing Men, not only to be contented and quiet themselves, but to be pliable and yielding to Those around them, in order to the general Good; a Temper always ready, by all reasonable Methods, to promote and establish the Happiness of Themselves, and of the World about them. This Temper, we see, St. Paul doth most heartily recommend to Christians, nay, he desires it may be One of the more conspicuous and visible Parts of their Character; a Mark, as it were, to distinguish them from the World of ill-natured and inflexible
flexible Men; and to make a Difference between Them, and the other Part of Mankind, who are not to be moved by any Considerations, to yield or bend to any Terms of Love and Peace. And yet, notwithstanding this, how little of this excellent Virtue do we see in the World? And what little Hopes have we of seeing more of it? Many Men take the Word into their Mouths, and use it as they see fit: Some, to ridicule, and make a Jest of it; Some, to put it, as a false Colouring to Something bad underneath: And Many mistake Something Else for it; and whilst they think they are possessed of it, are far removed from it. There seem to be Few, who have that Charity that is necessary to the very being of it; and for want of this, Many can neither understand, nor heartily seek after it. And yet, from the want of this Virtue have proceeded very many of those Miseries Men have felt in their own Minds; the Plagues of Impatience, Malice, and Revenge; and almost all the Unhappinesses and Ruines that have befallen public Societies. Why then should not Men be willing, if they have any Sense left of their own private Quiet; if they have any Regard to the Happines of their Neighbours; if they be touched with any Concern for the Good of that Society they belong to; nay, if they but con-
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Chriftian Moderation, in the Mifchiefs and Disturbances that shall befall it; why fhould not Men, I fay, if any fuch Considerations are worthy their Notice, (as certainly they are;) be ready to underftand what this Virtue is, and to praftife it? and be follicitous to know, (by their own Experience) what are the Properties and the blessed Fruits of it; And, fince the great Apostle fo particularly recommends it, why fhould they not (far from being ashamed of it,) glory in letting their Moderation be known unto all Men?

And this Subject I purposely now chufe, because I am perfuaded it is moft proper for the sad Occafion of this Day, which I judge to be observed moft according to the Design of it, when fuch material Points are insisted on, as, if they had been heartily embraced, would have prevented the Effects of that violent Spirit, the Characters of which it now bears; and will prevent all Like Evils, and mutual Outrages, for the future, if sincerely embraced on all hands.

What I design at present upon this Subject, fhall be comprized under these three Heads:

I. I fhall endeavour to fhew what Christian Moderation is, by pointing out some of the chief
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chief Properties of it, and of the Vice opposed to it.

II. I shall propose some proper Arguments to move us to pursue after it, and to possess ourselves of it.

III. I shall endeavour to lay down some Rules for the attaining it.

First, I say, I shall endeavour to shew what Christian Moderation includes in it, by pointing out some of the chief Properties of it, and of the Vice contrary to it, viz. Violence. I shall mention but two or three.

1. Christian Moderation will dispose us to be always ready to hear whatsoever can be reasonably offered, for the making up the Differences, and reconciling the Quarrels and Dissensions, amongst Men. It is a Virtue composed of Charity, Humility, and Peaceableness; and therefore must lead to the blessed Fruits of those Graces: and, upon the same account, it is utterly inconsistent with a Mind averse to Overtures of Peace; indisposed to hear of Union and Temper, where there have once been Differences; and resolved against Compliance, and an healing Disposition, where once there have been Breaches, and Provocations. This, indeed, is the Temper of Violence and Passion, which cannot
cannot be conceived to enter into any Breast, without the Mixture of Pride, and Prejudice, and Revenge; or else without the Leaven of some private Design, which too often is the Case. But, to be more particular; In order to Peace and Union,

2. Christian Moderation will dispose Men not to be too hard upon their Brethren of different Parties, or different Denominations; not to aggravate their Faults beyond due Measure; not to be ever incensing and inflaming them, by the Repetition, and lively Representation, of them, in what Colours they think fit; and this, not in order to make them themselves sensible of the Guilt of them, but to make them odious to the World, and hateful to all about them; the Mischief and Wickedness of which we easily see in Others, tho' we too easily overlook it in Ourselves.

Christian Moderation forbids not that Men should be very fully satisfied with the Cause which they themselves espouse; or the Way they chuse themselves to walk in; but it forbids them to be ever railing at Others; to be always cloathing the Mistakes and Failings of Others in the worst Circumstances they can invent; or, to manage their own Cause so as to irritate, and not convince, those that oppose it, or do not fall in with it. It forbids
bids us not to have a due Sense of any Crimes or Errors committed, or embraced, by Others, or to do our utmost to convince them in a Way proper for us to take; and likely to have Effect upon them: But it forbids us to lay them open, after such a Manner, as tends to raise their Passions, and utterly indispose them to hear and receive what can be offered. It forbids us to charge All, of any Sort, with the Crimes of a Few: for that is fixing Crimes upon Those, who are not guilty of them. This is not the Way of Charity and Condescension; this is not the Road to any tolerable degree of Harmony and Quiet in the World; and is teaching Others but a bad Lesson against Ourselves. And where is the Good, and what will be the Issue, when the great Business going forward in a Nation, is a Contest between the differing Parts that make it up, who shall find most Faults in the other; and aggravate them with the greatest Spleen and Keenness; and paint them out in the worst and blackest Colours They can find? or, who shall represent their Brethren so as most effectually to vex and anger Them Themselves, as well as to set the World on Fire against them: I say what good Issue can there be of this, unless the good of a People consists in mutual Hatred, and a Readiness to destroy one another? And yet how many Men think it almost their Duty
Duty to say any thing of Persons of differing Notions, and differing Measures, from themselves? How many Men, who are not contented with being in what They judge to be a good Way themselves, with the Advantages of Truth and Right on their own Side; not without such a due Sense of the Mistakes and Faults of others, as may inspire Them with a Desire to reclaim and amend them; but think their Business is to irritate and expose them, as far as possible; and imagine, that they cannot be just to their own Cause, without being unjust to that of others; nay, that no one is truly and heartily in their Way of thinking, as to the main Object of their Zeal, who doth not join in the reviling, abusing, and unchristian Treatment, of all who think otherwise? This is visible in many of all Parties, and all Sects, throughout the World; and yet this is as certainly contrary to Christian Moderation, as it is to all Hopes of Peace in the World. For if Christian Moderation be a yielding and pliable Disposition of Mind, then it certainly tends to the uniting the Differences of Men: And if it does, whatever is wholly contrary to That, whatever lays the Foundation of eternal Variance, is contrary to it, and inconsistent with it.

But, once more, Thirdly, Christian Moderation will dispose us to yield up Things of little Importance,
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Importance, and small Concern, for the sake of a greater Union, and a more strong Foundation for lasting Happiness and Peace amongst Men: much more, will it dispose Men to amend and reform what may be made better, for the same Ends. To be heartily concerned for the Substantials and Fundamentals of Religion; for Things of great Importance either to Church or State; for what is of Moment in the Worship of God, or the Government of Christian People, is that which all are obliged to. Nor doth Christian Moderation lay the least Obligation upon Us to yield in these Points. But when these are secured; and when, without any Prejudice to these, something may be granted, something may be altered or amended; or added: and this, either good in itself, or, at least, not at all blameable, and highly advantageous to the Interest and Peace of the World about us, and very much conductive to a strong Union, and a lasting good Correspondence amongst Christians; --- Not to be ready to yield in such Cases; not to be disposed to comply in such Matters, seems directly contrary to any Desire of Peace and Concord; and therefore must be contrary to Christian Moderation. For what Reason can there be against it? Will it do us any Prejudice to have a larger ground for Union? Is it not a Christian Disposition...
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SERM. sometimes to yield even to the unreasonable Humour of Others, and, by somewhat which will do Ourselves no Prejudice, to consult the Good and promote the Agreement of Christians? Or is it too great a Condescension, and too noble an Instance of Humility, to be more willing to agree than Others are, and to comply, as far as is reasonable with Them, who will not comply, so far as we think reasonable, with Us? Which of the two is it, that it becomes Christians to contend for; Who shall stand most upon their Guard against Union, or who shall step first towards it? Who shall insist most stiffly upon little Punctilios, of none or very small Concern to the main of Religion; or who shall be most disposed to part with things of that Nature, for the sake of what God and their common Saviour love infinitely better? And which of the two sorts of Men will come off at the great Day of Accounts with greater Glory, They, who have preferred the Union of the Christian World before their own Humour, or Opinions of little Importance; or They, who have stiffly insisted, and refused to yield up the least or most indifferent Circumstance to that Consideration?

But I shall not enlarge on this any more, nor search out any more Particulars at present, of Christian Moderation. But only observe, from what
what has been said, how unjust and unreasonable that Account is, which is given by many, of this Virtue; by Those only, I mean, who are such Strangers to it themselves, that they cannot bear the least Pretense to it in Others; who would make the World believe, that it proceeds from an Indifference to all Religion, and from a Mind very lukewarm in its Zeal for God: when, in truth, Christian Moderation proceeds from a great Zeal for all that deserves it, and a hearty Concern for the Honour of God. Let them, therefore, answer for it to God, and their own Consciences, whoever presume to bring a Disgrace and Contempt upon this Virtue, and those that endeavour to practise it. A moderate Man, who is truly so, values every thing as it deserves, and no farther. And as St. James says, that the Wisdom from Above is first pure, and then peaceable; so, next to his own Purity, he has a sacred regard to the Happiness and Peace of the World about him. And I see no Reason he has to be ashamed of the Name; or to envy any others a contrary Character.

But I pass on now to the Second thing I proposed, viz. to mention some proper Arguments to move us heartily to pursue after it, and to possess ourselves of it; For Instance;

A a 4. First,
First, if we consider the Peace and Quiet this virtue includes in it, I mean with respect to the breast of every private man, this will inflame us with some desire to attain it. Compare the man who is possessed of it, with one that is void of it; the man who has a mind ever ready to hear of peace and unity, agreement and harmony, with the man who is never in humour to attend to anything but what tends to the widening and opening of wounds and breaches; the man who is ever willing to make allowances for the mistakes and faults of men of different opinions from himself, with the man who is always raking into them, and always eager to represent them in the most inflaming manner; the man who is ready to yield up a thing of little moment, and many an inconsiderable point, to obtain peace, and settle a good correspondence amongst the several members of the same body, with the man who knows no such thing as yielding or compliance, but is rather ready to sacrifice the universal peace to his own private fancies: Compare these two together, and consider in whose breast most quiet and satisfaction is to be found; and it will be no very difficult matter to determine, whether more serenity and happiness of mind follow upon a disposition inclined to concord and unity, than upon a mind
a Mind always upon the Rack how to inflame and heighten Differences; or, always eager to take all Measures which are effectual to the keeping up Variances and Animosities in the World.

But, Secondly, As this Temper of Mind implies Quiet and Happiness in itself, so it is the most ready, and, I may say, the only Temper, that can, and must at last, heal the evil Dispositions of Mankind; and produce Peace and Happiness in public Societies: which is, I am sure, a good Argument, why every single Person should think himself obliged to pursue after it. In vain are other Methods thought of, and made use of, to join the Hands of Men in Friendship, unless their Hearts be disposed to this candid and compliant Temper. There will always be passionate and wicked Men in the World, to foment the Differences in it. And if none in it will yield one Step; if none will ever bend and comply; what can be hoped for? If the Method taken on all sides be to rail and revile, to aggravate and misrepresent, to search out Faults, and then to make what they please of them; this rather looks like a Declaration of perpetual War against one another, and is, in effect, a solemn Protestation, that they neither hope for, nor desire, Reconciliation and Peace; and seems to be a firm Resolution of destroying and
and ruining one another, whenever an Opportunity offers itself. And what a blessed Aspect upon the public Happiness have such Resolutions as these? It may be safely affirmed, that the Men of such Tempers, and such Dispositions, are They, who have, in all Ages, disturbed the Quiet of the World, ruined the Happiness of Societies, and who are ever hindering all Hopes of a better State for the future.

But see if another Scene might not be reasonably hoped for, and That, a Scene of Happiness to the Public, would Men but be persuaded to be as moderate, as yielding, as compliant, as good-natured, as ready to make Allowances, as willing to study the public Advantage (which is public Peace and Agreement,) as the Christian Religion obliges them to be. Would not this be visible in its beneficent Influences upon the whole Society? At least, would not this dispose us to live as Christians ought to do with Christians; and with all Members of the same Civil Society? But enough of this. --- I shall mention but one Argument more to move us to endeavour after this Christian Frame of Mind; and that is,

**Thirdly,** That it is a divine and god-like Temper, an Imitation of God himself, in what ought
to appear the most amiable Part of his Character in our own Eyes. He never has shewn himself willing to aggravate our Faults beyond the Hope of Pardon; or indisposed to come to Terms of Accommodation and Peace with his Sinful Creatures. He desires to be united to Us in Love and Friendship, who are at a greater Distance from Him by far, than Those who differ the most from us, can possibly be. He is willing to recede from the strictest Right, and the Rigour of Justice, in order to Our Happiness. And shall not we be willing, and disposed, after so divine a Copy, to yield and bend, in order to meet our Brethren in any Design, that tends to the Foundation or Establishment of a thing of such vast Importance as universal Peace and Happiness? Almighty God himself shews us, in the most surprizing Instance of our Redemption, how much he values the Happiness of his Creatures. It is our Duty to imitate him; and do every thing in our Power for the compassing the same End: and especially to imitate Him, in what he accounts One of his greatest Glories.

I come now to the Third thing proposed at first, i.e. To lay down some Rules, in order to our obtaining this Christian Temper of Mind.
And, i. Let us often consider such Arguments, to move us to the Pursuit after it, as I have before mentioned: How easy, and sedate, and happy, it will make us in the inward State, and the secret Recesses, of our own Minds; how beneficial it will be in its Influences upon the Public; how many Miseries it might have prevented; how many Happineses it would procure, were it universally practised. Let us then consider of how bad Consequence, and of what wretched Influence the Temper contrary to it must necessarily be, upon Society; what Wrath and Anger, what Malice and Ill-will; what outrages, and Tumults, and Wars, and Massacres, it has been, and ever will be, the Occasion of; A deep Sense of these, and of the great Duty of imitating God in our Tempers and Practice, will help us in the obtaining and possessing this divine Virtue. And

2. In order to this, it is absolutely necessary that we should free ourselves from Hatred and Malice, Pride and Arrogance. Love and Humility are the proper Road to this Virtue; but Uncharitableness and Pride lead us into Paths quite distinct from, and opposite to it. For the more we love our Neighbour, the more ready shall we be to design and promote his Happiness; and the more desirous and studious we are of that, the more shall we be willing to yield
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yield all lefser Points up to it; to comply in any thing of no great Importance, when that de-
mands it. And then, the more humble we are, the less Opinion and Value we set upon Our-
selves; the less shall we be sensible of any under-
valuing of ourselves by Compliance and Yield-
ing; the more ready shall we be to submit to all good Offices; to recede from what we might, perhaps, in Justice, claim, and to shew a Patter

then, the more humble we are, the less Opinion and Value we set upon Ourselves; the less shall we be sensible of any undervalue of ourselves by Compliance and Yielding; the more ready shall we be to submit to all good Offices; to recede from what we might, perhaps, in Justice, claim, and to shew a Pattern to all about us, of Moderation and Condescension. But, on the other side, if we have conceived, or do nourish, any Prejudices against Mens Persons; if we hate and abhor Men, because they do not fall in with us in all things; or entertain any sort of Ill-will against them; this will make us glad to displease and incense them, to heighten their Prejudices already embraced, but is never likely to make us consult their Good at any Time, or prefer it before the least Advantage, or most insignificant Humour, of our own; or to make us solicitous in our Endea-
vours after a Frame of Mind, which consists in a Readiness to yield and comply, for the sake of our common Good and Happiness.

And therefore, if our Breasts be filled with Pride, with an overweening Conceit of Ourselves, of our own Abilities, and our own Way; if we be too arrogant to hear of any Alteration in Ourselves; if we think it beneath our Dignity to stoop
Of Christian Moderation:

S E R M. stoop or descend, or to recede from any thing, tho' of never so little Consequence; we may e'en put a stop to our Endeavours after a Virtue which will dwell only with a Man of an humble and yielding Spirit; and sit down contented with our own great Acquirements, and not think any more of a Temper, which cannot possibly reside in a Breast, where Pride and Arrogance are nourished.

3. It is absolutely necessary, also, that we free our Breasts from Covetousness; Ambition; and All such Designs, as terminate in our own private Profit or Honour. For Moderation, in a truly Christian Sense, (however the Word found in English,) is a public-spirited and noble Virtue; and can never be completely and consistently exercised by a Man, who has proposed to himself his own private Gain, or Advancement, for the End of his Labours. How can He be ready and willing to recede one step from his own Interest, in order to the universal Good of Others, who has fixed his Eye only upon himself; and thinks That only to be good, which is a present Profit or Honour to himself? How confined must his Desires and his Designs be; and how little must He be moved with a Sense of any Advantage to others, who has not left any room for such Considerations to come at him, but is wholly wrapt up in himself, and his
Of Christian Moderation.

own Bye-ends? We can never hope to have our Moderation, our yielding and easy Temper, be known unto all Men; nay, we can never hope to have any thing to do with it, 'till we have banished all private Ends out of our Hearts; at least 'till we have brought them all entirely into Subjection to a greater End; and have such a Command over Ourselves, as that we can make them yield, at any time, to more weighty and generous Considerations.

These Rules will help us, if we are sincere in the use of them, to form Ourselves into this god-like Temper of Mind; and then to proceed and improve in it, notwithstanding all the Opposition of the violent Part of the World.

To conclude with one word proper on this Occasion; Had the Men of this Nation been universally sensible of the Nature and Obligation of this Duty, and possessed it in any Degree; the wicked Violences, and Evils, of this Day, and many both before, and after it, had not now been called to our Remembrance. I will not enumerate them; but rather pray, that the Records of Them, in our Histories, may make us, on all sides, more in love with true Christian Moderation: without which (I will be bold to say) we can never (in Time to come) be secure a-
Of Christian Moderation.

S E R M. gainst the like deplorable Calamities; nor
xvii. transmit those inestimable Blessings of Religi-
ous and Civil Liberty, we at present enjoy, (under the wise Government of Those who
appear to know the Value of this Virtue) safe,
and unviolated, to future Times: And this, I
am sure, ought to be the hearty Endeavour of
every Protestant Englishman, of what Denomi-
nation soever.
SERMON XVIII.

Preached at St. Swithin's Church, on Sept. 2, 1702, being the Fast-day observed in Remembrance of the Fire of London, 1666.

LUKE xix. 41, 42.

And when he was come near, he beheld the City, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy Day, the Things that belong unto thy Peace! But now they are hid from thine Eyes.

THE City our blessed Lord thus wept over, was Jerusalem; esteemed, by the Jews, as the Glory of the whole Earth. But he wept not over it, as a Collection of fine Buildings; but as it was the Capital City, and principal Resort, of the whole Jewish Nation; as it contained in it a vast Number of that People whom God had chosen out of the World to be his own: an ungrateful and rebellious People, that had had all Methods...
thods tried with them, to make them better and happier, but could not be reclaimed by any; that had killed and stoned the Prophets God had sent to them, and now were going to reject and kill his Son; and so were destined, through their own Wickedness, to a great and remarkable Ruine and Destruction. The Thought and Foresight of this moved the Compassion of our Lord, who came to save them. When he was near, He beheld the City; and that View brought to his Mind those dismal Calamities the Inhabitants of it were calling down upon themselves: And he wept over it, expressing his tender Regard to it's Inhabitants in this Wish, If thou had'st known, even thou, in this thy Day, i. e. if, in this your last Trial, now at this Time when I am sent to You with the last Offers of God's Mercy, the Things that belong to thy Peace! If You, the Inhabitants, had understood what is your true and real Interest, your Duty and your Happiness! But now they are hid from thine Eyes, i. e. from this Time, If You, the People highly favoured of God, are resolved to persist in Infidelity, and even to reject Me your long-expected Messiah, whom God has sent to you, with his last Offers; there can be no more Hopes. God Almighty most justly now gives you over, to be led by that perverse
Spirit into Ruine and Destruction. And this same thing our blessed Lord sets forth in another Place, in the Parable of the Householder, who planted a Vineyard, and let it out to Husbandmen, and sent several Servants to receive the Fruits of it for him; and, after they had been Abused and Murthered, last of all sent his Son: and when they refused Obedience to this last and worthiest Messenger, he could send, He resolves to try them no more, but miserably to destroy those wicked Men.

From this Case of the Nation of the Jews, and the City of Jerusalem, we are naturally led to observe these Three things:

I. That, according to the constant Representations of the Holy Scriptures, there is a Day appointed for wicked Societies and Nations, till which Time Almighty God waits for their Repentance, and defers their utter Ruine; but beyond which, they shall not be tried.

II. That this is not fixed by Arbitrary Will and Pleasure, but upon just Reasons: Or, in other Words, That there is not a Day for the utter Ruine of any Nation, or Society, so determined by God, but that, if they repent, and amend
SERM. amend their Lives, before that Day comes, they shall certainly be pardoned and blessed. And, agreeably to this,

III. That before the final Destruction of any Societies, or Nations, God uses many and sufficient Means of reforming and amending them; that they may go on to flourish and prosper in the World.

I. We may observe, that there is a Day appointed for Wicked Societies and Nations, 'till which Almighty God waits for their Repentance, but beyond which their utter Ruine shall not be deferred.

Thus, We see, in the Passage of the Gospel now before Us, there was a Time beyond which Jerusalem, and the whole Nation of the Jews, were not to be tried; and no more Offers of Mercy were to be tendered to them; but if they did not, at the Coming of the Son of God, repent, and turn from their Evil Ways; they were, from that Instant, devoted to Misery and Ruine: Or, if They did not, in this their Day, know and practise the Things that belonged to their Peace, They would from that Time be hid from their Eyes.

Thus
A Sermon Preached on Sept. 2, 1702.

Thus it was with the First World; when their Sins were many and heinous, and the whole Earth was corrupt, My Spirit, says God, shall not always strive with Man; I will not ever wait for their Repentance and Amendment; but their Days shall be an Hundred and Twenty Years. (Gen. vi. 3.) So long, and no longer, the Men of that World were to be waited on; and then a Flood of Waters to be brought in upon them, if they continued ungodly. Thus we see, tho' the Posterity of Abraham were by Promise to possess the Land of the Amorites, yet it was not to be, till the Iniquity of the Amorites was full (Gen. xv. 16.) 'till they had been tried to the utmost, and were found to be fit for nothing but a signal Destruction. Now these Things that were written before, were written for our Instruction, and these Things happened unto them for Examples. And we may argue, that, as there was a Pitch of Wickedness, beyond which God would not let these Societies of Men go on, without a remarkable Vengeance; and as there was a Day certainly set, beyond which they should not be tried, and after which no farther Offers should be made for their Reformation and Happiness: so it is with Us Ourselves, with this Nation and People to which we belong; So certainly, there is a determinate
Heighth of Wickedness, beyond which God will not bear with us; and a Day, in the Purpose of Almighty God, beyond which he will not try us, and after which nothing shall prevent our utter Desolation and Ruine.

II. We may observe, that, according to the Representations of the same Holy Scriptures, There is not a Day for the final Ruine of any Nations or Societies, so determined by God, but that, if they repent, before that Time come, they shall certainly be pardoned, and blessed with Prosperity and Success. Thus Noah was to preach Repentance and Righteousness to the World before the Flood, in order to prevent that great Calamity; and an Hundred and twenty Years were given, to try if they would hear his Voice and live. Thus Jonas was ordered by God to go to Nineveh, and cry aloud in it, yet Forty Days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown; and yet, when all the People of that City joined together to humble themselves before God, and God saw their Works, that they turned from their evil Ways, God repented of the Evil he had said he would do unto them, and he did it not. Thus; without doubt, he would have done with the Jews; if they had repented, and seen the Things that belonged to their Peace
in that their Day, which was destined to be their last Trial: if, instead of rejecting the Lord of Life, they had accepted his Offers, and become his Subjects and Servants; all their stoning and killing the Prophets, that had been sent before, and all their numberless past Provocations, would have been pardoned and forgotten.

For that this was the Method in which He would always proceed, He himself had assured the Jews by his Prophet Jeremiah (xviii. 7.) At what Instant I shall speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that Nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their Evil Ways, I will repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them, i.e. I will not do it, tho’ I have threatened it in Words of the most peremptory, and absolute, Sort. If Repentance intervene, the Evil shall never be executed; and it is threatened, upon Supposition only that a Repentance does not follow upon such Threatning. And this is a very considerable Satisfaction, that we have not to do with an arbitrary and unreasonable Tyrant, but one who desires and wishes our Repentance; who threatens Ruine, in order to bring a Nation to Repentance and Amendment; and who does not threaten it, in order to execute it, if Re-
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Serm. XVIII. pentance and Amendment intervene. Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die, O House of Israel? And thus he speaks not only to Them, but to all Nations and Societies: Turn ye from your evil Ways, and so Iniquity shall not be your Ruine. But,

III. We are led, by the Case before Us of Jerusalem, and the Jewish Nation, to observe, That, before the final Ruine of any Nation or Society, God uses many and sufficient Means to reform and amend them: How often, says our Lord to Jerusalem, would I have gathered thy Children together, even as a Hen gathereth her Chicken under her Wings; and Ye would not? How many Prophets were sent, with mighty Signs and Wonders, to allarm this People of the Jews? how many wise Men to guide and instruct them? With how immediate and special a Regard did God himself dwell amongst them, and preside over them? How many extraordinary and miraculous Mercies, Deliverances, and Victories, were they blessed with? And, because that Method was unsuccessfull, how many Plagues and Judgments, Famines, Swords, and Pestilences, did they experience? And, after they had been Proof against Instruction, against Mercies, and Judgments, and all other Efforts of his Good-will, last of all be
be sent unto them his Son, with all the Signs, and Evidences, of the promised Messiah; in order, at the very Approach of the End of his Forbearance, to prevent their Ruine by their Amendment. Almighty God himself gives an Account, in the Fifth Chap. of Isaiah, what he had done to his Vineyard. And now, says he, O Inhabitants of Jerusalem, and Men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and my Vineyard; what could have been done more to my Vineyard, that I have not done in it? And this is a plain Demonstration of his Mercy, and Long-suffering, that, altho' he must, in Justice, and left Virtue should perish from off the Earth, sometimes decree the utter Ruine and Desolation of a People; yet, before that, he tries many and different Methods to bring them to Reformation: A certain Proof, I say, that he delights not in their Ruine; that Judgment is his strange Work, in this Sense, that it is not what by Choice He inclines to: Nay, that, before a Nation be totally destroyed, it must be past even the Possibility of Recovering, by those Methods in which God thinks fit to deal with such Creatures as We are.

Having gone over those Three Observations I proposed at first, it will not be improper to consider
SERM. consider two Questions, which offer themselves upon this Subject. The first is, why whole Societies and Nations are often punished so remarkably in this World? And the other is, why good Men often suffer in those Calamities and Destructions, which are brought on a People for the Wickedness of others?

First, Why whole Societies and Nations of Men are punished often, in so remarkable a Manner, in this World. And the plain Reasons seem to me to be these two. 1. Because when once a whole Society, or Nation, is universally corrupt and debauched, Virtue must necessarily, and infallibly, perish from amongst the Men of that Society or Nation; and, Secondly, that this Destruction may be an Example to all other Societies. As to the first, the Corruption of a whole Nation is not like the Corruption of a particular Person; which may be let alone, and yet the Cause of Virtue and Goodness not run so very low, but that there may be Encouragement enough left to others to be religious and good: but it is of so very bad Consequence, that there is not the least Probability, if it be not restrained and checked, by some extraordinary Methods, that Virtue should ever shew its Head again in that Nation. The Examples in such a Society are
bad; the Education of Youth directly leading to Vice and Debauchery; the Principles upon which Men act apparently wicked, and tending on still to greater and greater Degrees of Wickedness. Now God, as he is holy, and of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity opposing itself to those Rules, He himself acts, and would have all others act, by; as He is the Governor and Judge of the World; is concerned to hinder, by all possible Methods, such an universal Wickedness as would ruine Virtue, so that it should have no Hopes of ever appearing again. And this is a sufficient Reason why he should use Judgments and Calamities, as well as Mercies, to prevent such an Increase of it in a Nation: and, if those lesser Methods are not successful, why he should bring utter Ruine and Desolation upon that whole Nation. Especially considering,

2. What a moving Example this may be to other Societies and Nations. Precedents, or Examples, are apt to influence our Minds very much: And to see how other Societies of People have been lost and ruined, when they refused to be reformed by milder Methods, naturally leads us to think how it must fare at last with Ourselves, if we go on. For the
the Question presently offers itself to our Minds, what Reason is there why We should Hope to be excepted? or, if we imitate other incorrigible Nations, in our Manners and Behaviour, why should We not resemble them in a remarkable and fatal End? Almighty God may therefore, justly punish wicked Societies, or Nations, to affright them from going on to a State of universal, settled, unrestrained Wickedness; and, if that cannot be done, may punish them with an utter Destruction, rather than permit such universal Wickedness to triumph and flourish, or suffer a Foundation to be laid for an uninterrupted Course of it. For this is exactly agreeable to the Rules of his Supreme Moral Government: as it is absolutely necessary to the maintaining the World in any tolerable Order, and consulting the Happiness of other Societies, and of those Persons that shall be born after, who will be allarmed by these Examples, to fly from what has before brought down Ruine upon whole Nations. 

When thine Judgments are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteousness, says the Prophet. When there is a remarkable Visitation, a visible Punishment of the Sins of any Nation; this will draw the Eyes of others, and teach them, that Righteousness is the only sure
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Sure Way to establish the Happiness of a People. For if, (as Solomon says) because Sentence against any one evil Work, is not speedily executed, therefore the Hearts of the Sons of Men are fully set in them to do Evil; Certainly, if Sentence were never executed in this World against the great and repeated evil Works, of which a whole Body of Men are notoriously and universally guilty, much more would the Hearts of the Sons of Men be set in them to do Evil; when They have Reason to think themselves secure; and so all Religion and Virtue would, by Degrees, long ago have vanished from the Earth. These two Reasons seem fully sufficient to satisfy us, why God should often punish, and sometimes totally destroy, Societies and Nations of Men.

There is another Reason, why wicked Societies and Nations should be punished in this World, mentioned by Some, viz. because they cannot be punished, as Societies, in the World to come. But this I do not urge, because I either do not understand it; or do not understand it to be a good Reason: and because the Reasons I mentioned before seem to be fully sufficient, without inquiring after any others.

I come
I come now to another Question, which has sometimes been asked upon this Subject, viz. Why good Men often suffer in those Calamities, and Destructions, which are brought on any Society, or Nation, for the Sins of others? And as to this, supposing the Fact true,

1. We may observe, that good Men have often very great Imprudences and Weaknesses: and these may, sometimes, naturally tend to help on public Calamities and Misfortunes.

Some of the best of them may be Men of great natural Passions, hurrying them on to sudden Resolutions, and Counsels; and at the same Time of so little Reach, as to be easily mistaken in their political Conduct; and think That to be good for the repairing the Breaches of a Nation, which will really help to widen them; and That for the Interest and Happiness of a People, which really tends to their Ruine and Unhappiness. Almighty God is not obliged to free the Minds of good Men from all Failings, or to conquer their Passions miraculously, for them; or to give their Minds such a Reach, as that they shall not mistake in their Notions of public Interest and Happiness; and they may justly suffer in those temporal Evils which they themselves
2. There may be many good Men, unexceptionable in their private and personal Conduct, who think it sufficient to look after themselves, and are too little concerned at seeing their Country over-run with Wickedness, to use their Endeavours to give a Check to it, or to put in Execution the best Laws made against the Progress of That which tends to the final Ruine of a Nation. The Instances before mentioned, from the sacred History, would teach them another Lesson. Noab was preserved from the general Flood: but then, he not only was a good Man himself, but had Zeal enough to make him concern himself for other People, and even to be troublesome to them, by being a Preacher of Righteousness, (as St. Peter says) in order to reclaim them, and prevent that Ruine that threatened them. So Lot was delivered, when Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed; but then, he was not only righteous himself, but St. Peter observes, that That righteous Man dwelling amongst them, in seeing and hearing vexed his righteous Soul, from Day to Day, with their unlawful Deeds; nay, interested himself so much in their Behaviour, as not only to be grieved at their Impieties, but, without doubt, to endeavour their Reformation:
For so much we gather with great Reason, from that Speech of the Inhabitants of Sodom, *This one Fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge*, Gen. xiv. 9.

In these Cases, therefore, in which the un-active Coldness of some, or the weak Understandings, or strong Passions, of other, good Men, have naturally tended, and led to the Ruine of that Society to which they belong; they themselves cannot think Almighty God to act unjustly by them, if he does not miraculously exempt them, from the common Lot in such Calamities, as may indeed justly be said to be brought upon their Country for the sake of the *Wickedness* of Others, but yet are such as these good Men themselves did not endeavour to prevent by their Zeal and Interposition; or perhaps helped forward by the Imprudence of their Counsels, or Violence of their natural Tempers. But,

3. It will take away the very Ground of this Objection, to observe that, according to the Representations of the Scriptures, the Fact itself is not certainly true. We all know that the same Holy Books, which relate the Stories of the Defolation of Cities and Nations, for the Wickedness of the People, give us Instances of good Men wonderfully preserved, and delivered, in such Calamities. Thus, when
when the Old World was to be destroyed, we find Noah, a good and righteous Person, who had never either assented to, or winked at, the Wickedness of those about him, strangely delivered by the Particular Providence of God, when the Flood was brought upon the World of the Ungodly.

Thus, when the Cities of Sodom and Gomorr...
and Equity, that, in those Cases, in which it pleaseth Almighty God thus immediately to interpose, and bring immediate Desolation upon any Society, for the sake of the Wickedness of Many of the Men who compose it; That, I say, in such Cases, the truly Good Men belonging to it should be preserved and delivered. Otherwise, these Calamities could not well be said to be decreed, or wrought, by God himself, for the Punishment of such Wickedness only.

And this appears plainly to be the very Foundation and Strength of Abraham's Argument, in the Eighteenth Chapter of Genesis. There we find, at the 20th Verse, That God is said to condescend to inform Abraham of his Resolution with regard to Sodom and Gomorrah, which, it is plain from Abraham's Answer, was a Declaration, that He would himself interpose, and bring a total Destruction upon those Cities, solely on account of the enormous Wickedness of the Inhabitants. This was the Fact, which moved Abraham to the Boldness of Arguing with God himself, upon the Principles of Justice and Equity, from Verse 23, to the End.

Wilt Thou also destroy the Righteous with the Wicked — That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the Righteous with the Wicked; and that the Righteous should be as the Wicked;
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That be far from thee. Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right? This is his Argument, xviii. Since this Destruction is to be brought upon these Places for the Sins of the Wicked only, strict Justice requires that the righteous Part of the People should not be destroyed for the Wickedness of Others, for the sake of which alone the Destruction is brought. Abraham's main Intention is not to intercede for Those whose Iniquities were full; but to contend, from the Nature of Justice, and of God himself, That a Method ought to be found for the Preservation of the Righteous, in such a particular Case. And we see, the Great God is so far from being displeased with a Mortal Man for pretending to argue with him, from such excellent Principles; that He plainly approves of the Argument, and goes so far as to declare, That, rather than the Righteous shall not be preserved, He will, for their Sakes, if a Few be found, spare the City, and even put off the Destruction of the Wicked, now ripe for his Vengeance. And, as it appears that there was but one good Man and Family there; This one Man and Family alone are preserved. And thus we see, that it is the Representation of Holy Scripture, that Good Men are actually delivered, and preserved, according to the Rules of Justice, by that God, that Righteous Judge of
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Serm. the Earth, in those Desolations and Destructions, which He himself immediately brings upon a People, expressly and merely on account of the crying Wickedness, of the Worst Part of them. And this is the Case particularly meant in the Objection. For,

4. As for Those Destructive, or Calamitous Events, apparently arising from the Original Frame and Contexture of this Earth, or of the Air around it; or from the Imperfections, Weaknesses, and Wickedness of Men themselves, the Inhabitants of this Earth; or from any the like Causes; the Good Part of Mankind, (the Best of whom have many Imperfections, and are placed Here, only as in a Country, designed not for a Paradise, or their Heaven, but for a State of Probation, suitable to the Ends proposed by their Maker,) ought not to complain, that They partake with the Wicked in such Sort of Evils, natural to this State. Nor do the Justice and Equity of God's Government need any Vindication, on account of Good Men suffering with the Wicked, in these and the like common Calamities of Nature, any more than They do, on account of his not exempting the Best of Men from the common Lot of Sickness, and even Death itself, pronounced and executed equally, upon
the Bad and the Good, the Just Man and the Sinner, in this World.

This is all that I can presume to offer concerning the Case of good Men's suffering, in Calamities brought upon any Nation, for the Sins of Others: And if what I have said upon so dark a Subject, not entirely laid open to our Capacities, cannot fully answer the Curiosity of Some, or the honest Desire of Satisfaction in Others, yet it seems sufficient to abate the Force of the Objection; and to give Them some ground to think, that there may be still stronger Reasons, in the Counsels of the All-knowing God, for this Method of proceeding with the Best, as well as Worst, Part of his imperfect Creatures, in this present State of Things.

Having thus gone over the Three principal Points I first proposed; and then considered Two Difficulties, arising upon Them; I will only now make a short Application of all to Ourselves, and our own Nation.

If it appears from what has been said, That Success and Prosperity have, by the Command and Laws of the Great Governour of the World, attended upon Families, and Nations, where Religion and Virtue have been encouraged and practis'd; we may conclude, that the same will wait upon Us, if Religion and Virtue are
If we read that his Wrath has been executed, and remarkable Vengeance taken, upon Nations in which Impiety and Immorality have been triumphant; we may be certain, that Desolation and Destruction is appointed for Us, if Impiety and Debauchery triumph in the same manner amongst us. And, to be more particular, As We find by the Words upon which I have been discoursing, and other Passages of the Gospel, that the Nation of the Jews, in our Saviour's Time, were called upon to cast back their Eyes upon all the Trials God had formerly made of them, and all the Methods He had used to amend them; not only by his Prophets, but by all his Mercies, and all his Judgments: and were plainly told, that after all the ungrateful Returns made by them, God would not strive with them much longer; but that, if they did not truly repent, and receive their Messiah, the Day of Destruction was soon to come upon them: so, We of this Nation may find too much Reason to think that That Day is not at any very great Distance from us, beyond which God will not try us, or bear with us; I mean, if we consider how many Methods he has used to awaken us, and how little we have hither to been alarmed, to any good Purpose of Amendment: how many Happinesses and Mercies
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He has favoured Us with, as a Nation—

Placed Us in a Situation, and in Circumstances, which point out to Us all Opportunities imaginable of being a great and flourishing People; — Made us the Subjects of a Power governed by Laws, and not of Arbitrary and Unbounded Tyranny; often delivered our Liberties and Lives from imminent Ruine, and our Happiness from the very Jaws of Destruction; — Called us to the Knowledge of his Gospel (a Mercy which we can never duly value) not as it was hid, and obscured, and made useless, by ignorant and wicked Men, but, by his Providence, restored to Light, so far, as to lie open to All, in that Native Simplicity and Purity, in which his first Followers preached, and wrote it, for the Use of All. And, to engage us the more to it, He himself has made This happy Condition of Ours so much his Care, that no Attempts hitherto against it have prospered, but all have been wonderfully defeated. And then We may go on to consider, That, as Mercies have not been wanting to draw us, so neither have Judgments to alarm and drive Us of this Generation to Amendment. It is not very long since all was Confusion and Disorder; since the Sword of Civil Fury was dyed in Blood and Slaughter; nor much less Time, since a fatal Pestilence raged amongst Us, and
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SERM. a terrible Fire laid waste this City. Now, if we reflect on all these, we must think, either that we are amended and reformed so much as to turn away God's Displeasure; or else, that the Day for Ruine and Destruction cannot be at a very great Distance, unless we do very soon and very seriously prevent it, by forsaking our Vices, and turning to Him in Holiness and Righteousness of Life. For thus We should call to Remembrance, He has dealt with the Nations of old; and particularly, with his chosen People, the People of Israel. And therefore, We should argue, in this same Manner, and these same Methods, will He deal with us. in the future Dispensations of his Mercy, or of his Wrath.

The Thoughts, which I have now pointed out, will, in their natural Tendency, lead us all most heartily to endeavour to amend our own Lives, and to do what in Us lies to discourage, and put a stop to, the open Wickedness of Others; and so to consult our own Interest and Happiness, in the Prosperity and Happiness of that Nation, and Society, of which we are Members. And, as what I have now offered cannot but be thought very seasonable upon the Occasion, which has at this Time brought Us together; so, let me add, with regard to our present publick Circumstances; that such
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Considerations can never be more seasonable, serm. than at a Time, when a Torrent of open xviii. Wickedness, and Shameful Divisions at Home, and a Powerful Enemy Abroad, seem to conspire to open the Way, to the Ruine of all that is dear to Us, as Englishmen, and Protestants.

God grant, We may know, even We, in this our Day, the Things that belong to our Peace; and all of Us act according to what We see to be our Duty, and our Interest!

S E R
SERMON XIX.

Preached at St. Peter's Poor, March 8, 1708-9, being the Anniversary of the Queen's Accession, &c.

1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

I exhort therefore, that first of all Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions, and giving of Thanks, be made for all Men: for Kings, and for all that are in Authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable Life, in all Godliness and Honestly.

Serm. These Words are a Direction to Timothy, who had the Care and Oversight both of Pastors and People, in the Parts about Ephesus; and they relate to the public Prayers of Christian Congregations: exhorting, that they should extend their Charity to the whole World, by recommending all Mankind to the Favour of Almighty God; particularly, that they should pray, and give Thanks, for Kings, and all that were in Authority,
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authority, or, as the Margin expresses it, nearer to the Original, in eminent Place; for All whom the Providence of God has raised to any Degree of Power; that they should pray for all such, that Christians might lead a quiet and peaceable Life under them, in all Godliness and Honesty. Which last Words are either designed to direct them what should be the Matter of their Prayers; or else to express one End which he proposed by Christians thus publickly praying for All in Authority, or Eminence; viz. that these Persons in Power might be induced by this to be favourable to them, or, at least, not to treat them as Enemies. If they be understood the first Way, the Direction is, That they should pray for all in Eminence, to this Effect, that God would be pleased so to dispose their Hearts, that They might so use their Power, as that so good Men, and Professors of so holy a Religion, as the Christians, might be safe and secure under them; that they might be Terrors only to Evil-doers, and a Praise and Safe-guard to them that do well. If they be understood in the latter Sense, as one End proposed by St. Paul, why Christians should at that Time particularly pray for all in high Stations, the Meaning of them will be this, That he would have them pray for their Superiours and Governours, not only because
because it was their Duty, but because it was their Interest; to the End that those Men in Power might be induced, when they knew that Christians did heartily pray for them, to use them as Friends; to permit them to lead quiet and peaceable Lives, and not to persecute and harrass them as Enemies; that so the Church might have Peace and Encouragement by means of the powerful Men of the World, when they should find that Christianity was no Enemy to them, or their Government, but was likely to be a great Support to it, by its Prayers and Intercessions for them.

Both these Ways may the Words, I think, be understood; tho' I rather think, that St. Paul might have the latter in his Eye, at a Time when Christianity was surrounded with Enemies; and perpetual Persecution was very likely to be its Fate, from the Notion that they had entertained, of its disposing Men to be of turbulent, and troublesome, and ungo-vernable Tempers; or that, being wholly taken up with the Thoughts of another State of Happines, to come hereafter, they might be entirely disregardful of the Interest and Good of Human Society below.

My Design is not to insist upon these Words as they may peculiarly belong to the first Christians, surrounded by Enemies, looked upon with
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with a jealous Eye by Princes and Men in Power, and continually liable to the Frowns of all around them; but to consider them with a more general View, as they may be applied, and very reasonably supposed to be directed, to all Christians, in all Ages, under all Forms of Government: and to Ourselves in particular, under an excellent Form of Government, and an excellent Queen, who, as this Day, by the Providence of God, succeeded to the Crown, and Glory, of her Illustrious Predecessor.

Only before I proceed, I cannot forbear remarking, how eager some Men are to catch at any thing that may impose a Yoke of Bondage upon Themselves and their Neighbours, when they lay hold on such a Text as this; and argue, from St. Paul's commanding Christians to pray for all in Eminence, or Power, that he commanded them, in this, to be wholly passive, at all Times, and in all Circumstances, under all possible ill Usage, even under such Administrations as must ruine the whole public Society, as well as themselves; nay, further, that they should pray for Prosperity to Those in Power, in all their violent Attempts, and all their Undertakings of all Sorts. But, in one word, they may as well argue, from our being commanded to pray for our Enemies, or from our being commanded to
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SERM. to pray for all Men here in the Text, that we are therefore obliged to wish them well in all their unjust Attempts against Ourselves; nay, in all their contradictory Designs against one another; to submit our Necks, our Families, our worldly Concerns, to the Insults and the Devastation of any who will be so hardy as to attack us, and to attempt our Ruine: And if some of the primitive Christians do, in their Apologies, declare to the Emperours, in absolute Terms, and without any Exceptions, that They pray for their Happiness and Success; it must be said, that they could mean this in no Sense pleasing to Almighty God, but in this, that they might be prospered and find Success in all their lawful and honourable Enterprizes; or else, if They meant this, in any other Sense, that these Christians, who were fallible Men, mistook the Nature of their Duty; and put up Prayers very unacceptable to the great Fountain of Good, and Lover of That only which is ever Just and Right.

To prosecute my present Design, it will be proper,

First, to consider the Importance and Burthen of Government; together with the unspeakable Benefit of good Government; from which,

Secondly, we may easily see, both the Need
there is of the heartiest united Prayers of the governed Society, in the Behalf of Governours; and likewise, what must be the chief Matter of these Prayers, as well as of their Thankgivings, plainly pointed out in those Words, That we may lead quiet and peaceable Lives, in all Godliness and Honesty.

After which, there will not need many Words to apply what shall have been said, to the present Occasion of our meeting together; and the Blessings which this Day has continued and confirmed to us.

First, The Importance and Burthen of Government deserves to be spoken to, together with the unspeakable and extensive Benefit of good Government. Were one to judge of Matters by mere Outside and Shew; or, were one to form his Sentiments, concerning Objects, by the Zeal that poor Mortals shew to obtain them, one would think a State of Power, and Riches, (which are the Sinews of Power,) to be the most lovely and desireable State in the World; made up of nothing but most agreeable Amusements, or magnificent Scenes of all that is desirable.

Through how much Blood, and at the Expence of how many Thousand Lives, will a Man, fired by Ambition, seek after a Crown that is to be purchafed at any rate; and think per-
perhaps, all the while, that he is in Pursuit of one of the most agreeable Stations this World can shew? And how eager will the Contention often be, even where one would think Men have had enough of their own Power before, and felt enough of the Weight of Government? But, there being something gawdy and great in outward Appearance, the Senses of Men are more taken up with the Outside, than their Reason and Consideration are with what is within. For, alas! if the Matter be laid open, how many Thorns grow inwards? how many Cares, and Fears, and Anxieties, must molest, even one, who is but little solicitous about the good Estate of those under him? How many Enmities must he encounter, how many Parties must he steer between, how many Applications must he endure? how many Jealousies must he entertain, of every Thing, and every Body? especially if he knows himself rather to be an Enemy, than a Friend, to his People?

But I speak not merely of this. Put the Case, that the true End of Government be constantly in the View of the Governour, and that it is his sincere Intention to consult the Good and Interest of the Governed; what a laborious, what an uninterrupted Course of Cares and Anxieties? what a Burthen of never-ceasing Thought, (the Labour of the Mind,)

doth
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doth this imply in it? To guard against the evil Designs of Flatterers, and artful Courtiers; against those who press for high Stations, in order to hinder the good Influences of better Men above them; and only to answer their own private Ends; to combat the Enmity and Opposition of those who dislike every thing that is truly good, and never put more Impediments in the Way of Governors, than when they are truly in the Interest of the People under them: To see with the Eyes of Others, and yet to see Things in their true Colours; to hear with the Ears of Others, and yet not to be deceived; to penetrate into the dark Recesses of the Breast of Others; to be Proof against Vain, and Empty, and Extravagant Complements, and to be armed against rough and unmannerly Contradiction: To know what is the true Interest of a People, in every considerable Branch; to have Courage enough to profess this to be their own; to have Conduct enough to prosecute it in the wisest Methods; and Hardiness to adhere to it, against all the deluding Offers, and all the boldest Threats, to the contrary: To do Justice impartially, and yet to exercise Mercy in due Time and Place: What shall I say? To act the Part of a God in the World, by Beneficence and Goodness; to protect the Injured, to defend the Oppressed,
This is the Part of Governours, the Part of all who are possed of Civil Power, in their several Places and Stations. And is not this a Burthen that requires God's Assistance; a Burthen for more than human Abilities? But how excellent in its Use, and how beneficial, when this Burthen is borne, and this Office executed, by Such as are not taken with the external Title and Appearance, but regard the internal Parts of it, and its true Design! how doth the benign Influence descend from the Head down to the lowest Parts of the Body? Mutual Love, Rest, Quiet, Security, in all their Concerns; These and many more Goods, are owing to the Fountain above, from whence they flow in mighty and useful Streams. On the contrary, when all this internal Part of Government is disregarded, and only the external Grandeur aimed at, and carried to an Excess of Height by a Governour, how doth the Malignity of this spread itself over a Country? Uneasiness, and Misery, and every evil Work, is the Effect: and Nothing good to be depended upon; but every thing that is valuable or delightful, to be sacrific'd to Humour and Passion!

Let
Let us therefore, Secondly, learn from hence how much it concerns us, and our Governours, that we heartily and fervently put up our Prayers to God, for Them; that this laborious and invidious Task may be made light and easy, through the kind Dispositions of his Providence, to all such as truly design his Glory, and the Good of those over whom they are placed. For indeed, his fatherly Eye, and friendly Concurrence, seem more necessary in This, than in any other secular Work whatsoever: as it is evident that in This, the Happiness, or Misery, of whole Nations, and of the Children yet unborn, are highly concerned.

And hence We shall be naturally led to see, what the Matter, and chief Subject, of our Prayers, should be. For Instance, that, through the kind Dispositions of Providence, it may not be in the Power of evil-minded Men to disturb the Reign, or obstruct the Management, of such Rulers as are indeed a Terror to evil Works, and a Praise to them that do well; that they may have Eyes perpetually open to see, and Ears perpetually disposed to hear, what is for the common and universal Interest; that they may have Hearts armed against every thing that can hinder the Prosecution of it, and Courage and Conduct to make Government as useful as God Almighty designed.
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designed it should be: That every thing may be
proposed and passed into Laws, that may esta-
lish Peace and Righteousness upon a lasting
Foundation; and build up such a Structure
of Public Virtue and Happiness, as no Time
may be able to demolish, nor any Attempts to
ruine.

To these Subjects of our Prayers, the Im-
portance, the Burthen, the Nature, and the
End of their Office direct us.

For their temporal Prosperity and Success
we must frame our serious Wishes, and adapt
our Prayers, so as to make them agreeable, in
all Respects, to the Will of God: and this can
be only done effectually, by praying to God
that They may be successful in all such Designs
and Endeavours as are approved of by him; as
are just, honourable, reasonable, fitting, and
becoming: all beyond this being little less than
Blasphemy. To pray to God that any Persons
may have Success in Works which He hates
and abhors; in the Works of that evil Spirit
which is always represented as the greatest En-
emy to his Will; is to affront and anger Him.
The Gospel of Christ knows no such Duty as
this. Tho' the Duty of Prayer for Governours
be laid down in general Terms; yet common
Sense, and the Commands of God, in other
Cases, must regulate and bring this into due
Form.
Form. Suppose all the Mariners and Passengers, in a Ship, were commanded to pray for their Pilot, and for his Success, in general Terms; could any one argue from hence, that they are obliged to pray for Success to him, even when he is endeavouring to split the Ship upon a Rock, to dash it into a thousand Pieces, and destroy the Life of every one in it: and could not every one understand such a general Expression to imply in it only an Obligation to such Prayer as is suitable to the Nature and End of his Office, the preserving the Ship, and bringing it safe into Port.

So, in the Case of Thanksgiving, if that were likewise enjoined; could any Man be so absurd as to say, that those Passengers, who saw this Danger evidently, and the evil Design of this Pilot, were yet obliged to bless God for such a Pilot, who was just going, evidently, to dash them against a Rock, and to destroy both their Goods and their Lives?

Besides, if the Christian Religion can be supposed to enjoin either Prayer, or Thanksgiving, in so unlimited a Manner; then must it be supposed, that the Christians of several Countries must be obliged in Duty to pray to God for the most contradictory things in Nature: one Part, that he will please to prosper Tyranny and Oppression; another Part, that he will be pleased to
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SERM. to give Success to Justice; and prosper the best of Administrations; which it is highly absurd to fix upon the Christian Institution. Can those Subjects of any Monarch, in Countries abroad, for instance, who groan under his Oppression and his exorbitant Demands, for the sake of what they themselves may think unjust Attempts of Force and War upon Others; can such Christian Subjects, I say, be obliged by the Gospel to pray for his outward Prosperity in all his Undertakings? This cannot be the Duty of such unhappy Subjects. We of this Nation, indeed, feel the Sweets of good Government, and know what it is to be engaged in a righteous Cause; and therefore, are obliged to pray for Success to our Sovereign, whom we willingly obey, and of whose Administration we are so gratefully sensible, and of whose Justice in the Cause She publickly maintains in Europe; we are so perfectly satisfied. This is the Difference between Us and Others. And, as it is impossible that Contradictions should be true; it is impossible that the Duty of Christians, in several Places, should be so absolutely contradictory to itself. No, our Prayers and Thanksgivings must be agreeable to God's Will. We must not pray to him to prosper Wickedness, even in high Places: nor must we thank him, as for temporal Blessings, for the Victories of Tyranny. For
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For this is to thank Him, for what is, in truth, one of the greatest Curses that even his Almighty Power can send down upon any Nation. A Curse, which some Nations Abroad may either labour against, or thank God for, according as their Hearts and Dispositions have been preserved in their natural State; or by continual Oppression, and the Custom of Injury and Infult, are become callous and totally insensible. For our Parts, we know no such Sentiment; and therefore cannot, without Blasphemy, think that the Success of Power, sporting itself in the Miseries of Those around it, can be any Subject for Thanksgiving to the great Governour of the World; who wishes Happiness to all Civil Societies, and expects from their Rulers, a constant Attention to that Happiness, for which they were set over their People.

The Third Particular proposed was this, Supposing that the Subject of our Prayers be granted, or that it pleases God to give us that uncommon Blessing of good and just Government over us; what our Behaviour, under a Sense of this, ought to be; and what Use we ought to make of so great an Happiness. These are particularly pointed out to us in the last Words of the Text, That we may lead a quiet and peaceable Life, in all Godliness and Honesty.

First,
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First. This is the very End proposed by the Apostle, in these Intercessions which he recommends for Kings, and all others in Authority; that, hearing Ourselves thus their sincere Friends and Well-wishers, we may, under them, enjoy an undisturbed Repose, and a State of Quiet, which we could not so well hope for, if we did not give them this Testimony of our Affection and Good-will. This is as great an Happiness, as the Condition of Men in this World allows to any Society; to enjoy, under the Protection of Power, lodged in good Hands, and exercis'd in the Manner and to the End for which alone it was appointed, the Comforts, and Conveniences of Life, as well as Necessaries; to reap the Fruits of their own Labours, and possess their own Acquisitions and Inheritances, without the continual Dread of Violence, and Arbitrary Rage, tearing them away and consuming them all. An Happiness, which we of this Part of the World, at this Time, may be said peculiarly to enjoy, whilst we may view, at a great Distance, the Storms and Tempests which beat upon others; and the Exercise of all Power by military Force, to the utter Ruine of the Quiet and Repose of their Lives, and of the peaceful Injoyment of what they have at least as strict a Right to enjoy securely, as their Governors have to rule over them. And hence in-
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deed, will appear our peculiar great Concern in these Expressions. For if we are so peculiarly happy, as that our Governours watch over us, and rule us by Laws made and known by Ourselves; and make our peaceable Possession of what is our own, as secure as this World admits of; we must be void of all Sense, and abandoned of all Understanding, to be Ourselves the Troublers of our own calm and smooth Waters; and, by unreasonable and undeserved Noise and Disquiet, to break in upon such a happy Scene of public Serenity, as can alone give a Relish to all the Goods of the Earth; and alone secure the Happiness of Ourselves, and Families, and Posterity, in it. But,

Secondly, There is something farther added by the Apostle, in his Description of the Conduct of Christians, under the Sense of the great Blessing of a good and beneficent Government. They must not only lead quiet and peaceable Lives, but must lead their Lives in all Godliness, and Honesty. Religion and Piety towards God, and Honesty, or, (as the Word signifies) all that is decent and becoming towards Men; These are recommended, as our own Duty; and, in the next Verses, hinted at, as the most proper and efficacious Means to reconcile all around us, not only to us Ourselves, but to God himself, who wills, and desires most affec-
fectionately, that all Men should be saved, as well as Ourselves, by coming to the Knowledge of his Truth.

But tho' this was said, when the Christians were in the midst of Heathens, and Unbelievers; yet the Injunction, and the Reason of it, still subsists in great Force. For Christian Governors want and claim our Prayers as well as Heathen ones: and Christians, as well now as at first, may find the good Effect of such a Behaviour, towards their Christian Governors; that it may even now tend to their own Peace and Quiet, in all their Enjoyments, as it did under others: and always have the same indispensable Duty, of leading a quiet and peaceable Life, in all Godliness, and all Decency, or in all and every Practice that is truly lovely, and truly becoming them in the relation they stand in, to all around them, in the Civil Society of which they are Members. This is so evident, in every Page of the Gospel, that it needs not one Word here to prove it; nor does the Time now allow me to go on upon this Head.

I will therefore, only add a word or two, upon a pleasing Subject, which offers itself unavoidably to our Thoughts, in applying what has been said, to the present Occasion of our meeting together. I believe you will be beforehand
hand with me in calling to mind, that the Pro-
sperity, and outward Success, of the Queen,
whom we obey, is our own Prosperity and Suc-
cess; that when we pray for Her, we pray for
Ourselves: That when we give Thanks for
Her, we give Thanks for our own envied HAPP-
iness, in having One still at the Helm, who
has, for many Years, so wisely steered between
all the dangerous Rocks, that many Others
have formerly split upon. And indeed, if we
look around us, the State of all other Nations
will engage us to acknowledge thankfully our
own Happiness; whilst we enjoy by written
Laws, what is truly valuable in this Life, as se-
cure as Human Affairs can be, from the Incon-
veniences most to be feared in a Civil Society;
and whilst the Supreme Executive Power is
lodged in such Hands, as have made us, for a
Succession of several Years, feel the kindly Influ-
ences of good Government.

I need say no more. Our own daily and
hourly Experience say enough to move us to
pray for the Increase of Prosperity to such a
Government, and the long Continuance of
such a State; and especially at a Time when the
Blessings of Peace and Plenty at Home, seem
to be vying with the Glory of our Arms A-
BROAD: Moderation and Piety presiding here;
Courage and Conduct exerting themselves A-
BROAD:
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SERM. broad: and contending with each Other, in their Efforts, to establish our Happiness at present, and to transmit it down secure to the latest Posterity. May we all, therefore, in Gratitude for such Mercies, join our Hearts and Voices to praise the Great Disposer of all Things for them; and to entreat the Preservation of them! And may we all resolve, in thankful Return to our Governors, and to God himself, to lead quiet and peaceable Lives, in all Godliness and Honesty.

Which God grant, &c.
SERMON XX.

Preached at the Church of St. Peter's Poor, on May 29, 1709.

Psal. cxvii. former Part of ver. 1.

The Lord reigneth; let the Earth rejoice.

The Sentence I have now read to You, carries along with it a most useful Lesson; full of as much Satisfaction and Comfort, as reasonable Creatures could desire, in such Circumstances as Men are in, whilst they are upon this Earth. And what it sets forth to us is plainly this, that God, who first created all Things, doth also order the Course of this World, as we now see it; and still continues to exercise a paternal Providence over it; and to direct and govern the several Parts and Inhabitants of it: and that we have the greatest Reason to rejoice that it is so. The Lord reigneth, let the Earth rejoice.

In speaking farther to these Words I propose,
First, To shew what is implied in the Affirmation, The Lord reigneth; and at the same Time, the Truth of it; and,

Secondly, to give some Reasons why the Inhabitants of the Earth, should rejoice because the Lord reigneth.

First, I propose to shew what is implied in this Affirmation, The Lord reigneth: and at the same Time, the Truth of it. And,

1. The general Meaning of it is certainly this; That a wise and powerful God presides over the whole World; that nothing comes to pass without his Will, his Decree, or his Permission; unless he sees fit to order it, or to suffer it to come to pass: That he holds the Sceptre of the Universe; and, comprehending all Things by an infinite Knowledge, and being able to order all Things by an omnipotent Will, he doth whatsoever pleases him both in Heaven and Earth: That, as nothing was made without Him, so nothing, from the first Moment of the Creation, hath happened in all the vast Extent of the World, amongst all the Multitude of Beings in it, which he did not think fit either to bring to pass himself, or to let other Beings brings to pass.

But, 2. In order to be more particular, Let us consider his Government, as it respects the
the material and irrational Part of the Creation; and his Government, as it respects the intelligent and rational Part of it.

As to his Government with respect to the material and irrational Part of his Creation; let us observe, that it was He, who, after he had created every Thing, placed and fixed it in its proper Place; and all in that peculiar and admirable Order, in which we now find the Universe with Wonder and Astonishment. And this was one Act of Government and Empire in Him, to give Laws to all the Matter that he had put into several Forms, and allot to every Portion of it, and to every Machine, its proper Province and proper Office; within what Bounds it should abide; how far its Influence should reach; what sort of Motion it should have; with what Quickness, and with what Determination, and to what End and Purpose it should move. Thus, having collected an unconceivable Number of Particles of Light and Heat, and fixed them in one vast Body, he may be said to have impressed on it a Law, tho' it was incapable of Knowledge and Perception; and commanded it to bear such a Relation to a certain Part of the World about it, as that the Inhabitants of it might receive Light, and Heat, and the Comforts of both, from it. And from this Time the Sun is said figuratively to have known its
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SERM. its Rising, and its Going down; and has dispensed its Heat and Light in one regular and continued Course: illuminating and invigorating those Bodies that perform their several Motions round it; in a stupendous and never failing Order. Particularly, the Place and Station of this vast Body is so ordered by this wise God, with respect to this Earth we live on, that it is the immediate Cause of the greatest Benefits in Nature. If the Seasons succeed one another in a constant and never-interrupted Course; Autumn and Winter, Spring and Summer; if, by this means, the Earth is prepared to afford us its Riches, and doth accordingly bring forth its Increase, and all its Fruits, in due Season; if the Vapours are carried up on High, and then let fall in kindly and benign Showers to refresh the Earth, and so circulate in a very beneficial and wonderful Manner; if Corn, and all the Fruits of the Earth, have in them what is proper to nourish, strengthen, and refresh the Bodies of Animals, to gratify their Appetites, to continue and add an Agreeableness to their Lives: and if these Fruits, all in their proper Season, may be so cultivated, as to offer Themselves, in a regular yearly Course, to the Necessities and Conveniencies, of Man: If the Air be such as he can live and breathe in, adapted to his Lungs, and the Frame of his Body,
Body; all this is owing to the Government of Almighty God; his original and first Decree by which He confined all Things to the Places they are now in, and fixed them in their present Relations and Proportions to one another; and particularly, to his planting the Sun, that immense Collection of Light and Heat, exactly where it might be most subservient to the Wants of that Part of his Creation to which He first ordained it to belong. All is owing to his Wisdom, who at first said, *Let there be Light, Let the Earth bring forth her Increase*; and who by his first Commands constituted the Nature, the Properties, the Place, and the distinct Office, of every Work of his Hands. These, and the like numberless Appearances, regular and orderly, are great and manifest Instances of the Providence, or Government, of God; and therefore may be said to be implied in that Expression, *The Lord reigneth*; and are not only so many wonderful and agreeable Appearances, but, undeniable Demonstrations, that a most knowing, and powerful, and merciful Being presides, and has always presided and ruled, in the Universe.

But then, we must observe farther, that this God not only first constituted all Things, what they are in their Nature, and allotted them their several Places, and assigned them their
their several Offices; but that He has reserved, in his own Hands, the Reins, to moderate and manage them as he sees fit: That He is not so tied up to the ordinary Methods and Causes which he has established, but that He sometimes interposes, and interrupts them, upon great and remarkable Occasions; and shews that He can make the ordinary Course of Things yield to his great Designs. Particularly, when He has a Religion to propagate in the World; a chosen People to deliver; a Nation to destroy; a false Religion to shame and confound; He reigns over Nature: and, as He is the God of it, He seems to go out of the ordinary Course He himself once settled, to make the World of rational Creatures attend, and to raise their Thoughts towards Him, their Father and King. And this also may be supposed to be implied in the Government of God, as it respects the material and irrational Part of the World.

Let us now consider it, as it respects the rational and understanding Part of the Creation. And here it is plain, That, when he first endowed any Beings with Understanding, and a Faculty of Knowledge superior to other Animals; and gave them, by this Means, a Power of answering the higher Ends of his creating such Beings; of adorning the Station in which
He should place them; and of imitating Him, whose Existence and Providence They could not but plainly discover: That, I say, this very adorning Them with these Powers, and noble Qualifications, was one Instance of his Government; and so was the placing them, Every One, in his proper Sphere of Action. And because all his Creatures, of the most excellent Sort, are of finite Understandings, and of limited Powers; and particularly, because many of these intelligent Beings, not only Men, but, as it is represented to us in the Holy Scriptures, Angels, or Beings of an higher Rank, have left their proper Stations; and, instead of carrying forward the Beauty of the Whole, and making themselves subservient to the Designs of God, seem to have made it their Business to resist those Designs; to interpose in the Midst of his Government; to scatter Wickedness wherever they can; and by that to bring Disorder, and Mischief, and Confusion, into the World, by all the Arts and Methods they are Masters of; and even insolently to oppose his Purposes, as far as They can: Therefore, it is a most agreeable Observation, That Almighty God can never be supposed to leave the World to the Management of these Beings of an inferior Rank; but to interpose himself, either immediately, or by the faithful Ministers of his
his Will and Pleasure, to shew that Power belongs unto him; and that, though He has given some Measure of Understanding to inferior Beings, yet he has not given them the Government of the World; nor put into their Hands the Disposal of the Fortunes of any of their Fellow-creatures.

He may permit wicked Spirits, and wicked Men, to plot, and contrive, and lay down their Schemes to Themselves, by which they hope to do Mischief in the World: He may permit them to go on in those wicked Thoughts, which their own evil and corrupted Natures suggest to them. But, whether they shall accomplish them, and bring them to Effect; whether they shall succeed, or be disappointed; is reserved to Him, and remains in his Breast only. He often laughs at their wretched Contrivances, and has them in Derision, and overthrows their whole Projects; and with one Nod, controls their Malice, and checks their Designs. He often infatuates their Counsels; breaths Folly and Inconsistency upon their Debates, and apparent Imprudence into all their Measures. And then, They work themselves into Ruine, and take the most effectual Course to bring on the Destruction of their own main Purposes. He often permits their abominable Designs to come to the End which They themselves wish and
and propose. But then, this is for some wise and good Purpose, He has in his own Eye; for the Punishment of other wicked Persons, or for the Reformation of a wicked People; or for the more conspicuous and terrible Downfall of these very wicked Beings.

He often, by secret and unknown Ways; by a false Friend, or a cunning Enemy; by their own Jealousies, Quarrels, and mutual Animosities; or some more miraculous Method; discovers and prevents their Mischief. And then, they Themselves fall into the Pit which they themselves digged for others: And the Mischief they meant for others, falls upon their own Heads. He often permits them to take every Step they please, and every Chain of their Design to be successful; that, when they come to the End of it, they may see that He governs and overrules even their Wickedness: and be surpris'd at last to find the Consequence of their Designs so different from what they intended it should be; and such Effects to proceed from their Contrivances, as these Contrivances themselves were thought the only Ways to prevent.

To prove what I have been saying, I will just mention some very remarkable Instances of the Superintendency of God, in the Spiritual and Temporal Concerns of his rational Creatures here
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here below. As to the first fort; Could any thing, for instance, be more maliciously contrived by the worst of Beings, than the ignominious Death and Crucifixion of Christ, which was his Plot, when he is said to have entered into the Heart of Judas? And yet, could any thing be more agreeable to the End of Christ's coming into the World, or the Design of Almighty God, in sending Him? and therefore, more contrary to the Mind of that accursed Spirit in bringing it about? Could any thing be thought of, more adapted to the Designs of the unbelieving Jews, than, after Jesus was dead, to set a Guard at his Sepulchre, left his Disciples should steal him, and say he was risen, and his Religion should be propagated by this Means? And yet; how were his Enemies over-reached by Providence in this? This very Circumstance helps to prove that his Disciples did not steal him away; and therefore, that he truly arose from the Dead; and therefore, that his Religion is true: and so they assisted in the propagating his Religion, whilst they meant to extinguish his very Name and Memory.

And, in temporal Matters, Could any thing be more artfully contrived to serve the Jealousy and Hatred of Joseph's Brethren, than the selling him into Egypt: and yet, what admirable
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Miracleful Purposes were served by it? Joseph's raised to Honour; a Nation and Family saved from Famine; the Foundation laid for the visible Displaying of God's Glory, in all his wonderful Dispensations towards the People of the Jews; in his bringing them out of Slavery, and separating them from all the World about them.

But I need not go far for more Examples of this Truth, in the Concerns of this World. This Day furnishes us with one as surprizing and as remarkable as any to be met with in Civil History. Who that lived in the late unhappy Times of Confusion, that accompanied and followed the Civil War; Who that saw that State of Things, and how many Barriers there were set against the Restoration of the ancient Form; and how deeply Multitudes were engaged in private Interest, and in private Revenge, to resist every thing tending that way; — Who that knew these Things, I say, could have thought of that which afterwards happened? And yet, notwithstanding all the Contrivances of the most politick, and all the Care of the wisest Heads, by a wonderful Providence, the ancient Form of Government, and that very Form which we now so much glory in, was restored with the greatest Quiet imaginable, to the great Surprize both of Those
I have now done with the first Head. And I hope, it has sufficiently appeared, from what I have said under it, what is implied in the Affirmation, *The Lord reigneth*; and, at the same Time, how strong the Argument is, that the settled Order, and regular Disposition, of all the Parts of the World about us; the Excellencies of his Rational Creatures, and the Great Events, with regard to Them; plainly declare the Care and Government of a most perfect Being over us; and that, where there are all the Marks and Characters of Wisdom, and Power, and Goodness, there Wisdom, Power, and Goodness, ought to be acknowledged. And indeed, if we pursue the Subject a little farther, what can be more reasonable than to argue, That, as God first created us, and brought us into being, and placed us in this State; so, He did by that contract the Relation of a Father to us, and with it all the Obligation of Care, and Provision, and tender Regard, that result from thence — That He, who thus brought Creatures into Being, to make them happy, still wishes their Happiness; That He, who is perfect in Knowledge, cannot help knowing their Necessities; that He, who is perfect
perfect in Goodness, is most ready to supply them; and that He, who is perfect in Power, is able to do whatever he pleases for them: and that therefore, He will not forsake or reject them, till they have rejected Him: --- Especially, since there is a wicked Part of his Creatures designing Misery and Ruine to the other, who are not always able to provide against it? For surely, we cannot be mistaken in this, which appears so evident, that a perfect Being cannot make Worlds of Creatures to sport with their Misfortunes; or to leave them to the Mercy of any inferior wicked Beings: and that God, who makes no Creatures out of the Reach of his own Knowledge, or Power, must be supposed to govern what He creates. For, that He is concerned for them, is plain from his bringing them into Being: and, if He be concerned for their Happiness, it is absurd to say that He doth not exercise a paternal Providence over them.

II. But I must now proceed to the other main Point, which I proposed, plainly implied in the Text, viz. That we have all the reason in the World to rejoice, and to be perfectly satisfied, under the Consideration of such a Providence ruling over this World, or under the Thought,
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Thought, that the Lord reigneth. The Lord reigneth, let the Earth rejoice. And,

First, How happy is it for us, that this World, and every Thing in it, was constituted and ordered, and is still governed, by God, i. e. by perfect Wisdom, Goodness, and Power? How can we imagine the Nature of Things, the Stations in which they are settled, the Courses of the celestial Bodies, the Succession of the Seasons, the Fruits of the Earth, the Qualities of them, the Bodies of Animals, better contrived and ordered, with respect to Ourselves, and the Sphere we are to act in, and the Ends of our Life here? What Failures, and Errors, and Irregularities, might we justly imagine and expect; nay, What mischievous and pernicious Blunders, did any Being of less than perfect Wisdom, and Power, and Goodness, preside over this World, and administer the Government of it? Here, indeed, appears the perfect Satisfaction we ought to have in the Thought of such a supreme Governour; when we know and consider, that, as Nothing is out of the Reach of infinite Knowledge, so Nothing can happen, in all the vast Universe of Beings, but what such a Being is aware of: That, as no Instance of Benignity, and the tenderest Love, is too low for infinite Goodness; so such a Being must ever be disposed to all Acts of Beneficence
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Ficence and Kindness to his Creatures: and that, as nothing is too difficult for infinite Power, so such a Being must be able to do for his Offspring whatever his Goodness represents them to stand in Need of, and his Wisdom knows fitting to be done, and becoming his Perfections, and their Situation: That Nothing doth or can happen to them, amidst all the Changes and Chances they are subject to, but what a most wise Being judges proper, either to order, or permit, to come upon them; as Nothing can be designed against them, but what He has Power to prevent, if He pleases; and as this Power is accompanied with perfect Goodness, and the tenderest Regard to his Creatures. But, what I am now saying, will further appear, by considering,

Secondly, What a great Unhappiness it would be to us, were we left to our own Management, and the Reins of Government put into our own Hands. Many are apt to think that, if they had the Disposal of Themselves, of their own Fortunes, and of all that belongs to them, they should entirely consult their Happiness, and secure their good Estate for ever: but very unjustly and unreasonably, as they would find to their cost, if God should be so unmerciful to them, as to take them at their Word, and put them from under his own Jurisdiction,
and make them to be the Framers of their own Fortunes. Such finite and imperfect Creatures as we are, see but a little Way. We can sometimes perhaps discern one Side of Things, and sometimes may guess right at the Consequences of them. But all our Knowledge that Way is but Guess at best; and is confined within a Compass that takes not in half the Circumstances of Things, that ought to be considered, before we should determine our Wishes and Prayers. And we are not only imperfect, and of a short and finite View; but we are passionate, educated with Prejudices, corrupted by evil Habits; often strongly inclined to Considerations on one Side, and averse to any (tho' never so plain, and never so material) on the other. And what excellent Governours we should be of our Selves, and of our own Fortunes, is plain. And again, what strange Confusion and Disorder must follow, were every other Man his own Master, as we desire to be in our own Case; and as He has the same Right to wish to be in His: whilst our several Designs, and Lufts, and Passions, must perpetually be clashing, and always annoying, disturbing, and confounding one another? Happy therefore, is it for us, that we have it not in our Power, so often as we please, to ruine Ourselves, and disorder the World about us! And very happy is.
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it for us, that perfect Wisdom, Goodness, and Power, preside over us, to deny us what is not fit for us; to afford us what is proper for us; and to deliver us from the Effects of our own Follies and Passions!

And then, Thirdly, as it is an Happiness to be out of our own Jurisdiction, and exempt from our own Management; so ought it likewise to be a great Satisfaction to us, that we are not left to the Will and Government of other Beings, of an inferior Rank; to the Mercy of that Part of the intelligent Creation, that have thrown off the Laws of God, and are always designing Mischief to their Fellow-creatures; and, as far as they can, helping forward the Ruine of all the World about them: whilst the Innocent are at rest, without Suspicion and without Fear. How much Misery, and Disorder, and Confusion would They bring about, were there only the good Part of the World to oppose their Designs, to detect their Contrivances, and resist their Power? How much Ruine would they joyfully be the Authors of, did not the Lord reign, and protect his Servants from their Rage? And how often would they procure, and bring about, the Desolation of Nations, and Societies, and Families, did not an All-seeing Eye interpose to disclose their Arts; and an
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SERM. an Almighty Arm, to resist and controll their Power?

How great Reason therefore, has every Man, and every Nation, and Society, to rejoice that the Providence of God leaves them not to the Contrivances of ill-disposed and malevolent Beings; and on this Account to rejoice that the Lord reigneth, that He has reserved the Government of them, and the Disposal of their Fortune and Estate, in his own Hands so, as to controll the Malice, and deliver them from the Power, of their Enemies; and to hinder all wicked Beings from triumphing in the Ruine of the Souls and Bodies of their Fellow-creatures?

Thus have I finished what I designed at this Time. First, I have shewn, what we may suppose to be implied in these Words, The Lord reigneth: And observed what was sufficient to prove the Truth of this Proposition. And Secondly, I have shewn the great Reason we have to rejoice, and be entirely satisfied, that the Lord reigneth. And now, let us reap some Benefit from what has been said, and not let so noble and useful a Subject pass by us, without those Advantages it so plainly brings along with it.

If the Lord be truly the Disposer and Governor of this World of Creatures which he at first created;
created; if He presides over it with a watchful and careful Eye; let the Consideration of this fill us with Peace and Quiet within, and entire Resignation to his Will and Pleasure. To whom can we submit, and in whose Disposals can we acquiesce, if not in the Disposals of perfect Wisdom and Goodness? If the Lord reigns, and Nothing can happen to us but by his Decree or Permission; let us rest satisfied, that all the united Force of evil Spirits and wicked Men shall not be able to hurt us, unless He thinks fit, it should be so. And be our Circumstances what they will, and our Case in appearance never so desperate, let the Thought of such a Governour, and such a King of Heaven and Earth, comfort and compose our Hearts; the Thought that He that administers our Affairs is knowing, and wise, and good, to an infinite Degree; is most ready and willing to do us Good, and is powerful enough to free us from all Evil, if it be best for us. If God be for us; if his Eye be over us every where; it imports little, Who is against us. And as He will always be for them that truly fear him; then, the Sun shall not smite them by Day, neither the Moon by Night, for he is the God and Governour of Nature; They shall not be afraid for the Arrow that flieth by Day, nor for the Pestilence.
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Pestilence that walketh in Darkness, nor for the Destruction that wasteth at Noon-day: for all the Instruments of Death are in his Hand, and under his Direction. The Lord shall preserve them from all Evil, he shall preserve their Souls.

These are some of the Psalmist's pious Thoughts upon this Subject; and some of the general Assurances the Holy Scriptures give to good Men.

And now, to apply what has been said more particularly; Let publick Societies rejoice, in a peculiar Manner, that the Lord reigneth; that, amidst all the Dangers that threaten them, they are the Care of an almighty and wise Providence; that, whilst contending Parties within them are pursuing their own particular Interests, and tearing in pieces the very Bands of all Happiness; and whilst powerful Enemies, without them, are threatening and contriving their Destruction; that, in such Circumstances, in which the Wisdom and Power of Men often fail, an infallible Pilot sits at the Helm; an all-seeing and gracious Eye watches and observes every thing that can happen; and an almighty and tender Hand directs and determines every Event, as it is best and fittest it should be, all things considered.

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But I should be unjust to the joyful Occasion of this Day, and to the Reason of my appearing here at this Time, if I should not take more particular Notice of the great Reason we of this Nation have to rejoice, on every Return of this Day, that the Lord reigneth. For we are now met together to commemorate before God, one of the most surprizing Dispersions of his Providence towards us; the Restoration of the Royal Family, and with it the Restoration of our ancient Form of Government that had long been banished from Us,—That Excellent Form of Government, so happily tempered between the Extremes of Lawless Power, and Lawless Confusion, as if it had been the Effect of a Consultation between the greatest Politicians, and the wisest Heads in the World;—That envied Constitution, in which the Commands of the Prince, and the Obedience of the Subjects, are equally regulated by Laws, and Both secured from all those Unhappinesses that attend some Sorts of Government, as long as the one is so wise as to enjoin nothing but what the Laws enjoin; and the other so honest as to make a Conscience of obeying the Dictates of those Laws—And, what is more to Us, That Constitution which we yet, by the wonderful Goodness of God, enjoy, and upon which We are every Day con- gratulating
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E R M. gratulating our own Happiness. Such was the Blessing of this Day, in its Design, and natural Consequence: and such the Reason We have to rejoice that the Lord reigneth.

What use was made of it, and what were the immediate Returns to Heaven for it, I do not willingly say, but would gladly draw a Veil over them, if they could be hid. But it is too plain that they were agreeable to our usual Gratitude to Heaven; and too evident to be dissembled, that a mighty Torrent of Vice came with Violence into the Land, with these mighty Blessings; that Men shewed their Thankfulness to God, not by the Integrity and Sobriety of their Lives, but by the highest Flights and Transports of Debauchery; that they shewed their Zeal against that Hypocrisy which, they complained, had defiled the Land, by open Profaneness; and their Loyalty to the King, by forgetting the God, by whom Kings reign; and that many of them took occasion, from the Miseries that had followed the Overthrow of this Government, to use their best Endeavours to transform it into an absolute and arbitrary Tyranny. Indeed, these gross Abuses of so gracious a Providence reflect only a Dishonour upon those, who had so little Ingenuity as to be guilty of them. But they do not at all diminish the Blessing that Heaven design-
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ed for this Nation. We Ourselves feel the benign Influence of it at this very Day, in the quiet Enjoyment of our Lives and Properties, under that Legal Government which it restored; and which We still enjoy, in a manner never perhaps before experienced.

May We all, by Gratitude itself, be induced to live so, as to reflect Honour upon the God who has thus regarded us; and may We, in a Sense of the Happiness we enjoy, all of us, in our several Stations, use our utmost Endeavours to transmit the same Happiness secure to our Posterity; by guarding it against such as think Mankind fit for nothing but the Chains of Slavery; and also by paying a cheerful and conscientious Obedience to the Legislative and Executive Power, now so happily settled, and in so excellent a Manner administered, amongst Us.

Which God grant, &c.
Sermon XXI.

Preached at the Church of St. Peter's Poor, on the publick Fast-day, 1709.


Sirs, ye are Brethren, why do ye Wrong One to Another.

These are the Words of Moses, by which he endeavoured to reconcile two of his Brethren, of the Children of Israel, who were quarrelling and striving with one another. This was not the first Instance he had given them of his Regard to their true and real Interest; and of his Readiness to do his Nation the greatest Service he was capable of doing: for it was but the Day before that he had defended one of his Brethren against the Insults and Violence of a barbarous Egyptian, and delivered him out of his Hands; by
by this means giving them a Prefage of that great Deliverance which God would, e're long, bring about by Him. But Moses, whilst he hoped they would immediately close with this friendly Design, and unanimously accept of his Advice and Proposals, met with the common Fate of almost all who pretend either to be Deliverers of the Oppressed, or Reconcilers of the contending and quarrelling Parts of Mankind. For the Israelites, though they were of the same Nation and Family, linked together by the Ties of the same Religion and Profession, involved in the same common Slavery, Fellow-sufferers in the same Barbarities and Cruelties, and surrounded by the same common Enemies; yet, could not only find Time to abuse, and quarrel with, one another, but affronted and abused their best Friend and Adviser, only because he persuaded them to a mutual Love and Concord; and to avoid those intestine Diffensions and Quarrels which would inevitably weaken their common Interest, and obstruct all Hopes of their future Prosperity. Indeed, we do not read that, after he had completed their Deliverance, and was taken from them, there were any amongst them so insensible of the Benefits he had conferred upon them, as to pursue his Memory with Affronts and Indignities. Such Ingratitude was reserved...
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Sermon ed for later Times. As to Moses; after His xx. Death we hear of Nothing but the Celebration of his Praises, the most grateful Acknowledgments imaginable offered at every Remembrance of Him, and all but Divine Honours paid to his Name. But, as I observed, whilst he lived amongst them, they treated him ungratefully upon every Occasion: And here, at the Beginning of his Regard to them, and whilst he was preparing them, by his good Advice, for Freedom and Happiness, the Person whom he would have persuaded to Justice and Peace, instead of thanking him for his good Offices, endeavoured to touch even his Life,

There is something in this so applicable to Ourselves, that I could not but think it proper and seasonable for us to spend some of our serious Thoughts upon this Expostulation of Moses in the Text. We are divided and torn to pieces, by our mutual Hatreds, and intestine Heats, by our shameful Divisions and unchristian Tempers: Few amongst Us care to hear of Love and Friendship; but will even revile the Man that but speaks to them of Peace: whilst in the mean while all acknowledge that it is the want of this mutual Love, and the Hatred which flourisheth in the room of it, to which we shall owe our common Ru-
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ine, whenever it comes upon us. What can one think, but that there must be a secret Infatuation from above, upon the Minds of Men; a fatal Blindness, to which God has given us over, when we see so much Danger from our own Animosities and Heats, and have not the Heart to consult our own Security; when we read and hear of so many Nations and Commonwealths, destroyed and laid waste by mutual Hatreds and intestine Quarrels, and yet cherish the same Evils amongst Ourselves, which we are sensible have hastened the Ruine of so many Nations before us? In these deplorable Circumstances no good Man, who has the least Concern for the common Welfare, can hinder his Thoughts from running out upon all the possible Methods of putting a Stop to this growing Evil, and preventing the fatal and natural Consequences of it.

In speaking upon this Subject it is not my Design, at present, to observe what Advances might be made towards accommodating our Differences, by Persons in the highest Stations: for I am sensible to how little purpose that might be, at this Time, and in this Place. But I shall endeavour to offer such Observations and Considerations as concern every private Christian, and come within the reach of every Member
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SERM. Member of the Commonwealth, and that in this following Method.

First, I shall shew what is the Duty of every Christian in those Differences, which thus distract Us.

Secondly, What are the great Hindrances to that Brotherly Love, and mutual Friendship and Agreement, which are so very necessary. And,

Thirdly, I shall urge the great and weighty Motives we have, at this Time, to pursue Peace, and Union, amongst Ourselves.

I. Let us examine what is the Duty of every Christian in those Differences which thus distract us. And this I think may be comprehended in two Particulars;

First, It is the Part of every good Man to endeavour, by all the Methods of Christianity, to reconcile the contending Parties in the World; and, in the Spirit of Meekness, to convince the Judgments of those whom he imagines to be in any material Error. No Peace or Union can be so lasting, as that which is the Consequence of Men's being of one Mind, and of one Heart; of the same Opinions, and of the same Sentiments, in Matters of any Concern. There is something in Human Nature which
is delighted with the Agreement of others in our own Notions; and there is something in the weak Part of it, that cannot always bear with a Difference and Diversity of Opinion. This Difference often brings on Disputes and Discourse; and Argument often produces Heat and Violence; and such Flames are seen to break forth, as would not have been, had there been an Agreement. So that it must be owned, it would be an incredible Happiness to Human Society, as it is seen to be in any Family, for Men to be of one Mind, and to have the same Notions and Opinions. Not that I think there is any ground to hope for such an Happiness. In the past Ages, it never has been experienced, or seen; nor can it be much hoped for, or expected, by wise Men, in the later Ages of the World. I am sure, the Passions of Men are at too great an Heighth, to give us any Foundation for thinking of any such Happiness in our Days. But still, it may be right for us to labour, and do our Part towards it, tho' we reap not all the Success, and see not all the good Effects of it, we could wish: The little we can do, every one of us in our own Sphere, may serve to compose the troubled Waters about us; and may prove, in time, a Foundation for a more general and universal Agreement. And therefore,
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Serm. fore, it is not the Improbability of effecting this that ought to affrighten us from attempting to bring all to the Acknowledgment of the same Truths which we acknowledge and embrace; provided always that in doing this, and in the Methods we pursue in order to do it, we break in upon no moral Duty, and no Command of our holy Religion. If we do, we shall be sure to cast more Scandal upon it, and do more Mischief by our Practice, than any such Agreement, even in true Opinions, can do good; nay, we shall rather be sure never to effect this Agreement, to any good Purpose, But,

Secondly, It is the Part of every good Man, amidst, and after, all his Endeavours to reconcile the Opinions of Men to one another, in what He thinks right, to love and bear with his Brethren, tho' they be not moved by his Arguments; tho' they cannot be persuaded, by what He perhaps may judge to be the plainest and most convincing Reasons, to alter their Minds; nay, tho' they return him Reproaches and Abuses for his good Design towards them. For, until that happy Day comes that Men be all of one Mind, (which whether it will ever come, or no, God alone knows,) this is the only way to procure or preserve Peace and Quietness in the World; and, indeed,
indeed, seems to be a more glorious Instance of Good-nature and Religion, than any that can be practised without such a Difference in Opinion. For to love Those who agree with us in every thing; to embrace Those whose Opinions fall in with ours in every thing, is no considerable Reach in Religion; nor any mighty Proof of a Person's Candour or Humility. But to love, and bear with, and make Allowances for, Those who differ from us, and whose Notions are at a wide distance from ours; to be ready to condescend to These, and to do them all Good Offices, this is truly great and glorious. There is some Temptation to the contrary, something in the Pride and Passion of Human Nature contradictory to this, which makes it much more honourable, and a much higher Instance of Goodness.

And it is worthy of our most serious Notice, that it is a Temper of Mind that resembles Almighty God, and is an Imitation of that divine Copy; and therefore must be most acceptable to Him. How wide are most of our Notions from his, and at what a distance, too often, do our Opinions of Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, stand from his; and how opposite are our Practices to his Will? And yet, He hath loved us, and borne with us, and made Allowances for our Weaknesses and Infirmities: and
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...and still invites us to all the Happiness we are capable of, notwithstanding this. And is it not fit that we should shew Ourselves as placable, as willing to make Allowances, as loving, as condescending and good to Those who differ from us, as the great God of Heaven and Earth has shewn himself to us? If you love those who agree with you in all things, and whose Opinions are the same with your own; what praise have ye? Do not even the Publicans and Sinners do the same? But if ye love, and bear with, Those who differ from you, and who contradict and oppose you in their Notions; then it is, that your Love and Good-nature exceeds the Good-nature and Love of Men of other Professions; then it is, that you come up to the Perfection of Christian Love; and then it is, that you may expect a great Reward; because then it is that you are the Children of your Father which is in Heaven, who hath dealt with you exactly as he would have you deal with one another.

Nay, and besides the Obligation to this mutual Love and Forbearance, amidst our Differences, arising from the Glory of the Practice, and the Example of God, one may say that nothing in the World could so effectually, in the End, put an end to these Differences themselves, as the Practice of this Love. For it is apparent
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apparent that nothing puts so great a stop to Agreement in Sentiments, as the Provocations given and received; the Passions, and the Pride of Men, with regard to their several Opinions. And therefore, tho' we differ mightily at present, yet, could Men but be persuaded to the Exercise of this mutual Candour and Forbearance; were there Conscience made of doing all good Offices to all Sorts; this Good-nature would have, without Doubt, a very visible Effect; and the Tempers of Men would become disposed to think and wish for such an Agreement, as Passion, and a lofty Behaviour makes them now averse to; and mutual Forbearance would very much dispose things towards that universal Agreement in Matters of Concern, which is so agreeable to Human Nature, and so conducive to the Peace of Human Society: there being nothing that hinders such an Agreement, so much as Personal Prejudices; and nothing that removes Personal Prejudices so much as the constant Practice of this Love and Good-nature.

Thus much, about the Duty of every Christian, in the midst of those Differences that distract us. And the two Instances I have mentioned, are such as lye within the Reach of every private Person, and what All Men may practise.
II. I come now to consider, as I proposed,

in the Second place, what are the great Hindrances to that mutual Love and Good-nature, which cannot but be acknowledged to be so highly useful and necessary. And of these I shall speak but very briefly, because few can bear to hear of them: and I had rather suppose all Men heartily disposed to Union, than that any Persons concerned are guilty of what must hinder it. But I think it plain, that the greatest Hindrances to it, are, the Spirit of Pride, and Inflexibility in our own Thoughts, and our own Ways; and of personal Hatred and Prejudice towards Others, in their Differences, from Us: and in some, the View to Ambition or private Interest. And these, indeed, with the artful Management of our common Adversaries, and the Weakness of some honest Men, are the great Hindrances and Bars to that Happiness which only can be effected by mutual Love, and Benevolence.

The Spirit of Pride leads Men to think that they are always in the right; and that it is more becoming, and reasonable that the whole World should conform to their Notions and Opinions, than that they should descend to the least Compliance with the World about them. And so long as this Temper flourishes, it is an Absurdity.
Absurdity to think of Peace or Union. The Spirit of personal Hatred, or Party Prejudice, disposes Men to think, that Nothing can be right or well meant, that is proposed by some Persons; and that Nothing can be too hard a Burthen to lay upon those of whom they have conceived a hard Opinion; and that Nothing ought to soften them into the leaft Condescension to them. The Spirit of Worldly-mindedness, and Self-interest, makes Men averse to all such Agreement and Union, unless it can be shewn, that it is for their own particular immediate Advantage; and, left it should prove, at last, a Bar in their Way, and an Obstacle to their worldly Projects and Designs; by lessening, or ruining, their Interest, Power, and Influence, in the World. And if you join to these the artful Management of common Adversaries, you will, perhaps, have as good an account as can be given, why any Nations or Societies have been ruined by Discord; and why that Unity, which is so necessary to the Preservation of the Whole, has been often prevented and hindered by any particular Members of the Whole. As for Ourselves; you know that our Adversaries, the common Adversaries of our Religion and Liberties, want not for Cunning and Worldly Wisdom. They never drop, even for a Moment, the View of their Cause; and are constantly applying...
ing themselves to the different Humours, and
the Force of their Minds, to improve the Pride
of Some, the evil Temper of Others, the
Worldly-mindedness of Others, to their own
Purposes. They encrease the Evil, and add
Fuel to the Fire, which they hope will at last
consume us; and, while good and sincere Men
are not aware of it, the Enemy comes, and
sows the Tares of Discord and Diffension, in
such Ground as is supposed to be proper for
them.

I come now, in the Third Place, to urge the
great and weighty Motives we have to pursue
this universal Love and Concord. And,

First, We are of the same Nation, and live
under the same Government; and, consequent-
ly, have the same Civil Rights and Privileges:
a Consideration, which has always been account-
ed a very strict Bond of Union amongst Men.
And these Civil Rights, and Privileges, are such
as few Nations enjoy; a Happiness, which pro-
ceeds from a Government so excellently tem-
pered between Arbitrary Power, and Confusi-
on, and Disorder. And then, We are of the
same Religion, as to the main and fundamental
Parts of it; and the Professiion of This, in Peace
and Quietness, is deeply concerned in the Ar-
gument.
And this Religion, such as few, even of the Christian Nations in the World, enjoy; Reformed from the grossest Abuses and Misrepresentations of superstitious Men; and rendered plain and useful, subservient to the Purposes of a good Life, and spiritual Worship; for which it was at first designed by its great Founder. It is the Enjoyment of those Civil Rights, and the free Exercise of this holy and pure Religion, that so happily distinguish us from many other Parts of the Christian World. So that from hence it appears, that we have the same common Advantages and Interest to enjoy, if we be so happy as to preserve ourselves in our present State; and, on the contrary, the same irreparable Loss to sustain in these two invaluable Goods, if we go on to carry forward the Work of our Enemies, by our Discord and Divisions at Home. And what can link us together in the Bands of Love, and in the amicable Prosecution of the same Designs, if a Sense of our Happiness, both as we are of this Nation, and of this Religion, will not? If such Civil Rights and Privileges, such a free Enjoyment of what is our own, such a Liberty in the Worship of God, and the Exercise of our Religion, be not valuable and dear to us, what is it that we can value? To be governed by Laws, and not by a single Will, and an arbitrary Power;
Power; to be secure in the Possession of our Properties; to be happy in the Freedom of our Bodies and Estates; and, above all, to be happy in the Freedom of our Services, and to be secure in the Performance of our Duties to God, and to one another: These are Advantages above any Price; such as we should envy in any other Nation; the great- est Blessings this World can know; and such as we should never enough admire, were it not that they are grown old, and that we have been too much used to them: So ungrateful are we, that what should recommend them to us, really helps to sink their Price in our Opinions, and to make us loath and undervalue them. But if the Enjoyment of these common Blessings cannot move us to that Love and Concord which are necessary to preserve them, let us, in the

Second Place, be allarmed a little, by considering, that We have the same deplorable Calamities to expect, unless we jointly endeavour to prevent them, by an universal and sincere Unity. For as, on the one hand, the common Happineses we now enjoy are very great: so, on the other hand, the Loses, we shall in common sustain, of our Civil Liberties, and the Exercise of our Religion, must be very great, and irreparable; if our Animosities and Hatreds
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still go on to make a way for those Adversaries, who watch for nothing so much as the Opportunity of entering through our Breaches. And not only this have we to fear; but, what is still worse, the positive Evils of That miserable State of things, directly opposite to the Present, which must succeed.

The Enemy that threatens us, cannot be supposed to prevail over us, but that his Maxims of Government must prevail also. And as this is a most deplorable, and almost insupportable, Civil Calamity; so what we are to expect, as we are Protestants, is more so: for the other might be supportable, were it qualified and lessened by the free Liberty of our holy Religion. But what Miseries are we not to expect when this Liberty is denied us, and we are called upon to profess a Religion which we cannot in Conscience approve of? And yet there is no Hope of its being otherwise, if the common Enemy prevails. For it has appeared, beyond all Contradiction, that no Oaths or Obligations have ever kept Those of that Religion, whenever they have Power, from extirpating and putting an end to the Protestant Name. And indeed, I see not how any of Them could answer it to their Religion, and to their Church, if they did not. For, whatever some of that Religion would fain persuade the Poor and Ignorant
SERM. Ignorant amongst us to believe, in order to xxi. seduce them from it, or make them more favorable to it; it is notorious, from all their public Declarations, their greatest Writers, and their constant Practice, that they are obliged, (by their Principles,) to put an End to the Protestant Name, and destroy it from under Heaven, if they can. How great then are the common Calamities we are to expect, if we join our own Quarrels with our Adversaries Designs against us, when it is impossible to suppose that they are at all deviated from their former Practices or Principles; impossible to think that the Reformation is not still as much hated as ever amongst them; and that still they account it lawful and commendable to exercise the utmost Barbarities towards All, who will not publickly profess and exercise their superstitious and unchristian Religion. Certainly, such Motives as these are of Weight enough to move even the hardest Heart, that has any Sense in it of our present Happiness; or any Belief of the Religion professed amongst us.

Last of all, as for our own Sakes, so for God's Sake, and for the Sake of that Name by which we are called, let us lay to Heart our Divisions and mutual Animosities; and let us all do our Endeavour to put some Stop to them, and to introduce
introduce Love and Concord in their Place: SERM. that our holy Religion be not blasphemed thro’ us; and that our Lord may be glorified in the universal Practice of that Love, which He came down from Heaven to plant in the World.

Which God grant, &c.
SERMON XXII.

Preached at St. Peter's Poor, on the publick Fast-day, 1711-12.

DEUTERON. xxxii. 29.

O that They were wise, that They understood this, that They would consider their latter End!

S E R M. X X I I .

The Words, I have now read to you, are the pathetical and moving Wish of God himself, about the People of Israel. O that They were wise, that They understood this, that They would consider their latter End! Some Interpreters, indeed, understand them to refer to the Enemies of Israel, who were spoken of, in the Verse before. But it seems to me much more probable, that these, and the following Words also, belong to the Children of Israel; and express, (agreeably to the
the main Design of this whole Song, of which they are a Part,) the great Desire that Almighty God had, to make them an happy and glorious Nation; and likewise, what it was that He expected from Them themselves, in order to this. That they refer to the Interest of a whole Nation, is certain: and therefore, tho' the Death of particular Persons may be called their latter End, and often expressed, in the common way of Speaking, by that Phrase; and, tho' this Text may be applied to That, considered by itself, and separated from the rest of this Chapter: yet, it is plain that it has no Relation, as it stands here, to the Death of particular Persons, but refers wholly to the latter End of Nations, or the final Ruine of whole Societies. Almighty God therefore doth, in this Verse (after the most pathetical Manner, amongst Men, of expressing the Desires of their Hearts) wish that the People of Israel were wise, i.e. That they had such a Wisdom, as would direct and move them to Every thing proper and necessary, in order to their own Preservation and Happiness. He wishes that they understood this; which seems to mean the Method in which he deals with Nations; and, in other Words, that they would consider their latter End, or, how certain their End will be, if They will not behave themselves as
the great Governour of the World expects; and that they would so consider this, as to be moved, by this consideration, to the performance of all those conditions which are necessary, on their own part, to the preventing their ruine, and establishing their prosperity. And then it follows, (verse 30.) how should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their rock had sold them, and the Lord had shut them up; — i. e. What a glorious current of success should they have, in all their lawful enterprizes against their enemies, unless God should put a stop to it himself; and fell them into their enemies hands, and into a base captivity, for the sake of their foolish and wicked behaviour, and their ungrateful returns for all those extraordinary favours bestowed upon them by Him, and by his peculiar providence?

These words, thus explained, you see, direct every man, who is a member of any nation, or society, to consider himself as such: not always to regard only his own private and personal concerns; but often to have in his thoughts the relation he bears to others around him, and what is required of him, as he is a part of that whole, in the welfare of which, He himself, and all his own posterity, and that of all around Him, are nearly concerned.
This, I say, it becomes us all frequently to consider, and especially upon such Occasions, as that which has now called us together. And to this End, the Words before us are very proper, as they naturally lead us to the following Observations:

I. That God doth truly desire the Prosperity and Happiness of Nations and Societies of Men.

II. That his Desire of their Prosperity doth not induce Him to make them happy, without their own joint Assistance; but that He expects their own Wisdom, and their best Endeavours, to concur with Him. And,

III. That the Consideration of that latter End, and Dissolution, which Nations must expect, if they go on to displease God; and of those Rules by which he acts, in his Dealings with Societies, ought to be of great Force to engage Us to consult our own Security and Prosperity, in those Methods which He has laid before Us; particularly, by forsaking those Vices, which otherwise must be our Ruine.

I. Let us observe, for our own great Satisfaction, that Almighty God is truly concerned for the Welfare of all public Societies and Nations. Far be it from us to suppose, that He ever
ever wholly confined his Love and tender Regard, or pathetic Wishes of Happiness, to the Jewish Nation; tho' he selected them out of the whole Earth, as his own People, for the good Purposes of his Providence. His remarkable Punishment of the Jewish Nation, when their Behaviour called for it; and, at last, ruining their whole Polity, and the Fabric of their Commonwealth; and his waiting upon other Nations, to see whether they would repent or not; and his deferring their Destruction 'till they were past all Hopes: These Particulars, recorded of old, of His Methods of dealing with Nations, may assure us, that He has the same tender Desire of the Welfare of All Nations, which He had for That of the Jews; and that He is as truly concerned for the Happiness of other Nations, as ever he was for Those whom He called His own People. He is the Creator of all Men, and the great Governour of all Nations. All have a Title to his Providence, and fatherly Care; and All must be dear in his Eyes, 'till they have made themselves otherwise. It appears from the Sacred History, That, if Abraham and his Family had been as impious, and as corrupted, as the other Families and Nations of the Earth, God would not have chosen Him, and his Posterity, out of all the World,
as his peculiar People. And that, by this Choice, he did not mean to signify his exempting that People from the general Rule of his Favour and Displeasure, towards all Nations, is most evident from his totally forsaking Them, and destroying even their Appearance, as a Nation, for the very same Reasons, for which He had heretofore cast out and destroyed other Nations, for their Sake: viz. because their Iniquities were full.

This, therefore, must be a mighty Satisfaction, that, whereas the Lords and Tyrants of this Earth often take a Delight in overturning, and confounding Families, and States, and Kingdoms, when their Projects require it, there sits a God on high, able and wise, to overrule their Power and Cunning; who delights not in Destruction and Desolation; whose Almighty Power is chiefly displayed in shewing Mercy; and whose Delight it is to do Good to the Children of Men. And, well might the Psalmist, upon Consideration of this, cry out, Why boastest thou thyself thou Tyrant, that thou canst do Mischief? whereas the Goodness of God endureth yet daily; i.e. How can you, the Tyrants of this World, pride yourselves in that Misery and Ruine which you can scatter around you; when you have the Example of God before your Eyes, who is infinitely exalted above you,
you, and cloathed with infinite Degrees of Power more than you are acquainted with:

And yet, his Goodness endureth daily; and yet He delights, not in destroying but, in saving; not in striking Terror upon the Nations of the Earth, but in showering down his Blessings upon them? Did the proud, and ambitious, and insatiable Lords of this Earth but consider this; what a stop must it put to all the Madnesses of their Power, here below? How few Scenes of Blood and Desolation? how few Countries depopulated and laid waste? how few Barbarities exercised? how few Families banished and extirpated? how few Towns laid in Ashes? and how few Instances of any thing like Violence, or Brutality, should we see or hear of?

But, because this lovely Pattern of the most high God, and supreme Governour of the World, is not regarded; but Ambition, and an unbounded Love of all the Tokens of Power, reign in the Hearts of many of the Rulers here below; therefore it is, that we have heard and seen so frequently the Characters of Inhumanity in the World, and Rivers of Blood shed, and Thousands of Lives sacrificed, to the Will and Humour of one Man; therefore it is, that we see Engines of Destruction invented and improved; all the Arts of Diffimulation to inveigle and cheat, and of Ruine and Violence
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 Silence to destroy, more studied, and in more Repute, than the Arts of Peace, and the whole Band of Social Virtues. But these Methods are not learnt from that great Governour of Heaven and Earth, who ought to be the great Pattern of the Mighty. For He is never represented to us to be more delighted, than when the Rules of his Government permit him to shower down his Blessings; and never more grieved, or acting with more Reluctance, than when He is constrained, as it were, by the same just Rules of Government, to pour his Wrath upon any People, or Nation. But,

II. We may and ought to observe, that Almighty God doth not so wish and desire the Prosperity of Nations, but that there are Conditions to be performed on their Part, without which he will not save them from Destruction. For Instance, It is absolutely necessary that they call up all their own Prudence, and enter into the best Counsels they can procure; that they take all Opportunities, and make use of all the most probable Methods, of preventing their own Destruction, by applying Wisdom against Wisdom, Force against Force, and using the honest Arts of this World, under the Conduct and Blessing of God. They must not forget to implore the favourable Eye and kind
kind Providence of that God, who sits over all; and can dispose the Fate of Kingdoms and Nations; and they must, at the same time, make use of the Assurances, He has put into their Hands, by his good Providence; remembering that He will not alone work Miracles for them, whilst They stand still and will do nothing for themselves. To this Purpose I cannot forbear to call to mind that, in that Storm, in which St. Paul was shipwrecked (Acts xxvii.) tho' an Angel of God had assured him that there should be no Loss of any Man's Life amongst them; yet, when the Ship-men were going to flee out of the Ship, Paul said to the Centurion, except these abide on the Ship, ye cannot be saved. So sensible was He, that when God promises to save any Persons, either their Lives or Estates, He never means to exclude their own Endeavours; but always requires the same Efforts and Behaviour from Them; as if they were to be saved wholly by their own Power and Wisdom.

And as one Part of that Wisdom which God requires of a Nation, in order to their Happiness, is to use all their own Endeavours against the Designs of their Common Enemy; all that Strength of Mind, and Force of Arms, with which They are blessed; so, another Part of it is, to be united amongst themselves; to bury all int
testine Quarrels and Animosities in their one common Interest; and not to allow themselves in the least Thought of incensing, or vexing, or oppressing one another, whilst their All lies at stake, and they are engaged in the Defense of their one whole common Interest. For this mutual Ill-will doth naturally tend to their own Ruine and Destruction. Their Enemies so well know this, that they never fail to endeavour to bring it about, where it is not; and to make a sad use of it where it is, by improving it to their own Purposes. Nor will God resist, and hinder, the natural Tendency of what is founded upon the Folly and Imprudence of Those who might know better. When a Nation is collected within itself; and has a Centre, in which the Parts of it all meet; and one common Purpose in view, on which its Happiness entirely depends; and no little Interests and divided Plots moving in it; how formidable is that Nation, and how difficult to be overpowered and undone by any Enemies? They therefore, who first begin to scatter Jealousies and Uneasinesses in it; to disunite any Parts of it from the others, let it be under what Pretence it will, are the first who lessen, weaken, and dissolve its Strength; the first who give Life and Encouragement to its Enemies: little considering into what Mischiefs such
such Beginnings have been improved, thro the
xxii. Cunning of Adversaries, on one side, and the
Weaknesses and Passions of human Nature, on
the other.

There are some Nations so blessed by Pro-
vidence, and enjoying such Advantages from
Nature, always to be improved by Art, that
a close Union amongst themselves would be
the greatest and most probable of all earthly Se-
curities to them; and such a Fence of Safety, as
would be strong enough against the Force of All
the Powers of this World united against them.
And perhaps, this may be one Reason why
we often see such a Nation the farthest of all
others, from desiring, or contriving, or effect-
ing, that lasting and good Union within them-
selves, which would make their Natural
Defense so secure and unmoveable. They are
certain, indeed, of being taught, by frequent
Experience, that God will not keep off the
Danger and Fear of their Ruine, without it;
but it is often seen, that they will not let that
Experience itself have that Effect upon them
which it ought to have.

I cannot here pass over in Silence the Sense
of Abraham in this Matter; a Person, who had
a greater Title to Prosperity and Happiness,
without his own Wisdom, than any Nation
upon Earth can pretend to. God had promised
him,
him, to give him a most desireable Land; and to make of him a glorious People: yet, he knew perfectly well, that intestine Quarrels and Dissensions amongst Him, and his Relations and Friends, would be of fatal Consequence to him, and ruine all his future Hopes. The sacred Historian leaves it upon Record, as a Matter of some Moment, (Gen. xiii. 5. &c.) that the Substance of Abraham and Lot was great, So that they could not dwell together; and the Consequence of this was, that there was a Strife between the Herdsment of Abraham’s Cattle, and the Herdsmen of Lot’s Cattle; and, the same Historian remarks, that the Canaanite and Perizzite dwelt in the Land, i. e. Abraham and Lot dwelt amongst Nations, which were Enemies to them both; and therefore, ready enough to make use of all Opportunities, and take all Advantages, in order to ruine and extirpate them. And we find Abraham, so sensible of the ill Consequence of this Quarrel, if he should insist upon what he in Justice might have demanded, that he yields up all his own Concerns to the Concerns of Peace, and to the common Interest: Let there be no Strife, says he, betwixt Me and Thee, and betwixt my Herdsmen and thy Herds- men; for we be Brethren. Is not the whole Land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me. If thou wilt take the Left Hand, I will go to the Right;
Right; or, if thou depart to the Right, I will go to the Left: What greater Instance of Goodness, and Condescension, and Regard to the common Concern of both, could we possibly imagine? But how different is this, from the Violence of Thole, who give themselves up to the Study of a particular Interest; and make the present exalting of that, the main Bent of their Thoughts and Labours, to such a Degree, that, even when the Whole is in Danger, They are seen rather to give the common Enemy an Advantage, than let go an Opportunity of revenging Themselves upon Others, or raising their own Power and Interest above theirs? But in this Temper there can be little, or indeed nothing, of that Public-spiritedness, which is so necessary to the Happiness of a Nation; and which must be guided by these Principles, That whatever is for the Interest and Security of the Whole, ought most readily to be followed and practised, by all the Members of the Whole; and still more, that whatever is contrary to that, ought, for that very Reason, to be, upon the first Thought, rejected and condemned, tho' it tend to what we otherwise most earnestly wish; on some private and particular Account: And farther, that Nothing indeed can be for the Interest of a Part, in the End, which is not for the Interest of the Whole, in the Fate of which that Part must be
be involved. This is what we may fairly gather to have been the Wisdom of Abraham in such a Conjunction; and this (we may fairly conclude, from the natural Tendency of mutual Jealousies and intestine Differences) is the most interesting Point, which a Nation ought to regard, when its All is at Stake; and such an Instance of Wisdom as Almighty God expects, from all Societies, upon the same Occasions.

III. I come now to the Third Observation proposed from the Text, viz. that the Consideration of their latter End, ought to be of great Force to move all Nations to prevent their own Misery and Dissolution, by such Methods, as their great Governor has, either by Reason or Revelation, laid before Them: and particularly, by utterly forsaking those Vices, which otherwise must be their Ruine.

I shall not here repeat, what I have often, upon like Occasions, observed to you, concerning the Dealings of God with wicked, incorrigible Nations, recorded in the Old Testament. But I shall add that, even under the Gospel, we have had a fresh Declaration of this, in the Lecture our blessed Lord read to the Jews, (Luke xiii.) upon the Subject of certain severe and extraordinary Providences that had happened to some particular Persons of that Nation.

Suppose ye, says he, (ver. 2.) that those Galileans.
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Serm. whose Blood Pilate mingled with their Sacrifices, were Sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay; but, Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish: Or, those Eighteen upon whom the Tower in Siloe fell, and slew them, Think ye that they were Sinners above all Men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay; but, Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish: For these Words are a Declaration of the temporal Destruction of a whole People, and not an Account of God's Dealing with private Persons; and they were designed to signify, that, as these Persons mentioned were slain by a sad and uncommon Calamity, so, that the whole Nation of the Jews should be brought to Desolation, by a more terrible Calamity, unless they prevented it, by a timely and sincere Repentance, and Acceptance of his Offers: As if He had said to them—"This is the Lesson I would have you learn from these Events, that You yourselves, as a Nation, shall so perish, in an uncommon Manner, by the just Judgment of God: and not, that such calamitous Events, which God, in the Course of his Providence, does not think fit to prevent, are designed, as Subjects for your censorious Tempers; or as Arguments, that Those particular Persons on whom He suffered them to fall, were greater Sinners than Those on whom they did not fall." And
And now, it cannot be at all improper to ob-
serve that, even without the extraordinary De-
clarations of God himself, against sinful Nations,
in the Holy Scriptures; That, I say, the Con-
sideration of the Natural Consequences of Things,
will itself convince us, that there is not a
more certain Sign of any one thing in Nature,
than the universal Virtue, or abandoned Wick-
edness, of a Nation is, of their flourishing Con-
dition, or of their Tendency to Ruine. If Be-
neciscence, and Charity, and all the Parts of
true Religion, abound, and are universally prac-
tised and encouraged in a Land, Happy will it be
for the People that are in such a Case, even in the
ordinary Course of this World, constituted and
appointed by God himself. But if Iniquity run
down amongst them with a mighty Stream;
and all Degrees of Vice abound and flourish in
a Nation, what will their latter End be? It must
fare with them, as it has fared, not only with
the Jews, but with other Nations, whether
Greeks, Romans, or Barbarians; who have been
seen to lose the Glory acquired by them in
their former State of rigid Virtue; and to waste
away by Degrees; in exact Proportion to their
Improvements in Vice and Luxury: and, at last
to be totally lost and ruined, by the genuine
Operation of their own Corruptions. Thus must
They, who imitate them in their Degeneracy,
imitate.
imitate them in their inglorious and deplorable End also; and inherit the Destruction which is the natural Consequence of such universal Dissoluteness of Manners.

I have thus gone over the three Observations, I proposed from the Text; and should now proceed to apply what has been said to Ourselves and our own Circumstances. But I have left myself not much Time to do it; and, I hope, not much Occasion to spend many Words upon it. As Almighty God has a very great Concern for the Happiness and Welfare of Nations and Societies of Men: so, He has, in a particular Manner, shewn himself concerned for us, if we may judge by those frequent Instances of his Mercy which He has poured down upon us; and by the long Trial He has vouchsafed to give us, whether we will turn unto Him or not; by those Evils He has from time to time sent amongst us; by those Fears and Dangers He has sometimes brought upon us, to awaken us; and those wonderful and surprizing Deliverances He has vouchsafed us, above all our Hopes and Expectations. He waits upon us, even yet; and still tries us with repeated Instances of his Love and Kindness. How long He will do so, He only knows. Would to God, I could say that we had made Him any Returns agreeable to so much Love and Long-suffering; or that we seem yet...
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To be disposed for Happines. We are now in some Danger again, as We are engaged in the Defense of Ourselves, as well as our Neighbours, against a very powerful and cunning Enemy. This is our common Cause, and the common Interest of every Member of this Nation.

Whether there be any amongst us who wish well to this formidable Enemy, is not our present Enquiry. But that which looks very ill, amongst all our Preparations against him, is this, That we do not hate this public Enemy more than we hate one another; that we are not more glad of an Opportunity of bringing him low, than we are of depressing one another; that we are not more filled with a just Resentment and Indignation against Him, than we are with mutual Resentment and Indignation against one another at Home; that we can find time, when all our Thoughts ought to be wholly taken up against the common Adversary, to invent, and attempt, and prosecute, what may irritate one another; and disturb Our own Quiet at Home; and by this contribute ourselves to the Strength and Advantage, of our Enemies Abroad.

If any please themselves with the Thought, that our Enemies are as wicked, and as bad as Ourselves, it must still be owned, that They are much more diligent in the using all Means.
that have a natural Tendency to effect their Purposes; and have a closer and more constant Union within themselves, than we can pretend to: and that it is certain also, that God often makes use of one very wicked Nation, to ruine and destroy another: Especially, when this other has had more of his Favours; enjoyed more Light; and sinned against greater Conviction, and greater Mercies. I do not presage Evil to us. But we must not flatter ourselves, and be too secure. Thankfulness for former Mercies; Repentance for that Ingratitude, that has been shewn in Return for them; Reformation of our Lives; a public and uniform Encouragement and Regard to Virtue; and as public and constant a Discouragement of Vice and Immorality; Love to one another, and universal Charity; and a prudent Use of all the Means put into our hands by Providence:—These are the things which will not only prevent the Ruine, which all the Efforts of our most powerful Enemies can threaten Us with; but fix our Happiness secure, upon as strong a Foundation, as the State of this World can admit of. O that we were wise, that we understood this, that we would consider our latter End!

FINIS.