


quaintance with the several Religions, which the Children of Men have taken up, and followed. If we look upon all the Sects of the Gentile Religion, we shall not find in them any the least footsteps of man's Salvation by Christ, and faith in him. They have set up *Idolatrous* Worship, and served gods of their own making, bowed down to stocks and stones : among Twenty Thousand gods, have mist of the *true One*; have betook themselves to moral *Vertues*, as the way to felicity ; and though they had *sacrifices*, yet they neither used them as *typical shadows of Christ*, nor did they offer them to GOD, but to *Devils*. If we look upon the *Mahometan* ; though  do in word acknowledge God and Christ, yet they neither acknowledge Christ as a *Redeemer*, nor do they prescribe *faith* in him as necessary, nor yet do they acknowledge his *Laws* ; but set up *their own* in Opposition to his. If we consider the *Anti-Christian* ; whatever pretence they make, yet they have *subverted* this Rule, in the foundations of it ; inasmuch as they have joyned *other Mediators* unto Christ ; have *enervated* faith in his *Righteousness* for Justification & Salvation ; and brought back a *Covenant of Works* ; have set up their own *Canons*, not only in equality with, but in *Opposition* to his Commands ; and because they loved not the Truth, have been left to *believe Lies*.

4. HENCE the *closer* such men follow *these Religions*, the further they are from *Happiness* ; because they thereby keep at the greater distance from the *only Rule* of Salvation. They mistake, that think *conscientious* following an erroneous Rule, is a *Salve* for the Errors of it. Ignorance is a damning evil ; and Ignorance in the Understanding will beget *Error* in the *Conscience*, and there is no reason why God should not punish Sin in the *Conscience*, as well as Sin in the *Will*.

IT therefore tells us, that it is a matter of great, yea infinite Concernment to us, that we labour to be *rightly acquainted* with the Rule we are to follow in our pursuit of happiness ; and therefore that we do not take it upon Credit ; but make *diligent inquiry* to know, what is the good & perfect and acceptable Will of God, left otherwise we take a great deal of pains to *no purpose*, and following a *false guide*, do in the end miss of, and finally fall altogether short of our desired Salvation.

[APRIL 24. 1688.]

SERMON V.

Prop. III. **T**HAT the WORD of GOD is this *only Rule*. If Man cannot be happy, without a Rule that can direct him to it, it must needs be his great concernment to know it, and not be mistaken. Now when the Word of God is said to be the Rule, it is a *metonymical* Expression, and intends that it is therein *contained* & no where else. Here therefore, two things are to be considered.

- (1.) What we understand by the Word of God?
- (2.) How it appears to be the only Rule ?

Q. 1. *WHAT* are we to understand by the Word of God ?

A. THIS Expression is *variously* used in Scripture : Especially,

1. For *the Son of God*, who is the *Eternal Word*, (*Joh. 1. 1, 14.*) So called, because by him God hath been pleased to make himself known to his People. Ver. 18. *No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*

2. FOR *the Eternal Decree* or Ordinance, in which God laid out and determined the works of Efficiency. So *Psal. 148. 8.*

3. FOR God's powerful *Administration* of the Works of Creation & Providence. There is a *Creating Word* (*Psal. 33. 6.*) and there is a *Preserving Word*, (*Mat. 4. 4. Heb. 1. 3.*) But neither of these is here applicable.

4. FOR *the Revelation or Discovery of his approving Will*. The proper use of *Speech* or *Words* among men, is to communicate their minds & thoughts one to another : and hence 'tis metaphorically applied to God, in respect of those *manifestations*, which he makes to the Children of men, of himself ; and is more especially restrained to those discoveries, wherein he lets them know what is their *Duty*, and wherein they may be capable of pleasing him. And this is the most frequent use of the Word in Scripture. In what way soever God sees meet to make known his mind to us, in that way he may be said to *speak* to us ; which the Apostle tells us hath been in *divers manners*. *Heb. 1. 1.*

Q. 2. *HOW* does it appear to be the only Rule ?

A. WE may here (to expedite this matter) call to mind, that there have been *two Covenants*, in which God hath traded with men about their happiness, *viz.* that of *Works*, and that of *Grace*. As to the *former*, or that of works, there needs no applying of this Consideration to it, because man is no longer to expect felicity by it. If fallen man could have attained his end according to the tenour of that, the second had been *superfluous*. *Gal. 3. 21. Is the law then against the promises of God ? God forbid : for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily Righteousness should have been by the law.* That Covenant stands armed with *Curses*, and all that are under it can expect nothing else : Ver. 10. *For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse : for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* And yet if there were need, it might be evidenced that God's Word was Man's only Rule there ; but because *Adam's* apostate Children can expect Life & Salvation only according to the tenour of the *Covenant of Grace*, it will suffice to make it appear, that the Word of God is the only Rule, to direct us to glorify and enjoy him, in the way of *this Covenant*. And this will be manifest by these Propositions.

1. THAT Man by his fall *miss* of the happiness offered in the first Covenant, & brought himself under a condition of *miser*y. Man's happiness consists in the *glorifying* of God, & *enjoying* him : and the fall cut him off from both. From the former, Rom. 3. 23. *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God* : From the latter. Isa. 59 2. *Your iniquities have separated between you and your God*. And hence he fell from Life into a state of Death : for therein did the Curse consist. Gen. 2. 17. *In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*. So that all the Children of men are not only born *capable* of Misery : But they are born *actually* miserable. Hence this *Death* is said to be *past upon all men*, Rom. 5. 12.

2. THAT fallen man is *no longer capable* of being made *happy* by that Covenant. For, though his happiness be still in attaining his end, and his end be still the same that ever it was, yet it is not to be advanced by him *in that way* wherein it was at *first* prescribed : and this, not by reason of any default in the Law or Covenant, (that is holy, & just and good) but by reason of *his own Impotency*. Rom. 7. 13, 14. *Was then that which is good, made death unto me? God forbid. For we know that the law is spiritual : but I am carnal, sold under sin*. And here is a double Impotency express in the two Phrases : — *Carnal*, i. e. *Sinful naturally and habitually* ; and so not able to *keep the Law*, by which God may be glorified, and I perform the Condition of Life : — *Sold under Sin*, i. e. under the *Sentence* of Condemnation ; not able to *make Satisfaction*, and remove the Curse. So that this Covenant speaks nothing but *terror* and *despair* to all those that are held under the Conditions of it.

3. THAT hence, if ever the undone Creature be *restored* to happiness, by attaining his end, there must be *another way* found out for it. If blessedness can be no longer by *the law*, then either man must *never* be blessed ; Or, there must be a *new law* of blessedness provided for him ; Or he must be made blessed *without any*, which cannot be ; for, if he could not be happy when he was *innocent*, but by closing with his Rule, and reaching his End, much less can he be so now he is *miserable*, unless there be a way to rid him of his misery, and bring him back to felicity. If therefore the law of *works* cannot, something *else* must, or otherwise he must needs perish. And if there be another *way*, there must of necessity be another *Rule* ; This being a directory suited to the way, and therefore cannot but vary accordingly. Hence that, Heb. 7. 12. *For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law*.

4. THAT the *Recovery* of fallen man from this Misery, is an act of *God's sovereign Pleasure*. It derives from hence, and hath its dependence here. If, when man had come short of his end, and lost his happiness, he had left him there without hopes forever, he could not have done him any *injury* ; it had been but an

Hell of *his own* procuring. Hence the Original of man's *Recovery* is referred to *God's Will*. Eph. 1. 5. *Having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will*. God had once brought himself under an *Obligation* to give him life in case of *Obedience* ; but he had not obliged himself to deliver him, if he should cast himself away.

5. THAT hence *the Way*, in which this recovery is to be obtained, *depends upon* that Pleasure of His. He that might have chosen, whether *ever* he would have saved us, hath the liberty of prescribing (as he sees meet) *how* he will bring it about, and upon what *Terms* we may expect it. If he do not restore us, none can : and if he do, it is *free Grace*. Who then shall prescribe to him ? Or who shall make his terms for him ? And for this reason it is, that *Salvation* is said to *belong to God*.

6. THAT as God *purposed* from Eternity to bring back a number of fallen Men, so he provided a *new Covenant-way* to accomplish it in. God hath a company of *Elect* or chosen ones among the ruins of the fall, whom he appointed to felicity in the days of Eternity, before the World was, (Eph. 1. 6.) And when he appointed them to the *End*, he also allotted the *Means*, by which they should reach it. Eph. 1. 4. *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love*. The new and living way was then fixed, & preëmporarily resolved upon ; and it was but *one way* that was then determined, unto the which the terms of the new Covenant are in the publication of it restrained. Mark 16. 16. *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believeth not, shall be damned*.

7. THAT *except God had revealed* this Way and Rule, it could *never* have been known in the World. Men nor Angels could not have so much as *published* that good news, that there is *such a thing*, unless he had first declared it : much less could they have given a *draught* of it. Hence it is, that where there is none of this Revelation, a People are in a state of Perdition, Prov. 29. 18. *Where there is no vision, the people perish : but he that keepeth the law, happy is he*. Rom. 10. 14. *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed ? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard ? and how shall they hear without a preacher ? For who should be able to know the mind of God, or enter into the secrets of the decree, till God was pleased to break them open ? Hence when Peter confessed Christ, he tells him, as Matth. 16. 17. *Blessed art thou Simon Barjona : for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my father which is in heaven*.*

8. THAT *in what way soever* God reveals this will of his, that is to be accounted *his Word*. For Gods word is nothing else but his *making his mind known* to his Creature. Now there have been *divers ways*, that God hath taken thus to inform his people of their duty ; sometimes,

times by *Oracles*, giving vocal Commands to them; sometimes by *Urim & Thummim*; partly by *Angels* appearing in humane Shape, & by the *Son of God* before his Incarnation, who often came to his Servants of Old: partly by *Visions* and *Dreams*, appearing to them in sleep, in raptures, and trances: and partly by *Prophets* and extraordinary men sent and spirited by him: and partly by appointing such men to *write down* his Will for the use of his People: of all which ways we have an account given unto us in the holy Scriptures.

9. THAT nothing but what GOD hath thus revealed to his People, doth or can belong to the *Rule*. That there *needs* no more, will be afterwards considered, when we come to observe the Perfection of Scripture: But here we observe, that there *can* be no more. We are therefore *severely forbidden* to add. Prov. 30. 5, 6. *Every word of God is pure. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.* For, if the *Salvation* of fallen man depends merely on the *good pleasure* of God, the *knowledge* of it necessarily depends upon his *revelation*. How else should it possibly come to be known? Hence we have that challenge, Rom. 11. 34. *For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? None was admitted to sit at Council-Table with him, or hear what he purposed in the Days of Eternity, or read those Records of his Decrees. Till he told it, it was a secret.* For any therefore of their own head to make any addition to this Rule, is a bold Intrusion upon the Divine Prerogative; an imposing upon God, which he will never admit of: nor shall they find any other thanks from God, but a severe Demand, *Who required these things at your hands?*

HERE I shall take into Consideration a CASE controverted among many *viz.*

Quest. WHETHER the Light of Nature, which Men bring with them into the world, may not be improved, so as to be a sufficient Rule to guide them to their chief End?

Ans. WE are here to consider Man in his *lapsed Estate*, and the Light of Nature as it is to be found in him in this estate of his: And *thence* taken, the Answer is in the *Negative*. For the full Illustration whereof, let these things be thought upon.

1. THAT the light of Nature at the first only discovered to Man the Rule, by which he was to attain his end, according to a *Covenant of Works*. It was properly adapted to the first covenant, in which man was by his *personal Obedience* to serve to God's glory, and secure his favour. Hence it contained in it only the *moral law*, or the substance of what was contained in the ten Commandments. Rom. 2. 14, 15. *The Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts.* It said, *These things ought to be done, and those to be avoided; & if thou so do, thou shalt be happy.* It was accommodated to the Image of God,

that was imprinted on man, and served to guide him in the right improvement of it. It was the candle of the Lord, set up in him to light him in his way wherein he ought to go.

2. THAT though the light of Nature clearly discovered to man his *Obligation to God*, yet it did not show him *every point of the Rule*, by which God would be served by him. There were some things *positive* required, which were not to be particularly found in it, but were made known to man by Revelation. Man knew, that God was to be obeyed in whatsoever he should enjoyn him, by the light of Nature: but this did not tell him that the Tree of life & knowledge were *sacramental*, and that it was *Death* to eat of the latter. The difference between the trees was arbitrary, and not natural. Possibly that might tell him, a *Sabbath* was due to be kept; but that *one day of seven*, or *this day of seven* was it, he had by revelation: God is therefore said to *sanctify* it.

3. THAT this light in fallen man is woefully *impaired*. Man knock't his head in his fall, and craz'd his understanding, as to divine Truths. It is but a little that he knows of that Rule. Some broken fragments, & moth-eaten registers, old rusty outworn monuments there are; but so imperfect & illegible, that there are but very few of them, that he can spell out what they mean, and in others he is mistaken. For this, we have that good Man's confession, Prov. 30. 2. *Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man.* For this reason, a state of Nature is called a state of *Darkness*, and natural men said to be *brutish*. Hence Divine Revelation is necessary to the right & thorough discerning of what was required in the old Covenant; in which a mistake is a capital crime, Gal. 3. 10,

4. THAT if the light of Nature, were as clear in man now as it was at first, yet his *Inability* to follow it, renders it *unprofitable* to him. The impotency, which is in natural men, to obey the demands of the Law, cuts them off from a capacity of improving the greatest discoveries they can make of it, to their advantage & happiness. For if men know & do not, their *Guilt* is aggravated; but fallen man can not do, not so much as the thing which he knows ought to be done. Whereas happiness is not in bare knowing, but doing. Joh. 13. 17. *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.* So that the utmost that this light doth for the man, is to let him see that he is *undone*; and the more discoveries he makes by it, the more conviction he hath of his great Infelicity.

5. THAT the light of Nature makes no discovery to man of *any other way* to attain his end and be happy, besides what was exhibited in the *Covenant of works*. And here let it be observed, —

1. THAT man by the light of Nature could never have known, that there was *any other possible way* for God to be glorified in man's salvation. Fallen Adam knew himself to be miserable, cursed, under a sentence of Condemnation; that Justice was engaged against him: but

but how Justice could be satisfied, Holiness be maintained, and yet Mercy be magnified, was beyond his reach. How God should punish sin, and yet love the sinner; take vengeance on men's Inventions, and yet extend grace to their Persons, was above the discoveries of Nature, a Riddle beyond all its Rules & Principles to expound. It had its notions about *happiness*, but none about *salvation*. Hence that is asserted concerning all natural men, Rom. 3. 17. *The way of peace have they not known.*

2. THAT *much less* are there any footsteps of the *Way it self*, to be found in the hearts of men: there are no umbrages of any such Discovery to be found there. If we should follow the whole method of it, step by step, and ask nature what it can say to it, it must be altogether silent. I shall instance only in three things that are most comprehensive.

1. IT hath no notices of the *Person of CHRIST*, and the *Redemption* wrought out by him. It might speak something of a *Trinity* of Persons in the God-head once; though, of that there is scarce any thing to be found in the relics of it since the Fall: but that the second Person should be made *Man*, and subject himself to the Law, and make satisfaction for sin, and make way that man might be justified by his imputed Righteousness, and saved by his merits,--here was a deep silence. Some would have *Adam* to be a *Type of Christ*; but if he were, he was an arbitrary, and not a natural one. Others would have us to believe, that *Adam* before his fall knew of the Incarnation of the Son of God: but we have no evidence for this in Scripture; and if he did, it must be by revelation. Others have thought that the *Gentiles Sacrifices* intimate some dark apprehensions of Satisfaction by another; but it is certain, sacrificing was handed down to the World by Tradition from *Noah*, and not by the light of nature; and that the Heathen lookt upon them as satisfactions *ex Opere operato*, and not as shadows of a better Sacrifice. Hence the preaching of a *Christ* is so far from the gust of humane reason, that it hath the reputation of *foolishness* by it. 1 Cor. 1. 23. *But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks, foolishness.*

2. IT gives no direction about *Gospel-Faith*. Faith in *God* is a great Duty of the first Commandment, and was clearly written in the law of nature; and fallen man hath natural Convictions of it as a Duty: But to believe in *Christ*, to rest in *God* for life and salvation upon the score of *Christ's* Righteousness, under a deep sense that we have none of our own, and to depend upon a *promise* in so doing, it is so far from bearing any witness to it, that it looks upon it with greatest contempt: and for this very reason it is, that men who make highest pretences to Reason, speak most contemptuously of it, as is obvious in *Socinians*, *Pelagians*, *Arminians*, and such like men. And hence such endeavours to confound the Doctrines of Justification & Sanctification in one: because nature's Light hath notions of a *Personal* Righteousness, but knows nothing of a *Relative* one.

3. IT is altogether a stranger to *Evangelical Obedience*. If it could afford any thing to man's information, it is here; but it is as much at a loss in this, as any thing. For, tho' it knows something of moral Duty (and that is but a little) yet it gives fallen man no information how to please *God* by his Obedience, and when he hath followed it to the highest, it leaves him unprofitable, (Luk. 17. 10.) and his Duties are but painted Abominations. It may convince man of wasteful flaws in his Obedience, but how to mend them it tells them not. Moral Obedience and Deeds of Sanctification, are vastly different things. Now, it tells not man where he may get a new Principle of spiritual Life, to enable him to live to and please *God*. It sets not open before him the Fountain, in which his Uncleanness may be washed away: where he may be furnished with grace to serve *God*, and live to his glory: nor how his imperfect Duties may find acceptance with an holy *God*, and receive his approbation; or where he may fetch those continual supplies of renewed strength to conquer his Corruptions, to deny Ungodliness, &c.

NOW all these things are *essentials* to that Rule, by which fallen man may be guided to glorify *God*, and enjoy him: and to be mistaken about them, or not to be acquainted with them, will undoubtedly leave him short of happiness. And this shews us their great folly, who will measure Divinity by natural Light, and will admit of nothing in Religion, which will not stoop to the test and trial of human Reason. And it tells us, how deeply we are engaged to *God* for his word of Revelation!

[M A Y 22. 1 6 8 8.]

SERMON VI.

Prop. IV. THAT *this Word, which is the Rule, is contained in the SCRIPTURES of the Old and New Testament.* The holy Scriptures are called a *Rule* *Metonymically*, because they contain in them all that is needful to be known, to guide or direct fallen man to the attainment of his chief end: and they were given by *God* to this very purpose, that they might shew to man his way.

THERE are three things which will be here requisite to be made good, *viz.* (1.) That the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the Word of *God*. (2.) That *God* hath given them to be our only Rule to direct us to our chief end. (3.) That they are a sufficient Rule to this purpose.

Article 1st. THAT *the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the Word of God.* This Conclusion must be cleared up, because we have already heard, that the word of *God* must needs be our Rule: except therefore we are sure that this is his word, we cannot rest upon it, as our Rule, with any safety to our Minds: and tho' one would think it superfluous, to do much here among *Christians*, because they profess their belief in this Article, yet when *Atheism* begins to put