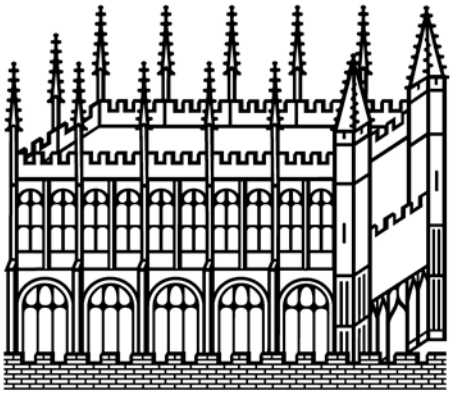

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WRITTEN by a LADY.

Publiſhed by

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MDCCLI.

TO

Mrs. *STEELE.*

MADAM,

IF great Obligations receiv'd are juſt Motives for Addreſſes of this kind, You have an unqueſtionable Pretenſion to my Acknow-

ledgments, who have condeſcended to give me your very ſelf. I can make no Return for ſo ineſtimable a Favour, but in acknowledging the Generoſity of the Giver. To have either Wealth, Wit, or Beauty, is generally a Temptation to a Woman to put an unreaſonable Value upon herſelf; but with all theſe, in a Degree which drew upon you the Addreſſes of Men of the ampleſt Fortunes, you beſtowed your Perſon where you could have no Expectations but from the Gratitude of the Receiver,

ceiver, tho' you knew he could exert that Gratitude in no other Returns but Eſteem and Love. For which muſt I firſt thank you, for what you have denied yourſelf, or for what you have beſtowed on me?

I owe to you, that for my ſake you have overlooked the Proſpect of living in Pomp and Plenty, and I have not been circumſpect enough to preſerve you from Care and Sorrow. I will not dwell upon this Particular; You are ſo good a Wife, that I know you think I rob you of more

than I give, when I ſay any thing in your Favour to my own Diſadvantage.

Whoever ſhould ſee or hear you, would think it were worth leaving all the World for you; while I, habitually poſſeſſed of that Happineſs, have been throwing away impotent Endeavours for the reſt of Mankind, to the Neglect of Her for whom any other Man, in his Senſes, would be apt to ſacrifice every thing elſe.

I know not by what unreaſonable Prepoſſeſſion it is, but, me-

methinks, there muſt be ſomething auſtere to give Authority to Wiſdom, and I cannot account for having only rallied many ſeaſonable Sentiments of yours, but that you are too Beautiful to appear Judicious.

One may grow fond, but not wiſe, from what is ſaid by ſo lovely a Counſellor: Hard Fate, that you have been leſſened by your Perfections, and loſt Power by your Charms!

That ingenuous Spirit in all your Behaviour, that familiar Grace in your Words and Actions,

ons, has for this ſeven Years only inſpired Admiration and Love, but Experience has taught me, the beſt Counſel I ever have received, has been pronounced by the faireſt and ſofteſt Lips, and convinced me that I am in you bleſt with a wiſe Friend, as well as a charming Miſtreſs.

Your Mind ſhall no longer ſuffer by your Perſon, nor ſhall your Eyes for the future dazzle me into a Blindneſs towards your Underſtanding. I rejoice in this publick Occaſion to ſhew my Eſteem for you; and muſt

do

do you the Juſtice to ſay, that there can be no Virtue repreſented in all this Collection for the Female World, which I have not known you exert as far as the Opportunities of your Fortune have given you leave. Forgive me, that my Heart overflows with Love and Gratitude for daily Inſtances of your prudent Oeconomy, the juſt Diſpoſition you make of your little Affairs, your Chearfulneſs in Diſpatch of them, your prudent Forbearance of any Reflexions that they might have

needed

needed leſs Vigilance had you diſpoſed of your Fortune ſuitably; in ſhort, for all the Arguments you every Day give me, of a Generous and Sincere Affection.

It is impoſſible for me to look back on many Evils and Pains which I have ſuffered ſince we came together, without a Pleaſure which is not to be expreſſed, from the Proofs I have had in thoſe circumſtances of your unwearied Goodneſs. How often has your Tenderneſs removed Pain from my ſick Head? How often Anguiſh from my afflicted

flicted Heart? With how skilful Patience have I known you comply with the vain Projects which Pain has ſuggeſted, to have an aking Limb removed by Journeying from one ſide of a Room to another; how often the next Inſtant travelled the ſame Ground again, without telling your Patient it was to no Purpoſe to change his Situation? If there are ſuch Beings as Guardian Angels, thus are they employed; I will no more believe one of them more Good in its Inclinations, than I can conceive

it

it more charming in its Form than my Wife.

But I offend, and forget that what I ſay to you is to appear in Publick: You are ſo great a Lover of Home, that I know it will be irkſome to you to go into the World even in an Applauſe. I will end this, without ſo much as mentioning your Little Flock, or your own amiable Figure at the Head of it: That I think them preferable to all other Children, I know is the Effect of Paſſion and Inſtinct; that I believe You the beſt of

Wives,

DEDICATION.

Wives, I know proceeds from Experience and Reaſon.

I am, MADAM,

Your moſt obliged Husband,

and moſt Obedient,

Humble Servant,

RICHARD STEELE.

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RELIGION.

RELIGION in the general reſpects *God*, as the *Object* and *Centre* of all its Acts and Offices. For upon ſuppoſition, that there is ſuch a Being as *God*, and that there are ſuch Beings as *Reaſonable Creatures*, or capable Subjects of *Religion*, it will neceſſarily follow, that there muſt be ſome Religion or other, to tie and oblige theſe Creatures to that God. For by *God*, we mean a Being that has all *poſſible Perfections* in him, and is the ſupreme *Cauſe* and Fountain of all other Beings and Perfections; and ſuch a Being, we muſt needs acknowledge, does not only deſerve the worthieſt Acts of Religion that *reaſonable Creatures*, who alone are capable of underſtanding his *Worth*, can render to him, but has alſo an unalienable Right to exact and require them; and that not only upon account of his own eſſential *Deſert*, for whatever he deſerves he has a Right to demand, but alſo upon account of the Right he has to reaſonable Creatures,

who owe their Beings to him, and all their Capacities of ſerving him, and ſo cannot diſpoſe of themſelves, without manifeſt Injury to him, *contrary* to his Will and Orders. By *reaſonable Creatures*, we mean Beings that are deriv'd from God, and are *endow'd* by him with a Capacity of underſtanding *him* and *themſelves*; and ſuch Creatures muſt neceſſarily ſtand oblig'd to render him ſuch *Acts* as are ſuitable to, and due Acknowledgments of, the Perfections of his *Nature*, and their own Dependence upon him; and this Obligation is that which we call *Religion*; a Word, which from its Derivation ſignifies a *binding*, or *obliging* us to *God*; wherefore *true Religion in the General, is the Obligation of reaſonable Creatures, to render ſuch Acts of Worſhip to God, as are ſuitable to the Excellency of his Nature, and their Dependence upon him:* Which Definition includes both the *Doctrines* and *Duties* of *Religion*. For the *Doctrines* are the *Reaſons* by which it obliges us to the *Duties*; and as there is no Duty in Religion but what derives its *Tie* and *Obligation* from ſome Doctrine contain'd in it, ſo there is no *Doctrine* in *Religion* but what *ties* and *obliges* us to ſome *Duty* that is enjoin'd by it. When therefore I call Religion an *Obligation*, I include in that Term, all thoſe *Doctrines* of it, concerning *God*, his *Nature*, and his *Tranſactions* with his Creatures, which are the Reaſons by which we ſtand oblig'd to render all Acts of Worſhip to him. But for the better underſtanding the Nature of true Religion, it is neceſſary we ſhould diſtinguiſh it into *Natural* and *Reveal'd*. By *natural* Religion, I mean *the Obligation which natural Reaſon lays upon us, to render to God all that Worſhip and Obedience, which, upon the Conſideration of his Nature, and our Dependence upon him, it diſcovers to be due to him.* For God having planted in us a *rational* Faculty, by the Exerciſe of which, we are naturally led into the Belief of his *Being*, the Senſe of his Perfections, and the Acknowledgment of his *Providence*, he expects we ſhou'd follow it, as the Guide and Director of our Lives and Actions; and whatſoever this Faculty does naturally,

and

and in its due Exerciſe dictate to us, is as much the *Voice of God* as any *Revelation*. For whatever it naturally dictates, it muſt dictate by his Direction, who is the Author of its Nature, and who having fram'd it to ſpeak ſuch a Senſe, and pronounce ſuch a Judgment of Things, has thereby put his Word into its Mouth, and does himſelf ſpeak thro' it, as thro' a ſtanding *Oracle*, which he has erected in our *Breaſts*, to convey and deliver his own Mind and Will to us.

Whatſoever then *natural Reaſon*, rightly exercis'd, teaches us concerning God, and our Duty towards him, is true *Religion*, and does as effectually bind and oblige us to him, as if it had been immediately reveal'd by him. It teaches us, that God is infinitely *Wiſe*, and *Juſt*, and *Powerful* and *Good*; that he is the *Fountain* of our *Beings*, the *Diſpoſer* of our Affairs, and the *Arbitrator* of our State both here and hereafter; and by theſe *Doctrines* it obliges us to *admire* and *adore* him, to *fear* and *love* him, to *truſt* and *obey* him. And this is *natural Religion*, which conſiſts of ſuch Doctrines as *natural Reaſon* teaches us, concerning God, and his Nature, and Providence; and of ſuch Duties, as it infers from thoſe *Doctrines*, and enforces by them. All the Doctrines of this *Religion*, upon which it founds its *Duties*, being *eternal Verities*, as they muſt neceſſarily be, being all deduc'd, from the *immutable* Nature of God and Things, all the Duties of it muſt be *morally*, that is, *eternally* good and reaſonable, becauſe theſe Doctrines are the eternal Reaſons upon which they are founded, and by which they oblige. Whatſoever then is a Duty of *natural* Religion, muſt oblige for ever, becauſe it obliges by an *eternal* Reaſon, and ſo can never be diſpens'd with, or abrogated, till the Natures of Things are cancell'd and revers'd and *eternal Truths* are converted into *Lyes*.

In ſhort therefore, *natural Religion* has only *natural Reaſon* for its *Rule* and *Meaſure*, which from the Nature of God and Things deduces all thoſe *eternal Reaſons*, by which it diſtinguiſhes our Actions into *honeſt* and *diſhoneſt*,

decorous and *filthy*, *good* and *evil*, *neceſſary* and *ſinful*. For it does not make them *good* or *evil* by judging them ſo, but if it judges truly, it judges of them as it finds them; and unleſs it finds them Good and Evil in themſelves, upon ſome *eternal Reaſon* for or againſt them, its Judgment is falſe and erroneous. The *objective* Goodneſs or Evil that is in the Actions themſelves, is not the Meaſure of our *natural Reaſon*; but our *natural Reaſon*, judging truly concerning them, is the Meaſure of our *Choice* or *Refuſal* of them; for be our Action never ſo good or evil in itſelf, unleſs we have ſome *eternal Reaſon* for or againſt it, we cannot judge it ſo, and unleſs we judge it ſo, we cannot reaſonably chooſe or refuſe it; but as ſoon as ever we have judg'd or pronounc'd it *good* or *evil*, upon an *eternal Reaſon*, we ſtand oblig'd by that Judgment to do or forbear it. Thus *Right Reaſon* pronouncing ſuch Actions good, and ſuch evil, is the *Law* of *Nature*, and thoſe eternal Reaſons upon which it ſo pronounces them, are the *Creed* of *Nature*; both which together make *natural Religion*. And by this *Religion* was the World govern'd, at leaſt the greateſt part of it, for ſome thouſands of Years, 'till by long and ſad Experience it was found too weak to correct the Errors of Mens *Minds*, and reſtrain the wild Extravagances of their *Wills* and *Affections*; and then God, out of his great Pity to loſt and degenerate Mankind, vouchſaf'd to us the glorious Light of *Reveal'd Religion*, which, in the *largeſt* Acceptation of it, includes all *natural Religion*, as well all that it propoſes to be *believ'd*, as what it requires to be *done*, the *Doctrines* as well as the *Duties* of it, both which are contain'd in that *Revelation* of his Will, which God has made to the World, to which it has ſuperadded ſeveral *Doctrines* and *Duties* of *ſupernatural* Religion.

But, ſtrictly ſpeaking, *reveal'd* Religion, as it is diſtinguiſh'd from *natural*, conſiſts of ſuch *Doctrines* and *Duties* as are knowable and diſcoverable only by *Revelation*, as are not to be deduc'd and inferr'd by Reaſoning and Diſcourſe,

Diſcourſe, from any *neceſſary* or *natural Principles*, but wholly depend upon the *Counſel* and *Good-will* of God. And where things depend entirely upon God's Will, and their being or not being lies wholly in his free Diſpoſal, it is impoſſible that our *natural* Reaſon ſhould ever arrive at the Knowledge of them, without ſome *Revelation* of his *Will* concerning them. For in ſuch Matters as theſe, where the *Will* of God is abſolutely *free*, *Reaſon* without *Revelation* has neither *neceſſary* nor *probable* Cauſes and Principles to argue from, and therefore can make neither certain Concluſions, nor ſo much as probable Gueſſes concerning them. Man muſt neceſſarily remain entirely in the dark, 'till ſuch time as God had *reveal'd* to him which way his Will is determin'd; and of ſuch Matters as theſe conſiſts all *reveal'd Religion*, ſtrictly ſo call'd. For tho' God has made ſeveral *Revelations* of his *Will*, yet the Subject Matter of them was for the main always the ſame, the *Doctrine of the Mediation of Jeſus Chriſt*, and the Duties that are ſubſequent to it, which from the Promiſe that God made to *Adam* upon his Fall, *The Seed of the Woman ſhall break the Serpent's Head*, to the laſt *Promulgation* of the *Goſpel*, has been the great Theme of all divine *Revelation*. For what elſe was that Revelation which God made to *Abraham*, *In thy Seed ſhall all the Nations of the Earth be bleſſed*, but only the *dawning* of the *Goſpel?* which is nothing but *glad Tidings* of the *Mediator*. What was the *Law* of *Moſes*, but only the ſame Goſpel ſhining thro' a Cloud of *Types* and ſymbolical Repreſentations? And what are all the ſucceeding Prophecies of the *Old Teſtament*, but only the ſame Goſpel ſtill ſhining clearer and clearer, 'till at laſt it broke forth in its *Meridian Brightneſs?* It might be eaſily demonſtrated, that from *Adam* to *Moſes*, from *Moſes* to the *Prophets*, from the *Prophets* to *Jeſus Chriſt*, the main Scope and Deſign of all divine *Revelation* has been the gradual *Diſcovery* of this great Myſtery of the *Mediation*. Thus *reveal'd Religion* was, for the Matter of it, always the ſame, tho' it was not

always reveal'd with the ſame Perſpicuity, but clear'd up by Degrees from an obſcure *Twilight* to a perfect *Day*. Wherefore *Chriſtianity*, which in Strictneſs is nothing but the Doctrine of the *Mediation*, together with its appendant *Duties*, ought not to be look'd upon as a *new Religion* of 1700 Years Date, for in Reality 'tis as *ancient* as the *Fall*, and was then preach'd to *Adam* in that dark and myſterious Promiſe. After which it was a little more clearly repeated, tho' very obſcurely ſtill, in God's Covenant with *Abraham*; and again, after that, it was much more amply reveal'd in the *Types* and *Figures* of the *Law* of *Moſes*; which yet, like painted Glaſs in a Window, did under their pompous Shew ſtill darken and obſcure the holy *Myſteries* within them, which were nothing but the *Doctrines* and *Laws* of the *Chriſtian* Religion. *Judaiſm* was only *Chriſtianity* veil'd, and *Chriſtianity* is only *Judaiſm* reveal'd.

Thus, you ſee, the *Religion* of the *Mediator* was the principal Subject of all Divine *Revelation*; and this, without Revelation, *natural Reaſon* could never have diſcovered, becauſe the whole of it depended upon the *Free Will of God*. For whether he would admit of any *Mediator* or no, whether he would admit his own Son to be our *Mediator* or no, whether he would depoſit ſuch ineſtimable Bleſſings for us or no in the Hands of our *Mediator*, was entirely left to his free Determination; and there was no neceſſary Cauſe, either *within* or *without* him, nor any probable one neither, that *human Reaſon* cou'd ever have diſcovered, which could incline or determine him one way or other. 'Till ſuch time then as he *reveal'd his Will* to us, we were left entirely in the dark as to this Matter, and had no manner of *Principles* to argue from, or ſo much as to gueſs by. This therefore is ſtrictly the *reveal'd Religion*, as it is diſtinguiſh'd from the *natural*. But ſince, together with *reveal'd Religion*, God has put forth a *ſecond Edition* of *natural*, which was almoſt loſt and *grown out of Print*, thro' the wretched Negligence and Stupidity of *Mankind*; and

ſince

ſince he has not only reveal'd them *together*, but alſo incorporated them into *one*, *Religion* as it is now fram'd and conſtituted, by this happy Conjunction of *natural* with *reveal'd*, may be thus defin'd: *It is the obligation of rational Creatures to render ſuch Acts of Worſhip to God, thro' Jeſus Chriſt, as he himſelf hath inſtituted, and are in their own Natures ſuitable to his Excellencies and their Dependence upon him.* By which *Acts of Worſhip*, I do not mean ſuch only as are immediately directed to, and terminated upon God, as all thoſe are which are contain'd in the firſt Table of the *Decalogue*, but all thoſe *Acts* in general which God has commanded, and being perform'd on a religious Account, out of Homage and Obedience to God's Will and Authority, are as truly and properly *Acts of Worſhip*, to him, as *Prayer*, *Praiſe*, or *Adoration*.

It will be eaſy from this ſhort Account of the *Nature* of *Religion*, to collect what Principles are neceſſary to the founding and ſecuring its Obligations.

God being the great Object of all *Religion*, it muſt be abſolutely neceſſary, in order to our being truly religious, that we *believe* that *God* is.

Religion being an Obligation of us to God, that this Obligation may take Effect upon us, it is neceſſary we ſhould believe that he concerns himſelf about us, and conſequently that he governs the World by his *Providence*.

Religion obliging us to render all due *Acts of Worſhip* to him, to enforce this Obligation upon us, it is neceſſary we ſhould *believe* that he will certainly *reward* us if we render thoſe Acts to him, and as certainly *puniſh* us if we do not.

Theſe *Acts of Worſhip*, which *Religion* obliges us to, being ſuch as are ſuitable to the Excellency of God's Nature, to enable us to fulfil this Obligation, it is neceſſary we ſhould have right Apprehenſions of the *Nature* of *God*.

Religion obliging us to render all theſe *Acts of Worſhip* to God, in and thro' Jeſus Chriſt, to our performing this, it is neceſſary we ſhould believe in his *Mediation*.

Theſe Reflexions, as little as they ſeem to be adapted to the Sex to whom they are addreſt, will eaſily be brought within their reach by Application; and the Satisfaction it may give their *Minds* to ſee on what Foundation *Religion* in general, and the Chriſtian Religion in particular, is eſtabliſh'd, will more than recompenſe the Pains they may at firſt take in ſo ſerious and uncommon a Study. 'Twill require their Attention, but then what Subject can deſerve it ſo much as that which is the ſureſt Guide to *eternal Life?*

If Men were not very ingenious in framing Excuſes for their Folly, and in the Contrivance and Purſuit of *Ruin*, it wou'd ſeem very ſtrange that the *Goſpel*, which was deſign'd to be the great Inſtrument of our *Happineſs*, ſhould be alledg'd to diſcourage and damp our Endeavours for it: That the *Goſpel*, whoſe great End is to fill our *Minds* with *Joy*, *Peace*, and *Hope*, ſhould be traduc'd as an Enemy to our *Pleaſure*. But ſo it is; and therefore, as little Colour or Appearance of Argument as there is in this Objection, we will not paſs it by without examining it.

Religion ever had, and always muſt have, the Character of its Author viſibly ſtampt upon it. Nothing that is not infinitely *kind* and infinitely *wiſe* can be found in any part of *Revelation* truly Divine; from whence we may rationally conclude, that the great aim of God, in the eſtabliſhing *Religion*, is to advance the *Happineſs* of Man, and to advance it in a Method conſonant to thoſe *Principles* he has implanted in them. Nor did any one inſpir'd Author ever think otherwiſe. *He that keepeth the Law*, ſays *Solomon*, *happy is he: Great Peace have they that love thy Law*, ſays the *Pſalmiſt*, *and nothing ſhall offend them*: And again, ſays *Solomon*, *Happy is the Man that findeth Wiſdom, and the Man that getteth Underſtanding*. That this was to be underſtood of actual and preſent *Happineſs*, in this Life, is apparent from what follows a little after: *Length of Days is in her right Hand, and in her left Hand Riches and Honour: Her ways are ways of Pleaſantneſs,*

and

and all her Paths are Peace: She is a Tree of Life to thoſe that lay hold upon her. And tho' the *Goſpel*, as a higher and more perfect Diſpenſation, does propoſe to us, as our great and chief End, *Life* and *Immortality*; yet it does by no means exclude us from Happineſs here, but rather eſtabliſhes it upon proper and firm Foundations, and fences it about with impregnable Bulwarks. *Peace I leave with you, my Peace I give unto you; not as the World gives, give I unto you. Let not your Heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Now the Fruit of the Spirit is Joy, Peace,* &c. Again, *Now the God of Hope fill you with Joy and Peace in believing, and make you abound in Hope, thro' the Power of the Holy Ghoſt. Godlineſs is profitable to all things, having the Promiſe of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come.* Nor can I indeed conceive how the State of a righteous and holy Soul ſhould be other than a happy and bleſſed one. The Belief, and confident expectation of a Heaven, muſt needs be more tranſporting and raviſhing than the richeſt fancy of a *Sinner*; and that Security, both in reſpect of this and a future Life, which a good Man enjoys in the protection of God, and the aſſurance of his Favour who is *Almighty, Immutable,* &c. muſt infinitely exceed any thing that a *Sinner* can attain to, and muſt exclude thoſe uneaſy Fears which frequently interrupt the *Sinner*'s Enjoyment, and overcaſt his Hopes. He who loves God and Virtue, cannot but be happy in the daily Practice and Enjoyment of what he moſt delights in; and he who has ſubdu'd his Paſſions, and overcome the World, cannot chooſe but reap the daily Fruits of ſo glorious a Conqueſt, and be conſtantly entertain'd with pleaſing Reflexions and delightful Proſpects. If he ſhould enjoy nothing elſe, that *Sovereignty, Liberty, Magnanimity*, and *Divine Charity*, and enlargement of Soul which he thereby gains, were an abundant Reward of this Victory. A good Man has the beſt Title to the *Bleſſings* of this Life, and the *Glories* of another. He enjoys this World with as great Security as Wiſdom and Moderation, and has an aſſur'd *Hope* of a

far better when he quits this: The Anticipation of which, by *Faith*, *Love* and *Hope*, doth at once facilitate and confirm his Conqueſts over all unworthy Luſts, and entertain him with an unexpreſſible Satisfaction and Pleaſure.

For this Reaſon I ſhall diſcourſe a little of *Happineſs*, without that immediate Regard to another Life which might be expected; not judging myſelf obliged either to prove the Certainty of it, or to demonſtrate the Reaſonableneſs of embracing Miſery during the Space of this ſhort Life, in expectation of that perfect and eternal *Happineſs* which is promis'd hereafter; ſince 'tis plain enough from the ordinary Courſe of Providence, that the *Happineſs* of this Life and the other are not incompatible: But on the contrary, that that wherein the Life and Being of true *Happineſs* in this World does conſiſt, is but a neceſſary Introduction to, or Qualification of us for, the *Happineſs* of another.

But what becomes then of the Doctrine of the *Croſs*? This is a very ſoft and mild *Commentary* upon that of our Saviour: *If any Man will come after me, let him deny himſelf, and take up his Croſs, and follow me:* Which is not ſo formidable an *Objection* as it may at firſt ſight ſeem. 'Tis true, ſuffering through all the Progreſs and Stages of *Evils*, even to the laſt, that is, Death itſelf, was a common, nay almoſt univerſal Duty in the beginning of *Chriſtianity*, being indiſpenſably neceſſary to the Propagation of the *Goſpel*; but bleſſed be God, the Reaſon of that Duty has long ago ceas'd. And all that I can think neceſſary to be ſaid here, in purſuance of my Deſign, to ſhew that Religion is the true way to Happineſs, *temporal* and *eternal*, is, that the *Pleaſures* of thoſe *Confeſſors* and *Martyrs* far out-weigh'd their Sufferings while they liv'd; that when they ſuffer'd Death itſelf, the time was come when they muſt exchange *Temporal* for *eternal Happineſs*. Nor does this at all infringe the truth of my Propoſition, which does not vainly aſſert an *eternal* Duration of Happineſs in this Life, but only teaches the Poſſibility of attaining it. And I think the Death of *Martyrs* and *Confeſſors*

feſſors is rather a *Confirmation* than *Confutation* of this Opinion, teaching us plainly, that in deſpite of all Calamities, 'tis not only poſſible *to live* but to die happily; which laſt is no ſmall Acceſſion to *temporal Happineſs*. From the little that has been ſaid on this Occaſion, 'tis eaſy to form an Anſwer to what is objected from St. *Paul: If in this Life only we have hope in Chriſt, we are of all Men moſt miſerable.* 'Tis confeſſedly, indiſputably true, that had theſe *Chriſtians* been deſtitute of that *Hope* which was their Support, they had ſunk under the Weight of ſuch Sufferings, and ſo had been the moſt miſerable of all Men. But ſince their *Hopes* did not only ſupport them under Afflictions, but alſo render them ſomewhat more than *Conquerors*; all that can follow hence is, that the Reſurrection and eternal Life are unqueſtionable Truths, and that he who believes them as firmly as the Confeſſors and Martyrs did, may, like them, *be happy*, tho' a thouſand ſeas of Calamities and Troubles ſhould break in upon him.

As to *Mortification*, which is a Duty of perpetual Obligation, for the purity of *Religion* is ſtill the ſame, this did at firſt ſignify the Renunciation and Extirpation of *Jewiſh* Luſts, according to that of St. *Paul, Mortify therefore your Members which are upon the Earth, Fornication, Uncleanneſs, inordinate Affection, evil Concupiſcence, and Covetouſneſs which is Idolatry*; and it *ſtill* is the ſame thing. Whatever Difficulty we are to encounter with, in the performance of this Duty, it muſt be vanquiſh'd, for 'tis impoſſible to be *Wicked* and *Happy*. A wicked Man is his own *Hell*; every Paſſion, every Luſt is a Fiend, a Fury that does laſh and torment him. And all this the *Heathens* themſelves did not only conſtantly acknowledge, but alſo paint out with as lively Eloquence, as any *Chriſtians* cou'd ever do; their Experience, over whom Sin had an uncontroll'd Dominion, moſt effectually convincing them of the Outrages, Tyranny, and unſpeakable Miſchiefs of wicked and abominable *Paſſions*. Nay ſo manifeſt is it that the ſubduing theſe irregular Paſſions is neceſſary to our *Happineſs*, that even the *Epicureans* themſelves,

ſelves, notwithſtanding their confining the *Happineſs* of Man to this ſhort Life, and by a probable Conſequence reſolving it ultimately into the Enjoyments of the Body, did yet look upon themſelves as extremely injur'd by *Tully* and others, when they repreſented them as revolted from, and Enemies to Virtue. 'Tis not my buſineſs here to examine what Foundation for Virtue their Philoſophy could leave, or what Rank and Place they could aſſign it; 'tis enough that they could not but acknowledge it as neceſſary to *Happineſs*.

'Tis true, *Mortification* in the Goſpel Senſe requires us not only to reſtrain theſe irregular Luſts, but alſo not to over-rate and over-value this World, and the things of it. Not to look upon this Life as our only and chief Portion, and dote upon it with Fondneſs and Paſſion; and I do not think that this is any thing more than what is imply'd and included in the former Notion of *Mortification*. This Moderation of our Inclinations to the World being a proper and neceſſary Foundation of the former Abſtinence; it being very improbable that he who values and dotes upon the World above all things, ſhould refrain from irregular Purſuits and Enjoyments of it. Now even this degree of *Mortification*, and the neceſſity of it in order to *Happineſs*, was taught and recommended by the wiſe Men among the *Heathens*, as well as by our *Saviour* and his *Apoſtles*; by thoſe conducted by the *Light of Nature*, as by thoſe conducted by the *Light of Revelation*. Take this together with the Diſcipline which promotes it, I mean the obſervation of great Abſtinence from ſenſual Pleaſure, and no *Monk* or *Anchoret* can ſpeak with a more glorious contempt of the World than a *Stoick*: But their Flights, who would allow the Body, the World and the Things of it, no Place nor Degree in the number of good Things, are too daring and bold to lay any ſtreſs upon. Take then the opinion of other *Philoſophers*, who allow'd theſe their proper Place and Value, and you will find that *Mortification* was ever thought by the Light of *Nature* ſubſervient to our true *Happineſs*. *Hierocles* in the beginning of his divine *Comments*, gives us a ſhort but full Account of the

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Pythagorean, and I may add *Platonick Philoſophy* in this Point. The Subſtance of which is, *The buſineſs of Philoſophy is to purify the Soul of Man from ſenſual Luſts and inordinate Paſſions, and to transform it into the Likeneſs and Image of God; this is that which it purſues, by diſcovering to us excellent Truths, and by recommending to us the Practice of excellent Virtues:* But this was that *Philoſophy* which the beſt and ancienteſt of the *Heathens* look'd upon as the only way to *Happineſs*; ſo far were they from judging it inconſiſtent and incompatiable with it. Nay they deem'd this very ſtate of Virtue, a State of more exalted *Happineſs*, and an Image of the Divine Life.

Hence is that little leſs than inſpired Heat of Rapture of *Tully*, *When the* Soul *having diſcover'd and entertain'd* Virtue, *hath extinguiſh'd its Fondneſs for, and Indulgence of the* Body, *and ſtifled Luſt as the Reproach and Stain of its Honour and Beauty, and hath put off all dread of Death and* Pain, *&c.* What can be ſaid, or ſo much as fancy'd more bleſſed than the State of ſuch a Man? Nay after all, the greateſt *Patrons* and *Abettors* of *Pleaſure* did ever acknowledge this *Moderation* in our *Paſſions* and *Enjoyments* indiſpenſably neceſſary to our *Happineſs*.

'Tis wonderful how much the Followers of *Epicurus* glory'd in his *Abſtinence*; that theſe *Voluptuaries* ſhould preſcribe and practiſe the *Doctrine* of *Mortification!* But this they were compell'd to do by the irreſiſtible force of Reaſon: For how can he who dotes upon the World, and melts in ſoft and ſenſual Pleaſures, be able to ſecure the Repoſe of his *Mind* againſt thoſe melancholy Alterations which may daily, and ſome time or other will certainly befal himſelf, and his *Enjoyments?* On what Foundation can the Peace and Liberty of his *Mind* be eſtabliſh'd? or can he be happy, who is diſtreſs'd by every change of Weather, and is divided and diſtracted between numerous contrary *Paſſions*, and a *Slave* to each?

To conclude, The *Scripture* is ſo far from denying, that it affirms the Poſſibility of obtaining preſent *Happineſs*, nor are the Sufferings of *Confeſſors* and *Martyrs*, or

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the Doctrine of *Mortification*, any prejudice to this Aſſertion; for neither *Affliction* nor *Mortification* are inconſiſtent with the true *Happineſs* of *Man*. That *Affliction* is not, the Examples of thoſe very *Martyrs* and *Confeſſors* triumphing over it, do ſufficiently evince. That *Mortification* is not, is unanimouſly confeſs'd by the Suffrages of ſuch as were conducted by the Light of Nature; of ſuch too as were intirely devoted to the Pleaſures of this *Life*, and that upon undeniable Grounds.

We have ſeen in the preceeding Pages, that *Religion* is not only the way to *Happineſs* in the next World, but in this alſo. The ſofter *Sex*, who are too apt to centre it in things that cannot at all contribute to make them *happy*, may be at firſt ſurpris'd to find it aſſerted that Happineſs does not conſiſt in *Honours*, *Dignities*, *Wealth*, *Shew*, *Dreſs*, and the like, but is confin'd to *Religion* and *Piety*, and yet to be meet with in the *Preſent* as well as the *future Life*. But if they will condeſcend ſo far as to give attention to what will be farther ſaid on ſo important a Subject, I doubt not but their *Reaſon* will be convinc'd, whether they reduce their *Judgment* to *Practice* or not.

Nothing is ſo proper and ſo neceſſary as *Piety* and *Devotion* to complete and crown all their other Excellencies. This is the *Salt* which ſeaſons all *Sacrifices*, the *Altar* which ſanctifies the *Gift:* No *Good*, how ſplendid ſoever in the ſight of Man, being acceptable to God 'till it be thus conſecrated, and has this *Seal* of the *Sanctuary* upon it. This is a Virtue truly Divine, as well in its *Original* as its *End*; for as it comes from *Heaven*, ſo it tends thither alſo, and thither raiſes its *Votaries*. This is it which ſublimates and ſpiritualizes *Humanity*, refines it from all the *Dregs* of *Mortality*, and ſo wings our earthly lumpiſh Nature, that we can ſoar aloft to the Region of *Spirits*, and by its Raptures make ſome Eſſay of that State of *Separation* even while we are linkt to the *Body*. This is it which combines us ſo with *God*, that we have the ſame *Intereſts*, the ſame *Choices*; nay, it does in a ſort communicate and interchange Properties with him. The all-

powerful

powerful God ſeems impotent, and unable to reſiſt its Influence, while it inveſts us feeble Wretches in a kind of *Omnipotence*, by engaging him for us who can do all things.

Piety may be conſider'd in a larger or more limited Senſe. In the former, 'tis as wide as the whole *Scheme* of *Duty*, not confin'd to any one Act, but extended to all the *Commands* of *God*. For as the animal Spirit diffuſes itſelf into all the moſt diſtant Members of the *Body*; ſo this more vital Principle has as univerſal Influence on the Mind, ſtamps that with ſuch an Admiration and Reverence of God, ſuch a Love and Complacency in him, that every Act is at leaſt habitually deſign'd to obey and glorify him.

Piety in the more limited Senſe is taken for our immediate intercourſe with God in things purely divine, as *Adorations*, *Prayers*, *Ejaculations*, and all *Pantings* and *Breathings* of the Soul after him: In which Notion 'tis more particularly call'd *Devotion*. And this is comprehended in the other, as a *Part* in the *Whole*, nay indeed as an *Effect* in its *Cauſe*; for where *Piety* has not firſt form'd and modell'd the *Soul*, there can be no true *Devotion*. External Forms of it there may be, but that is but Ceremony and Pageantry, the moſt ſubmiſſive *Proſtrations* are there but like *Dagon* before the Ark, the fall of a lifeleſs *Trunk*; the moſt *elevated Eyes* but a kind of convulſive Motion, and the moſt rigid *Mortifications* but like the *Lancings* and *Cuttings* of *Baal*'s Prieſts. Of this the very *Heathens* had ſome Notion, and therefore in their *Worſhips* had many Preparatory Ceremonies of Luſtration and Purifying, as being conſcious of the Incongruity, that *Unholy* Perſons ſhould be admitted to *Sacred* Things.

Accordingly *Socrates* has excellently defin'd the *beſt way of worſhipping God* to be *the doing what he commands*. Indeed without this our Devotion is mere Stratagem and Deſign; We invoke God as we uſe to cajole Men, only to ſerve a preſent Turn. And in ſuch diſingenuous Addreſſes 'tis eaſy to read the *Event*, or if we cannot, *Solomon*

lomon will inſtruct us, *The Prayers of the Wicked are an Abomination to the Lord.*

As *Piety* is the *Ladies* greateſt *Ornament* and Advantage, ſo have they ſomewhat more of pre-diſpoſition towards it in their native Temper. *God*'s Laws, which are the *Rule* of *Piety*, have this common with Mens, that they are enforc'd upon us by the Propoſals both of *Puniſhments* and *Rewards*; by that means engaging two of our moſt ſenſible Paſſions, *Fear* and *Love*; and the female Sex being eminent for the *pungency* of both theſe, they are conſequently the better prepar'd for the impreſſions of *Religion*.

This is ſo much acknowledg'd, that our *Maſculine Atheiſts* make an ill uſe of it, and are willing to think that *Religion* owes its Force only to the Impotence of the Subjects which it works upon, and that 'tis only an Impoſition on the eaſy *Credulity* of *Women*; in which tho' they ſufficiently ſhew their contempt of *Piety*, yet they unawares give greater honour to that *Sex* than they intend, while they confeſs it more capable of a Likeneſs to the ſupreme Goodneſs, and of the renewal of God's Image, (for to that all *Piety* is deſign'd) than their own. Wherefore *Women* have ſo little Reaſon to be aſham'd, that they ought to glory in the Conceſſion, and gratefully to celebrate the goodneſs of God to them; who as he brings *Light* out of *Darkneſs*, ſo converts their natural Infirmities into a means of ſpiritual Strength; makes the Impotencies and Defects of their *Nature* ſubſervient to the operation of *Grace*, and by conſecrating their very Paſſions, makes even thoſe *Gibeonites* ſerviceable to the *Tabernacle*. But then 'tis to be remembred, that the greater is their Obligation to comply with this deſign of God's, to let their Paſſions run in the Channel he has cut for them; ſo to confine their *Fear* and *Love* to ſpiritual Objects, that they make no inordinate *Eruptions* to any thing elſe, but in all their Eſtimations of things dreadful, or deſirable, to give ſtill the juſt Deference to that which is *Eternal*.

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And as Women in *General* have this Advantage towards *Piety*, and Obligation to it, ſo particularly thoſe of *Quality*, who we may ſuppoſe to have generally a more early *Inſtitution* and *Inſtruction* in it than thoſe of a meaner Rank. They have beſides more Opportunities afterwards of being built up in the Knowledge of their Duty, and by the help of an ingenious *Education*, clearer Apprehenſions to diſcern it; and when they do ſo, have greater Obligations to perform it, both in reſpect of God, of others, and themſelves.

In reſpect of God they have the greateſt Tie of *Gratitude*, not only for the common Mercies which they partake with the reſt of Womankind, but for theſe peculiar, by which they are differenced from others; of which, if they want a juſt value, let them ask themſelves how willing they wou'd be to part with them, How ſhe who has fed delicately, wou'd like to be deſolate in the Street, or *ſhe that has been brought up in Scarlet, to embrace the Dunghill.* And according to the Averſion they find to ſuch a *Change*, let them eſtimate their preſent Enjoyments, and the Thankfulneſs it exacts.

In regard of others, their *Piety* back'd with their ſecular Advantages, may be of a more extenſive Benefit; they have many Opportunities of doing good by their Influence on others; or if no way elſe, yet the Splendor of their Example, will, by the eminency of their Conditions, ſhine as a Light on ſome high Tower, more conſpicuouſly, and guide many into the ſame path of Virtue. 'Tis certainly no ſmall Obligation which lies on them in this reſpect; for God, who does nothing without an *End* worthy of his *Wiſdom*, can never be thought to have ſelected ſome Perſons as the Objects of his *Bounty*, merely that they may ſwill and glut themſelves with ſenſual Pleaſures. No, doubtleſs, he that is the great Maſter of the Univerſe, diſpoſes all things for common Benefit; and therefore if he has placed ſome in a higher Orb than others, it is that they may have an auſpicious Influence on thoſe below them. And if they

fail in this, they are no longer *Stars*, but *Comets*, things of ominous and unlucky abode to all about them.

They have in reſpect to themſelves all Obligations to *Piety:* 'Tis evident they do not more out-number their *Inferiors* in any thing, than in the Opportunities and Solicitations to Sin. *Wealth* and *Honour* have many Snares, and, which is worſe, do often diſpoſe the Mind to ſuch a heedleſs Security, that it takes no Care to avoid them: and as in the Body, the diſeaſes of *Repletion* are far more numerous than thoſe of *Emptineſs*; ſo the Mind is oftner vitiated by *Affluence* and *Proſperity* than by *Indigence* and *Adverſity*. It becomes therefore thoſe who are ſo ſurrounded with Enemies, to fortify themſelves, and that they can no way do but by a ſincere *Piety*, that *whole Armour of God* which St. *Paul* deſcribes, *by which alone they may repel all the Darts of Temptations*. They may not only ward the Blow, but wreſt the Weapon out of Satan's Hands. Here he urges to them the *Opportunities*, the Impunity which their Wealth and Greatneſs give them to be *bad:* They may retort his Argument, and by a wholſomer Inference collect thence their great Obligation to be good, not only upon the Score of *Gratitude*, tho' that were enough to an ingenuous Soul, but of Intereſt alſo, in reſpect of that Account they muſt finally give. For tho' *God* be not an unjuſt *Exactor*, to reap where he has not *ſow'd*, yet he is not ſo negligently profuſe, as to do that which no prudent Man will do, ſcatter his Goods promiſcuouſly, without taking notice where they fall: But as he diſpenſes all things by a particular *Providence*, ſo he does it to a particular End, and will exact as particular an Account how that End has been comply'd with.

It is a ſmart Exprobration of God's to *Iſrael*, that ſhe had ſacrilegiouſly employ'd his *Silver and Gold, his Flower and Honey, which he had given her, in the ſervice of her Idols*. By which, as we may ſee he takes notice how we diſpoſe of our temporal Poſſeſſions, ſo

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it ſhews us how the Indictment will proceed againſt all thoſe who ſo pervert their Uſe. With what Confuſion muſt they appear at the great *Audit*, who can give no other Account of their *Receipts* but that they conſumed them upon their *Luſts*, waged *War* againſt God with his own *Treaſure*, and have been as well *Thieves* as *Rebels*? What a *Luciferian* Fall will they have from their *Honours*, who have endeavoured to undermine God's? Who thought themſelves too great to pay him *Homage*, and by their profane and vicious Example induc'd a Contempt of him? In ſhort, what a retaliation of Invaſions will there then be? Thoſe that have turn'd his *Grace* into *Wantonneſs*, converted his Bounty into the Fuel of their *Pride* and *Luxury*, ſhall then have their *Glory* turned into *Shame*, their *Riots* and *Exceſſes* into the want of a *drop of Water*, and ſhall retain nothing of their *Greatneſs* but the *Guilt*, the grating Remembrance of having abuſed thoſe *temporal Bleſſings*, which if well manag'd might have received them into everlaſting Habitations of Joy. How neceſſary then is it, for all who have received ſo much upon Account, to be often reflecting on it, examining what Charges the great Owner has impoſed on ſo ample an Income? What he requires of them for whom he has done ſo much? And this is particularly the Buſineſs of *Piety*, which in all the before-mention'd Reſpects is, as the uſefulleſt, ſo the nobleſt Accompliſhment of *Greatneſs*.

Such has it been accounted, till this profane Age of ours, which has remov'd all the *Boundaries* of the former, revers'd even the *Inſtincts* of *Nature*, and will not leave us ſo much of *Religion* as the very worſt of Heathens had. For how erroneous ſoever they were in the Choice of their *Deities*, they always honoured and reverenced thoſe they choſe, committing moſt of their Enormities in Obedience, not in Affront to them. They did not aſſign them *Votaries*, as *Jeroboam* did, of the *meaneſt* of the *People*, but thought themſelves dignify'd by their Service,

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and eſteem'd it an Infamy not to be *pious*. But alas! now-a-days we make other *Eſtimates*, *Religion* is ſo abject, ſo contemptible a thing, as is thought fit to influence none that are great either in Parts or Quality. And therefore tho' too many are willing to appropriate it to *Women* upon the firſt Account, as *the Goſpel is the fooliſhneſs of Preaching*; yet they make Exceptions upon the latter, and are not willing to afford it any of the nobler *Proſelytes* even of that Sex.

I doubt not there are many Lectures read to ſuch, to fortify them againſt all Impreſſions of *Piety*, to raze out the comnom Notion of a God; and in order to that, depoſe his *Vicegerent* within them, diſcard their *Conſcience*, that unmannerly Inmate, which is ſtill ſpeaking what they have no mind to hear, and will be apt ſometimes to queſtion their grand Principle, and tell them they have *Souls*. And truly it is no wonder if the *Abettors* of *Atheiſm* take this Courſe; for ſince they have no ſolid Foundation of Truth or Reaſon, 'tis but neceſſary they ſupport their Party by Authority, the Countenance and Applauſe of great Perſons; and God knows they have too much ſucceeded in the Deſign. But in the mean time, what Security do they give for the Truth of their Pretenſions? We know 'tis ſtill requir'd of thoſe, that will practiſe upon other Peoples Concerns, that they put in *Caution* to ſecure the *Owner* from *Damage*. But alas! what Gage can they give for a *Soul?* Who can contrive a Form of Indemnity, where that is the thing hazarded?

'Tis eaſy indeed for one of theſe, the *Devil's* Apoſtles, to tell a Lady ſhe has nothing to do but to indulge to her Pleaſure; that 'tis the extremeſt Folly to be frighted from a *preſent Enjoyment* by a Fear of I know not what *future Smart*; that *God*, and *Sin*, and *Hell*, are but Names, certain *Bugbears*, conjur'd up by *Divines*, to work upon her *Fear*, and abuſe her *Credulity*.

This, and much more of this kind, may be ſaid and I doubt not often is; but all this while the Queſtion

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is begg'd, and a ſtrong *Affirmation* muſt paſs for Proof; for I defy all the *Doctors* of *Atheiſm* to make any *Demonſtration* of their Tenet; and yet, tho' they pretend to no *Demonſtration* themſelves, *Religion* muſt be condemn'd merely for the want of it, that is, for not making ſpiritual things liable to Senſe, for diſtinguiſhing between *Belief* and *Science*, which is indeed for doing the moſt reaſonable thing in the World; remitting every Object to the Trial of its proper Faculty: And they who ſuſpect upon that Account, may by the ſame kind of reaſoning wrangle us out of all our Senſes, may perſuade us that we *hear* nothing becauſe the *Eye* diſcerns not *Sounds*, that we *taſte* not becauſe the *Ear* underſtands not *Guſts* and *Savours*, and ſo on to the reſt.

And yet this is the bottom of thoſe Arguments which the great Pretenders to *Reaſon* make againſt *Religion*, and in the mean time have ſo little Ingenuity as to exclaim on the light Credulity of *Fools* and *Women*, that embrace the Dictates of *Faith*, while at the ſame inſtant, they exact a more implicite Aſſent to their negative Articles, than to *Religion*. A ſtrange magiſterial Confidence, ſo to impoſe on this *Age* what is ſo univerſally contradictory to all former, and to the common Verdict of Mankind! For 'tis obſervable thro' all the Succeſſions of Men, that there was never any *Society*, any collective Body of *Atheiſts*. A ſingle one perhaps might here and there be found, as we ſometimes ſee *Monſters* and *unſhapen Births*; but for the generality they had always ſuch *Inſtincts* of a *Deity*, that they never thought they run far enough from *Atheiſm*, but rather choſe to multiply their *Gods*, to have too many than none at all. They were even apt to deſcend to the *Adoration* of things below themſelves, rather than to renounce the Power above them. By which we may ſee, that the *Notion* of a God is the moſt indelible Character of natural *Reaſon*; and therefore whatever Pretence our *Atheiſts* make to *Ratiocination* and deep *Diſcourſe*, it is none of that primitive fundamental Reaſon, coetaneous with our *Humanity*, but is indeed a Rea-

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ſon fit only for thoſe who own themſelves like the *Beaſts that Periſh*.

Admit we cou'd be more bountiful to them, and allow their *Opinion* an equal *Probability* with our *Faith*, yet even this cou'd never juſtify any *Body* in point of *Prudence* that ſhould adhere to them. Common *Diſcretion* teaches us, that where two Propoſitions have an equal Appearance of *Truth*, there is no rational Inducement to prefer one before the other, 'till we have examin'd the Conſequences, and find ſomething in the one which may overpoiſe and outweigh the contrary. Now in all things that concern *Practice*, there are no Motives ſo conſiderable either to *invite* or *avert*, as *Advantage* or *Danger*.

Let us apply them to the preſent Caſe, and examine the Pretenſion of the *Atheiſt* and the *Chriſtian*, in both Reſpects. But firſt we are to remember that both Advantage and Danger are to be view'd under a double Notion, either as *preſent* or as *future*; the former is the *Atheiſt's* moſt proper Subject, and indeed all he can pertinently ſpeak to, who profeſſes himſelf a Man of this World. Here he will tell us, that the Disbelief of *God* and *another Life*, is the great *Enfranchiſer* of Mankind, ſets us at Liberty from that *Thraldom*, thoſe Bonds with which our ſuperſtitious Fears have follow'd us; that it ſuperſedes all thoſe nice and perplexing Enquiries of *lawful* and *unlawful*, and reduces all our Inquiſitions only to this one, How we ſhall moſt pleaſe ourſelves. The *Glutton* need not put a *Knife* to his *Throat*, but is only to put an *Edge* upon his *Palate*. The *Drunkard* need not refrain his *Cups*, but only take care that they be fill'd with the moſt delicious *Liquor*. The *Wanton* need not pull out his *Eye*, but only contrive to poſſeſs what that tempts him to deſire. And, in a word, none of our Appetites need be reſtrain'd, but ſatisfy'd. This uncontrol'd Licentiouſneſs, this brutiſh Liberty, is that *chief Good*, that ſupreme Happineſs which they propoſe to themſelves, and to which they invite others.

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On the other ſide, the *Chriſtian* is not without his Claim to a preſent Advantage, tho' of a far differing Nature. He is not ſo prepoſterous, as to think it a Preferment to ſink below his Kind, to aſpire to an Aſſimilation with mere *Animals*, which is the utmoſt the former amounts to; but he propoſes to himſelf the Satisfaction of a *Man*; thoſe *Delights* which may entertain his *Reaſon* not his *Senſe*, which conſiſts in the *Rectitude* of a well-inform'd *Mind*. His *Religion* is the perfected Scheme of *Morality*, and makes him a *Philoſopher* without the Help of the *Schools*. It teaches him the Art of ſubduing his *Appetites*, calming his Paſſion, and in a word, makes him Lord of himſelf, giving him by that, all the *Pleaſures* which reſult from ſuch a *Sovereignty*. Nor is he totally void even of the pleaſures of Senſe, which in many Inſtances are greater to him, than to thoſe who moſt court them. *Temperance* cooks his courſeſt Diet to a greater *Guſt* than all their ſtudied Mixtures. *Chaſtity* makes one lawful Embrace more grateful to him, than all the naufeating Variety of their unbounded *Luſts*: And *Contentment* ſwells his *Mite* into a *Talent*; makes him richer than the *Indies* wou'd do, if he deſired beyond them. Nor is it a contemptible Benefit, that his *Moderation* gives him an Immunity from thoſe ſenſitive *Pains*, which oft bring up the Rear of inordinate ſenſual *Pleaſures*. Thus, his Condition, even in the worſt Light, is not ſo deplorable as 'tis repreſented.

But if it were, he has *Pleaſure* that would infinitely overwhelm that Smart, and that not only in his *Reaſon*, but in his more ſublime Diviner Part. Such *Irradiations* from above, ſuch *Anticipations* of his future Bliſs, ſuch Acquieſcence in a calm and ſerene Conſcience, as is very cheaply bought with all he can ſuffer here. I know the *Profane* laugh at theſe things as *Chimeras*, and the Illuſions of a prepoſſeſs'd *Fancy*; and truly if they were ſo, they might come in Balance with many of their Pleaſures, which are as much owing to *Opinion* and *Imagination*: But if we conſider, what Support they

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have given under the heavieſt Preſſures; how they enabled the Primitive *Martyrs*, not only to ſuffer, but even to court all that is formidable to *human Nature*; we cannot think that a mere fantaſtick imaginary Joy, cou'd deceive the Senſe of ſuch real, ſuch acute *Torments*. And tho' in this great Declination of Zeal, there be perhaps few that can pretend to thoſe higher Degrees of ſpiritual *Raptures*, yet certainly were the *Votes* of all devoted People collected, they would all concur in this Teſtimony, that even in the common Offices of *Piety*, the ordinary Diſcharge of a good Conſcience, there is infinitely greater Complacence, a higher Guſt and Reliſh, than in all the *Pleaſures* of *Senſe*. But of this, the moſt irrefragable Witneſſes are thoſe, who from great *Voluptuaries* have turn'd *Devotees*; and I dare appeal to their Experience, whether of the two States is the moſt pleaſant. I wiſh thoſe, who will not believe this on others Words, wou'd themſelves make the Trial; and till they do ſo, they are notoriouſly unjuſt to pronounce that a *Fiction*, of whoſe Reality they refuſe to make Proof.

By what has been ſaid, ſuch *Eſtimate* may be made, which bids faireſt, the *Atheiſt* or *Chriſtian*, as to preſent *temporal* Felicity: But alas! what an Allay, what a Damp is it to Felicity, to ſay 'tis *temporal?* Yet we may give it a Term below that, and ſay 'tis *momentary*. For ſince our *Life* is ſo, nothing that depends on that can be otherwiſe, and yet in this ſhallow Bottom the *Irreligious* embark their *All*. For as to all *future Advantage*, 'tis their Principle to diſclaim it; they diſcern no *Reward for blameleſs Souls*. In this particular, the *Chriſtian* does not *compare* with, but *triumph* over them. He knows that *if his earthly Houſe of this Tabernacle be diſſolved, he hath a Building of God, an Houſe not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens*. That when he parts with his *Life*, he does not reſign his *Happineſs*, but ſhall receive it infinitely improv'd, both in *Degree* and *Duration*. And now certainly 'tis viſible enough which Opinion

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propoſes the fairer Hopes, and conſequently which, ſuppoſing but an equal Probability, is the moſt inviting.

But ſome Spirits there are ſo ignoble, that the moſt glorious Prize cannot animate them; that like a *Swine*, the Muſcles of whoſe *Eyes*, they ſay, permit him not to look upwards, are not concern'd in all the *Felicities* above, but wou'd, at a Venture, reſign their Share in thoſe, ſo they may ſecurely enjoy their *Husk* and *Draff*. But yet even thoſe who are incapable of the more *generous* Sentiments, may be apt enough to the more *ſervile*; and Danger may fright, tho' Glory cannot allure them. It concerns ſuch therefore, to compare the Miſchiefs which each Opinion threatens to their Oppoſites, and from thence make an Eſtimate which is ſafeſt to be choſen. And here let the *Atheiſt* himſelf caſt up the Account, of the *Dangers* conſequent to *Chriſtianity*, and it can all amount but to this, the *Deprivation*, or rather *Moderation*, of ſome preſent *Senſual* Pleaſures, or the incurring of ſome preſent *ſenſitive* Pains; the former in the daily Exerciſe of *Temperance* and *Mortification*; the latter more rarely, and oftner in Purpoſe than Act, the ſuffering for *Righteouſneſs ſake*. And both theſe the *Chriſtian* balances, nay outweighs, by two more important preſent *Hazards* on the other ſide. To the former, he oppoſes the *Danger* of being enſlav'd to the brutiſh Part of a Man's ſelf; a thing ſo deplorable in the Judgment of *Humanity*, that all Writers of *Ethicks* have unanimouſly declar'd, no *Servility* to be ſo ſordid and intolerable, as that of the vicious Man to his *Paſſions* and *Luſts*. To the latter, he confronts the Miſchief of being a Slave to every Man elſe; for ſuch he certainly is, whom the Fear of ſuffering can baffle out of any thing he thinks Juſt and Honeſt. For if all the Men in the World cou'd ſucceſſively have the Power to afflict him, they wou'd have alſo to command and rule him: And what can be more abject, more below the Dignity of *human Nature*, than to have a Spirit always prepar'd for ſuch a *Servitude*? Beſides, even the utmoſt Suffering which *Chriſtianity*

can at any time require, is out-vy'd daily by the Effects of *Luxury* and *Rage*; and for *one* that has Opportunity to be a *Martyr* for his God, *thouſands* become ſo to their Vices.

If from the *preſent* we look forward to *future* Dangers, the *Atheiſt* muſt here be perfectly ſilent. He cannot ſay, that the *Chriſtian*, after this Life, ſhall be in any worſe *Eſtate* than himſelf, ſince he concludes they ſhall both be the ſame Nothing, but the *Chriſtian* threatens him with a more diſmal State; he allows him indeed a *Being*, and an *Eternal* one, but it is only ſuch, as qualifies him for a Miſery as *Eternal*. The Worm that never dies, the Fire unquenchable, where all the Exceſſes of his ſhort Pleaſures ſhall be reveng'd with more exceſſive endleſs Torments. His *Senſes* which were here the only Organs of his *Felicity*, ſhall then be, tho' not the only, the very ſenſible *Mediums* of his Wretchedneſs; and that *Conſcience*, which he here ſuſpended from its Office, ſhall then take out its Arrears, and return all its ſtifled Admonitions, in perpetual Horrors and deſperate *Upbraidings*.

To conclude, The Reſult of all is, that the tranſitory *Pleaſures* of the *Atheiſt* are over-pois'd, even by the preſent *Satisfactions* of the Pious. And the *Eternity* of unbounded unconceivable *Joys* he expects hereafter, comes in over and above, having nothing on the other ſide that offers at a Competition with it. And at the very ſame rate of Proportion, we have ſeen the Dangers alſo are; ſo that we can eaſily compute the utmoſt Miſchief our *Chriſtianity* can do to us if it ſhould be falſe; but the Damage of the other is ineſtimable, both for the Penalty of *Loſs* and *Senſe*. I may now appeal to *common Prudence*, to judge of the vaſt Inequality, and to pronounce, that ſure there had need be ſome great Evidence of *Truth* on the *Atheiſt*'s ſide, to preponderate all theſe Diſadvantages. Indeed nothing much below a *Demonſtration* can juſtify the Choice of ſo dangerous *Principles*: I am ſure an equal Probability can never do it,

it, where the Danger is ſo unequal; and were the verieſt *Atheiſt* conſulted in a ſecular Caſe of the like Circumſtances, wou'd certainly pronounce him a *Mad-man* that ſhou'd make ſuch an *Election*. How deſperate a Frenſy then is it, to do it without ſo much as that equal Probability, or indeed any Probability at all? And yet this *Madneſs* ſets up for the Monopoly, not of *Wit* only, but Reaſon too, and by Confidence and Clamour ſeeks to run down thoſe Arguments it can never confute.

My preſent Buſineſs being to recommend *Piety*, I can no way do that ſo effectually, as by ſhewing its conſonancy to right *Reaſon*, eſpecially conſidering the buſy Induſtry now us'd to repreſent it under another Form; and to alienate from it thoſe very Perſons whoſe *Greatneſs* may give it any *Luſtre* or *Repute* in the World. Of which ſort I ſuppoſe there are few more frequently attack'd than *Women* of *Quality*, who converſe among thoſe that call themſelves the *Wits of the Age*.

'Tis to no purpoſe to enquire at what time, and by what Examples this Flood of *Impiety* broke in upon us, unleſs we did more ourſelves to get clear of it, and ceaſed at leaſt to refine on the Vices which are complained of. The Air is ſtill infectious, and we ſtill want *Antidotes* to defend ourſelves from the Infection.

One cannot help adviſing the Great eſpecially of the Sex we more particularly addreſs to, to have a care how they combine with *Seducers* againſt themſelves; but if they have been ſo unhappy as to lend an Ear to *Infidelity*, yet at leaſt not to give up both to be forc'd into a Slaviſh Submiſſion to its *Dictates*, but hear what may be offer'd on the ſide of *Faith*. Sure 'tis but a low Compoſition for *God* thus to divide with *Satan*, yet it is that of which his Emiſſaries are ſo jealous, that 'tis one of their Grand Maxims, that none who profeſſes Divinity, is to be advis'd with; and therefore by all Arts they are to be render'd either *Ridiculous* or *Suſpected*. To which methinks may be apply'd the Fable, which *Demoſthenes* once recited to the *Athenians*, when *Alexander* demaded

of them to deliver up their *Orators*; of the *Wolves* and the *Sheep*, their coming to a Treaty. The firſt Article of the *Wolves* was, That the *Sheep* ſhould give up their *Maſtiffs* which guarded them. The Reſemblance is too obvious to need a minute Application.

But this is manifeſtly to reverſe all former *Rules*, and to truſt a Man rather in any *Faculty* than in his *own*, and would never have prevail'd in any thing, but where the Soul is concern'd; that poor deſpicable thing, whereon alone we think fit to make Experiments. 'Tis ſure that if any ſhould diſpute their Title to an earthly Poſſeſſion, they would not ſo tamely reſign it, nor would truſt their ownſelves in its *Defence*, but would conſult their ableſt *Lawyers*, and by them ſift out every Circumſtance that might eſtabliſh their Claim. Why ſhould they then ſuffer themſelves to be talk'd out of an *Heavenly* Inheritance, without ſo much as once propoſing their Doubts to thoſe whoſe Study and Profeſſion it is to reſolve them? But as in all other *Ills*, ſo in this, Prevention is better than *Cure*; and therefore to thoſe that are yet untainted, the ſecureſt Courſe will be to ſtop both Ears againſt all profane Inſinuations, and to uſe thoſe who tempt them to be *diſloyal* to their *God*, that *ſpiritual* Adultery, as they ſhould do thoſe that ſolicit them to the *carnal*, not ſo much as to enter *parley*, but with the greateſt Indignation deteſt and reject them. 'Tis the ſaying of the Wiſe Man, that *an angry Countenance driveth away a backbiting Tongue:* And certainly, wou'd great Perſons look ſeverely on ſuch Defamers of Religion, they would give ſome Check to that *Impudence* of Profaneneſs, which has given it ſuch a Vogue in the World.

And thus much it is ſure their Duty to do, if they own any Relation to that *God* who is ſo diſhonour'd. They would think it a very diſingenuous thing to ſit by, and hear a *Friend* or *Benefactor* revil'd, and expreſs no Diſpleaſure. Is God then ſo friendleſs among them, that only his *Traducers* and *Blaſphemers* can be patiently heard? Among the *Jews*, at the hearing of any *Blaſ-*

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phemy, they rent their Clothes, as we have elſewhere obſerv'd; but I fear we have ſome of our nice *Dames* that would be much more concern'd at a *rip* in their Garment, than at the rending and violating God's ſacred Name; that could more patiently behold the total Subverſion of *Religion*, than the Diſorder or Miſplacing of a Lock or a Ribband. But 'tis to be hop'd there are not many ſo impious, and thoſe that are not, will ſurely think themſelves oblig'd with all their Power to diſcountenance all the *Factors* of *Irreligion*; whether they be the ſolemn *ſedater* ſort that would argue, or the *jollier* that would rally them out of their *Faith*.

But when they have thus provided againſt the *Aſſaults* of others, and ſecur'd the *ſpeculative* part of *Religion*; they have only eſtabliſh'd a *Judicatory* againſt themſelves, ſtor'd up Matter of Conviction and Accuſation, if they anſwer it not in the practick. It behoves them therefore ſeriouſly to weigh the Obligations they have to *Piety* in the general Notion of it, as it comprehends all the *Duties of a Chriſtian Life*; of which I know not where to find a better *Summary* than St. *James* has drawn up, *Pure Religion and undefiled before God, even the Father, is this, to viſit the Fatherleſs and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep himſelf unſpotted from the World.*

Beſides this *general*, there is, as I ſaid already, another more reſtrain'd Notion of *Piety*, as it relates to our more immediate Intercourſe with God in divine *Ordinances*, and *Worſhip*. In which reſpect it commonly paſſes under the Name of *Devotion*; and thus conſider'd, it has a great Propriety to the Female *Sex*. For *Devotion* is a tender Plant, that will ſcarce root in ſtiff or rocky Ground, but requires a ſupple gentle Soil, and therefore the feminine Softneſs and Pliableneſs are very apt and proper for it; and accordingly there have been very eminent Growths of it in that *Sex*. I need not heap up Examples of former Ages, but rather perſuade this to leave ſome at leaſt to the following; and the more conſiderable the Perſons are, the more conſpicu-

ous will be the Example, which ſeems the more to adapt it to thoſe I now ſpeak to. *Devotion* in a *Cloiſter* is as *recluſe* as the *Votary:* A *Light* rather under a *Buſhel* than on a *Candleſtick*; and, in an obſcure *Cottage* 'tis either not obſerv'd, or elſe thought to be but the Effect of *Deſtitution* and ſecular Wants, a *Reſerve* rather than a *Choice*; but when thoſe who are in the Eye of the World, the moſt eminent *Actors* on the *Theatre* of human Life, ſhall chooſe the part of a *Saint*, when thoſe who want none of the Divertiſements or Blandiſhments of *Earth*, ſhall have their Converſation in *Heaven*; this recommends it to the *Spectators* as the true and greateſt Object of human *Choice*; ſince 'tis choſen by thoſe who know the utmoſt Pretence of all its *Competitors*.

Nor is *Devotion* only more excellent in them, in regard of its Effects, but 'tis alſo more neceſſary in reſpect of their Obligation. *Devotion* is an *Abſtraction* from the World, and therefore cannot, in any eminent Degrees, be practiſed by thoſe whoſe Neceſſities or Buſineſs do much entangle them in it. From ſuch, a far leſs Proportion will be accepted, than from thoſe whoſe *Plenty* and *Eaſe* give them no other want but that of *Employment*. And certainly, if there be any of whom that can be truly ſaid, *Women* of *Quality* are the *Perſons*; for they, in this reſpect, exceed even *Men* of the like Rank. *Men* are often engag'd in publick *Employments*, and muſt lend moſt of their Time to the Uſe of others; or however all have the Care of their own private Affairs, the Managery of their Fortunes to employ them. But of *Women*, the utmoſt that is ordinarily required, is but a little eaſy *Inſpection* within their own *Walls*, the Overſight of a few *Children* and *Servants*. And even from this how many are by their Condition of Life exempted, and how many more do by their Niceneſs and Delicacy exempt themſelves? And ſurely ſo perfect a Vacancy is neither *happy* nor *ſafe*; wherefore God, who projects we ſhould be both, never deſign'd it for any of Mankind; but where

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he gives ſo much Liberty from *ſecular*, he expects a greater Diligence in *ſpiritual* Employments.

And indeed 'tis an amazing thing to ſee, that any, into whom he has breath'd the *Breath of Life*, on whom he has ſtamp'd the Image of his own *Eternity*, can think thoſe immortal *Souls* were given them, only to ſerve the mean and abject Uſes of their corruptible *Bodies*, for which the *Soul* of the dulleſt *Animal* wou'd have done as well: That Eating and Drinking, Sleep and Recreations, which are only uſeful to the ſupporting us in this World, are the only things for which we were ſent hither. And yet if we may meaſure their *Opinions* by their *Practice*, this ſeems to be the perſuaſion of many of our female *Gentry*, who look upon it as a degrading, a kind of attainder of their Blood, to do any thing but pleaſe their Senſes: An Error ſure of the moſt pernicious Conſequence imaginable. We know *a Lady of Pleaſure* is, in one Senſe, a very ſcandalous Epithet, and truly it is no very laudable one in the other. She whoſe ſole univerſal Aim is *Pleaſure*, will not think herſelf much out of her Road in the purſuit of any Particular; and ſhe that thinks ſhe lives for no other Purpoſe, will ſo often be at a loſs for *innocent Pleaſure*, that ſhe is almoſt under a Neceſſity to call in the *Nocent*, to ſerve the very End as ſhe purpoſes of her *Being*. But indeed, were they ſure to confine themſelves to ſuch as are harmleſs in their Kind, yet the Exceſs of them renders them ſinful, and the doting Purſuit denominates them *Lovers of Pleaſure more than Lovers of God*, a Character ſo black, that the Apoſtle completes his *Catalogue* of the worſt *Vices* of the worſt *Times* with it. And conſequently it agrees ſo exactly with the looſe degenerate Age into which we are fallen, that we ought to look upon it as a Matter of the higheſt Concern, to endeavour after a Reformation, and thereby prevent the falling down of the heavieſt Judgments on our Heads. The *Contempt* of *Religion* is grown to ſuch a height, that hardly the appearance

of Morality and Decency remains: *Ladies* of *Quality* looking upon it as a part of their very liberal Breeding, to ſhew that their Behaviour in all things depends entirely on their *Humour*, and that they are incapable of all Reſtraint. Do ſuch as theſe conſider, that 'tis the goodneſs of God which has deſign'd a Reſcue for thoſe whoſe Condition expoſes them to ſuch Dangers, by exacting a liberal expenſe of Time in the *Devotion*, to divert them from laviſhing both it and their Souls together? Neither does he by this defeat their Aim of a pleaſant Life, but rather aſſiſt it: For whereas ſenſual Delights are vagrant, and muſt be chas'd thro' a hundred Turnings and wild *Mazes*, the ſpiritual are fix'd, and one may always know where to find them. How often are the voluptuous in Pain to know which Pleaſure to chooſe? Like a ſurfeited Stomach, the greater Variety is ſet before it, the more it nauſeates all. What Difficulties has a Lady many times to reſolve, whether an Afternoon ſhall be ſpent at the *Court* or the *Theatre*? Whether in *Dancing* or at *Cards*? In giving or receiving *Viſits*? as not knowing which will beſt pleaſe her. But ſhe that knows the *Delights* of *Devotion*, knows withal that there is no other fit to come into Competition with it, and ſo is not diſtracted in her *Choice*, nor need go farther than her *Cloſet* for the moſt agreeable Entertainment. This, I know, will ſound a little incredible, to thoſe that take a *Cloſet* to have no other uſe than to be a Conſervatory of Toys and Trifles, that aſpire to no Pleaſure there above that of *Children*, the playing with the Pictures and Puppets that adorn it. Nor indeed do I pretend that ſuch ſhall find thoſe *Satisfactions* I ſpeak of. Thoſe whoſe Errand is to *Belzebub*, the God of *Flies*, muſt not expect to be treated by the God of *Iſrael*. An ingenuous Man will ſcorn to obtrude himſelf on thoſe who deſire not his Company, and *God* certainly will not make himſelf more cheap. Thoſe that will meet him in their *Cloſets*, muſt come with that Deſign, reſort thither as to an *Oratory*, and muſt alſo come frequently too. Spiri-

tual

tual *Joys* know not the way to a Place where they are not often invited; and as *Men* ſeek for each other, not in Places where they ſeldom or never come, but where they daily frequent, ſo God contrives not to meet us in that Place, where we appear rarely and accidentally, but where we uſually reſort.

There are ſo many printed *Directories*, for publick and private Worſhip, that I need only obſerve here the Order and Connexion of theſe two that they are neither to be ſever'd, nor yet to be rang'd prepoſterouſly. The *private* muſt not juſtle out the *publick*, for God expects his ſolemn Homage; and their huddling it up in *private*, as it may give *Men* ground to ſuſpect they pay none at all, ſo neither God nor Man can collect any thing better from it, than that they are aſham'd of the *Deity* they pretend to ſerve. On the other ſide, the *publick* muſt as little ſwallow up the *private*, and where it does, there may be juſt doubt of its Sincerity. Many *Attractives* there may be to *Church*, beſides that of *Piety*, and indeed, where that is really the Motive, it teaches ſo much *Reverence* to that awful *Preſence* they are to approach, as not to come without ſome *Preparation*. What Solicitude, what critical Niceneſs, will a *Lady* have for her *Dreſs*, when ſhe is to appear at a ſolemn Meeting at Court? And ſhall ſhe take no Care, how ſordidly, how undecently ſhe appears, when the *King of Kings* gives Audience? Shall many Hours, Days, nay, perhaps Weeks, be taken up in contriving for the one, and ſhall there never be a Minute allotted for the other? This were ſure very unequal, and yet this is the Caſe, where the *Devotion* of the *Cloſet* does not prepare for that of the *Church*. If the Mind be not firſt tun'd there, it will be very ill qualify'd for that *Harmony* of *Souls*, which is the only thing God regards in our publick Offices. But indeed, *Private Devotion* is not only a needful *Preparative* to that *ſacred* Commerce, but to our *Cure*. The World is only a larger ſort of a *Peſthouſe*: In every Corner of it we meet with infectious Airs, and thoſe that converſe in it

had need of this *Antidote.* How many *Temptations* does every Place, every Hour, every Interview, preſent, to the ſhocking even of that moral Integrity, which a ſober *Heathen* would judge fit to preſerve, much more of that ſtrict Piety our *Chriſtianity* exacts?

There is another Motive to this private and conſtant exerciſe of Devotion, which ſhould weigh more than all others, tho' every Motive has of itſelf weight ſufficient to incline a juſt Mind to the performance of it, and that is the Conſideration that God is preſent in all Places, that he ſees every Action, hears all Diſcourſes, and underſtands every Thought: He is wholly in every Place, but included in none; not bound with Cords, except thoſe of Love; not divided into Parts, not changeable into ſeveral Shapes, filling Heaven and Earth with his preſent Power, and never-abſent Nature. This ſure is enough to excite us to be frequent and fervent in our private Devotions, that our whole Lives may be ſanctify'd, and made acceptable to that moſt awful Preſence in which we always ſtand. We may always imagine God to be as the *Air* and the *Sea*, and we all inclos'd in his *Circle*, wrapt up in the Lap of his infinite *Nature*; or as *Infants* in the *Wombs* of their pregnant *Mothers:* and we can no more be remov'd from the Preſence of God than from our *Being.*

The preſence of God is underſtood by us in ſeveral Manners, and to ſeveral Purpoſes.

God is preſent by his *Eſſence*, which, becauſe it is infinite, cannot be contain'd within the Limits of any Place; and becauſe he is of an eſſential Purity, and ſpiritual Nature, he cannot be undervalu'd by being ſuppos'd preſent in the Places of unnatural Uncleanneſs. As the Sun reflexing upon the mud of Strands and Shores, is unpolluted in his Beams, ſo is God not diſhonoured when we ſuppoſe him in every one of his Creatures, and in every part of every one of them; being ſtill as unmixt with any unhandſom Adherence, as the Soul is in the Bowels of the Body.

God

God is every where preſent by his *Power*; he rolls the *Orbs* of Heaven with his *Hand*; he fixes the Earth with his *Foot*; he guides all the Creatures with his *Eye*, and refreſhes them with his Influence; he makes the Powers of Hell to ſhake with his *Terrors*, binds the Devils with his *Word*, throws them out with his *Command*, and ſends the Angels on Embaſſies with his *Decrees*. He hardens the joints of Infants, and confirms the Bones, when they are *faſhioned beneath ſecretly in the Earth*. He it is that aſſiſts at the numerous Productions of Fiſhes, and there is not one Hollowneſs in the bottom of the *Sea*, but he ſhews himſelf to be Lord of it, by ſuſtaining the Creatures that come to dwell in it. In the Wilderneſs, the *Bittern* and the *Stork*, the *Elk* and the *Bear*, live upon his Proviſions, revere his Power, and feel the Force of his *Almightineſs*.

God is more ſpecially preſent in ſôme Places, by the ſeveral and more ſpecial Manifeſtations of himſelf, to extraordinary Purpoſes. Thus his Seat is in Heaven: He ſits there encircled with all the outward Demonſtrations of his Glory, which he is pleas'd to ſhew to all the inhabitants of thoſe his inward and ſecret Courts. Thus they that *die in the Lord* may be properly ſaid to be gone to God; with whom, tho' they were before, yet they now enter into the ſecret of his *Tabernacle*, into the retinue and ſplendor of his *Glory*. But this manner of the divine Preſence is reſerv'd for the *Elect People of God*, and for their Portion in their Country.

God is, by *Grace* and *Benediction*, ſpecially preſent in holy Places, and in the ſolemn *Aſſemblies* of his *Servants*. If holy People meet in *Grots* and *Dens* of the *Earth*, when *Perſecution* or a publick Neceſſity diſturbs the *publick Order*, *Circumſtances*, and *Convenience*, God fails not to come thither to them; but God is alſo by the ſame, or a greater Reaſon, preſent there where they meet ordinarily, by Order and publick Authority. There God is preſent ordinarily; he will go out of his way to meet his *Saints*, when themſelves are forc'd out

of

of their way of Order by a ſad Neceſſity; but elſe God's uſual way is to be preſent in thoſe Places where his *Servants* are appointed ordinarily to meet. However, his Preſence there ſignifies nothing more than a readineſs to hear their Prayers, to bleſs their Perſons, to accept their Offices, and to like even the Circumſtance of orderly and publick Meeting.

God is eſpecially preſent in the *Hearts* of his *People*, by his holy Spirit. Indeed the *Hearts* of holy Men and Women are *Temples* in the truth of Things, and in Type and Shadow they are Heaven itſelf. For God reigns in the Hearts of his Servants, there is his Kingdom: The power of Grace has ſubdu'd all his Enemies, there is his Power: They ſerve him Night and Day, and give him Thanks and Praiſe, that is his Glory. The *Temple* itſelf is the heart of Man, *Chriſt* is the high Prieſt, who from thence ſends up the Incenſe of Prayers, joins them to his own Interceſſion, and preſents all together to his Father. The *Holy Ghoſt*, by his dwelling there, has alſo conſecrated it into a *Temple*. God dwells in our *Hearts* by *Faith*, *Chriſt* by his *Spirit*, and the *Spirit* by his *Purities*. Thus we are alſo Cabinets of the myſterious *Trinity*; and what is this ſhort of *Heaven* itſelf, but as *Infancy* is ſhort of *Manhood*, and *Letters* of *Words*? The ſame State of Life it is, but not the ſame Age: 'Tis Heaven in a Looking-Glaſs, dark but yet true, repreſenting the Beauties of the *Soul*, the Grace of *God*, and the Images of his eternal *Glory*, by the reality of a ſpecial Preſence.

God is eſpecially preſent in the conſciences of all Perſons, good and bad, by way of Teſtimony and Judgment, He is there a *Remembrancer* to call our Actions to Mind, a *Witneſs* to bring them to Judgment, and a *Judge* to acquit or to condemn. Tho' this manner of *Preſence* is in this Life imperfect, after the manner of this Life, and we forget many of our Actions, yet the greateſt changes of our State of Grace or Sin, our moſt conſiderable Actions, are always preſent, like *Capital Letters* to an aged

aged and dim Eye. At the Day of Judgment, God ſhall draw aſide the *Cloud*, manifeſt this manner of his *Preſence* more notoriouſly, and make it appear he was an *Obſerver* of our very Thoughts; that he only laid thoſe things by, which becauſe we covered them with Duſt and Negligence, were not then diſcern'd, but when we are riſen from our Duſt and Imperfection, they will all appear plain and legible.

Now the conſideration of this great Truth is of a very univerſal Uſe, in the whole Courſe of the Life of a *Chriſtian:* All the Conſequents and Effects of it are univerſal. He who remembers that God ſtands a *Witneſs* and a *Judge*, beholding every ſecret act of *Impiety*, muſt be harden'd in Impudence if he be not much reſtrain'd in his Temptation to *Sin*. For the greateſt part of Sin is taken away, if a Man has a Witneſs of his Converſation; and he is a great deſpiſer of God, who ſends a Boy away when he is going to commit Fornication, and yet will do it tho' he knows God is preſent, and cannot be ſent off: As if the *Eye* of a little Boy was more awful than the all-ſeeing Eye of God. He is to be fear'd in *publick*, he is to be fear'd in *private:* If you go forth he ſpies you, if you go in he ſees you, when you light the Candle he obſerves you, when you put it out then alſo God marks you. Be ſure that while you are in his ſight you behave yourſelf as becomes ſo holy a Preſence: But if you will ſin, retire yourſelf wiſely, and go where God cannot ſee you for no where elſe can you be ſafe. Certainly, if Men wou'd always actually conſider, and really eſteem this Truth, that God is the great *Eye* of the World, always watching over our Actions, and hath an ever-open *Ear* to hear all our Words, and an unweary'd *Arm* ever lifted up to cruſh a *Sinner* into Ruin, it wou'd be the readieſt way in the World to make Sin to ceaſe from among the children of Men, and for Men to approach to the bleſſed Eſtate of the *Saints* in *Heaven*, who cannot ſin, for they always walk in the *Preſence*, and behold the Face of God.

Say

Say with yourſelf, as *David* did, *Whither ſhall I go from thy Spirit, or whither ſhall I flee from thy Preſence? If I aſcend up into Heaven, thou art there: if I make my Bed in Hell, thou art there.* This Thought, by being frequent, will beget an habitual Dread and Reverence towards God, and Care in all your Actions: For it is a great Obligation and Engagement to act unblameably, when we act before the *Judge* who is infallible in his *Sentence*, all-knowing in his *Information*, ſevere in his *Anger*, powerful in his *Providence*, and intolerable in his *Wrath* and *Indignation*.

In the beginning of religious Actions, make an Act of *Adoration*, that is, ſolemnly worſhip God, place yourſelf in God's Preſence, and behold him with the eye of *Faith*. Let your Deſires fix on him as the object of your *Worſhip*, the reaſon of your *Hope*, and the fountain of your *Bleſſings*. For when you have placed yourſelf before him, and kneeled in his Preſence, it is moſt likely all the following parts of your *Devotion* will be anſwerable to the wiſdom of ſuch an Apprehenſion, and the glory of ſuch a Preſence. Let every thing you ſee, repreſent to your Spirit the Preſence, the Excellency, and the Power of God. Let your Converſation with the *Creatures* lead you to the *Creator*; for ſo ſhall all your Actions be done more frequently, with an actual Eye to God's *Preſence*, by your often ſeeing him in the *Glaſs* of the *Creation*. In the *Face* of the *Sun* you may ſee God's *Beauty*, in the *Fire* you may feel his *Heat* warming. In the Water his Gentleneſs to refreſh you: He it is that comforts your Spirits when you have taken *Cordials*, and it is the dew of *Heaven* that makes your *Field* give you *Bread*. This *Philoſophy*, which is obvious to every Man's Experience, is a good advantage to our *Piety*, and by this act of Underſtanding, our Wills are check'd from Violence and Miſdemeanor.

In your Retirement make frequent *Colloquies*, or ſhort Diſcourſes between *God* and your own *Soul*; *Seven times a Day did* David *praiſe him, and in the Night ſeaſon alſo did*

did he think upon him while he was waking. Every Act of Complaint or Thankſgiving, every Act of Rejoicing or of Mourning, every Petition, and every Return of the Heart in theſe Intercourſes, is a going to God, and appearing in his Preſence. This was long ſince by a ſpiritual Perſon call'd, *A building to God a Chapel in our Hearts.* It reconciles *Charity* and *Religion*, the neceſſities of our *Calling*, and the employments of *Devotion:* For thus, amidſt the Works for ſupplying the wants of human Life, you may retire into you *Chapel*, your *Heart*, and converſe with God by frequent Addreſſes and Prayers.

Repreſent and offer to God Acts of *Love* and *Fear*, which are the proper Effects of this Apprehenſion, and the proper Exerciſe of this Conſideration. For as God is every where *preſent* by his Power, he calls for *Reverence* and *Godly Fear:* As he is preſent to you in all your *Needs*, and relieves them, he deſerves your *Love*. And ſince in every Action of our Lives, we find one or other of theſe apparent, and in moſt things ſee both, it is a proper and proportionate Return, that to every ſuch *Demonſtration* of *God*, we expreſs ourſelves ſenſible of it, by admiring his divine Goodneſs, or trembling at his Preſence; ever obeying him becauſe we love him, and never diſobeying him becauſe we fear to offend him.

Let us remember, that God is in us, and that we are in him. We are his *Workmanſhip*, let us not *deface* it: We are in his *Preſence*, let us not pollute it by unholy and impure Actions. *God hath alſo wrought all our Works in us.* And becauſe he rejoices in his own Works, if we defile them, and make them unpleaſant to him, we walk perverſely with God, and he will walk crookedly towards us.

God is in the Bowels of your *Brother*; refreſh them when he needs it, and then you give your *Alms* in the preſence of God, and to God; who feels the *Relief* which you provide for your *Brother*.

God is in every Place; ſuppoſe it therefore to be a *Church*; and that decency of Deportment, and piety of Carriage, which you are taught by *Religion*, or by Cuſtom,

or by Purity and publick Manner to uſe in *Churches*, the ſame uſe in all *Places*; with this Difference only, that in *Churches* let your Deportment be religious, in external Forms and Circumſtances alſo; but there and every where let it be religious, in abſtaining from ſpiritual Indecencies, and in readineſs to do good Actions; that it may not be ſaid of you, as God once complain'd of his *People, Why hath my Beloved done wickedneſs to my Houſe?*

God is in every Creature; be cruel towards none, neither abuſe any by *Intemperance*. Remember that the Creatures, and every Member of this our body, is one of the leſſer Cabinets and Receptacles of God. They are ſuch as God has bleſt with his *Preſence*, hallow'd by his Touch, and ſeparated from unholy Uſe, by making them to belong to his Dwelling.

He walks as in the preſence of God, that converſes with him in frequent Prayer and frequent Communion, that runs to him in all his Neceſſities, and asks Counſel of him in all his Doubtings, that opens all his Wants to him, that weeps before him for his Sins, that asks Remedies and Supports for his Weakneſs, that hears him as a *Judge*, and reverences him as a *Lord*, obeys him as a *Father*, and loves him as a Patron.

This Exerciſe of conſidering the divine *Preſence* is an excellent Help to *Prayer*, producing in us Reverence and Awfulneſs to the divine *Majeſty* of *God*, and actual Devotion in our Offices.

It alſo produces a confidence in God, and Fearleſneſs of our Enemies; Patience in trouble, and *hope* of *Remedy*; ſince God is ſo nigh in all our ſad Accidents; he is a diſpoſer of the Hearts of Men, and even of things; he proportions out our Trials, and ſupplies us with Remedies; and where his *Rod* ſtrikes us, his *Staff* ſupports us. To which we may add this, that God, who is always with us, is, eſpecially by Promiſe in *Tribulation*, to turn the *Miſery* into a *Mercy*, and that our greateſt Trouble may become our advantage, by entitling us to a new manner of the divine *Preſence*.

It is apt to produce Joy and Rejoicing in God, we being more apt to delight in the Partners and Witneſſes of our Converſation. Every Degree of mutual abiding and converſing, being a Relation and an Endearment: We are of the ſame houſhold with God: He is with us, in our natural Actions to preſerve us, in our Recreations to reſtrain us, in our publick Actions to applaud or reprove us, in our private to obſerve us, in our Sleep to watch by us; in our Watchings to refreſh us: And if we walk with God in all his Ways, as he walks with us in all *ours*, we ſhall find perpetual Reaſons to enable us to keep that *Rule* of his, *Rejoice in the Lord always; and again, I ſay, Rejoice:* Which puts me in mind of a ſaying of an old religious Perſon, *There is one way of overcoming our ghoſtly Enemies, ſpiritual Mirth, and a continual bearing of God in our Minds.* This effectually reſiſts the Devil, and ſuffers us to receive no hurt from him.

This Exerciſe is apt alſo to *kindle holy Deſires of the enjoyment of God*, becauſe it produces Joy when we do enjoy him; the ſame Deſires that a *weak Man* has for a *Defender*, the *ſick Man* for a *Phyſician*, the *Poor* for a *Patron*, the *Child* for his *Father*, the *Bride* for her *Bridegroom*.

From the ſame Fountain are apt to iſſue, Humility of *Spirit*, Apprehenſions of our great Diſtance, and our great Needs, our daily Wants, and hourly Supplies, and Admiration of God's unſpeakable Mercies. It is the cauſe of great Modeſty and Decency in our Actions; it helps recollection of Mind, and reſtrains the Scatterings and Looſeneſs of wandering Thoughts; it eſtabliſhes the Heart in good Purpoſes, and leads us on to Perſeverance; it gains Purity and Perfection, according to the Saying of God to *Abraham, Walk before me and be perfect; with holy Fear, and holy Love*, and indeed every thing that pertains to a holy Life. When we ſee ourſelves placed in the eye of God, who ſets us to work, and will reward us plenteouſly, to ſerve him with *Eye-Service* is not very pleaſing, for he alſo ſees the Heart; and the want of this

Conſideration

Conſideration was declared to be the Cauſe why *Iſrael* ſinn'd ſo grievouſly: *For they ſay, the Lord hath forſaken the Earth, and the Lord ſeeth not; therefore the Land is full of Blood, and the City full of Perverſeneſs.* What a *Child* wou'd do in the Eye of his *Father*, and a *Pupil* before his *Tutor*, and a *Wife* in the Preſence of her *Husband*, and a *Servant* in the ſight of his *Maſter*; let us always do the ſame, for *we are made a Spectacle to God, to Angels, and to Men.* We are always in the ſight and preſence of the All-ſeeing and Almighty God, who is alſo to us a *Father* and a *Guardian*, a *Husband*, and a *Lord.*

Tho' from what has been already ſaid, Perſons of both Sexes may form a very lively and edifying Idea of *Religion*, and eſpecially *Chriſtianity*; yet ſince there can never be too much of Life and Edification in ſuch a Subject, we ſhall carry our Reflexion ſtill farther, both in *Generals* and *Particulars.*

Religion, in a large Senſe, ſignifies the whole duty of Man, comprehending in it *Juſtice*, *Charity*, and *Sobriety*; becauſe all theſe being commanded by God, they become a part of that Honour and Worſhip which we are bound to pay to him. 'Tis, in a more reſtrain'd Senſe, taken for that part of Duty, which particularly relates to God, in our *Worſhip* and *Adoration* of him; in confeſſing his Excellencies, loving his Perſon, admiring his Goodneſs, believing his Word, and doing all that which may, in a proper and direct manner, *do him Honour.* It contains the Duties of the firſt Table only, and the *internal* Actions of *Religion*, in which the Soul only is employ'd, and miniſters to God, in the ſpecial Actions of *Faith*, *Hope*, and *Charity.*

Faith believes the *Revelations* of God, *Hope* expects his *Promiſes*, and *Charity* loves his Excellencies and *Mercies.* *Faith* gives our Underſtanding to God, *Hope* gives up all the Paſſions and Affections to Heaven and heavenly things, and *Charity* gives the Will to the Service of God. *Faith* is oppos'd to *Infidelity*, *Hope* to *Deſpair*, and *Charity* to *Enmity* and *Hoſtility*; and theſe three

three ſanctify the whole Man, and make our Duty to God, and Obedience to his Commandments, to be willing, reaſonable, and delightful, and therefore to be intire, perſevering, and univerſal.

The Acts and Offices of Faith are, To *believe* every thing which God has reveal'd to us; and when once we are convinced that God has ſpoken it, to make no farther Inquiry, but humbly to ſubmit, ever remembring, that there are ſome things, which our Underſtanding cannot fathom, nor ſearch out their Depth.

To *believe* nothing concerning God but what is honourable and excellent; as knowing that *Belief* to be no honouring of God, which entertains of him any diſhonourable Thoughts. *Faith* is the *Parent* of *Charity*, and whatſoever *Faith* entertains, muſt be apt to produce *Love* to *God*. But he that believes God to be Cruel or Unmerciful, or to rejoice in the unavoidable Damnation of the greateſt Part of Mankind, or that he ſpeaks one thing and privately means another, thinks evil thoughts concerning God, and ſuch as for which we ſhou'd hate a Man, and therefore are great Enemies of *Faith*, and apt to deſtroy *Charity*. Our Faith concerning God, muſt be as himſelf has reveal'd and deſcrib'd his own Excellencies; and in our Diſcourſes we muſt remove from him all Imperfection, and attribute to him all *Excellency*.

To *give* ourſelves wholly up to *Chriſt* in *Heart* and *Deſire*, to become Diſciples of his Doctrine by *Choice* beſides *Conviction*, being in the *Preſence* of God but as *Idiots*, without any Principles of our own to hinder the Truth of God, but ſucking in greedily all that God has taught us, believing it infinitely, and loving to believe it. For this is an Act of *Love* reflected upon *Faith*, or an Act of *Faith* leaning upon *Love*.

To *believe* all God's Promiſes, and that whatſoever is promiſed in Scripture, ſhall on God's part be as ſurely perform'd, as if we had it in *poſſeſſion*. This Act makes us to rely upon God with the ſame Confidence, as we did on our Parents when we were *Children*, when we made

made no doubt, but whatſoever we needed we ſhou'd have, if it were in their Power.

To *believe* alſo the Conditions of the *Promiſe*, or that part of the *Revelation* which concerns our *Duty:* Many are apt to believe the Article of *Remiſſion* of Sins, but they believe it without the Condition of *Repentance*, or the Fruits of a *holy Life*; which is to believe the *Article* otherwiſe than God intended it. For the *Covenant* of the *Goſpel* is the great Object of *Faith*, and that ſuppoſes our *Duty* to anſwer his *Grace*; that God will be our God ſo long as we are his People. The other is not *Faith* but *Flattery*.

To *profeſs* publickly the *Doctrine* of *Jeſus Chriſt*, openly owning whatſoever he has *revealed* and commanded; not being aſhamed of the Word of God or of any Practices injoin'd by it; and this without complying with any Man's Intereſt, not regarding Favour, nor being mov'd with good Words; not fearing Diſgrace, or Loſs, or Inconvenience, or Death itſelf.

To *Pray* without Doubting, without Wearineſs, without Faintneſs, entertaining no Jealouſies or Suſpicions of God, but being confident of God's hearing us, and of his Returns to us, whatever the Matter or the Inſtance be; that if we do our Duty, he will be gracious and merciful.

Theſe are the *Acts of Faith*. The *Signs* are,

An *earneſt* and *vehement Prayer:* For it is impoſſible we ſhou'd heartily believe the things of God, and the Glories of the Goſpel, and not moſt importunately deſire them: For every thing is deſir'd according to our Belief of its Excellency and Poſſibility.

To do nothing for *Vain-glory*, but wholly for the Intereſts of *Religion*.

To be content with God for our Judge, for our Patron, for our Lord, for our Friend; deſiring God to be all in all to us, as we are in our Underſtandings and Affections wholly his.

To have all our Thoughts and principal Deſires fix'd upon the matters of *Truth*, the things of Heaven. For if a Man were adopted *Heir* to *Cæſar*, he wou'd, if he *believed* it real and effective, be wholly at Court in his Father's Eye. His Deſires would out-run his ſwifteſt Speed, and all his Thoughts would ſpend themſelves in creating Ideas and little fantaſtick Images of his future Condition. Now God has made us *Heirs* of his Kingdom, and *Co-heirs* with Chriſt: If we believ'd this, we would think, and act, and ſtudy accordingly.

But he that rejoices in Gain, whoſe Heart dwells in the World, and is eſpous'd to a fair Eſtate; who is tranſported with a light momentary Joy, is afflicted with Loſſes, and amaz'd with temporal *Perſecutions*; who eſteems Diſgrace or Poverty, in a good Cauſe, to be intolerable: This Man either has no Inheritance in Heaven, or believes none. He believes not that he is adopted to be the Son of God, the Heir of eternal Glory. *Shew me thy Faith by thy Works*, ſays the Apoſtle: *Faith* makes the Merchant diligent and adventurous, and that makes him rich. It is told us by Chriſt, He that *forgives ſhall be forgiven*. If we believe this, it is certain we ſhall forgive our Enemies; for none of us all but need to be forgiven. No Man can poſſibly deſpiſe or refuſe ſuch excellent *Glories*, as are reveal'd to them that are *Servants* of *Chriſt*; and yet we do nothing that is commanded us, as a Condition to obtain them. No Man cou'd work a Day's Labour without *Faith*; but becauſe he *believes* he ſhall have his *Wages* at the Day's or Week's end, if he does his *Duty*. But he only *believes*, who does that thing, which other Men in like Caſes do, when they do *believe*. He that *believes* Money gotten with Danger, is better than *Poverty* with Safety, will venture for it in unknown Lands or Seas; and ſo will he that *believes* 'tis better to get Heaven with *Labour*, than to go to Hell with *Pleaſure*.

He that believes does not make haſte, but waits patiently till the *times of Refreſhment* come, and dares truſt God for

for the Morrow. He is no more ſolicitous for the next Year, than he is for that which is paſt. And it is certain that Man wants Faith, who dares be more confident of being ſupply'd when he has Money in his Purſe, than when he has it only in Bills of Exchange from God; or that relies more upon his own Induſtry, than upon God's Providence, when his own Induſtry fails him. If you dare truſt to God, when the Caſe to human Reaſon ſeems impoſſible, and truſt to God then alſo out of Choice, not becauſe you have nothing elſe to truſt to, but becauſe he is the only Support of a juſt Conſcience, then you give a good Teſtimony of your *Faith*.

True *Faith* is *confident*, and will venture all the World upon the Strength of its Perſuaſion. Will you lay your Life on it, your Eſtate, your Reputation, that the Doctrine of *Jeſus Chriſt* is true in every Article? Then you have true *Faith:* But he that fears Men more than God, *believes* Men more than he *believes* in God.

Faith, if it be true, living, and juſtifying, cannot be ſeparated from a good *Life:* It works *Miracles*, makes a *Drunkard* become *ſober*, a *laſcivious* Perſon become *chaſte*, a *covetous* Man become *liberal: It overcomes the World, it works Righteouſneſs*, and makes us diligent to do, and chearfully to ſuffer, whatſoever God has placed in our way to Heaven.

I ſhall proceed to conſider the Means and Inſtruments to obtain Faith. The firſt is an humble, willing and docible Mind, a deſire to be inſtructed in the way of God; for Perſuaſion enters like a *Sun-beam* gently, and without Violence; open but the Window and draw the Curtain, and the *Sun* of *Righteouſneſs* will *enlighten* your Darkneſs.

Remove all Prejudice, and Love to every thing which may be contradicted by *Faith*. *How can ye believe*, ſaid Chriſt, *that receive Praiſe of one another?* An unchaſte Man cannot eaſily be brought to *believe*, that in chaſte Purity he ſhall ever ſee God. He that loves *Riches* can hardly *believe* the Doctrine of Poverty, and Renunciation

tion of the World. *Alms*, *Martyrdom*, and the Doctrine of the *Croſs*, is Folly to him that loves his *Eaſe* and *Pleaſures*. He that has within him any Principles contrary to the Doctrines of *Faith*, cannot eaſily become a Diſciple.

Prayer, which is inſtrumental in every thing, has a particular Promiſe in this, *He that lacks Wiſdom let him ask it of God*; and *if you give good things to your Children, how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give his Spirit to them that ask him?*

The Conſideration of the Divine *Omnipotence*, and infinite Wiſdom, and of our own Ignorance, are great Inſtruments of curing all Doubting, and ſilencing the Murmurs of *Infidelity*.

Avoid all Curioſity of enquiring into Particulars, and Circumſtances of Myſteries: For true Faith is full of Ingenuity and hearty Simplicity, free from Suſpicion, wiſe and confident, truſting upon *Generals*, without watching and prying into unneceſſary or undiſcernible *Particulars*. No Man carries his Bed into his Field to watch how his Corn grows, but *believes* upon the general Orders and Providence of Nature, and at Harveſt finds himſelf not deceived.

Be not buſy to diſpute the time of *Temptation*, but rely upon the Concluſion, and throw yourſelf upon God. Contend not with him but in Prayer, and in the Preſence, and with the Help, of a prudent and ſober *Guide*. Be ſure to eſteem all Changes of Faith, which offer themſelves in the time of your greateſt Weakneſs, contrary to the Perſuaſions of your beſt Underſtanding, to be *Temptations*, and reject them accordingly.

'Tis a prudent Courſe, that in our *Health* and beſt Advantages, we lay up particular Arguments and Grounds of Perſuaſion and Confidence, to be brought forth and uſed in the great Day of Expence; and that eſpecially in ſuch things in which we uſe to be moſt tempted, in which we are leaſt confident, which are

moſt

moſt neceſſary, and which commonly the *Devil* uſes to aſſault us withal in the Days of our Viſitation.

The Difference between *Faith* and *Hope* conſiſts in this, that the Objects of *Faith* are all things reveal'd, good and bad, Rewards and Puniſhments, things paſt, preſent, and to come; things that concern us, and things that concern us not: But *Hope* has for its Object, things only that are good, and fit to be hoped for, and reſpecting ourſelves; becauſe theſe things are offer'd to us upon Condition, of which we may ſo fail as we may change our Will; therefore our Certainty is leſs than the Adherences of Faith, which becauſe *Faith* relies upon one Propoſition, that is, the Truth of the Word of God, cannot be made uncertain in themſelves; whereas the Object of our Hope may become uncertain to us, with reſpect to our Attainment. For it is infallibly certain, that there is a *Heaven* for all the Godly, and for me among them all, if I do my Duty. But that I ſhall enter into Heaven is the Object of my *Hope*, not of my *Faith*, and is ſo ſure, as it is certain I ſhall perſevere in the Ways of God.

The *Acts of Hope* are, To *rely* upon God, with a firm Expectation of his *Promiſes*, always eſteeming every *Promiſe* of God as a Magazine of all that *Grace* and *Relief*, *which we can need in that Inſtance* for which the *Promiſe* is made.

To *eſteem* all the Danger of an Action, the Poſſibilities of Miſcarriages, and every croſs Accident that can intervene, to be no Defect on God's part, but either a *Mercy* on his part, or a Fault on ours. For then we ſhall be ſure to truſt in God, when we ſee him to be our Confidence, and ourſelves the Cauſe of all Miſchances.

To rejoice in the midſt of Misfortune, or ſeeming Sadneſs; knowing that this may work for good, if we be not wanting to ourſelves. This is a direct Act of *Hope*, to look through the *Cloud* for a *Beam* of the *Light* from God, which is call'd in Scripture, *Rejoicing in tribulation*,

ztion, when *the Lord of hope fills us with joy in be-ying.*

To *desire to Pray*, and *to long* for the great Object of ur *Hope*, the mighty Prize of our high Calling, and to lesire the other things of this Life as they are promised, hat is so far as they are made necessary and useful to us, in order to God's *Glory*, and the great End of *Souls*. *Hope* and *Fasting* are said to be the two *Wings* of *Prayer*; *Fasting* is but as the *Wing* of a *Bird*, but *Hope* is like the *Wing* of an *Angel*, soaring up to *Heaven*, and bearing our *Prayers* to the Throne of Grace. Without *Hope* it is impossible to *pray*, but *Hope* makes our *Prayers* reasonable, passionate, and religious; for it relies upon God's Promise, or the Experience of his Providence. *Prayer* is always in proportion to our *Hope*, zealous and affectionate.

Perseverance is the Perfection of *Hope* and its last Act. So long as our Hope continues, so long we go on in Duty and Diligence.

The *Rules* to govern *Hope* are these following:

Let *your Hope be moderate*, proportion'd to your State, Person and Condition, whether it be for *Gifts* or *Graces*, or temporal Favours. It is an ambitious Hope for Persons, whose Diligence exceeds not theirs that are least in the Kingdom of *Heaven*, to *believe themselves* as dear to God as the greatest *Saints*; or that they shall have a Throne equal with St. *Paul*, or the blessed Virgin *Mary*. *Hope* that God will crown your Endeavours with equal Measures of that Reward, which he indeed freely gives, but yet gives in Proportion to your Endeavours. *Hope* for good Success according to, or not much beyond, the Efficacy of the Cause and the Instrument. Let the *Husbandman* hope for a good *Harvest*, not for a rich Kingdom, or a victorious Army.

Let your Hope be well grounded, relying upon just Confidences; that is, upon God, according to his *Revelations* and *Promises*. For 'tis possible for a Man to have a vain Hope in God; and in Matters of *Religion*, it is

Preſumption to hope, that God's Mercies will be pour'd forth upon lazy Perſons, that do nothing towards holy and ſtrict Walking, that truſt and long for an Event, beſides and againſt all Application of the Means. Rely not in temporal things upon uncertain *Propheſies* and *Aſtrology*, not upon your own Wit or Induſtry, not upon Gold and Friends, not upon Armies and Princes. Truſt not in Phyſicians for Health, who are but Men, and cannot always cure themſelves. Uſe all lawful Means, but expect nothing from them above their natural or ordinary Efficacy; and in the Uſe of them expect a Bleſſing from God. A *Hope* that is eaſy and credulous, is an *Arm* of *Fleſh*, and will miſerably diſappoint us at laſt.

Let your *Hope* be without Vanity, ſober, grave, and ſilent, fix'd in the Heart, not born upon the *Lip*; apt to ſupport your Spirits within, but not provoke Envy abroad.

Let your *Hope* be of things poſſible, ſafe and uſeful. He who *hopes* for an Opportunity of acting his *Revenge*, or *Luſt* or *Rapine*, watches to do himſelf a Miſchief. All Evils incident to ourſelves, or Brethren, are Objects of our *Fear* not *Hope*. And when we truly underſtand them, things uſeleſs and unſafe can no more be wiſh'd for, than things impoſſible can be obtain'd.

Let your *Hope* be *patient*, without wearineſs of Spirit, or haſtineſs in point of Time. Make no Limits or Preſcriptions to God, but let your Prayers and Endeavours go on ſtill, with a conſtant Attendance on the Methods of divine Providence. The Men of *Bethulia* reſolv'd to wait upon God but *five* Days longer; but *Deliverance* ſtaid *ſeven* Days, and yet came at laſt. Take not every Accident for an argument of *Deſpair*, but go on ſtill in *hoping*, and begin again to work, if any ill Accident has interrupted you.

The *Means* to cure *Deſpair*, and to continue or increaſe in *Hope*, are partly by *Conſideration*, partly by *Exerciſe*.

Apply

Apply your Mind to cure all the proper Cauſes of *Deſpair*, which are *Weakneſs of Spirit*, or *Violence* of *Paſſion*. He who covets greedily, is impatient of *Delay*, and deſperate in croſs Accidents. He who is little of *Heart*, is alſo little of *Hope*, and apt to be *melancholy* and *ſuſpicious*.

Deſpiſe the things of the World, and be indifferent to all Changes and Events of *Providence*: And for the things of God, the *Promiſes* are ſure to be perform'd in kind. Where there is leſs Variety of Chance, there is leſs Poſſibility of being diſappointed. But he who creates to himſelf thouſands of little *Hopes*, uncertain in the *Promiſe*, and fallacious in the Event, depending upon ten thouſand Circumſtances, as are all the Things of this World, ſhall often fail in his Expectations, and be apt to diſtruſt Providence at laſt.

So long as your *Hopes* are regular and reaſonable in temporal Affairs, ſuch as are *Deliverances* from *Enemies*, eſcaping a *Storm*, or *Shipwreck*, *Recovery* from *Sickneſs*, *Ability* to pay your *Debts*, and the like; Remember, there are ſome things *ordinary*, and ſome things *extraordinary* to prevent *Deſpair*. In *ordinary*, remember that the very *hoping* in God, is an Endearment of him, and a means to obtain his Bleſſing. *I will deliver him, becauſe he hath put his truſt in me.* There are in God all thoſe glorious Attributes and Excellencies, which in the nature of things, can poſſibly create or confirm *Hope*; he is *ſtrong*, *wiſe*, *true*, *loving*: There cannot be added another Capacity to create a Confidence; for upon theſe Premiſes we cannot fail of receiving what is fit for us. God has oblig'd himſelf by *Promiſe*, that we ſhall have the good of every thing we deſire; for even Loſſes and Diſappointments ſhall *work for the good of them that fear God.* If we will truſt the truth of God for Performance of the *Generals*, we may well truſt his Wiſdom to chooſe for us the *Particulars*: But the *extraordinary* ways of God are apt to ſupply the Defect of all natural and humane Poſſibilities. God has in many Inſtances given extra-

ordinary Virtue to the ſecond Cauſes and Inſtruments, he has given excellent *Spirit* and *Vigour* to the *Sufferers*, arming them with ſtrange Courage, heroick Fortitude, invincible Reſolution, and glorious Patience. His Providence produces ſtrange things beyond common Rules; he who led *Iſrael* thro' a *Sea*, who made a *Rock* pour forth Waters, the *Heavens* to give them Bread and Fleſh, and whole *Armies* to be deſtroy'd with fantaſtick Noiſes, can do what he pleaſes, and ſtill retains the ſame Affections for his People, and the ſame Providence over Mankind as ever. It is impoſſible for that Man to *deſpair*, who remembers that his *Helper is omnipotent*, infinitely *loving*, and infinitely *wiſe*, chooſing better for us than we can for ourſelves. This in all Ages and Chances has ſupported the afflicted People of God, and carry'd them on dry Ground thro' a Red Sea. God invites and cheriſhes the *Hopes* of Men by all the variety of his Providence.

If your Caſe be brought to the laſt Extremity, and you are even at the very Brink of the Grave, yet then *deſpair* not; at leaſt, wait a little longer; and remember that whatſoever final Accident takes away all *Hope* from you, if you ſtay a little longer, and in the mean while bear it patiently, it will alſo take away all *Deſpair* too; for when you enter into the Regions of *Death*, you reſt from all your *Labours* and your *Fears*.

Let them who are tempted to *deſpair* of their *Salvation*, conſider how much Chriſt ſuffer'd to redeem us from Sin and its eternal Puniſhment. He who conſiders this, muſt needs believe, that the Deſires which God had to ſave us, were not leſs than infinite, and therefore not eaſily to be ſatisfy'd without effecting it.

Let no Man *deſpair* of God's Mercies to forgive him, unleſs he be ſure that his Sins be greater than God's Mercies; if they be not, we have much reaſon to *hope*, that the ſtronger Ingredients will prevail, ſo long as we are in the Day and State of *Repentance*, within the Poſſibility and Latitude of the *Covenant*; and as long as any *Promiſe* can but reflect upon him with an oblique *Beam*

of

of Comfort, poſſibly the Man may err in his Judgment of Circumſtances, and therefore let him *fear*; but becauſe it is not certain he is miſtaken, let him not *deſpair*.

Conſider, that tho' God knows all the Events of Men, and what their final Condition ſhall be, who ſhall be ſav'd, and who ſhall periſh; yet he treats them as his own, calls them to be his own, offers fair Conditions as to his own, gives them Bleſſings, Arguments of Mercy and Inſtances of *Fear* to deter them from *Death*, and call them home to *Life*; all which ſhews no Cauſe of *Deſpair* to them; therefore much leſs ſhould any Man *deſpair* for himſelf, ſince he was never able to read the Scrolls of eternal *Predeſtination*.

Remember that *Deſpair* belongs only to paſſionate *Fools* or *Villains*, ſuch as were *Achitophel* and *Judas*; or elſe to *Devils* and damn'd Perſons. And as the *Hope* of *Salvation* is a good Diſpoſition towards it, ſo is *Deſpair* a certain Conſignation to eternal Ruin. A Man may be *damn'd* for *deſpairing* to be *ſav'd*. *Deſpair* is the proper Paſſion of *Damnation*. God has placed *Truth* and *Felicity* in *Heaven*, *Conſideration* and *Repentance* upon *Earth*, but *Miſery* and *Deſpair* are the Portion of Hell.

Have always in mind the *Promiſes* of God, and the *Remembrances*, the Experience, the former Senſes of the divine Favours; that thence you may argue from times *paſt* to the *preſent*, and enlarge to the *future* and to greater Bleſſings. For tho' the Conjectures and Expectations of *Hope*, are not like the Concluſions of *Faith*, yet they are a Defence againſt the Searchings of *Deſpair* in temporal things, and an Anchor of the Soul, ſure and ſtedfaſt, againſt the Fluctuations of the Spirit in Matters of Salvation. God has preſerv'd me from many Sins, may I argue with myſelf, and his Mercies are infinite; I *hope* he will ſtill preſerve me from many more. I have ſinn'd and God ſmote me not, his Mercies are ſtill over the *Penitent*; I *hope* he will deliver me from all the Evils I have deſerv'd. He has forgiven me many Sins of

Malice, and therefore ſurely he will pity my Infirmities. God viſited my Heart and changed it. He loves the Work of his own Hand; and ſuch my Heart is now become; I *hope* he will love this too. When I repented, he received me graciouſly, and therefore I *hope*, if I do my Endeavour, he will totally forgive me. He help'd my ſlow and weak Beginnings, and therefore I *hope* he will lead me to Perfection. When he had given me ſomething firſt, then he gave more; I *hope* therefore he will keep me from falling, and give me the Grace of *Perſeverance*. He has choſen me to be a Diſciple of *Chriſt*'s Inſtitution, he has elected me to his Kingdom of *Grace*, and therefore I *hope* alſo to ſee his Kingdom of *Glory*. He died for me when I was his Enemy, and therefore I *hope* he will ſave me, when he has reconcil'd me to himſelf, and is become my Friend. *God has given us his Son, how ſhall he not with him give us all things elſe?*

Take you care only of your Duty, of the Means and proper Inſtruments of your Work, and leave the End to God. Lay that up with him, and he will take care of all that is intruſted with him; which being an Act of Confidence in God, is alſo a Means of Security to you.

By ſpecial Acts of ſpiritual Prudence and Reaſoning, ſecure the confident *Belief* of the *Reſurrection*, and you cannot but *hope* for every thing elſe, which you may reaſonably expect, or lawfully deſire, upon the Stock of the divine Mercies and Promiſes.

If *Deſpair* ſeizes you in a particular temporal Inſtance, let it not defile your Soul with impure Mixture, or blend with your ſpiritual Conſiderations; but rather let it make you eſtabliſh your Soul in Matters of *Religion*, that by being thrown out of your earthly *Dwelling* and *Confidence*, you may retire into the *Strengths* of *Grace*, and *hope* the more ſtrongly in that, by how much your are the more defeated in this, that *deſpair* of good Fortune, or Succeſs, may become the neceſſary Spur to all Virtue.

Enough

Enough has been ſaid of *Faith* and *Hope:* We come now to *Charity*, or the *Love* of *God.* Love is the greateſt thing he can give us, and the greateſt thing we can give to God; for God himſelf is *Love. Charity* is the old, the new, and the great Commandment. It is indeed all the Commandments, for it is the *fulfilling of the Law.* It does the Work of all other *Graces*, without any Inſtrument but its own immediate Virtue. For as the *Love* of Sin makes a Man ſin againſt all his own Reaſon, all the diſcourſes of Wiſdom, all the Advices of his Friends, without Temptation, and without Opportunity, ſo does the *Love* of God make a Man chaſte, without the laborious Acts of faſting and exterior Diſcipline, temperate in the midſt of *Feaſts*, and active enough to chooſe it without intermediate Appetites. It reaches at *Glory* thro' the very heart of *Grace*, without any other Aims but thoſe of *Love.* It is a *Grace* that loves God for himſelf, and our Neighbours for his ſake. The conſideration of God's Goodneſs and Bounty, the Experience of thoſe profitable and excellent Emanations from him, may be, and moſt commonly are, the firſt *Motive of our Love*; but when we are once enter'd, and have taſted the goodneſs of God, we love the Spring for its own Excellency, paſſing from *Paſſion* to *Reaſon*, from Thinking to Adoring, from Senſe to Spirit, from Self love to an union with God; this is the Image, and little Repreſentation of *Heaven.* It is *Beatitude* in *Picture*, or rather the *Infancy* and *Beginnings* of *Glory.*

We need no Incentives, by way of ſpecial Enumeration, to move us to the Love of God; for we cannot love any thing, for any Excellence, real or imaginary, but that Excellence is infinitely more eminent in God. There can but two things create Love, *Perfection* and *Uſefulneſs*; to which anſwer on our part, *Admiration* and *Deſire*, both which are centred in *Love.* For the Entertainment of *Admiration*, there is in God an *infinite Nature*, *Immenſity* or *Vaſtneſs*, without *Extenſion* or *Limits*, *Immutability*, *Eternity*, *Omnipotence*, *Omniſcience*, *Holineſs*,

Dominion, Providence, Bounty, Mercy, Juſtice, Perfection. He is the original of all Things, and the *End* alſo to which all Things, and all Actions muſt be directed, and will at laſt arrive. The Conſideration of which may be heighten'd, if we conſider our Diſtances from all theſe *Glories.* Our Smallneſs and limited Nature, our Nothing, our Inconſtancy, our Age like a Span, our Weakneſs and Ignorance, our Poverty, our Inadvertency and Inconſideration, our Diſabilities and Diſaffections to do good, our harſh Natures and unmerciful Inclinations, our univerſal Iniquity, and our Neceſſities and Dependencies, not only on *God* originally and eſſentially, but even our need of the meaneſt of *God's* Creatures, and our being obnoxious to the weakeſt and moſt contemptible. But for the Entertainment of *Deſire* we may conſider, that in him is a *Torrent* of *Pleaſure* for the *Voluptuous:* He is the *Fountain* of Honour for the *Ambitious*, an inexhauſtible Treaſure for the *Covetous.* Our vicious Hearts are in love with fantaſtick Pleaſures, and images of Perfections, which are truly and really no where to be found but in *God.* Our *Virtues* therefore have ſuch proper Objects, that it is but reaſonable they ſhou'd all turn into Love; for certain it is, that this Love will turn into Virtue. *As to the Acts of Love to God, Obedience* is the chief: *This is Love, that we keep his Commandments.*

Love does all things which may pleaſe the *beloved* Perſon; It is alſo ſedulous and inquiſitive in the Inſtances of its Expreſſion.

Love gives away all things to advance the Intereſt of the Perſon *belov'd:* It relieves all that he wou'd have reliev'd, and ſpends itſelf in ſuch real *Significations* as it is enabled withal. He never *lov'd* God that will quit any thing of his *Religion* to ſave his *Money:* Love is always liberal and communicative.

It ſuffers all things that are impos'd by its *Beloved*, or that can happen for his ſake, or that intervene in his Service, chearfully, ſweetly, willingly, expecting that God

God ſhou'd turn them into Good, and Inſtruments of Felicity. *Love* is patient, and content with any thing.

Love alſo is impatient of any thing that may diſpleaſe the *beloved* Perſon, hating all *Sin* as the enemy of its Friend; for *Love* contracts all the ſame Relations, the ſame Friendſhips, and the ſame Hatreds. All Affection to Sin is perfectly inconſiſtent with the *Love* of God. *Love* is not divided between God and God's Enemies: We muſt *love* God with all our Heart, give him a whole and undivided Affection, having *Love* for nothing elſe but ſuch things as he allows, and which he commands or *loves* himſelf.

Love endeavours for ever to be preſent, to converſe with, to enjoy, to be united with its Object; loves to be talking of him, reciting his Praiſes, repeating his Words, imitating his Geſtures, tranſcribing his Copy in every thing: And every degree of Union, and every degree of Liking, is a degree of *Love*, which can endure any thing by the Abſence, and the Diſpleaſure of the *Beloved*. For we are not to uſe *God* and *Religion* as Men uſe *Perfumes*, with which they are delighted when they have them, but can very well be without them. True *Charity* is reſtleſs till it enjoys God in ſuch Inſtances in which it wants him. It is like *Hunger* and *Thirſt*, it muſt be *fed* or it cannot be anſwered, Nothing can ſupply the Preſence, or make Recompenſe for the abſence of God, or of the effects of his Favour, and the light of his Countenance.

True *Love*, in all Accidents, looks upon the Perſon *belov'd*, and obſerves his Countenance, and how he approves or diſapproves it, and accordingly looks ſad or chearful. He who loves God is not diſpleas'd at thoſe Accidents which God chooſes, nor murmurs at thoſe Changes, which he meets in his Family, nor envies at thoſe Gifts he beſtows; but chooſes as he likes, and is rul'd by his Judgment: Is perfectly of his Perſuaſion, *loving* to learn where God is the Teacher, and being

content to be ignorant or ſilent, where he is not pleas'd to open himſelf.

Love is curious in little Things, or Circumſtances, or Meaſures, and little Accidents, not allowing to itſelf any Infirmity which it ſtrives not to maſter, aiming at what it cannot reach, deſiring to be of an angelical *Purity*, of a perfect Innocence, a ſeraphical Fervour, and fears every Image of Offence: Is as much afflicted at an idle Word as ſome at an Act of *Adultery*, and will not allow itſelf ſo much Anger as will diſturb a *Child*, nor endure the impurity of a *Dream*. This is the curioſity and niceneſs of *Divine Love*; this is the fear of God, and is the Daughter and Production of *Love*.

But becauſe this Paſſion is pure as the brighteſt and ſmootheſt Mirror, and therefore is apt to be ſully'd with every impure Breath, we muſt be careful that our *Love* to God be governed by theſe Rules and Meaſures.

That it be ſweet, even, and full of Tranquillity, having in it no Violences or Tranſports, but going on in a courſe of holy Actions and Duties, which are proportionable to our Condition and preſent State; not to ſatisfy all the *Deſire*, but all the Proportions and Meaſures of our Strength. A new beginner in *Religion* has paſſionate and violent Deſires, but they muſt not be the Meaſure of his Actions. He muſt conſider his Strength, his late Sickneſs and State of Death, the proper Temptation of his Condition; and ſtand at firſt upon his Defence; not go to ſtorm a ſtrong Fort, or attack a potent Enemy, or do heroick Actions, fitter for *Giants* in *Religion*. Indiſcreet Violences, and untimely Forwardneſs, are the *Rocks* of *Religion*, againſt which tender Spirits often ſuffer Shipwreck.

Let your *Love* be prudent, and without Illuſion; let it expreſs itſelf in ſuch Inſtances as God has choſen, or which we chooſe ourſelves, by proportion to his Rules and Meaſures. *Love* turns into *doting* when *Religion* turns into *Superſtition*. No degree of *Love* can be imprudent, but

but the Expreſſions may: We cannot *love* God too much, but we may proclaim it in indecent manners.

Let your *Love* be firm, conſtant, and inſeparable; not coming and returning like the *Tide*, but deſcending like a never-failing *River*, ever running into the *Ocean* of divine Excellency, paſſing on in the *Channel* of Duty and conſtant Obedience, and never ceaſing to be what it is, till it comes to what it deſires to be; being ſtill a *River* till it be turned into *Sea* and Vaſtneſs, even the immenſity of a bleſſed *Eternity*.

Tho' the Conſideration of the Divine Excellencies and Mercies be infinitely ſufficient to produce in us *Love* to God, yet that we may the better kindle and increaſe our *Love* to him, we muſt cut off all earthly and ſenſual *Loves*, for they pollute and unhallow the pure and ſpiritual *Love*. Every degree of inordinate Affection to the things of this World, and every Act of *Love* to a Sin, is a perfect Enemy to the *Love* of God. And it is great ſhame to take any part of our Affection from the eternal God, to beſtow it upon a *Creature*, in defiance of its *Creator*; or to give it to the *Devil*, our open Enemy, in Diſparagement of him who is the Fountain of all Excellencies, and celeſtial Amities.

Lay *Fetters* and *Reſtraints* upon the imaginative and fantaſtick part, becauſe our Fancy being an imperfect and lighter Faculty, is uſually pleas'd with entertainment of Shadows; and becauſe the things of the World fill it with ſuch *Beauties*, and fantaſtick *Imagery*, it preſents ſuch Objects as amiable to the Affections, and elective Powers. Perſons of Fancy, ſuch as are *Women* and *Children*, have always the moſt violent *Loves*. But then, if we be careful with what *Images* we fill our *Fancies*, we may the ſooner rectify our *Loves*. To this Purpoſe it is good that we tranſplant the Inſtruments of *Fancy* into *Religion*; for which reaſon *Muſick* was brought into *Churches*, together with Ornaments, Perfumes, comely Garments, Solemnities, and decent *Ceremonies*, that the buſy and leſs diſcerning

Fancy

Fancy being brib'd with its proper Objects, may be inſtrumental to a more celeſtial and ſpiritual *Love*.

Remove Solicitude or worldly Cares, and multitudes of ſecular Buſineſſes; for if theſe take up the Intention and actual Application of our Thoughts, and Meditations, they will alſo poſſeſs our Paſſions; which, if they be fill'd with one Object, tho' ignoble, cannot attend another, tho' more excellent. We always contract a Friendſhip and Relation with thoſe with whom we converſe. Our very Country is dear to us for our being in it, and the Neighbours of the ſame Village, and thoſe that buy and ſell with us, have ſeiz'd upon ſome Portions of our *Love*. Wherefore, if we dwell in the Affairs of the World, we ſhall alſo grow in *love* with them; and all our *Love*, or all our *Hatred*, all our *Hopes*, or all our *Fears*, which the eternal God would graciouſly ſecure to himſelf, and eſteem among his Treaſures and precious Things, ſhall be ſpent upon Trifles and Vanities.

Do not only chooſe the things of God, but ſecure your Inclinations, and Aptneſſes for God, and for *Religion*. It will be a hard thing for a Man to do ſuch a perſonal Violence to his firſt Deſires, as to chooſe whatſoever he has no Mind to. A Man will many times ſatisfy the Importunity, and daily Solicitations of his firſt Longings. There is nothing therefore that can ſecure our *Love to God*, but ſtopping the natural Fountains, and making *Religion* to grow near the firſt Deſires of the Soul.

Converſe with God by frequent *Prayer*; in particular pray that your *Deſires* may be right, and *love* to have your Affections regular and holy. To which purpoſe make frequent Ejaculations and Communions, and an aſſiduous daily Devotion. Diſcover to him all your Wants, complain to him of all your Affronts, lay your Misfortunes and all your ill News before him: Call to him for *Health*, run to him for Counſel, beg of him for Pardon. It is as natural to *love him* to whom we make ſuch Addreſſes, and of whom we have ſuch Dependencies, as it is for *Children* to *love* their *Parents*.

Conſide

Conſider the Immenſity and Vaſtneſs of the divine *Love* to us, expreſt in all the Emanations of his Providence, in his *Creation*, in his *Preſervation* of us. For it is not my Prince or my Patron, or my Friend that ſupports me, or relieves my Needs, but God who made the Corn that my Friend ſends me; who created the Grapes, and ſupported him who has as many Dependencies, and as many natural Neceſſities, and as perfect Diſabilities as myſelf. God indeed made him the Inſtrument of his Providence to me, as he has made his own Land, or his own Cattle to him, with this only Difference, that God by his Miniſtration to me, intends to beſtow on him a Favour and Reward, which to natural Inſtruments he does not.

The leaſt *Love* to God that is, muſt be obedient, pure, ſimple, and communicative: It muſt exclude all Affection to Sin, and all inordinate Affection to the World: It muſt be expreſſive, according to our Power, in the Inſtances of Duty; and muſt be *Love* for *Love*'s ſake. And of this *Love*, *Martyrdom* is the higheſt Inſtance, that is, a Readineſs of Mind rather to ſuffer any Evil than to do any. Of this our bleſſed Saviour affirm'd, *That no Man had greater Love.* This is the higheſt point of Duty, the greateſt Love that God requires of Man, and yet he that is imperfect muſt have this *Love* alſo in preparation of Mind; and muſt differ from another in nothing, except in the degrees of Promptneſs and Alacrity. In this Senſe, he who *loves* God truly, tho' but with a beginning and tender *Love*, yet he *loves* God with all his *Heart*; that is, with that degree of *Love* which is the higheſt point of Duty, and of God's Charge upon us; and he that loves God with all his Heart, may yet increaſe with the *Increaſe of God*, juſt as there are degrees of *Love to God* among the *Saints*, and each of them love him with all their Powers and Capacities.

The greater State of this Love is the *Zeal of Love* which runs out into Excreſcencies and Suckers, like a fruitful and pleaſant Tree, burſting out into Gums, and producing

producing Fruits, not of a monſtrous, but of an extraordinary and heroick Greatneſs: Concerning which theſe Cautions are to be obſerved.

If Zeal be in the beginnings of our ſpiritual *Birth*, or be ſhort, ſudden, and tranſient, or be a conſequent of a Man's natural Temper, or come upon any Cauſe, but after a long growth of a temperate and well-regulated Love, it is to be ſuſpected for *Paſſion* and *Forwardneſs* rather than the vertical point of *Love*.

That *Zeal* only is good, which in a *fervent Love*, has temperate *Expreſſions*; for let the Affection boil as high as it can, yet if it boil over into irregular and ſtrange Actions, it will have but few, but need many Excuſes. *Elijah* was *zealous* for the Lord of Hoſts, and yet he was ſo tranſported with it, that he cou'd not receive Anſwer from *God*, till by *Muſick* he was recompos'd and tam'd: And *Moſes* broke *both* the *Tables of the Law*, by being paſſionately *zealous* againſt them that broke the *firſt*.

Zeal muſt ſpend its greateſt Heat, principally in thoſe things that concern ourſelves; but with great Care and Reſtraint in thoſe that concern others.

Remember that *Zeal* being an Excreſcence of *divine Love*, muſt in no Senſe contradict any Action of *Love*. *Love* to God includes *Love* to our Neighbour, and therefore no pretence of *Zeal* for *God*'s Glory muſt make us uncharitable to our Brother; for that is juſt ſo pleaſing to *God*, as *Hatred* is an Act of *Love*.

That *Zeal* which concerns others, can ſpend itſelf in nothing but Arts and Actions, and charitable Inſtruments for their good. When it concerns the good of many that one ſhou'd ſuffer, it muſt be done by Perſons of a competent Authority and in great Neceſſity; in rare Inſtances, according to the Law of *God* or *Man*, but never for private Right, or for trifling Accidents, or in miſtaken Propoſitions. The *Zealots* in the old Law had Authority to transfix and ſtab ſome certain Perſons, but *God* gave them Warrant: It was in the Caſe of *Idolatry*, or ſuch notorious Crimes, the Danger

of

of which was inſupportable, and the Cogniſance of which was infallible; and yet that Warrant expir'd with the *Synagogue*.

Zeal in the inſtances of our Duty and perſonal Deportment, is more ſafe than in matters of Counſel and Actions, beſides our juſt Duty and tending towards *Perfection*. Tho' in theſe Inſtances there is not a direct *Sin*, even where the Zeal is leſs wary, yet there is much Trouble, and ſome Danger; as if it be ſpent in the too forward *Vows* of *Chaſtity*, and Reſtraints of natural and innocent Liberties.

Zeal may be let looſe in the inſtances of *internal*, perſonal, and ſpiritual Actions, which are matters of direct *Duty:* As in *Prayers*, and Acts of *Adoration*, *Thankſgiving*, and *frequent Addreſſes*; provided that no direct Act paſs upon them to defile them: Such as Complacency and Opinions of *Sanctity*, cenſuring others Scruples and Opinions of Neceſſity, unneceſſary Fears, Superſtitions, numbrings of Times and Hours. But let your *Zeal* be as forward as it will, as devout as it will, as ſeraphical as it will, in your direct Addreſs and Intercourſe with *God*, there is no Danger, no Tranſgreſſion. Do all the parts of your Duty as earneſtly as if the *Salvation* of all the World, and the whole *Glory* of *God*, and the *Confuſion* of all Devils, and all that you hope or deſire, did depend upon every one Action.

Let *Zeal* be ſeated in the Will or Choice, and regulated with Prudence and a ſober Underſtanding, not in the Fancy and Affections, for theſe will make it full of Noiſe and empty of Profit, but that will make it deep and ſmooth, material and devout.

Zeal is not a direct Duty, no where commanded for itſelf, and is nothing but a forwardneſs and circumſtance of another Duty. It is therefore then only acceptable, when it advances the *Love* of *God* and our Neighbours, whoſe Circumſtances require it. That *Zeal* is only ſafe, only acceptable, which increaſes *Charity* directly; and becauſe Love to our Neighbour, and Obedience to *God*,

are

are the two great Portions of *Charity*, we muſt never account our *Zeal* to be good, but as it advances both theſe, if it be in a Matter which relates to both, or ſeverally, if it relates ſeverally.

Having conſider'd the *internal Acts* of *Religion*, we come now to the *external*; and by it we are taught to preſent to *God* our *Bodies*, as well as our *Souls*, for God is the Lord of both; and if the *Body* ſerves the *Soul* in Actions natural, civil, and intellectual, it muſt not be eas'd only in the offices of *Religion*, unleſs the Body ſhall expect no Portion of the Rewards of *Religion*, ſuch as are *Reſurrection*, *Re-union*, and *Glorification*.

The Actions of the *Body*, as they ſerve to *Religion*, and as they are diſtinguiſhed from *Sobriety* and *Juſtice*, relate either to the *Word* of *God*, or to *Prayer*, or to *Repentance*; and accordingly *reading and hearing the Word of God*, *faſting and corporal Auſterities*, *feaſting or keeping Days of publick Joy and Thankſgiving*, *have ever been accounted religious Acts*.

Reading and *hearing* the Word of *God* are but the ſeveral Circumſtances of the ſame Duty, inſtrumental eſpecially to Faith, but conſequently to all other *Graces* of the *Spirit*. It is all one to us whether by the *Eye* or by the *Ear*, the *Spirit* conveys his Precepts to us. If we hear St. *Paul* ſaying to us, *Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judge*, or read it one of his *Epiſtles*, in either of them we are equally and ſufficiently inſtructed. The *Scriptures* read are the ſame thing to us, which the ſame *Doctrine* was, when it was preach'd by the *Diſciples* of our *bleſſed Lord*, and we are to learn of either with the ſame *Diſpoſitions*. The *Word of God* is all thoſe *Commandments* and *Revelations*, thoſe *Promiſes* and *Threatnings*, recorded in the *Bible*: Nothing elſe is the *Word of God*, that we know of, by any certain Inſtrument. The good Books and ſpiritual Diſcourſes, the *Sermons* or *Homilies*, written or ſpoken by Men, are but the Words of Men, or rather Explications of, and Exhortations according to, the *Word of God*; but of themſelves they

they are not the *Word of God.* In a *Sermon,* the *Text* only, in a proper Senſe, is to be called *God's Word,* and yet good *Sermons* are of great Uſe and Convenience for the Advantages of *Religion.* But the *Holy Ghoſt* is certainly the beſt *Preacher* in the *World,* and the Words of *Scripture* the beſt *Sermons:* All the *Doctrine* of *Salvation* is plainly ſet down there, that the moſt unlearned Perſon, by hearing it read, may underſtand all his Duty. What can be plainer ſpoken than this?

Thou ſhalt not kill.

Be not drunk with Wine.

Husbands, love your Wives.

Whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do to you, do ye ſo to them.

The Wit of Man cannot more plainly tell us our Duty, or more fully, than the Holy Ghoſt has done already. What *Abraham* in the *Parable* ſaid concerning the Brethren of the *rich Man,* is here very proper: *They have Moſes and the Prophets, let them hear them: but if they refuſe to hear theſe, neither will they believe though one ſhould ariſe from the Dead,* to preach to them.

Reading the holy *Scriptures* is a Duty expreſly commanded us, and is call'd in *Scripture Preaching*; all other Preaching is the effect of human Skill and Induſtry, and, tho' of great Benefit, yet it is but an Eccleſiaſtical Ordinance.

Set apart therefore ſome Portion of your Time, according to the opportunities of your Calling and neceſſary Employment, for the *reading* of holy Scripture, and, if it be poſſible, every Day read, or hear ſome of it read. You are ſure that *Book* teaches all *Truth,* commands all *Holineſs,* and promiſes all *Happineſs.*

When it is in your Power to chooſe, accuſtom yourſelf to ſuch Portions which are moſt plain, and contain the Story of the Life and Death of our *bleſſed Saviour:* Read the *Goſpels,* the *Pſalms* of *David,* and fail not diligently to attend to the *reading* of holy Scriptures,

when

when they are moſt publickly and ſolemnly read in Churches. For at ſuch times, beſides the learning our *Duty*, we obtain a Bleſſing along with it, it becoming to us a part of the ſolemn divine *Worſhip*. When the *Word of God* is *read* or *preached* to you, be ſure you be of a ready Heart and Mind, free from worldly Cares and Thoughts, diligent to hear, careful to mark, ſtudious to remember, and deſirous to practiſe all that is commanded. Do not hear for any other End but to become better in your Life, to be inſtructed in every good Work, and to increaſe in the Love and Service of God.

Beg of God by Prayer that he wou'd give you the Spirit of *Obedience* and Profiting, and that he wou'd by his Spirit write the Word in your Heart; to which Purpoſe ſerve yourſelf of ſome affectionate Ejaculations before and after this Duty.

Let not a Prejudice to any Man's Perſon hinder you from receiving Good by the Doctrine he preaches, if it be according to *Godlineſs*; but, if Occaſion offer it, or eſpecially if Duty preſent it unto you; that is, if it be preach'd in that Aſſembly where you are bound to be preſent, accept the Word preach'd as a Meſſage from God, and the Miniſter as his *Angel* in that Miniſtration.

Conſider and remark the Doctrine that is preſented to you, in any Diſcourſe; and if the Preacher adds accidental Advantages, any thing to comply with your Weakneſs, or to put your Spirit into Action, or holy Reſolution, remember it, and make uſe of it. But if the *Preacher* be a weak Perſon, yet the Text is the *Doctrine* you are to remember, that contains all your *Duty*. It is worth your Attendance to hear that ſpoken often, and renewed upon your Thoughts. Tho' you ſhou'd yourſelf be learned, yet the ſame thing which you knew already, if ſpoken by another, may be made active by that Application. I can better be comforted by my own Conſideration, if another Hand applies Matter

Matter to me, than if I do it myſelf, becauſe the Word of God does not work as a natural Agent, but as a divine Inſtrument. It does not prevail by the Force of Deduction, and artificial Diſcourſings only, but chiefly by way of Bleſſing, in the Ordinance and in the Miniſtry of an appointed Perſon. At leaſt obey the publick Order, and reverence the Conſtitution, giving good Example of Humility, Charity, and Obedience.

When *Scriptures* are *read*, you are only to enquire with Diligence and Modeſty, into the Meaning of the *Spirit*: But if *Homilies* or *Sermons* be made upon the Words of *Scripture*, you are to conſider, whether all that is ſpoken be conformable to the *Scriptures*. For tho' you may practiſe for human Reaſons, and human Arguments, miniſtred by the *Preacher*'s Art, yet you muſt practiſe nothing but the command of God, nothing but the *Doctrine of Scripture*.

Take the Advice of ſome pious and prudent ſpiritual Guide, for the Choice of ſuch good Books, as may be of uſe and benefit for your Edification, and leading a holy Life. Eſteem that Time well accounted for, which is prudently and affectionately employ'd, in hearing or reading good Books, and pious Diſcourſes; ever remembring that *God*, by hearing us ſpeak to him in *Prayer*, obliges us to hear him ſpeak to us in his *Word*, by what Inſtrument ſoever it be convey'd.

True natural *Religion*, that which was common to all Nations, did principally rely upon four great Propoſitions, *That there is one God. That God is nothing of thoſe things which we ſee. That God takes care of all things below, and governs all the World. That he is the great Creator of all things without himſelf.* And according to theſe were fram'd the four firſt Precepts of the *Decalogue*. In the *firſt* Commandment, the *Unity* of the *Godhead* is expreſly affirm'd; in the *ſecond*, his *Inviſibility* and *Immateriality*; in the *third*, his *Government* and *Providence*, by avenging them that ſwear falſly by his Name; in the *fourth*, he proclaims himſelf *Maker of Heaven and Earth*

Earth. For in memory of *God's Reſt* from the Work of *ſix* Days, the *ſeventh* was *hallow'd* into a *Sabbath*, and the keeping it was a confeſſing *God* to be the great *Maker* of *Heaven* and *Earth*; and conſequently to this, it was alſo a Confeſſion of his Goodneſs, his Omnipotence, and his Wiſdom, all which were written with a Sun-beam in the great Book of the *Creature.*

As long as the *Law* of the *Sabbath* was bound upon *God's* People, ſo long *God* would have that to be the ſolemn manner of confeſſing theſe *Attributes*; but when the *Prieſthood being chang'd, there was alſo a Change of the Law*, the great Duty remain'd unalterable in changed Circumſtances. We are eternally bound to confeſs God Almighty to be the *Maker of Heaven and Earth*, but the manner of confeſſing it, is chang'd from a *Reſt* or a doing *nothing*, to a ſpeaking *ſomething*, from a *Day* to a *Symbol*, from a *Ceremony* to a *Subſtance*, from a *Jewiſh State* to a *Chriſtian Duty.* We keep one Day in *ſeven*, and ſo confeſs the Manner and Circumſtances of the *Creation*, and we *reſt* alſo that we may attend on holy Duties; ſo imitating *God's Reſt*, better than the *Jew*, who lay upon his Face from Evening to Evening, and could not by Stripes or Wounds be rais'd up to *ſteer* the Ship in a great Storm. *God's Reſt* was not a natural *Ceſſation:* He who cou'd not *labour*, cou'd not be ſaid to *reſt*; but *God's Reſt* is to be underſtood, to be a beholding and rejoicing in his Work finiſh'd; and therefore we truly repreſent *God's Reſt*, when we confeſs and rejoice in *God's Works* and *God's Glory.*

This the *Chriſtian Church* does upon every Day, but eſpecially upon the *Lord's Day*, which ſhe has ſet apart for this, and all other Offices of *Religion*, being determin'd to this Day by the *Reſurrection* of her deareſt Lord, it being the firſt *Day* of Joy the *Church* ever had. And now upon the *Lord's Day* we are not ty'd to the *Reſt* of the *Sabbath*, but to all the Works of the *Sabbath.* We are to abſtain from bodily *Labour*, not becauſe it is a direct Duty to us as it was to the *Jews*, but becauſe it is neceſſary,

neceſſary, in order to our Duty, that we attend to the *Offices* of *Religion*.

The *Obſervation* of the *Lord's Day*, differs nothing from the *Obſervation* of the *Sabbath*, in Matter of Religion, but in the Manner. They differ in the Ceremony and external *Rite*. *Reſt* with them was the *Principal*, with us it is the *Acceſſary*. They differ in the Office or Forms of *Worſhip*, for they were then to worſhip God as a *Creator*, *Lord* and *Father*, we are to add to that our *Redeemer*, and all his other Excellencies and Mercies. And tho' we have more natural and proper Reaſons to keep the Lord's Day than the *Sabbath*, yet the *Jews* had a Divine *Commandment* for their *Day*, which we have not for *ours*. But we have many *Commandments* to do all that Honour to God which was intended in the *fourth Commandment*; and the Apoſtles appointed the *firſt Day* of the *Week* for doing it in ſolemn *Aſſemblies*.

When you go about to diſtinguiſh *Feſtival* Days from *Common*, do it not by leſſening the Devotions of ordinary *Days*, that the common Devotion may ſeem bigger upon *Feſtivals*, but on every Day keep your ordinary Devotions entire, and enlarge upon the *holy Day*.

Upon the *Lord's Day* we muſt abſtain from all ſervile and laborious Works, except ſuch as are Matters of Neceſſity, of common Life, or of great Charity. For theſe are permitted by that Authority which has ſeparated the Day for holy Uſes. The *Sabbath* of the *Jews*, tho' conſiſting principally in *Reſt*, and eſtabliſh'd by God, did yield to theſe: The *Labour* of *Love* and *Work* of *Religion*, were not againſt the *Reaſon* and *Spirit* of the *Commandment*, for which the *Letter* was decreed, and to which it ought to miniſter. And thererefore much more is it ſo on the *Lord's Day*, where the *Letter* is wholly turn'd into *Spirit*; and there is no Commandment of God, but of ſpiritual and holy Actions. The *Prieſts* might kill their *Beaſts*, and dreſs them for *Sacrifice*; and *Chriſt*, tho' born under the *Law*, might *heal* a *ſick Man*; the *ſick Man* might carry his Bed to witneſs his Recovery,

very, and confeſs the Mercy, and leap and dance to God for Joy. An *Ox* might be led to Water, and an *Aſs* be haled out of a Ditch. And a Man may take *Phyſick*, and he may eat Meat, and therefore there were of neceſſity ſome to prepare and adminiſter it. They were not herein ty'd down by ſtrait-lac'd Rules to minute and trifling Circumſtances, but they had even then a reaſonable Latitude, only unneceſſary *Labour* was inhibited, or ſuch as did not miniſter to *Charity* or *Religion*. And even this is enlarg'd by the *Goſpel*, whoſe *Sabbath* or *Reſt* is but a *Circumſtance* and Acceſſion to the principal or ſpiritual Duties: Upon the *Chriſtian Sabbath*, *Neceſſity* is to be ſerv'd firſt, then *Charity*, and then *Religion*.

The *Lord's Day* being the *Remembrance* of a great Bleſſing, muſt be a Day of Joy, Feſtivity, ſpiritual Rejoicing, and Thankſgiving; and therefore 'tis a proper Work of the Day, to let your Devotions ſpend themſelves, in ſinging or reading Pſalms, in recounting the great Works of God, in remembring his Mercies, in worſhipping his Excellencies, in celebrating his *Attributes*, in admiring his Perſon, in ſending Portions of pleaſant Meat, to them for whom nothing is provided, in all the Acts and Inſtruments of advancing God's Glory, and the Reputation of *Religion*, in which it were a great Decency, that a Memorial of the *Reſurrection* ſhou'd be inſerted, that the *particular* Religion of the Day be not ſwallow'd up in the *general*. And of this we may the more eaſily ſerve ourſelves, by riſing ſeaſonably in the *Morning* to private *Devotion*, and by retiring, at the Leiſures and Spaces of the *Day*, not employ'd in publick Offices.

Fail not to be preſent at the publick Hours and Places of *Prayer*, entring early and chearfully, attending reverently and devoutly, abiding patiently during the whole Office, piouſly aſſiſting at the *Prayers*, and gladly alſo hearing the *Sermon*. At no hand omitting to receive the holy *Communion* when it is offer'd, unleſs ſome great Reaſon

Reaſon excuſe it, this being the great Solemnity of *Thankſgiving*, and a proper Work of the Day.

After the *Solemnities* are paſt, and in the Intervals between the Morning and Evening Devotion, as you ſhall find Opportunity, viſit ſick Perſons, reconcile Differences, do Offices of Neighbourhood; inquire into the *Needs* of the Poor, eſpecially *Houſe-keepers*, relieve them as they ſhall *need*, and you are able; for then we truly rejoice in God, when we make our Neighbours, the poor Members of Chriſt, rejoice together with us.

Whatſoever you are to do yourſelf as neceſſary, you are to take care that others alſo, who are under your Charge, do in their Station and Manner. Let your *Servants* be call'd to *Church*, and all your *Family* that can be ſpar'd from neceſſary and great Houſhold Miniſtries. Thoſe that cannot, let them go by turns, and be ſupply'd otherwiſe as well as they may. Provided that on theſe Days eſpecially, they be inſtructed in the Articles of Faith, and neceſſary parts of their Duty.

Thoſe who *labour* hard in the *Week*, muſt be *eas'd* upon the Lord's Day, ſuch *Eaſe* being a great *Charity* and *Alms*; but on no account muſt they be permitted to uſe any unlawful Games, any thing forbidden by the Laws, or any thing that is dangerous, and apt to mingle Sin with it; no *Games* prompting to Wantonneſs, to Drunkenneſs, to Quarrelling, to ridiculous and ſuperſtitious Cuſtoms; but let their Refreſhment be innocent, charitable, of good Report, and not excluſive of the Duties of Religion.

Within theſe Bounds, becauſe neither God nor Man has paſt any Obligation upon us, we muſt preſerve our *Chriſtian Liberty*, and not ſuffer ourſelves to be intangl'd with a Yoke of Bondage: For even a good Action may become a Snare to us, if we make it an Occaſion of Scruple, by a Pretence of Neceſſity, binding Loads upon the Conſcience, not with the Bonds of God, but of Men, and of Fancy, or Opinion, or of Tyranny. Whatſoever is laid upon us by the Hands of Man, muſt be

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acted and accounted for by the Meaſure of Man: But our beſt Meaſure is this; He keeps the Lord's Day beſt, that keeps it with moſt Religion and with moſt Charity.

As to other *Solemnities*, eſpecially *Saints Days*, every *Church* is to be ſparing in the Number of them, and to be temperate in her Injunctions, not impoſing them, but upon voluntary and unbuſied Perſons, without Snare or Burden.

That Man muſt certainly be a great Stranger to the Exerciſe of true Piety and Virtue, who is not ſo affected with it, as to take a great deal of Pleaſure and Delight in it, there *being* nothing that can afford ſo much Joy and Satisfaction to the Soul as that does. I cannot give a greater Inſtance of it in any thing than in the common Duty I have already diſcours'd of, the *reading the Word of God.*

This is one of the *Ways* of *Wiſdom*, which wiſe and good Men often walk in; and could you but ſee how their Hearts are affected while they read them, you would need no other Argument to perſuade you, 'tis a pleaſant and delightful Work. For the *Scriptures* are the Word, the *Oracles* of God himſelf, and therefore they who are truly Godly, cannot but find extraordinary Joy and Comfort in reading and conſulting of them, For the Will of the Almighty is there reveal'd to them, and his glorious Properties and Perfections unveil'd before them. They meet there with all the *Promiſes* which he has made to Mankind in *Jeſus Chriſt*, and with all things whatſoever, which they ſhould deſire to know. They may there learn, both how to ſerve God here, and to enjoy him hereafter, which are the only things a good Man deſires to know. And they who are truly ſuch, cannot but be ſtrangely affected in the reading of the Scriptures; the heavenly and divine Expreſſions which they there meet with, are tranſporting to them as may be ſeen from the Example of *David*, *How ſweet, how pleaſant was the Word of God to him?* And every godly Man being of the ſame Temper and Diſpoſition

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of *David*, he cannot but find as much Comfort and Joy in his Divine Word, as the Royal *Pſalmiſt* did, who therefore deſcribes a good Man, *by his delighting*, as he did, *in the Law of God.*

Praying and *praiſing God* are ways of *Piety* and *Pleaſure* too: For by *Prayer*, they who are truly *pious*, converſe with *God* himſelf, with an humble Confidence, that whatſoever they ask in *Chriſt*'s Name, they ſhall receive, which muſt needs afford them more Joy and Comfort than any one is able to conceive, but they that have it; eſpecially praiſing of him being always join'd with praying to him, which is ſo high, ſo holy, ſo heavenly a Work, ſo agreeable to the Nature of the *Saints*, that it cannot but raiſe their Spirits to the higheſt pitch of Joy and Pleaſure. This is the conſtant Buſineſs and Recreation of the glorify'd Saints in Heaven; and who is able to expreſs the Pleaſure which the truly Pious take, in frequenting the publick Ordinances, to preſent themſelves together in a ſolemn and reverent manner before the eternal God to implore his Mercy, to magnify his Name, to hear his Word, and to perform their Homage and Devotion? How did *David* rejoice to go to the Houſe of *God?* How did he grieve, when by reaſon of his Baniſhment he was depriv'd of this Mercy? How did he envy the very Birds that could go nearer to God's *Altar* than himſelf? How does he beg to be reſtor'd to his former Liberty, that he might freely go to the Houſe of God again? preferring it before all other Joys. And doubtleſs, all thoſe that are as holy as *David* was, cannot but find the ſame Delight, in worſhipping and adoring God, as he did. They cannot but find theſe ways of Wiſdom to be the ways of *Pleaſantneſs* and *Peace.*

Meditating upon God and Chriſt, upon Heaven, and the Glories of the World to come, is a Duty no leſs pleaſant than profitable to the *Saints* of *God.* By this Means they have their Converſation always in Heaven, there ſolacing their Souls in the *Contemplation* of divine

Perfections. As the luſtful Man is delighted with beholding of earthly Beauty, and the Covetous with his worldly riches, ſo and much more he that is Heavenly and Godly, muſt needs be delighted with meditating upon God and Heaven, Objects agreeable to his Temper and Conſtitution. We may therefore boldly ſay, There is no Pleaſure like to his who always dwells in Heaven, converſing with thoſe tranſcendent Beauties, Glories and Perfections that are there. This is what the Royal Pſalmiſt found *ſo ſweet and pleaſant to his Soul.* What can be more refreſhing to a *divine* Spirit than the *Sacrament* of the *Lord's Supper:* We feed there upon Angels Food, the Bread of Life, that came down from Heaven. We are Gueſts at *Chriſt*'s own *Table,* and have nothing leſs than all the Merits of his Death and Paſſion diſplay'd and ſet before us, which the truly Holy cannot but look upon as the beſt Banquet, the moſt pleaſant Feaſt, which they ever were or can be invited to in this World. If the Duties which Wiſdom requires to be perform'd, afford ſo much Comfort and Delight to them that daily perform them, what then ſhall we think of the Pleaſures, which a good Man takes in the Exerciſe of all true *Grace* and *Virtue?* What ſhall we think of it? Why certainly that it is far greater than we are able to think it, for no Man can conceive it but he that has it. That we may underſtand ſomething of it, let us conſider the true Nature of *Piety;* that it conſiſts in the right Temper and Diſpoſition of Mind, reducing all its Powers and Faculties into their proper Frame and Conſtitution. Thus it may juſtly be term'd, the Health and Soundneſs of the Soul, as all Vices are Diſeaſes and Diſtempers in it. And therefore, as an healthful and ſound Body is not only free from Pains and Aches, but all its natural Motions are pleaſing and delightful to it; ſo is it with the pious Soul, all pious and virtuous Actions being agreeable to its Nature, the exerting them cannot but be very grateful and pleaſant to it. As when ſuch a Soul exerciſes itſelf in the loving of God, and longing after him, in truſting on him,

him, and rejoicing in him, and the like, ſuch Acts as theſe are the natural Product of that Grace and Virtue which is ſown in the Heart. That Man would do Violence to his renew'd Nature that ſhould not exert them, and therefore he cannot but take extraordinary Delight in the exerting or acting of them. The ſame may be ſaid of all other Virtues and Graces whatſoever, as *Faith*, *Humility*, *Self-denial*, *Temperance*, *Patience*, *Truth*, *Faithfulneſs*, *Juſtice*, *Meekneſs*, *Charity*, and whatever elſe it is that the Hearts and Lives of true Saints are adorn'd with. For ſuch Acts as theſe, flowing naturally from a pious Soul, renew'd and aſſiſted always by the Grace of God, they cannot but always carry a ſecret kind of Pleaſure and Delight along with them, which none can perceive, much leſs partake of, but the Soul from whence they flow.

Beſides this Agreeableneſs which there is between all Acts of Piety and pious Souls, he that ſincerely performs thoſe Duties, and exerciſes thoſe Graces which God requires, enjoys by it Peace of Conſcience, an unſpeakable Joy and Satisfaction in his Mind ariſing from the Senſe and Conſideration, that he has done his Duty, and that God is pleas'd with him. For the Apprehenſion of *God*'s Love and Favour is certainly the greateſt Pleaſure and Happineſs that Men or Angels are capable of. But according to our Obedience to *God*'s *Laws*, ſo generally is our Senſe of his Love to us. If we have ſincerely endeavoured to obſerve whatſoever he has commanded, we have juſt ground to hope for Chriſt's ſake he will accept of us, and is well pleas'd with us; which muſt needs affect us with extraordinary Joy and Comforts, as St. *Paul* aſſures us, it did him.

This is what every Chriſtian may often experience. When we have been conſcious to ourſelves of ſome wilful or notorious Sin, have not our Conſciences often flown in our Faces, and rais'd Storms and Tempeſts in our Breaſts, ready to ſink us every Moment into Horror and Deſpair? On the other ſide, when we have faithfully diſ-

charged our *Duties*, and kept our *Conſciences void of Offence, towards God and towards Man*, have we not found our Minds Serene, and our whole Souls tranſported into Pleaſure and Satisfaction, at the Apprehenſion and Remembrance of it? It is thus with them that walk only by the Light of Nature, and how much more then with ſuch as are guided by the Light of the Goſpel, and aſſiſted with the Principles of true *Grace?* Their bleſſed Souls muſt needs be affected with extraordinary Comfort and Joy, at the Senſe of their ſerving and pleaſing God, in the Merits and Mediation of Jeſus Chriſt, which he ſtedfaſtly believes in, and relies continually upon, as having the Word of God himſelf for it, that what he ſincerely endeavours to do, is acceptable to God by Jeſus Chriſt. And whoever believes this, as every pious Man certainly does, cannot but take inexpreſſible Delight in ſerving *God*, becauſe he believes that for Chriſt's ſake *God* is pleaſed with what he does, and accepts of it as well as if he was every way as perfect and exact as the Law itſelf requires it ſhould be: Which is ſo great, ſo high a Comfort, that they who experience it in themſelves, can never be able to expreſs it to others.

You ſee therefore what *Peace* and *Pleaſure* there is in the ways of Wiſdom, in the ſeveral Acts of Piety, which they who are truly godly, continually exerciſe themſelves in. The Pleaſures ſuch enjoy far exceed all the ſenſual *Delights* of the World. They who devote themſelves wholly to the Service of *God*, live the moſt pleaſant and comfortable Lives of any Men in the World: They are indeed the only Men that know what Pleaſure and Comfort means, and by Conſequence that the *ways of Wiſdom* are not only the *ways of Pleaſantneſs*, but the only *ways of Pleaſantneſs*, that it is poſſible for any Man to walk in.

All other Pleaſures only tickle the Senſes and delight the Fancies of Men, and ſo have no other Being or Exiſtence in the World but what our deluded Imaginations give them. Abſtract your Fancy from all things here below,

below, and what will then become of your Pleaſure in them? How ſoon will it vaniſh into Smoke and Vapours, into Vanity and Vexation of Spirit? Think Gold Dirt, and it is ſo: Think the Pomp and Glory of the World to be mere Dream and Shadow, and it is ſo: Think *Luſt*, *Luxury*, *Drunkenneſs* and *Gluttony* to be beaſtly and bruti ſh Fooleries, and they are ſo. For theſe are things which *Fools* and *Madmen*, nay the brute beaſts themſelves take as much ſeeming Pleaſure in, as the ſobereſt and learnedſt Men can do. We ſhould therefore never fancy any thing of Pleaſure in ſuch things as theſe are, were not our Imaginations ſo fearfully corrupted and depraved, as to preſent every thing in a wrong Shape, and under falſe Colours to us. For we are all Men, rational Creatures, made after the Image of God, endow'd with ſpiritual and immortal Souls, as well as with frail and corruptible Bodies; and therefore it cannot in Reaſon be imagin'd but that far other and higher Delights are deſign'd for us, than ſuch as Brute Beaſts themſelves partake of as well as we.

The Pleaſures which pious Men enjoy are quite of another Nature: They are not ſeated in the Body or Senſes, but the Soul itſelf is the Subject of them, and all its Powers and Faculties are affected and delighted with them. Wherefore our Saviour, to diſtinguiſh them from all other Pleaſures, calls them *the Reſt or Happineſs of our Souls*. The things of this World may ſomething eaſe and refreſh our Bodies, but they cannot reach the Soul at all, ſo as to afford it any thing of Comfort and Satisfaction. It was on this Account, a fooliſh thing for the *rich Man* in the Goſpel to ſay to his Soul, *Take thine Eaſe*, becauſe his worldly Goods were increas'd, as you ſee he did. But no leſs a Perſon than the great God himſelf call'd him *Fool* for his Pains. He was a Fool indeed, that thought his earthly Riches cou'd give Eaſe to his Soul. No, none but Chriſt can ever do that, neither does he ever do it to any but the truly *Pious*: They may ſay indeed to their *Souls*, *Souls take your Eaſe*, for you have

Goods real, ſpiritual, and eternal: Goods laid up for you, not only for many Years, but for ever and ever. This is more than any one elſe can ſay, and therefore they muſt be acknowledged to be the only Perſons that enjoy true Peace and Pleaſure in the World; ſuch Peace and Pleaſure as becomes a Man and a Chriſtian to ſolace and delight himſelf continually in, the Soul itſelf being the proper and immediate judge of it.

As the Pleaſures which ariſe from *Piety* exceed all others in the *Subject*, ſo do they in the *Object* too. Whatever ſenſitive Pleaſures Men enjoy, they are no more, nor greater, than what the ſilly Creatures upon Earth can afford them. They look no higher than this lower World, and if they can make a ſhift to pick up ſomething which looks like Pleaſure in it, they are beholden to every inanimate and ſenſeleſs Creature for it. Thus the covetous Man takes Pleaſure in refin'd *Dirt*, the Epicure in *Meats* and *Drinks*, the vain-glorious Man in empty Titles of *Honour*; and every one but he who is ſincerely pious, can find no other Pleaſure in the World, but what he is forced to fetch from ſenſible and terreſtrial *Objects*, as being the only things he converſes with, tho' they were never intended to make Men happy.

But it is not ſo with the *Sons of Wiſdom*, with thoſe who are born again, and ſo become *Children* of the moſt High. They feed not like Swine upon the Husks of this lower World, but have their Heads and Hearts continually taken up with the Contemplation and Enjoyments of the chiefeſt Good, the eternal God himſelf; or at leaſt with longing and thirſting after him, and with rejoicing at every Intimation that they have of his Love and Kindneſs to them: He who is the only Center of all Perfections, is the only Object of their Joy and Pleaſure; the *Light of his Countenance*, that is the Manifeſtation of his Grace and Mercy to them, is the only good that they deſire, or rejoice in. Hence ſuch as are truly wiſe and godly, diſdaining to converſe with nothing elſe but

Dirt

Dirt and Clay, as ſilly Mortals upon Earth do, *their Converſation is in Heaven*; there are all the Wealth and Joys that are the objects of their Deſires, and therefore their Thoughts and Affections are always there; and as there is nothing upon Earth, ſo neither is there any thing in Heaven which they deſire in compariſon of God. All the World, the whole Creation is nothing to a godly Man. The eternal God, the Creator himſelf, is the portion of their Cup, and the lot of their Inheritance: He is their Hope and Help, their Joy and Deſire, their Light and Love, their Strength and Power, their Wealth and Riches, their Sun, their Shield, and their exceeding great Reward: He is their all, their more than all, their God. And ſeeing this ſupreme and univerſal Being of the World, is the only Object of a Man's Delight, the *ways of Wiſdom* muſt needs be acknowledged to ſurpaſs all other ways in Pleaſantneſs and Peace, as much as Heaven does Earth, and the infinite *Creator* all finite *Creatures*.

The *Pleaſures* of pious Men are true, ſolid, pure and unmixt, which cannot be ſaid of the ſenſual Delights of this World, which are always uſher'd in, attended, and follow'd with Grief and Trouble. They are no Pleaſures till ſome preceding Pain or Sorrow makes them ſo: And, as they begin, ſo they muſt go on and end with Sadneſs, as *Solomon* himſelf, who made as much Trial of them as ever Man did, found by his own Experience, and has therefore expreſly aſſerted: But it is not ſo with the Godly, their Joys are real and ſubſtantial, without any Allay of Trouble. They depend not upon the conſtitution of their Bodies, but the right diſpoſition of their Minds, which being always preſerved in a due Temper, their Pleaſures are not ſubject to ſuch Changes and Viciſſitudes as others are, but their Hearts are always fix'd, truſting upon God.

They are firm and conſtant *Pleaſures*, not like the uncertain *Delights* of ſinful Men, which ebb and flow with the ſtream of worldly Proſperity, and depend al-

together upon the unconſtant ſmiles of Fortune in this World: they are merry and jolly while they proſper, but let them be depriv'd of any part of their Eſtates, croſt in their Relations or Deſigns, or laid upon a Bed of Sickneſs, and then all their Pleaſure is gone, nothing they have can afford them any Comfort or Relief, but their Thoughts trouble them, and every thing ſeems ſad and ſorrowful to them. The *Pleaſures* of *Piety* are not ſuch as theſe: They are not taken from any ſublunary Objects, and therefore do not increaſe or wane with them. But the good Man is as chearful when the World frowns as when it ſmiles upon him: However the World goes with him 'tis all one to him: He is ſtill the ſame; tho' he loſes all things here below, he loſes nothing of his Joy; for that was placed only upon God before, and ſo it is ſtill, in the midſt of all his Thoughts within. The comforts of God ſtill rejoice and delight his Soul. Tho' he be upon his Sick, his Death-Bed, his Comfort ſtill remains; his Sickneſs cannot be ſo painful and tormenting to his Body, but the Teſtimony of a good Conſcience is ſtill as pleaſing and ſupporting to his Soul.

The *Pleaſures* of the Righteous are full and ſatisfying; the things of this World are all ſo vain and empty, that whatever Men fancy, they can never be ſatisfy'd with them; and the Reaſon is, becauſe the Soul is capable of more than all this World; wherefore its Deſires being as large as its Capacities, can never be ſatisfy'd with any thing or all things in it. But the godly Man drinks continually at the Fountain-Head, the inexhauſtible Fountain of all true Joy and Happineſs. God himſelf is the only object of his Delight, in whom he cannot but reſt fully ſatisfy'd, being not able to deſire more than he has in him.

The *Pleaſures* of this World are but brutiſh and ſenſual, no better than the very Beaſts themſelves enjoy as well as Men. But the Joys of the Godly are Angelical and Divine, ſuch Joys as the Cherubims and Seraphims

the

the Angels and Archangels, enjoy in Heaven, ſuch even as God himſelf enjoys. For what does he rejoice in, but in himſelf, and what do they rejoice in but only him? Therefore if you would know what Joys there are in Heaven, you muſt look into the Breaſt of a pious Man, you may there ſee them repreſented as clearly as they can be in this World, but you cannot read them nor underſtand them, unleſs yourſelves be the pious Men ye look into.

The *Pleaſures* of this Life are at the beſt but the *Pleaſures* of this Life; when this Life is ended, you muſt leave them all, ſo as never to return to them again; but inſtead of preſent Pleaſures and Delights you will have Grief and Sorrow, Pain and Torment, Miſery and Deſolation for ever. It is not ſo with the Joys of the *Pious:* They are begun in this Life, and perfected in the Life to come, ſo as to continue in their Luſtre and Beauty, in their Height and Perfection to all Eternity. Neither will they only laſt for ever, but the Pious ſhall know, and be aſſur'd of it too, which will be a great Addition to them. For the very Thoughts of loſing theſe Pleaſures, as Men of this World muſt loſe theirs, would damp all the Comfort they take in them. But there will be no fear of that, they are not ſuch Pleaſures as Time can conſume, or Eternity itſelf diminiſh; he who enjoys them once, will be certain to enjoy them for ever.

How great then are the Miſtakes that are in the World concerning *Piety*, as if it was a melancholy and diſconſolate courſe of Life? Whereas it is plain that no Perſons in the World enjoy ſuch *Pleaſures* as the *Godly* do; indeed none but they enjoy any true Pleaſure at all. The reſt of Mankind are altogether unacquainted with true Joy and Comfort, true Peace and Pleaſure, becauſe they walk not in the ways of Wiſdom. How great is the Folly and Madneſs of ſinful Men, who embrace the Shadow for the Subſtance, and take up with ſeeming inſtead of real Joys? they are always thirſting after

Pleaſure, but can never be ſatisfy'd with it, till they be ſatisfy'd and made truly holy.

Wherefore as ever we deſire to lead chearful and comfortable, pleaſant and happy Lives, either in this World or that which is to come, we muſt reſign ourſelves to God, and make it our Buſineſs to pleaſe him, walking continually in the ways of Wiſdom, and then we ſhall have *Pleaſure* indeed. Such Pleaſure as the World can neither give nor take from us; ſuch Pleaſure as will refreſh our Minds, comfort our Hearts, ſupport our Spirits, rejoice our Souls in all Conditions, and make us happy both now and for ever.

Theſe ſeveral Ideas of Religion and Virtue, will not be ſo uſeful as one might wiſh, unleſs we deſcend alſo into Particulars, and treat of the Human as well as Chriſtian Virtues; all which are included in a *Chriſtian Life*, and the practice of them effectually conduces to our future Happineſs.

All the Virtues which belong to a Man, conſider'd merely as a rational Creature, conſiſt in theſe five Particulars, *Prudence*, *Moderation*, *Fortitude*, *Temperance*, *Humility*. All which are alſo eſſential Parts of the *Chriſtian Life*.

Prudence is the Root and Ground-work of all our Virtues. 'Tis that which gives Law and Scope to all our Motions; that propoſes the Ends, and preſcribes the Meaſures of our Actions. For Prudence conſiſts in being guided and directed by right Reaſon, as it propoſes to us the worthieſt Ends, and directs us to the fitteſt and moſt effectual Means of obtaining them. To live *prudently* is to live in the conſtant Exerciſe of our Reaſon, and to be continually purſuing ſuch *Ends*, as *right Reaſon* propoſes, by ſuch Means as *right* Reaſon directs us to, which is the proper Buſineſs of all the virtues of *Religion*; which is therefore ſo frequently call'd in Scripture *Wiſdom* or *Prudence*.

Our Reaſon being the nobleſt principle of our Nature, that by which we are raiſed above the level of Brutes, by which

which we are ally'd to Angels, and border upon God himſelf; it ought upon this Account to be ſubmitted to, as the ſupreme Regent of all our other Powers, to be look'd upon as the *Rule* of our *Will*, and the Guide of all our animal Motions. And when, to gratify our ſenſual Appetites, or unreaſonable Paſſions, we either neglect thoſe Ends which our Reaſon propoſes to us, to purſue them by ſuch Means as our Reaſon diſallows of, we reverſe the very order of our Natures; and while we do ſo, 'tis impoſſible we ſhould be happy, either here or hereafter: For every thing you ſee is diſeaſed, while 'tis in an unnatural State and Condition, while its *Parts* are diſplaced, or put into Diſorder, or diſtorted into an unnatural Figure. So it is with a Man, who while he preſerves his Faculties in a natural Station, and Subordination to each other, while he keeps his *Affections* and *Appetites* in ſubjection to his *Will*, and his *Will* to his *Reaſon*, he is calm and quiet, and enjoys with himſelf perpetual Eaſe and Tranquillity. But when once he breaks this Order, and ſuffers his Paſſions or Appetites to uſurp the Place of his Reaſon, to impoſe contrary Ends to it, or preſcribe contrary Means; his Faculties, like disjointed Members, are in continual Anguiſh and Anxiety. And hence it is, that in the courſe of a wicked Life, we feel ſuch reſtleſs Contentions between our *Spirit* and *Fleſh*, the *Law* in our *Minds*, and the *Law* in our *Members*, becauſe our Nature is out of tune, its Faculties are *diſplaced* and *diſordered*, and that ſovereign principle of *Reaſon* which ſhould *ſway* and *govern* us, is depos'd and made a *Vaſſal* to our *Appetites* and *Paſſions*. For in all our evil Courſes we *chooſe* and refuſe, *reſolve* and *act*, not as *Reaſon* directs us, but as *Senſe* and *Paſſion* bias us; and our *Reaſon*, having nothing to do in all this brutiſh Scene of Action, either ſleeps it out without minding or regarding, or elſe ſits by as an idle Spectator of it, and only cenſures and condemns it: 'Tis this which cauſes all that Tumult and Confuſion that is in our Natures; and till by the Exercise of *Prudence* our

Faculties

Faculties are reduced and ſet in order again, our Mind will be like our *Body*, while its *Bones* are out of joint, continually reſtleſs and unquiet; and therefore to remove this great Indiſpoſition of our Nature to *Happineſs*, Prudence is requir'd of us, as one of the principal Virtues of the heavenly Part of the *Chriſtian Life*.

See, ſays the Apoſtle, *that ye walk circumſpectly, not as Fools but as Wiſe*. In the whole courſe of your Actions, take heed that ye follow the guidance of your Reaſon, and do not ſuffer yourſelves to be ſeduced by your blind *Paſſions* and *Appetites*, which are the *Guides* of Fools. And accordingly St. *Paul* prays for his *Chriſtian Coloſſians*, *That they might be fill'd with the Knowledge of God in all Wiſdom and ſpiritual Underſtanding*. That they might have ſuch a Knowledge of God's Will, as might render them truly *prudent*, and cauſe them to purſue the beſt *Ends* by the beſt *Means*.

That the practice of this Virtue of *Prudence* is a moſt proper and effectual Means of our eternal Happineſs, is evident from hence, becauſe the practice of it is a conſtant *Exerciſe* of *Reaſon*. For to act *prudently* in *Religion*, is to follow the beſt *Reaſon*, to aim at *Heaven*, which is the beſt End, and direct our Actions thither by the beſt *Rules*: 'Tis to conſult what is beſt for ourſelves, and how it may be moſt effectually obtain'd. In a word, it is to intend the chiefeſt Good above all, and to level our Lives and Actions moſt directly towards it.

By living in the continual Practice of *religious Prudence*, we ſhall by degrees habituate ourſelves to a Life of Reaſon, and ſhake off that drowſy charm of Senſe and Paſſion, which hangs upon our Minds, and renders our *Faculties* ſo dull and unactive. Having diſus'd ourſelves a while to obey their blind and imperious Dictates, our Reaſon will reaſſume its Throne in us, and direct all our Aims and Endeavours, to what is fitteſt and moſt reaſonable. For we being finite and limited Beings, cannot operate ſeveral ways with equal Vigour at once. Our rational and ſenſitive Propenſions, are made

made in ſuch a regular and *æquilibrious* Order, that proportionably as the one *increaſes* in *Activity*, the other always *decays*; and ſo accordingly as we abate in the ſtrength of our brutiſh, ſhall we improve in the Vigour of our rational Faculties. But to act ſuitably to their Natures, being the End of all our Faculties and Powers of Action, the God of Nature, to excite them to it, has founded all their Pleaſure in the vigorous Exerciſe of them upon ſuitable Objects: Since therefore our *Reaſon* is the beſt and nobleſt of all Powers of Action, the greateſt Pleaſure we are capable of muſt certainly ſpring out of the Exerciſe of it. Wherefore ſince *Prudence* conſiſts in the uſe of our *Reaſon*, the Practice of it muſt needs effectually contribute to our Pleaſure and Happineſs: For Uſe and Exerciſe will mightily ſtrengthen and improve our Reaſon, and render it not only more apprehenſive of what is fit and reaſonable, but alſo more perſuaſive and prevalent, and when once it is improv'd into a prevailing principle of Action, and has acquir'd not only Skill enough to preſcribe what is right to us, but alſo Power enough to perſuade us to comply with its Preſcriptions, to chooſe and refuſe, to love and hate, to hope and fear, deſire and delight, and regulate all our Actions by its Laws and Dictates, then are we entring upon our Heaven and Happineſs.

That which makes us unhappy is, that our ſinful and unreaſonable Affections do ſo hamper and intangle us, that we cannot freely exerciſe our Faculties upon ſuch Objects as are moſt ſuitable to them; that our Minds and Wills are ſo fetter'd by our vicious Inclinations, that we cannot exert them upon that which is moſt worthy to be known and choſen, without a great deal of Difficulty and Diſtraction. But now, under the conduct of our *Reaſon*, our Faculties will by degrees recover their Freedom, and diſengage themſelves from thoſe vicious Incumbrances, which do ſo clog and interrupt them in their rational Motions. When this is thoroughly effected, we are in full Poſſeſſion of the heavenly

venly State. Our *Paſſions* and *Appetites* being perfectly ſubdu'd to our *Reaſon*, all our *rational Faculties* will be free, and every one will move towards its proper Objects, without any Let or Hindrance; our *Underſtanding* will be ſwallow'd up in a fix'd Contemplation of the ſublimeſt Truths, our *Wills* entirely reſign'd to the Choice and Embraces of the trueſt *Good*, our *Affections* unalterably devoted to the Love and Fruition of the moſt excellent Beauty and Perfection; and in this conſiſts the happy State of Heaven.

Another *Virtue* which appertains to Man, conſider'd merely as a *rational Animal*, is *Moderation*, which conſiſts in proportioning our concupiſcible Affections to the juſt worth and value of things, ſo as neither to ſpend our Affections too prodigally upon Trifles, nor yet to be over ſparing or niggardly of them to real and ſubſtantial Goods; but to love, deſire and expect things more or leſs, according to the Eſtimate which our beſt and moſt impartial *Reaſon* makes of their Worth and Goodneſs. For he who affects things more than in the eſteem of *Reaſon* they deſerve, affects them irrationally, and regulates his Paſſion by his wild extravagant Fancy, and not by his Reaſon and Judgment. While Men do thus neglect their *Reaſon*, and accuſtom themſelves to *deſire* and *love*, and affect without it, they neceſſarily diſable themſelves to enjoy a *rational Happineſs*. For beſides, that their *rational Faculties*, being thus laid by and unemploy'd, will naturally contract *Ruſt*, and grow every Day more weak and reſtive: Beſides, that their unexercis'd *Reaſon* will melt away in Sloth and Idleneſs, and all its vital Powers freeze for want of Motion, and like ſtanding Water, ſtagnate and gather more Corruption, and putrify by degrees, till at laſt 'twill be impoſſible to revive them to the vigorous Exerciſe of Motion, in which their Pleaſure and Happineſs conſiſts: Beſides this, I ſay, by habituating ourſelves to affect things irrationally, to love the *leaſt* Goods *moſt*, and the *greateſt leaſt*, we ſhall diſable ourſelves from enjoying any Goods

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but only ſuch as cannot make us happy: For he who loves any Good more than 'tis worth, can never be happy in the Enjoyment of it, becauſe he thinks there is more in it than he finds, and ſo is always diſappointed in the Fruition of it. And the Grief of being diſappointed in what he expects, does commonly countervail the Pleaſure of what he finds and enjoys while he is in the purſuit of any Good, which he inordinately debates upon; he is wild and imaginative, he ſwells with fantaſtick Joys, and juggles himſelf into *Expectations*, which are as large and boundleſs as his Deſires. But when once he is ſeiz'd of it, and finds how vaſtly the Enjoyment falls ſhort of his Expectation, his Pleaſure is preſently loſt in his Diſappointment, and ſo he remains as unſatisfy'd as ever. Thus if he were to ſpend an Eternity in ſuch Diſputes and Enjoyments, his Life wou'd be nothing but an everlaſting Succeſſion of Expectations and Diſappointments.

Beſides which alſo, it is to be conſider'd, that all theſe *leſſer Goods*, which are the Objects of our extravagant Affections, are as fleeting as they are falſe. The *leſſer Goods* are thoſe that are for the worſt part of our Body and animal Life; the proper Goods whereof are the outward ſenſitive Enjoyments of this World: All which, when we leave this World, we muſt leave for ever, and go away into Eternity with nothing about us, but only the good or bad Diſpoſitions of our Souls, and that which is the prevailing Temper of our Souls in this Life, will doubtleſs be ſo in the other too. For the entering into the other World, tho' it will, doubtleſs, improve thoſe Souls which were *really* good before, yet it is not to be imagin'd how it ſhould create thoſe good, who were *habitually* bad. And if we retain in the other World, that prevailing Affection to theſe ſenſitive Goods which we contracted in this, it muſt neceſſarily render us unſpeakably miſerable there. For every Luſt the Soul carries into the other World, will, by being eternally ſeparated from its Pleaſures, convert into an hopeleſs Deſire, and upon that account grow more furious and

and impatient. There is none of all the Torments of the Mind comparable to that of an outrageous Deſire, join'd with deſpair of Satisfaction, which is juſt the Caſe of ſenſual and worldly-minded Souls in the other Life, where they are full of ſharp and unrebated Deſires; and in this deſolate Condition they are forc'd to wander to and fro, tormented with a reſtleſs Rage, an hungry and unſatisfy'd Deſire, craving Food, but neither finding nor expecting any; and ſo in unexpreſſible Anguiſh they pine away a long Eternity. And tho' they might find Content and Satisfaction, cou'd they but divert their Affections another way, and reconcile them to the heavenly Enjoyments; yet being irrecoverably pre-engaged to *ſenſual* Goods, they have no Savour or Reliſh of any thing elſe, but are like *feveriſh Tongues* that diſguſt and nauſeate the moſt grateful Liquors, by reaſon of their own overflowing Gall. So impoſſible is it for Men to be ever happy either here or hereafter, ſo long as their Affections to the leſſer Goods of this World, do ſo immoderately exceed the Worth and Value of them.

The peculiar Office of the Virtue of *Moderation*, is to bound our *concupiſcible* Affections, and proportion them to the intrinſick Worth of thoſe outward Goods which we affect and deſire. For tho' the Word *Moderation*, according to our preſent Acceptation of it, be no where to be found in the *New Teſtament*, yet the Virtue expreſt by it is frequently enjoin'd; as particularly, where we are forbid to *to ſet our Affections upon the things of this Earth:* and again, *To love the World and the things that are in the World.* Which Phraſes are not to be ſo underſtood, as if we were not to love the Enjoyments of the World at all, for they are the bleſſings of God, and ſuch as he has propos'd to us in his Promiſes, as the *Rewards* and *Encouragements* of *our Obedience:* and certainly he wou'd never encourage us to obey him, by the Hope of ſuch *Rewards* as are unlawful for us to deſire and love. The meaning therefore of theſe Prohibitions is, that we ſhou'd ſo moderate our Affections to the World, as not

to

to permit them to exceed the real Worth and Value of its Enjoyments. For it is not ſimply our loving it, but our loving it to ſuch a Degree as is inconſiſtent with our Love of God, that is forbidden here. And hence *Covetouſneſs*, which is an *immoderate* Deſire of the World, is called *Idolatry*, becauſe it ſets the World in the place of God, and gives it that ſupreme Degree of Affection which is only due to him; and this the Apoſtle calls *inordinate Affection*, becauſe it extravagantly exceeds the intrinſick worth and value of its Objects.

That this Virtue of *Moderation* does mightily contribute to our Acquiſition of *Heavenly Happineſs*, is evident from what has been already ſaid, namely, that 'till our Affections are thus *moderated*, we can have no ſavour or reliſh of the heavenly Enjoyments; for in this corrupt State of our Natures, we generally *underſtand* by our *Affections*, which, like colour'd Glaſs, repreſent all Objects to us in their Hue and Complexion. Thus when a Man's Actions are immediately carry'd out towards worldly things, they will be ſure by Degrees to corrupt and deprave his Judgment, and render him as unfit to judge of divine and ſpiritual Enjoyments, as a Ploughman is to be Moderator in the *Schools:* For tho' in his Nature there is a tendency to *rational* Pleaſures, yet this he may, and very frequently does ſtifle and extinguiſh by addicting himſelf wholly to the *Delights* and *Gratifications* of his Senſe, which by Degrees will ſo melt down his *rational* Inclinations into his *ſenſual*, and confound and mingle them with his carnal Appetites, that his *Soul* will wholly ſympathize with his *Body*, and have all *likes* and *diſlikes* in common with it.

Now to ſuch a *Soul*, the ſpiritual World muſt needs be a barren *Wilderneſs*, where no Good grows that it can live upon, none but what is nauſeous and diſtaſteful to his coarſe and vitiated Palate: Were we admitted to that heavenly Place where the Bleſſed dwell, yet unleſs we had acquir'd their heavenly Diſpoſition and Temper, we cou'd never participate with them in their

Pleaſures;

Pleaſures; for ſo great wou'd be the Antipathy of our ſenſual Affections to them, that we ſhou'd doubtleſs fly away from them, and rather chooſe to be for ever *inſenſible*, than to be condemned to an everlaſting *Perception* of what is ſo ungrateful to our Natures. Wherefore till we have in ſome meaſure *moderated* our *concupiſcible Affections*, and wean'd them from their exceſſive Dotages upon ſenſual Good, 'tis impoſſible we ſhou'd enjoy the Happineſs of Heaven.

Another Virtue which belongs to a Man, conſider'd merely as a *rational* Creature, is *Fortitude*, which in the largeſt Senſe conſiſts in not permitting our *iraſcible Affections* to exceed thoſe Evils or Dangers, which we ſeek to repel or avoid, in keeping our *Fear* and *Anger*, our *Malice*, *Envy*, and *Revenge*, in ſuch due Subjection, as not to let them exceed thoſe Bounds which Reaſon and the Nature of things preſcribe them. *Fortitude* is not taken here in the narrow Senſe of the *Moraliſts*, as it is a Medium between irrational *Fear* and *Fool-hardineſs*, but as it is the *Rule* by which all thoſe *iraſcible Paſſions* in us, which ariſe from the Senſe of any Evil or Danger, ought to be guided and directed. That by which we are to guard and defend ourſelves againſt all thoſe troubleſom and diſquieting Impreſſions which outward Evils and Dangers are apt to make upon our Minds. In this Latitude, *Fortitude* not only comprehends Courage as it is oppos'd to *Fear*, but alſo *Gentleneſs* as it is oppos'd to *Fierceneſs*; *Sufferance* as it is oppos'd to *Impatience*; *Contentedneſs* as it is oppos'd to *Envy*; and *Meekneſs* as it is oppos'd to *Malice* and *Revenge*; all which are the *Paſſions* of weak and puſillanimous Minds, that are not able to withſtand an Evil, nor endure the leaſt touch of it without being ſtartled and diſorder'd, that are ſo ſoftned with *Baſeneſs* and *Cowardiſe*, that they cannot reſiſt the moſt gentle impreſſions of Injury. For as ſick Perſons are offended with the *light* of the *Sun* and the freſhneſs of the Air, which are highly pleaſant and delightful to ſuch as are well and in *Health*; ſo Perſons of weak feeble Minds are eaſily

eaſily offended, their Spirits are ſo tender and effeminate, that they cannot endure the leaſt Air of Evil ſhould blow upon them, and what would be only a Diverſion to a courageous Soul, troubles and incommodes them. Whatever *Courage* ſuch Perſons may pretend to, 'tis merely a Heat and Ferment of their *Blood* and *Spirits*; a *Courage* wherein *Game-Cocks* and *Maſtiffs* outvie the greateſt Heroes of them all: But as to that which is truly *rational* and *manly*, which conſiſts in a firm compoſedneſs of Mind in the midſt of evil or dangerous Accidents, they are the moſt wretched *Cowards* in Nature. He that has true *Fortitude*, is harden'd againſt Evil upon *rational Principles*, he is fortified and guarded with *Reaſon* and Conſideration, that no dolorous Accident from without is able to invade his Soul, or raiſe any violent Commotions in it. In a word, he hath ſuch a conſtant Power over his *iraſcible Affections*, as not to be over-prone either to be *timorous* in *Danger*, or *envious* in *Want*, or *impatient* in *Suffering*, or *angry* in *Contempt*, or *malicious* and *revengeful* under *Injuries* and *Provocations:* And till we have acquir'd this Virtue, we can never be happy here or hereafter.

While we are in this World, we muſt expect to be encompaſs'd with continual Crouds of evil Accidents, ſome or other of which will be always preſſing upon and juſtling againſt us: If our Minds therefore are ſore and uneaſy, and over-apt to be affected with the Evil, we ſhall be continually *pain'd* and *diſquieted:* For whereas were our Minds but calm and eaſy, all the evil Accidents that befal us, wou'd be but like a Shower of Hail upon the Tiles of a Muſick-room, which with all its Clatter and Noiſe diſturbs not the Harmony that is within; our being too apt to be moved into *Paſſion* by them, uncovers our Mind to them, and lays it open to the *Tempeſt*. If our *Reaſon* commands not our *Paſſions*, outward *Accidents* will, and according as they happen to be, good or bad, ſo muſt we be ſure ſtill to be happy or miſerable; and in this Condition like a Ship without a Pilot, in the midſt

of

of a tempeſtuous Sea, we are the Sport of every Wind and Wave, and know not, till the Event has determined it, how the next Billow will diſpoſe of us, whether it will daſh us againſt a *Rock*, or drive us into a quiet *Harbour*.

So miſerable is our Condition *here*, while we are utterly deſtitute of this *Virtue* of *Fortitude*, but much more wretched will the want of it neceſſarily render us *hereafter*. For all thoſe *Affections* which fall under the *Inſpection* and *Government* of *Fortitude*, are in their *Exceſſes* naturally vexatious to the Mind, and always diſturb and raiſe Tumults in it: For ſo *Wrath* and *Impatience* diſtract and alienate it from itſelf, confound its Thoughts and ſhuffle them together into a Heap of wild and diſorderly Fancies; ſo *Malice*, *Envy* and *Revenge*, do fill it with anxious biting Thoughts, which like young Vipers gnaw the Womb that bears them, and fret and gall the wretched Mind which forms and gives them Entertainment. If we go into the other World with theſe Affections unmortify'd in us, they will not only be far more violent and outrageous than now, and we ſhall not only have a far quicker Senſe of them than now, but this our ſharp Senſe of them will be pure and ſimple without any Intermixture of Pleaſure to ſoften and allay it. What exquiſite *Devils* and *Tormenters* will they prove when an extreme *Rage* and *Hate*, *Envy* and *Revenge*, ſhall be altogether like ſo many hungry Vultures preying on our Hearts; and our Mind ſhall be continually *baited* and *worried* with all the furious Thoughts which theſe outrageous *Paſſions* can ſuggeſt to us: When with the meagre Look of Envy we ſhall gaze on the Regions of Happineſs, and inceſſantly pine and grieve at the Felicities of thoſe that inhabit them; when thro' a Senſe of our own *Folly*, and of the miſerable Effects of it, our *Rage* and *Impatience* ſhall be heightened and boil'd up into a *Diabolical Fury*; and when at the ſame time an inveterate *Malice* againſt all that we converſe with, and a fierce Deſire of *revenging* ourſelves upon thoſe that have contributed to our Ruin, ſhall, like a Wolf in our Breaſts, be continually

nually gnawing and feeding upon our Souls: What an inſupportable Hell ſhall we be to ourſelves? Doubtleſs that *outward Hell*, to which bad Spirits are condemn'd, is very terrible, but as doubtleſs the worſt of their Hell is *within* themſelves, and their own deviliſh Paſſions are ſeverer *Furies* to them than all thoſe Devils that are without them.

To remove therefore this great Impediment of our Happineſs, Chriſtianity injoins us to practiſe this neceſſary Virtue of *Fortitude*, by *moderating* our *Anger* and *Impatience*, by ſuppreſſing our *Envy*, and extinguiſhing all our unreaſonable *Hatred* and *Deſire* of *Revenge*. How much the Practice of this Virtue conduces to our eternal Happineſs, is evident from hence, that all the Diſeaſes and Diſtempers which our Minds are capable of, are nothing elſe but the Exceſſes of its *concupiſcible* and *iraſcible Affections*, nothing but its being affected with *Good* and *Evil*, beyond thoſe Limits and Meaſures which right *Reaſon* preſcribes. Did we but love our outward *Goods* according to the Value at which true Reaſon rates them, we ſhould neither be vext with an *impatient Deſire* of them while we want, nor diſappointed of our Expectation while we enjoy them. When our Deſires towards theſe outward Goods are reduc'd to that *Coolneſs* and *Moderation*, as neither to be impatient in the Purſuit, nor diſſatisfy'd in the Enjoyment of them, it is impoſſible they ſhould give any Diſturbance to our Minds: On the other hand, did we but take care to regulate our Reſentments of outward Evils and Dangers, as *right Reaſon* adviſes, they would never be able to hurt or diſcompoſe our Minds; for *right Reaſon* adviſes, that we ſhould not ſo reſent them, as to increaſe and aggravate them; and he who follows her Advice, and conducts his *iraſcible Affections* by it, has a Mind that is elevated above the reach of Injury, that ſits above the Clouds in a calm and quiet Region, and with a brave Indifferency hears the rolling Thunder grumble and burſt under his Feet. When outward Evils fall upon

timorous,

timorous, peeviſh and malicious Spirits, like Sparks of Fire upon a Heap of Gun-powder, they preſently blow them up and put them all in Combuſtion: When they happen to a *diſpaſſionate* Mind, they fall like Stones upon a *Bed* of *Down*, where they lie eaſily and quietly, and are received with a calm and ſoft Compliance. The Health of a reaſonable Soul conſiſts in being perfectly reaſonable, in having all its Affections perfectly ſubdued, and clothed in the Livery of its Reaſon. While it is thus, it cannot be *diſeas'd* in that ſpiritual State, in which it will be wholly ſeparated from all bodily Senſe and Paſſion, becauſe it has no Affection in it that can any way diſturb and ruffle its calm and gentle Thoughts: And then feeling all within itſelf to be well, and as it ſhou'd be, every String tun'd into a perfect Harmony, every Motion and Affection correſponding with the moſt perfect Draughts and Models of its own Reaſon, it muſt needs highly approve of, and be perfectly ſatisfy'd with itſelf; and while it ſurveys its own Motions and Actions, it muſt neceſſarily have a moſt delicious Guſt and Reliſh of them, they being all ſuch as its beſt and pureſt Reaſon approves of, with a *full* and *ungainſaying* Judgment. And thus the Soul being cur'd of all irregular Affections, and remov'd from all corporeal Paſſion, will live in a perfect Health and Vigour, and for ever enjoy within itſelf a Heaven of Content and Peace.

Another *Virtue* which appertains to a Man, conſider'd merely as a *rational Creature*, is *Temperance*, which conſiſts in not indulging our *bodily Appetites* to the Hurt and Prejudice of our *rational Nature*, or in refraining from thoſe Exceſſes of *bodily Pleaſures*, of *Eating*, *Drinking*, and *Venery*, which do either diſorder our Reaſon, or indiſpoſe us to enjoy the purer Pleaſures of the *Mind*. All Exceſſes of *bodily Pleaſures* are naturally prejudicial to our Reaſon, as they indiſpoſe thoſe *bodily* Organs, by which it operates; for ſo *Drunkenneſs* dilates the Brain, which is the Mint of the Underſtanding, and drowns thoſe Images it ſtamps upon it, in a Hood of unwholſom Rheums

Rheums and Moiſtures; and *Gluttony* clogs the *animal Spirits*, which are, as it were, the *Wings* of the *Mind*, and indiſpoſes them for the higheſt and nobleſt Flights of Reaſon; ſo *Wantonneſs* chafes the Blood into *Feveriſh Heats*, and by cauſing it to boil up too faſt in the *Brain*, diſorders the Motions of the Spirits there, and ſo confounds the Ideas, that the Mind can have no clear or diſtinct Perception of them, by which means our Intellectual Faculties are very often interrupted and forced to ſit ſtill for want of proper Tools to work with; and ſo by often loitering, grow by Degrees liſtleſs and unactive, and at the laſt, are utterly indiſpos'd to any rational Operations.

Beſides this, which muſt needs be a mighty Prejudice to our *rational Nature*; by too much familiarizing ourſelves to *bodily Pleaſures*, we ſhall break off all our Acquaintance with ſpiritual ones, and grow by Degrees, ſuch utter Strangers to them, that we ſhall never be able to reliſh and enjoy them, and our Soul will contract ſuch an uxorious Fondneſs of the *Body*, as the *Shop* of all the Pleaſure it was ever acquainted with, that 'twill never be able to live happily without it. For tho' in its ſeparate State, it cannot be ſuppos'd that the *Soul* will retain the Appetites of the Body, yet if while it is in the Body, it wholly abandons itſelf to corporeal Pleaſures, it may, and doubtleſs will, retain a vehement *bankering* after it, and longing to be reunited to it, which, I conceive, is the only *Senſuality* that a ſeparated Soul is capable of: For when ſuch a Soul arrives into the Spiritual World, her having wholly accuſtom'd herſelf to *bodily Pleaſures*, and never experienced any other, will neceſſarily render her incapable of enjoying the Pleaſures of pure and bleſſed Spirits: Thus being utterly deſtitute of all her dear Delights and Satisfactions, which are ſuch as ſhe knows ſhe can never enjoy but in Conjunction with the Body, all her Appetite and Longing muſt neceſſarily be an outrageous Deſire of being embodied again, that ſo ſhe may be capable of repeating

ing her old ſenſual Pleaſures, and acting over the bruti∫h Scene anew.

Hence among other Reaſons it was, that the *Primitive Chri∫tians* did ſo ſeverely abſtain from *bodily Pleaſures*, that by this means they might gently wean the Soul from the Body, and teach it beforehand to live upon the Delights of *ſeparated Spirits*; that upon its Separation, it might drop into Eternity like Fruit from the Tree, with Eaſe and Willingneſs; and that by accuſtoming it before to *ſpiritual Pleaſures* and *Delights*, it might acquire ſuch a ſavoury Senſe and Reli∫h of them, as to be able when it came into the ſpiritual World, to live wholly upon them, and to be ſo entirely ſatisfy'd with them, as not to be endleſly vex'd with a tormenting Deſire of returning to the *Body* again: They did ſo uſe them, that, as much as in them lay, they might wean their Souls from all ſuch Pleaſures, that ſo they might have the better Appetite to the ſpiritual Food, upon which they were to live for ever. Hitherto tend all thoſe *Precepts* concerning *abſtaining from worldly Luſts which war againſt our Souls, and mortifying the Deeds of the Body*, and keeping under the Body, and being *temperate* in all things, *to watch and to be ſober, and walking honeſtly as in the Day, not in Rioting and Drunkenneſs, not in Chambering and Wantonneſs, not in Exceſs of Wine, Revellings and Banquetings.* The Senſe of all which is, That we ſhould not indulge our bodily Appetites, to the vitiating and depraving our ſpiritual; that we ſhould not plunge ourſelves ſo far in the *Pleaſures of the Fle∫h*, as to drown our Senſe and Perception of divine and heavenly Enjoyments, but ſhould ſo ſubdue and mortify our Senſuality, as that it may not have Dominion over us, nor be the prevalent Delight and Complacency of our Souls; but that the commanding Bias, and ſwaying Propenſion within us, may be towards divine and ſpiritual Enjoyments.

'Tis at the firſt View evident, how much the Practice of this Virtue conduces to our future Happineſs; for by taking us off from all Exceſs of *bodily Pleaſures*, it diſpoſes

poſes us to enjoy the Pleaſures of Heaven and *connaturalizes* our Souls to them. Thus when after a long Exerciſe of Temperance we come to leave the *Body*, our *Soul* will be ſo looſen'd from it beforehand, and rendered ſo indifferent to the Delights of it, that we ſhall be able to part both with it and them, without any great *Regret* or *Reluctancy*, and live from them for ever without any diſquieting Longings or *Hankerings* after them. For as when we are grown up by Age and Experience to a Senſe of more *manly* Pleaſures, we deſpiſe Nuts and Rattles, which when we were *Children* we accounted our Happineſs, and ſhould have reckon'd ourſelves undone had we been depriv'd of them; ſo when by the Practice of a ſevere Repentance we have acquir'd a thorough Senſe of the Pleaſures of Virtue and Religion, we ſhall look upon all our *bodily Pleaſures* as the little Toys and Fooleries of our Infant State, with which we pleas'd our Childiſh Fancies when we knew no better, our Minds being for the main reconcil'd to rational and ſpiritual Pleaſures. We ſhall put off all Remains of bodily Luſts with our Bodies, and ſo fly away into the ſpiritual World with none but pure and ſpiritual Appetites about us, where meeting with an infinite Fulneſs of ſpiritual Joys and Pleaſures, of which we had many a Foretaſte in the Body, our pre-diſpos'd Mind will preſently cloſe with and feed upon them, with ſuch unſpeakable Content and Satisfaction, as will raviſh it for ever from the Thoughts of all other Pleaſures.

Another of thoſe Virtues which belong to a Man, conſider'd merely as a *rational Animal*, is *Humility*, which conſiſts in a modeſt and lowly Opinion of ourſelves, and of our *Acquiſitions*, *Merits* or *Endowments*, or in not valuing ourſelves beyond what is due and juſt, upon the Account of any Good we are poſſeſt of, whether it be *internal* or *external*. For *Pride* or an over-weening *Self-Conceit* is the Bane of all our Virtue and Happineſs, as has been ſufficiently ſhewn under its proper Article, in the firſt Volume of this *Ladies Library*, to which therefore I muſt refer. We ſhould be ſo far from repining and

murmuring at God, for not rewarding us as liberally as others, that we ſhould be thoroughly ſenſible that he has been bountiful to us, infinitely beyond our Deſert or Expectation; that 'twas not out of a fond Partiality or blind *Reſpect* of *Perſons*, that he rais'd others to higher Degrees of *Glory* than ourſelves, but out of a Principle of ſtrict *Juſtice*, that exactly balances and adjuſts its Rewards, according to the Degrees of our Deſert and Improvement. The Senſe of which will not only compoſe our Minds into a perfect Satisfaction, but alſo continually excite us to thoſe beatifical Acts of *Love* and *Praiſe*, *Thankſgiving* and *Adoration*. Thus will Humility tune and compoſe us for Heaven, and only caſt us down like Balls, that we may rebound the higher in Glory and Happineſs.

'Tis true indeed, the immediate Product of this, and all the other Virtues already treated of under this Head, is only, at leaſt chiefly, privative Happineſs, or the Happineſs of *Reſt* and *Indolence*, which conſiſts in not being miſerable, or in a perfect Ceſſation from all ſuch Acts as are hurtful and injurious to a rational Spirit.

Now beſides this *privative*, there is a *poſitive* part of Happineſs, which conſiſts not in Reſt but in Motion, in the vigorous Exerciſe of our rational Faculties, upon ſuch Objects as are moſt ſuitable to them. And to the obtaining of this part of our Happineſs, there are kinds of Virtues neceſſary to be put in Practice, as we are *rational Creatures*, and theſe are Virtues of a *divine* Nature, as the others are of a *human*.

As we are *rational* Creatures, related to God, we are oblig'd to think of and contemplate the Beauty and Perfection of his Nature.

For the natural Uſe of our Underſtanding is to contemplate *Truth*, and therefore the more of *Truth* and *Reality* there is in any knowable Object, and the farther it is remov'd from *Falſhood* and *Non-entity*, the more the Underſtanding is concern'd to contemplate and think upon it. God therefore being the moſt true and real Object,

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as he ſtands remov'd by the Neceſſity of his *Exiſtence* from all Poſſibility of not being, muſt needs be the moſt perfect theme of our Underſtanding, the beſt and greateſt Subject on which it can employ its Meditations. And beſides that he is the moſt true and real of all Beings, he is alſo the Source and Spring of all Truth and Reality: His Power, conducted by his Wiſdom and Goodneſs, being the Cauſe not only of all that is, but of all that either ſhall be or can be. And is it fit that our *Underſtanding*, which was made to *contemplate*, ſhould wholly overlook the Fountain of it? But beſides this too, that he is the greateſt Truth himſelf, and the Cauſe of every thing that is true and real, he is the Sovereign of Beings, the moſt amiable and perfect, as he includes in his infinite Eſſence all poſſible Perfection both in Kind and Degree. And what a monſtrous Irreverence is it, for Minds that were fram'd to the Contemplation of *Truth*, to paſs by ſuch a great and glorious one without any *Regard* or *Obſervance*, as if he ſtood for a Cypher in the World, and were not worthy to be thought upon? He is, beſides all this, a *Truth*, in which, above all others, we are moſt nearly concern'd, as he is not only the *Father* and Prop of our Beings, and the *Conſolation* of our *Lives*, but the ſole *Arbiter* of our Fate too, upon whom our everlaſting well or ill Being depends. And what can we be more concern'd to think and meditate upon, than this great Being from whom we ſprang, in whom we live and breathe, and from whom we are to expect all the Evil or Good that we can fear or hope for? All which conſidered, there is no Doubt to be made but that our Underſtanding was chiefly made for God, to look up to him, and contemplate his Being and Perfections. 'Till we have thoroughly fixt our Minds and Wills upon God, we do naturally affect ſuch an *Infinity* of Objects, that our Deſires are always reaching at new *Pleaſures*, and carry'd forth after new *Poſſeſſions*; by which the Soul declares that it is not to be perfectly pleaſed with finite *Truth* or *Good*, and that it can never be ſatisfy'd but in

Union with God, who is an *infinite Ocean* of Truth and Goodneſs. For as for all other Beings, they are ſo very ſhallow, that we quickly ſee to the very Bottom of their Truth and Reality; and when we have done that, we have no more in them, to feed and entertain our Underſtandings; and when we have exhauſted the Truth of *finite* Beings, we muſt either ceaſe to underſtand any more, which would be to deprive our nobleſt Faculty of any farther Pleaſure, or we muſt at laſt fix our Mind upon God, in whom it will find ſuch *infinite* Truth as will be ſufficient to exerciſe it throughout all its *infinite* Duration. But unleſs we do now acquaint our Minds with God, by frequent thinking and meditating upon him, we ſhall by Degrees grow ſuch Strangers to him, that by that time we go into the other World, we ſhall be ſo far from being pleas'd with contemplating him, that we ſhall look upon him as an uncouth Object, and out of diſtaſte avert and turn our Eyes from him. We ſhall be continually flying away from him, as *Batts* and *Owls* do from the Light of the *Sun*, and never be able to compoſe our awkward Thoughts into a fixt Contemplation of his Glory. And when we have thus baniſh'd ourſelves from the only Object that can for ever bleſs and ſatisfy our Underſtanding, that can keep it in everlaſting Exerciſe and Motion, and feed its greedy Thoughts eternally with freſh and glorious Diſcoveries, we have utterly loſt one of the ſweeteſt Pleaſures that human Nature is capable of, and ſo muſt neceſſarily pine and languiſh under an eternal Diſcontentedneſs.

Tho' to meditate cloſely upon God may at firſt be irkſom and tedious to our unexperienc'd Minds, yet when by the conſtant Practice of it we have worn off that Strangeneſs towards God, which renders the Thoughts of him ſo troubleſome to us, and by frequent Converſes are grown better acquainted with him, we ſhall be by Degrees ſo pleas'd and ſatisfy'd with the Thoughts of him, that we ſhall not know how to live without them; and our *Minds* at laſt will be touch'd with ſuch a lively

lively Senſe of his attractive Beauties, that we ſhall never be well but while we are with him. He will thus become the conſtant Companion of our Thoughts, and the daily Theme of our *Meditations*. Nothing in the World will then be ſo grateful and acceptable to us, as to retire now and then from it, and converſe with God in holy Contemplation. And tho' by reaſon of our preſent *Circumſtances* and *Neceſſities* there is no Remedy, but our Thoughts muſt be often diverted from him, and forced to attend to our ſecular Occaſions; yet after they have been us'd a while to God, we ſhall find they will never be ſo well pleas'd, nor ſo much at Eaſe, as when they are retir'd from every thing but God, and compos'd and ſettled into divine Meditations. When we go into the other World, where we ſhall be remov'd from theſe troubleſome *Circumſtances* and *Neceſſities* which did here ſo often divert our Thoughts from God, our Minds, which have been ſo long accuſtomed and habituated to him, will immediately faſten upon him, and entirely devote themſelves to the Contemplation of his Nature and Glory. For our Minds being already ſtrongly inclin'd and bias'd towards God, by thoſe grateful Foretaſtes we have had of him in the Warmths of our Meditation; we come into the ſtill and quiet Regions of the *Bleſſed*, where we ſhall immediately have a more cloſe and intimate View of him than ever, all our Thoughts will naturally run towards him, and be ſo captivated with the firſt Sight of his Glory, that we ſhall never be able to look off again as long as Eternity endures; but one View will invite us to another, and what we ſee will ſo tranſport and raviſh us, that we ſhall ſtill deſire to ſee farther and farther.

Oh happy Mind! what Tongue can expreſs the Joys and Raptures, that being thus in Conjunction with God, art always fill'd with glorious *Ideas*, and compaſt round with the Wonders of his Perfection? At every Glance thou ſeeſt ſome new *Charms*, with every Thought makeſt ſome vaſt *Diſcovery!* Oh! the tranſporting Pleaſures of

that bleſſed *Viſion*, which I can now hardly think of without Ecſtaſy! With what Delight will my wing'd Thoughts hover in the Light of God's Countenance, which thro' every Moment of Eternity will be ſtill revealing new Beauties to us, ſuch as will not only for ever *employ*, but for ever *inflame* our Meditations.

As we are *rational Creatures*, related to God, we are not only obliged to *think of* and *contemplate* him, *but alſo humbly to worſhip and adore him.*

Out of a moſt awful Eſteem, and moſt profound Reverence of his ſuper-excellent Majeſty, and boundleſs Perfection, we ſhould bow down our Souls before him, and addreſs ourſelves to him by *Invocation* and *Prayer*, by *Praiſe* and *Thankſgiving*, as to the all-ſufficient, independent, and ſole Diſpoſer of every good and perfect Gift. And in theſe our Addreſſes we ſhould outwardly expreſs this our reverential Eſteem of him, by ſuch humble Geſtures of Body as are moſt apt to teſtify it to others. Of this Duty we have diſcours'd in the foregoing Pages, and ſhall take Occaſion to ſpeak farther in thoſe that follow. If we are of the Elect, 'twill eternally be our Buſineſs and Employment to admire and extol the Perfections of God, of which he will every Moment make new and glorious Diſcoveries; and to celebrate with grateful Acknowledgments the infinite Riches of his Bounty, of which we will every Moment have freſh and ſweet Experiences. Thus, while by continual Acts of Praiſe and Thankſgiving we endeavour to affect our Minds with a due Senſe of the Goodneſs and Bounty of God, we are practiſing beforehand the *Muſick* of *Heaven*, and taking out the *Songs* of *Sion*, that ſo when we go from hence, we may be qualify'd and prepar'd to bear a part in the celeſtial Choir. True Devotion conſiſts in a quick and lively Senſe of the infinite Majeſty, Beauty, and Benignity of God, and moſt effectually diſpoſes the Mind to all thoſe divine and ſpiritual Exerciſes in which the State of Heaven conſiſts.

As

As we are *rational Creatures*, related to God, we are alſo oblig'd *to an unfeign'd Love of and Complacency in him.*

And this Obligation lies from us to him, both on the Account of what he is in *himſelf*, the moſt amiable of Beings, in whom there is an harmonious Concurrence of all imaginable Beauties and Perfections, of Wiſdom and Goodneſs, of Juſtice and Mercy, and every other amiable thing that can claim or attract a reaſonable Affection; (all which, in infinite Degrees, are *contemper'd* together in his Nature) and alſo on account of his infinite Kindneſs and Beneficence to us, in the many Inſtances mentioned in every Article of this Deſign.

If ever we intend to grow up to the State of the Bleſſed in Heaven, we muſt endeavour to kindle and blow up the *Love* of God in our Hearts. In order to this, we muſt be frequently repreſenting to our Minds the infinite Reaſon we have to love him, and preſſing it upon ourſelves, with the vaſt Obligations he has laid upon us, ſpreading them fairly before our Thoughts in all their endearing Circumſtances. We muſt ever and anon ſet our cold and frozen Souls before thoſe melting Flames of his Love and Beauty, and never leave urging and preſſing them with this Conſideration, till we feel the heavenly Fire begin to kindle in our Boſoms. Above all things, we muſt take care by the conſtant Practice of what is agreeable to God's Nature, to reconcile our Minds and Tempers to him, for, 'till this is done, we can never be habitually pleas'd or delighted in him. But when once, by the practice of thoſe eternal Rules of Goodneſs that are founded in his bleſſed Nature, we have ſo far reconcil'd our Natures to him, as that our Hearts and his ſtand bent the ſame way, and are for the main alike inclin'd and diſpos'd, then we are prepar'd for, and made proper and convenient *Fuel* to receive this heavenly *Flame of Love* from him. And when this is once ſo thoroughly kindled in our Hearts, as that we are habitually well-pleas'd and delighted in him, ſo as to rejoice in his Happineſs, acquieſce in his Will, and meditate on his Beauty

and Goodneſs with an unfeign'd complacency of Soul, we are then in the ſame State in *Kind*, tho' not in *Degree*, with the bleſſed People in Heaven.

And how inconceivably happy will that glorious State be, when we ſhall always live in view of the moſt *lovely* Object, and always *love* him as much as we are able, and be able to love him a thouſand times more than we can now imagine? For the longer we *view*, the more ſhall we *know* him, and the more we *know* him, the better we ſhall love him. Thus thro' everlaſting Ages our *Love* ſhall be *ſtretching* and *extending* itſelf upon this infinite Beauty and Lovelineſs; he will never be abſent from us, but continually entertaining our amorous Minds with the proſpect of his infinite Beauties; we ſhall ever feel his Love to us in the moſt ſenſible and endearing Effects, even in the glory of that Crown which he will ſet upon our Heads; and in the raviſhing Sweetneſs of thoſe Joys, he will infuſe into our Hearts: We ſhall then experience the continuation of his *Love* in the continual *Fruition* of all that an everlaſting Heaven means; and be convinced as well by the perpetuity of his Goodneſs to us, as by the immutability of his Nature, that he is an unchangeable *Lover*. In a word, we ſhall there find him a moſt happy Being, happy beyond our vaſteſt wiſhes of his Love; we ſhall not only delight in him, as he is infinitely *lovely* and *amiable*, but rejoice and triumph in him too, as he is infinitely bleſſed and happy; for Love unites the Intereſts as well as the Hearts of *Lovers*, and mutually appropriates them to each others Joys and Felicities: We ſhall in that *State* of *Bleſſedneſs* ſhare in the *Felicity* of God, proportionably to the degree of our Love to him; for the more we love him, the more we ſhall ſtill eſpouſe his Intereſt; and the more we are intereſted in his Happineſs, the happier we muſt be, and the more we muſt enjoy of it.

Thus God's Happineſs is, as it were, the common Bank and Treaſury of all *divine Lovers*, in which they have every one a Share, and of which proportionably to the de-

grees

grees of their Love to him, they do actually participate to all *Eternity*. Cou'd they but love him as much as he deſerves, that is *infinitely*, they would be as *infinitely* bleſſed and happy as he; for then all his *Happineſs* wou'd be theirs, and they would have the ſame delightful Senſe and feeling of it, as if it were all tranſplanted into their own Boſoms. God therefore being an *infinitely happy*, *infinitely loving*, and *infinitely lovely* Being, when once we are admitted to dwell for ever in his bleſſed Preſence, our Love to him can be productive of nothing but ſweet and raviſhing Emotions; for the immenſe Perfections it will then find in its Object, muſt neceſſarily reſcue it from all thoſe Fears and Jealouſies, Griefs and Diſpleaſures, that are mingled with our carnal *Loves*, and render it a pure Delight and Complacency. When once it is grown up to the Perfection of the heavenly State 'twill be all Heaven, 'twill be an eternal Paradiſe of Delights in us, a living Spring, whence Rivers of Pleaſures will iſſue for ever more. Oh! bleſſed State, in which my Heart ſhall be brimful of Love, and my Love ſhall triumph alone with me, and be all Joy and Raviſhment, being remov'd for ever out of the Noiſe and Neighbourhood of all theſe diſquieting Affections, which here are wont to mingle with, and continually diſturb and incommode it.

As we are rational Creatures, related to God, we are *farther oblig'd attentively to imitate him in all his imitable Perfections and Actions*.

'Tis an allow'd Maxim, that that which is moſt perfect in its Kind, is to be the Rule and Meaſure of all thoſe individual Natures that are contain'd under it: God therefore being the moſt perfect of all in the whole kind of reaſonable Beings, muſt needs be the ſupreme Pattern of all thoſe Individuals that are under him, and ſo far as any of them diſagree from him, ſo for are they defective in their Natures. God is the *Archetype* of every reaſonable Creature, and Man is his Imitation and Image; for he is a Being that is infinitely reaſonable in all his *Volitions* and

Actions; that has not the leaſt Intermixture either of Humour or Folly, or Prejudices in his Choices, but is always and in every thing govern'd by his own pure and all-comprehending Wiſdom. Upon which Account he ought to be own'd, look'd upon by every reaſonable Being, as the ſovereign Standard and Pattern of their *Natures*, and ſo far as any *reaſonable* Nature moves or acts *counter* to his, ſo far it ought to be look'd upon as monſtrous and unnatural in its Kind: And as it is monſtrous in a human Body to have its Parts diſplaced, its Mouth opened in his Belly, or its Legs growing out of its Shoulders, becauſe theſe are unnatural Poſitions, which are directly contrary to the true Idea, Form, and Figure of a human Body ſo every reaſonable Nature that does not imitate and take after God's, but chooſes and acts contrary to him, is ſo far monſtrous and miſhapen, becauſe 'tis writh'd and diſtorted into a Figure that is directly contrary to its natural Pattern and Exemplar: while it continues ſo, it is not capable of true Happineſs; for that which renders God ſo infinitely happy in himſelf, is not ſo much the Almighty Power he has to defend himſelf from foreign Hurts and Injuries, as the exact Agreement of all his Motions aad Actions, with the all-comprehending Reaſon of his own Mind.

In proſecution of its great Deſign which is to make us happy, the Goſpel ſtrictly requires us to be always *imitating*, ſo far as they are *imitable*, the Perfections and Actions of our heavenly Father; to endeavour to form our Natures to his, to rectify the Features and Lineaments of our Souls by his moſt amiable Idea; to be continually framing our Temper by the noble pattern of his Mercy and Goodneſs, his Juſtice, Purity, and Wiſdom; that ſo, being *new-caſt* as it were in the perfect Mould of his Nature, we may be transformed into living Images of him. *Be ye therefore*, ſays the Apoſtle, Imitators, or *Followers of God, as dear Children.* Again, *Be pure as God is pure, merciful as he is merciful, and perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.* And in another Place, *Put on the new Man,*

Man, which after God is created in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs.

What an infinite Satisfaction muſt that give to the Mind, when ſurveying itſelf round about, it ſhall find every thing within itſelf exactly as it *ought to be*, every Faculty, to its utmoſt Power and Capacity, perfectly correſponding with its original Pattern and Exemplar? when it ſhall interchangeably turn its Eyes from God to itſelf; and compare Grace with Grace, and Feature with Feature, and perceive what amiable Conſent and Agreement there is between its own Copy and his fair Original; what a pure *Imitation* of God its Life is, and how exactly *Deiform* all its Motions and Actions are? When, I ſay, our bleſſed Minds ſhall always find themſelves in this godly Poſture and Condition, oh! what incomparable Content and Satisfaction will they take in themſelves? With what raviſhing Pleaſure will they ever review their own Motions, which being immediately copied from the nature of God, will be ſuch as its ſevereſt Reaſon will be always forced to commend and approve? How will the happy Mind be then always triumphing in its own Purity, and enjoy within itſelf an everlaſting Heaven of Content and Peace? How will it continually be crown'd with the applauſes of its own Reaſon? All its Actions will have the joyful Echoes of a well-pleas'd Conſcience, continually reſounding after them. Thus, by *imitating* God's Perfections, we ſhall *imitate* his Happineſs too, and ſhall for ever take after him, not only in reſpect of the Rectitude of our Natures, but alſo in the moſt bleſſed and comfortable Enjoyment of ourſelves. Beſides that, our reſemblance of God will everlaſtingly diſpoſe us to *Love*, and our *Love* to contemplate and adore him; for all theſe bleſſed Acts do reciprocally further and promote each other; juſt like contiguous Bodies, that are placed in a Circle, the firſt of which being moved, thruſts on the ſecond, the ſecond the third, and the third the laſt, if there be no more between, and then the laſt thruſt on the firſt, and

ſo

ſo round again in the ſame Order. If we carry therefore with us into Eternity, a Frame and Diſpoſition of Nature like God's, we ſhall always ſo *imitate* as ſtill to *love* him, ſo *love* as ſtill to *contemplate* him, ſo *contemplate* as ſtill to *adore* him, ſo *adore*, as ſtill to *imitate*, and *love*, and *contemplate* him anew.

As we are reaſonable Creatures, related to God, we *are bound to reſign up, and ſubmit ourſelves* to his bleſſed Will and Diſpoſal.

For God has a juſt Dominion over all, founded in his own infinite Power, that does not, like other Dominions, reſult to him from any external Acts or Atchievements, but is the eternal Prerogative of his own Nature. For he, as well as all other Beings, has a Freedom to exerciſe his own Abilities, ſo far as it is juſt and lawful; but being infinitely paramount to all other Powers whatſoever, he can be ſubject to no ſuperior Authority, nor conſequently be obliged by any other Law but that of his own Nature. Whatever he can do, he can do juſtly, if it be not contrary to the infinite Perfections of his Nature; for his Power being infinite and unconfin'd, as well as his *Wiſdom*, *Juſtice*, and *Goodneſs*, does ſufficiently warrant him to do whatſoever is conſiſtent with them; otherwiſe he would be infinitely Powerful in vain: And therefore, ſince he can exerciſe a Dominion over all, he muſt needs have an eternal Right to do it, ſo far as his own *Wiſdom*, *Juſtice*, and *Goodneſs* will permit, which are the only Laws by which he can be bounded, in the exerciſe of his infinite Power and Ability; and therefore while he governs us by ſuch Rules and Laws as are convenient to his own Nature, his own Greatneſs and Power, which exalts him above all other Laws or Authority, ſufficiently warrants him ſo to do: And being thus rightfully enthron'd, by the infinite Preeminence of his own Power and Majeſty, all other Beings, ſo far as they are capable, ſtand immutably oblig'd to ſubmit and reſign themſelves up to his Government.

But beſides that we are oblig'd to him as he is God, we are alſo bound to him as he is our *Creator*. For there is always a Power acquir'd by *Benefits*, where there is none *antecedently*, eſpecially where the Benefit conferr'd is no leſs than that of our Being, which is the Caſe between us and God. And this is ſuch a Benefit, as is ſufficient to entitle him to us, by an abſolute and unalienable Prôperty, tho' he had no antecedent Right of Dominion over us by virtue of his infinite Greatneſs. Before he created us, or any other Being, he had free Power to act any thing that lay within the compaſs of *Juſt* and *Lawful*; which *Juſt* and *Lawful* was not definable by any other Law but that of his own Nature; and tho' ſince his Creation his Power is not more, yet doubtleſs by giving us our Beings, he has laid new Obligations upon us to obey him. For now, deriving ourſelves as we do, from him, we are bound by all the Ties of Equity and Juſtice, to render back ourſelves to him, and to ſubmit thoſe Powers to his Dominion, which are the Effects and Offspring of his Bounty. For what can be more juſt and equal, than that that Will which is the cauſe of our Beings, ſhou'd be the Law and Rule of our Actions; than that we ſhou'd ſerve him with thoſe Powers we deriv'd from him, and render him back the fruits of his own Plantation? For now we are not our own but God's, and he alone has Power to diſpoſe of us. Whenever we diſpoſe of ourſelves contrary to his Will and Pleaſure, we do not only invade his Property, but employ the Spoils of it againſt him; and while we continue thus doing, it is not poſſible we ſhou'd ever be happy. For beſides that while we continue in Rebellion againſt him, we are in actual Confederacy with Hell; (*Rebellion* being *as the Sin of Witchcraft*) Rebels againſt God are, like Witches, in League with the Devil, which is the genuine Comment on this Text. Such Rebels are liſted Volunteers under thoſe infernal Powers, who for blowing the Trumpet of *Rebellion* in *Heaven* were baniſh'd thence ſix thouſand Years ago, and have ever ſince been raiſing Forces in this lower World

againſt

againſt God; and all who are confederates with them, will partake of their Portion in the Lake, that burns with unquenchable Fire to all Eternity.

It cannot be ſuppos'd that the wiſe Sovereign of the World ſhould be ſo unconcern'd for his own Authority, as to ſuffer his Creatures to ſpurn and affront it, without manifeſting his Diſpleaſure againſt them, in ſome dire and ſenſible Effects. And when once he is implacably ſet againſt us, he will more or leſs let looſe his Power upon us, and make us feel his wrathful Reſentments, by infuſing ſupernatural Horrors into our Souls, and ſcourging our guilty and defenceleſs Spirits with Inſpirations of dire and frightful Thoughts. God has imprinted a dread of his own Power and Majeſty, ſo deeply on our Natures, that we are not able, with all our Arts of Self-deceit, wholly to obliterate and deface it: And tho' in this Life we may ſometimes ſuppreſs and ſtupify our Senſe of God, yet even here, in ſpite of ourſelves, 'twill ever and anon be returning upon us. If when we have done what we know is offenſive to that inviſible Majeſty we ſtand in owe of, we do but ſuffer ourſelves ſeriouſly to reflect upon it, there preſently ariſes in our Minds a ſwarm of horrid Thoughts and diſmal Expectations. And if in this preſent State, in which we have ſo many Salves for our wounded Spirits, ſo many Pleaſures and Self-deluſions to charm our natural Dread of God, our over-charg'd Conſciences do not withſtanding recoil upon us, and alarm us with ſuch diſmal bodings, what will they do hereafter, when all thoſe Pleaſures are remov'd, and all thoſe Self-deluſions baffled with which we were wont to ſooth and divert them? We ſhall then doubtleſs be continually ſtung with ſharp and dire Reflexions, and our Conſciences, like tragick Scenes, be all hung round with the enſigns of Horror. Then ſhall the dread of God perpetually haunt us like a grim Fury, and the terror of his offended Majeſty ſtrike us into an everlaſting Trembling and Agony; for the *Devils themſelves believe and tremble:* The ſame will be our Lot, if we go into

into the other World habitual Rebels to God: Our deep and inveterate Malice againſt him, will ſtill hurry us to incenſe and provoke him; and then our natural Dread of his Power and Majeſty will break into frightful and horrible Thoughts, and ſo be continually revenging upon us, thoſe our continual Provocations of him. Our Senſe of our Unlikeneſs to him will ever fill us with Shame and Confuſion, and that of our *Rebellion* againſt him, continually ſtrike us into Fear and Amazement.

To prevent which, our *Holy Religion*, which does ſo induſtriouſly conſult our Happineſs, requires us now to *ſubmit ourſelves to God, to live to God, to preſent ourſelves living Sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, to yield ourſelves unto God, and our Membens as Inſtruments of Righteouſneſs unto God.* By all which is to be underſtood, that we ſhould endeavour ſo to affect our Minds with the Senſe of God's Authority over us, and the manifold Reaſons of our Obedience to him, as to be firmly and conſtantly reſolv'd within ourſelves, neither to chooſe any thing that he forbids, nor to refuſe any thing that he commands; that we ſhould ſet him up a Throne in our Hearts, a fix'd and prevailing Reſolution of *Obedience*, that therein he may ſit and reign, and have the abſolute Empire of all our inward Motions and outward Actions. In a word, that we ſhould acquire ſuch an habitual Reſpect to, and Reverence of his ſovereign Authority, that no Temptation from within or without us may be able to countermand it, or to ſeduce us from our Duty, into any wilful courſe of Rebellion againſt him. And when once we have fram'd our Mind into this obediential Temper, we are in a forward Preparation for Heaven.

By being thus reduc'd to a perfect Submiſſion to the will of God, we ſhall therein find ourſelves incomparably happy. Our Wills being always determin'd by the will of God, we ſhall be perfectly eas'd of all the Trouble and Diſtraction of chooſing. Our Mind will no longer hover in Suſpence, nor be divided between contrary Reaſons,

but

but all its Thoughts will glide gently on, in a calm and quiet Channel, without ever being toſs'd and bandy'd to and fro, by croſs and oppoſite Deliberations. It will no ſooner know the will of God, but 'twill reſt in it immediately, with a free Aſſent and uncontroll'd Approbation. It will, upon new Occaſions, be free from the trouble of forming new Choices and Reſolutions, being already fix'd, under all Events, to one ſteady courſe of Motion; and immoveably reſolv'd, whatever befals, ever to do what God wou'd have it. Our Will, thus perfectly acquieſcing in God, as in its proper Place and Element, will no longer diſpute, as it was wont to do, no longer waver between two Loadſtones; but always obey upon the firſt Motion, and follow him for ever without Deliberation. In which happy State we ſhall be no longer ground between thoſe countermoving Milſtones, the *Law in our Minds*, and *the Law in our Members*; but being intirely reſign'd to God, we ſhall obey him with a full Current of Inclination. What a mighty eaſe muſt this be to the *Soul*, eſpecially conſidering, that by being thus intirely *ſubject* to God, it will not only be releas'd from the trouble of deliberating and chooſing, but alſo thoroughly warranted of the Goodneſs and Rectitude of its own Choices? For ſo far as we are ſubject to God, our Wills are his, and ſo are our Actions too; and while they are ſo, we can have no reaſon to miſtruſt that they are bad in themſelves, or that he is angry and diſpleas'd at them. And whereas, *rebellious* Souls are perpetually haunted with two reſtleſt *Furies*, the *Shame* of their *Guilt*, and the *Fear* of their *Danger*, which even here give them more *Diſturbance* than all their *Sins* can give them Pleaſure and Delight; when once we are perfectly ſubject to God, we ſhall be for ever diſcharg'd of them both, and then will our happy Minds be always as *Courageous* as *Truth*, and as *Confident* as Innocence itſelf.

As by our perfect *Submiſſion* to God, we ſhall be wholly releas'd from Fears and Doubts, and ſufficiently warranted in our own Choices, ſo we ſhall be abundantly

ſatisfied,

ſatisfied, both of the Wiſdom and Succeſs of them. For then we ſhall be aſſur'd, by a ſweet and happy Experience, that whatever God commands us to do, he moſt certainly knows that it is for our Good, and that that is the Reaſon why he commands it. While we *chooſe* what God wou'd have us, our Wills are guided by his Wiſdom, and ſo in every genuine Act of Obedience, we are as *infallible* as *Omniſcience* itſelf. When therefore we are perfectly *reſign'd* to God, we ſhall always *will* and *act*, with as much *Confidence* and *Aſſurance* of a happy and proſperous Succeſs, as if we ourſelves were infinitely wiſe, and had a perfect comprehenſion of all poſſible Iſſues and Events. And while wretched Rebels grope about under the conduct of their own blind Wills, and for the moſt part do they know not *what*, and go they know not *where* themſelves, but live by *chance*, and act at random; our Wills and Actions being wholly ſteer'd by an all-wiſe Will, which never fails to meaſure them by the beſt Rules, and point them to the beſt Ends; we ſhall always proceed upon the moſt certain Grounds, and be infallibly aſſur'd, that every thing we *will* or *do* ſhall conſpire to our Good.

And whereas when Men know not what may happen upon ſuch an Action, and are not able to pry out all thoſe hidden Events which lurk in the Womb of their own Deſigns, they always act with *Caution* and *Anxiety*, and are doubtful and tremulous in their Motions; when once we are ſure of a good Event, we ſtill go on with Courage and Chearfulneſs, and ſo we ſhall ever do, when we ever perfectly *will* and *act* under the command of God: For we ſhall then ſee all good Iſſues before us; and be firmly aſſur'd from that infallible Wiſdom which governs his *Will*, and by his *ours*, that every thing we *will* or *do* ſhall be crown'd with a happy Effect. And this will for ever wing our Souls with an unwearied Vigour and Activity, and render each Act of our *Obedience*, unſpeakably *ſweet* and *delightful* to us. And now, oh! bleſſed Mind! what Tongue or Thought can reach

reach thy Happineſs? who living in a moſt perfect Subjection to an all-good, and all-wiſe Will, art never in the leaſt concern'd or troubled, to *debate* and *deliberate* what to chooſe; but doſt everlaſtingly embrace and follow what an infinite Goodneſs and an infinite Wiſdom has choſen for thee?

As we are *reaſonable Creatures*, related to God, we are oblig'd not only to reſign our Wills intirely up to his, but *chearfully to truſt in, and depend upon him*, for he is the Prop and Center of all the mould'ring *Creation*: the almighty *Atlas* that bears it upon his Shoulders, and keeps it from ſinking into Ruin: We, and every Creature in Heaven and Earth hang upon him; and if he ſhakes us off but for a moment, we preſently drop into nothing and periſh. For cou'd we *exiſt* of ourſelves this *preſent Moment*, we might as well have done ſo the *Moment before*, and may as well do ſo the *Moment after*, and ſo backwards and forwards to all Eternity; and unleſs we had ſuch a fulneſs of Eſſence in us, as to exiſt of ourſelves from all Eternity paſt, to all Eternity to come; it is impoſſible we ſhould exiſt ſo much as one *Moment*, without new Supplies from the infinite and independent fountain of Being. And what can be more fit and reaſonable, than that we who are thus born up by him, ſhou'd freely truſt in, and depend upon him; that we ſhou'd *build* our *Hope* upon the *Prop* of our *Exiſtence*, and make him the ſtay of our Confidence, *in whom we live, and move, and have our being*; eſpecially, conſidering what a proper object of Truth and Dependence he is, and that not only as he is the ſovereign diſpoſer of all thoſe Iſſues and Events which concern us, but alſo as he is infinitely wiſe, and always underſtands what is good or hurtful to us, and as he ſtands engag'd, both by his own eſſential Goodneſs and free *Promiſe*, never to fail thoſe that put their *Truſt* in him; but to manage all their Affairs to their eternal Intereſt and Advantage. And in whom can we more rationally confide, than in a Being of infinite Wiſdom, Goodneſs, and Power? that

always

always *knows* what is beſt for us, that always *wills* what he *knows* to be ſo, and always *does* what he wills.

How extremely unfit are we to make *Choices* for ourſelves, ſince in moſt Particulars 'tis almoſt an Equality, whether what we *chooſe* will prove our *Food* or our *Poiſon!*

But now, God being the ſupreme Orderer and Diſpoſer of things, and having the firſt Link of every Chain of Cauſes in his own Hands, muſt needs have an intire Comprehenſion of all the intermediate ones, from the *Beginning* to the *End*; and his Power being not only the Cauſe of all *actual* Events, but alſo of the *Poſſibility* of thoſe that ſhall never be *actual*, he muſt needs diſcern the utmoſt Iſſues and Concomitants of every *poſſible* as well as of every *future* Event, and perfectly underſtand, not only what will be beneficial and injurious to us, but alſo what might be. Thus 'tis impoſſible for him to be miſtaken in his *Choice*, becauſe he knows well beforehand, what things wou'd be ſo, if they *were*, as what they *are*, when they do actually *exiſt*. Upon the whole therefore, 'tis doubtleſs of ineſtimable Advantage to us, to be in the Hands of God: And next to Hell itſelf, I know nothing is more formidable than for God to let us alone, and give us up to our own Wills and Deſires. And ſhou'd he call to us from Heaven, and tell us that he was reſolv'd to croſs our Deſires no more, but to comply with all our Wiſhes, let the Event prove good or bad, we ſhou'd have juſt Reaſon to look upon ourſelves as the moſt forlorn and abandon'd Creatures on this ſide Hell, as Perſons excluded from the greateſt Bleſſing that belongs to a Creature: And if we had any Hope of his Re-acceptance of us, it wou'd be infinitely our Intereſt to reſign back ourſelves, and all our Concerns, to him, and on our bended Knees to beſeech him above all things, not to leave us to ourſelves, or throw us from his Care and Conduct. It being therefore, upon all Accounts, ſo highly fit and reaſonable, and ſo much our Intereſt and Advantage, that we ſhou'd freely

freely truſt ourſelves, and all our Affairs, into the Hands of God, and depend upon him for the good Succeſs of all our honeſt Endeavours and Undertakings, that we ſhou'd acquieſce in his Diſpoſal of Things, and under all outward Events be pleas'd and ſatisfy'd with his Conduct, as knowing that however things may happen to us, they cannot be otherwiſe than as the wiſe and good God is pleas'd either to permit, or to order and determine them: This, I ſay, being ſo fit in itſelf, and ſo much for our Intereſt, it is impoſſible that without it we can ever be happy here or hereafter.

When we conſider what a mighty Stake we have in his Hands, how all our Fortunes lie at his Feet, and how eaſily he can frown us into nothing, or ſpurn us into a Condition ten thouſand times worſe than nothing, whenever he pleaſes; how can we be otherwiſe ſecure in our own Minds, or avoid being extremely anxious or ſolicitous, but by firmly relying on his Truth and Goodneſs: To the want of which is to be attributed all that carking Care, tormenting Fear, and diſquieting Thoughts, which perpetually haunt the Minds of Men; and from theſe thorny Diſquietudes it is impoſſible they ſhould ever be wholly free, no not in Heaven itſelf, 'till they have wrought their Minds to a perfect Truſt and Confidence in God. For we ſhall be altogether as dependent upon God for our *heavenly*, as we are for our *earthly* Happineſs; becauſe, tho' all thoſe Acts of heavenly Virtue, in which our heavenly Happineſs conſiſts, will be much more in our own Power than any of theſe worldly Goods are, yet they will be no longer in our Power than God ſhall think fit to enable us to chooſe and act, and to ſupport us in our Being and Exiſtence, which then we ſhall ſenſibly perceive intirely depends upon the all-enlivening Vigour of his vital Breath. And therefore tho' he has promis'd to continue our Being in that moſt bleſſed State for ever; yet unleſs we perfectly truſt in his Veracity, our Minds will be continually diſturb'd with anxious and miſgiving Thoughts:

We

We ſhall be afraid leſt one time or other he ſhould forget his Promiſe, and upon ſome unknown Reaſon or Emergency withdraw from us that Influence of his upholding Power, upon which our Being and Well-being depends, and let us drop into *nothing*. And the greater our Happineſs is, the more we ſhall be afraid to loſe it, becauſe we ſhould always be ſenſible that it intirely depends upon the Pleaſure of God, whoſe Truth and Goodneſs we cannot perfectly confide in. From all which Conſiderations it is plain, that if we were placed in the midſt of Heaven, with a miſgiving diſtruſtful Mind of God; that wou'd imbitter all the Joys of it, and give them a harſh and ungrateful Farewel. For the fearful Apprehenſions we ſhou'd continually have of being thruſt out of Heaven again, and tumbled headlong from all Glory, wou'd be ſuch a continual Affliction to us, that we ſhou'd e'en pine away our happy Eternity for fear of being eternally depriv'd of it. So impoſſible it is for any dependent Being to be happy, without an intire *Truſt* and *Confidence* in God, upon whom its Being and Happineſs depend.

There are many Places of the *Goſpel* that teach us this intire Confidence in God: *Commit the keeping of your Souls to God in well-doing*, ſays St. *Peter*. *Truſt in the living God, who giveth all things richly to enjoy*, ſays St. *Paul*. And again, *Do not truſt in yourſelves, but in God, who raiſeth the Dead*. All which, and much more to the ſame purpoſe, is ſaid to preſs and engage us to a conſtant and chearful Reliance upon God, and to endeavour to affect our Minds with a deep Senſe of his overruling Providence, and a full Aſſurance of the Goodneſs of all thoſe great Deſigns he is driving on in the World; and accordingly to acquieſce in and embrace all Events, as the Token of his Love and Favour, and always to live upon this Perſuaſion, that it is infinitely better for us to be in God's Hands than in our own, and that he knows much better how to diſpoſe of us and our Affairs than we do, and that he will take care to diſpoſe of them

as much to our Advantage as we ourſelves ſhou'd, if we knew as much as he does.

Now tho' by reaſon of thoſe ſtrong Impreſſions which ſenſible things in this Life of Senſe make upon us, we ſhould not always be able ſo firmly to rely upon and repoſe ourſelves in God's invincible Power, as not to be at all diſquieted about the Iſſues and Events of things; yet, if by frequent *Acts* of Truſt and Reliance on him, we have ſo diſpos'd our Minds to confide in him, as that by looking up to his over-ruling *Providence*, we can ordinarily ſtay and ſupport ourſelves amidſt the Changes and Revolutions of this World: If when a Storm of Adverſity hangs lowring over, or ſhow'rs down upon us, we can fly to God for Shelter, and promiſe ourſelves Safety and Protection under the out-ſtretch'd Wing of his Providence: In a word, if when we ſmart, we can ordinarily hope in him, and reſt perſuaded that under his gracious Conduct and Diſpoſal all things ſhall work together for our Good; this our imperfect wavering Hope and Dependence ſhall, in the other Life, be immediately ripen'd into a moſt perfect *Confidence* and *Aſſurance*. For tho' our Condition will be ever dependent, yet will it be ever dependent upon ſuch a Foundation as can no more fail than God's own Life and Being; no leſs than his Veracity and Goodneſs, both which are ſo eſſential to him, as that he cannot exiſt without them. And knowing ourſelves ſo firmly ſecur'd in this our dependent State, as that we can never ſink, unleſs God himſelf ſink under us, we ſhall be to all Eternity, not only as ſafe but as ſatsfy'd in it as if we were every one a God to himſelf; and in this bleſſed Security we ſhall quietly enjoy God and ourſelves for ever. Thus will our *Truſt* and *Confidence* in him crown the Pleaſure of all our other Virtues, by giving us full Security of an everlaſting Fruition. The raviſh'd Mind will now have no *Fear* or *Diſtruſt* to cramp or arreſt it in its bleſſed Operations, no anxious Thoughts of a ſad Inſecurity to ſour its preſent Enjoyments, but will enjoy all Heaven every

every Moment, in a fearleſs Security of enjoying it all for ever; and when it ſhall perfectly *love, contemplate,* and *adore* God with a ſure and certain Confidence of contemplating, loving and adoring him perfectly for ever, oh how unſpeakably will this enhance the Pleaſure of thoſe beatifical Acts! For now in every Moment of our bleſſed Eternity, we ſhall ſtill have the Joy of a bleſſed Eternity to come. And beſides all thoſe Pleaſures which each preſent Moment of our heavenly Life ſhall abound with, we ſhall ſtill have the pleaſure of a Proſpect of infinite Ages of Pleaſure. And thus the bleſſed Mind, by its perfect Dependence on God, conſummates its own Heaven, and ſecures itſelf for ever in a moſt quiet and undiſturb'd Enjoyment.

The Delight which a good Chriſtian cannot but take in conſidering ſo nearly the Perfection of his Life and Happineſs, both in this World and the next, will take away the Tediouſneſs of Reflexions too apt to diſguſt worldly Minds that bend always to this Earth, and have not Spirit enough to ſoar ever ſo little up towards Heaven. To theſe they are not addreſs'd; but even for theſe too one muſt have ſome Conſideration; and in treating in the next Place of the *ſocial Virtues*, they may, I hope, be led to conſider the *divine* with leſs Impatience.

Man, of all ſublunary Creatures, is moſt adapted to *Society*; for tho' the greateſt part of other Creatures do covet Society as well as he, yet he alone is furniſh'd with the Gift of Nature which renders Society the moſt pleaſant and uſeful, and that is the Gift of *Speech:* By means of which we can expreſs our Thoughts, maintain a mutual Intelligence of Minds one with another, and thereby divert our Sorrows, mingle our Mirth, impart our Secrets, communicate our Counſels, and make mutual Compacts and Agreements to ſupply and aſſiſt each other. And in theſe things conſiſts the greateſt Pleaſure and Uſe of *Society*. As of all Creatures we are moſt fitted for Society, ſo we ſtand in the greateſt need of it: For as for other Creatures, after they come into the World, they

are

are much ſooner able to help themſelves than we; and after we are moſt able to help ourſelves, there are a world of Neceſſaries and Conveniencies, without which we cannot be happy, and with which we cannot be ſupply'd without each other's Aid and Aſſiſtance, which in an unſociable State of Life we ſhould, of all Creatures in the World, be the moſt indiſpos'd to render one another. As a Man in his perfect State is the beſt of all Animals, ſo ſeparated from Law and Right he is the worſt: For out of Society we ſee his Nature perfectly degenerates and inſtead of being inclin'd to aſſiſt, grows almoſt moſt ſavage and barbarous to his own Kind. Since therefore we have ſo much need of each other's Help, *Society* is abſolutely neceſſary to cheriſh and preſerve in us our natural Benevolence towards one another; without which, inſtead of being mutually helpful, we ſhould be mutually miſchievous. For he that cannot contract Society with others, or thro' his own Self-ſufficiency does not need it, belongs not to any Commonwealth, but is either a wild Beaſt or a God. We being therefore ſo fram'd for *Society*, and under ſuch Neceſſities of entring into it, it hence neceſſarily follows, that being aſſociated together, we are all oblig'd in our ſeveral Ranks and Stations ſo to behave ourſelves towards one another, as is moſt for the common Good of all; and that ſince the Happineſs of each particular Member of our *Society*, redounds from the Welfare of the whole, and is involv'd in it, we ought to eſteem nothing good for *ourſelves* that is a Nuſance to the publick, becauſe whatever it ſuffers, I and every Man ſuffer; and unleſs I cou'd be happy alone, that can never be for my Intereſt in *particular* that is againſt my Intereſt in *common*. Now in ſuch a natural Behaviour as moſt conduces to our common Benefit and Happineſs, as we are in Society one with another, conſiſts all *ſocial Virtue*, the proper Uſe and Deſign of which is to preſerve our *Society* with one another, and to render it a common Bleſſing.

As

As *rational* Creatures *aſſociated*, and ſo related to one another, we are oblig'd *to be kindly and charitably diſpos'd towards one another*: For the end of our *Society* being mutually to aid and aſſiſt one another, it is neceſſary in order thereunto, that we ſhould every one be *kind* and *benevolent* to every one, that ſo we may be continually inclin'd mutually to aid, and to do good Offices to one another. So far as we fall ſhort of this we fall ſhort of the end of our *Society*. The leſs we *love* one another, the leſs prone we ſhall be to promote each other's Welfare, and conſequently the leſs Advantage we ſhall reap from our mutual *Society*. But if inſtead of loving we malign and hate each other, our *Society* will be ſo far from contributing to our Happineſs, that it will be only a means of rendring us more miſerable. For it will only furniſh us with more frequent Opportunities of doing Miſchief to one another, and that mutual Intercourſe we ſhall have by being united together in Society, will ſupply us with greater Means and Occaſions to wreak our Spite upon each other. For *Society* puts us within each other's Reach, and by that means, if we are Enemies, renders us more dangerous to one another; like two adverſe Armies, which when they are at a diſtance can do but little hurt, but when they are join'd and mingled, never want Opportunities to deſtroy and butcher one another. Thus *Hatred* and *Malice* render our *Society* a *Plague*, and we had much better live *apart* poorly and ſolitarily, and withdraw from one another as Beaſts of Prey do, into their ſeparate Dens, than continue in one another's Reach, and be always liable, as we muſt be while we are in *Society*, to be *baited* and *worried* by one another.

And as *Hatred* and *Malice* ſpoil all our *Society* in this Life, and render it worſe than the moſt diſmal Solitude, ſo they will alſo in the other; for whenever the Souls of Men leave their Bodies, they doubtleſs flock to the Birds of their own Feather, and conſort themſelves with ſuch ſeparate Spirits, as are of their own Genius and

Temper. For beſides that good and bad Spirits are by the eternal Laws of the other World diſtributed into two ſeparate Nations, and there live apart from one another, having no other Communication or Intercourſe but what is between two hoſtile Countries, that are continually deſigning and attempting one againſt another: Beſides this, I ſay, Likeneſs does naturally congregate Beings and incline them to aſſociate with their own Kind. Now *Rancour* and *Malice* are the proper Characters of the Devil, and the natural Genius of Hell, and conſequently 'tis by a malicious Temper of Mind that we are naturaliz'd beforehand Subjects of the Kingdom of Darkneſs, and qualified for the Converſation of Furies. And when we go from hence into Eternity, this our malignant Genius will render us utterly averſe to the friendly Society of Heaven, and naturally preſs and incline us to conſort with that wretched Nation of ſpiteful and rancorous Spirits, with whom we are already join'd by a *Likeneſs* and Communion of Nature. But oh! much better were it for us to be ſhut up all alone in ſome dark Hole of the World, where we might converſe only with our own melancholy Thoughts, and never hear of any other Being but ourſelves, than to be continually plac'd with ſuch vexatious Company. For tho' we who are Spectators only of *corporeal* Action, cannot diſcern the manner how one Spirit acts upon another, yet there is no doubt but *ſpiritual Agents* can ſtrike as immediately upon Spirits as *Bodily Agents* can upon Bodies; and ſuppoſing that theſe can mutually act upon one another, there is no more doubt but that they can mutually make each other feel each other's *Pleaſures* and *Diſpleaſures*, and that according as they are more or leſs powerful, they can more or leſs aggrieve and afflict one another. And what can be expected from a Company of malicious ſpiteful Spirits, join'd in *Society* together, but that their Converſation ſhould be a continual Intercourſe of mutual Miſchiefs and Vexations? Eſpecially conſidering how they have laid the Foundation of an eternal Quarrel one againſt

againſt another. For there all thoſe Companions in Sin will meet, who by their ill Counſels, wicked Imaginations, and ſad Examples, did mutually contribute to each others Ruin; and being met in ſuch a woful State, how will the tormenting Senſe of thoſe irreparable Injuries they have done each other whet their Fury againſt, and incite them to play the Devils one with another? And what can be expected from ſuch a Company of *waſpiſh* Beings, ſo implacably incens'd againſt one another, but that being ſhut up together in the infernal Den, they ſhould be perpetually hiſſing at and ſtinging each other? And beſides theſe mutual Plagues, which theſe furious Spirits muſt be ſuppos'd to inflict upon one another, they will be alſo nakedly expoſed to the powerful Malice of the Devils, thoſe fierce Executioners of God's righteous Vengeance; who, as we now find by Experience, have Power to ſuggeſt black and horrid Thoughts to us, and to torture our Souls with ſuch dreadful Imaginations, as are far more ſharp and exquiſite than any bodily Torments. And ſince they have ſuch Power over us, when God thinks fit to let them looſe, what will they have hereafter, when our wretched Spirits ſhall be wholly abandon'd to their Will, and they ſhall have free Scope to exerciſe their Fury upon us, and glut their hungry Malice with our Griefs and Vexations? It ſeems, at leaſt, a mighty probable Notion, that that horrid Agony of our Saviour in the Garden, which caus'd him to ſhriek and groan, and ſweat as it were great Drops of Blood, was chiefly the Effect of thoſe preternatural Terrors with the Devils, with whom he was then conteſting, impreſt upon his innocent Mind. And if they had ſo much Power over his pure and mighty Soul, that was ſo ſtrongly guarded with the moſt perfect and unſpotted Virtues, what will they have over ours, when we are abandon'd to them, and thrown as *Preys* into their Mouths? With what a helliſh Rage will they fly upon our guilty and timorous Souls, in which there is ſo much Tinder for their injected Sparks of Horror to take Fire on?

Since therefore *Rancor* and *Malice* do ſo naturally incline and hurry our Souls towards the wretched Society of Devils and damned Spirits, the *Goſpel*, which ſo induſtriouſly conſults our Happineſs, takes all poſſible Care, as has been before obſerved, to train us up in Charity and mutual Love: It obliges us to bear an univerſal *Good-will* to all, and to take an hearty Complacency in all that are truly lovely; to be ready to contribute to, and rejoice in every one's Welfare, and to live in the continual Exerciſe of all thoſe *charitable* Offices which have been enlarg'd upon in treating of the Virtue of *Charity*. To be courteous and affable, and to treat all thoſe we converſe with, with an obliging Look, a gentle Deportment, and endearing Language: To be *long-ſuffering*, *mild*, and *eaſy to be intreated*, not to break forth into Rage and Storm upon every Provocation; and when we are juſtly provok'd, not to ſuffer our Diſpleaſure to feſter into Malice and Rancour, but to be forward and eaſy to be reconcil'd: To be of a *compaſſionate* and *ſympathizing* Temper, and to *rejoice* with thoſe that *rejoice*, and *weep* with thoſe that *weep*, to be candid Interpreters of Men and their Actions, to be ready to mitigate and excuſe their Faults, and put fair Comments on their Actions, to be ſo far from making malicious Gloſſes on their innocent Meaning, from proclaiming their Miſcarriages, and rejoicing in their Falls, as not to believe ill of them, but upon undeniable Evidence; and when we are forc'd to do ſo, to pity and lament them, and endeavour, and pray, and hope for their Reformation. In ſhort, to be benign and bountiful to the Neceſſitous and Diſtreſs'd, and to endeavour, according to our Abilities, to allay their Sorrows, remove their Oppreſſions, ſupport them under their Calamities, and counſel them in their Doubts; to be ready to every good Work, and like Fields of Spices, to be ſcattering our Perfumes thro' all the Neighbourhood; and all this out of an honeſt ſincere Purpoſe to promote their Good, and not merely to acquire to ourſelves a popular Vogue and Reputation: All which are

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eſſential Parts of that *Charity*, which the Goſpel injoins us to exerciſe towards one another; of which enough has been ſaid in the firſt Volume under its proper Head.

As we are rational Creatures related to one another, *we are oblig'd to be juſt and righteous in all our intercourſe with one another*; to yield to every one whatſoever by any kind of Right, whether natural or acquir'd, he can demand or challenge of us; for there are ſome things to which every Man has a right by Nature, as he is a Part and Member of human Society. As for Inſtance, *Life*, which is the Principal of all our Actions and Perceptions, is freely lent us by God, who is the Source and Fountain of *Life*, and conſequently till God reſumes his *Loan*, or we forfeit it by our own Actions, we have all a natural Right to live; and for any Man to attempt to deprive us of our *Life*, or our means of living, is the higheſt Injury and Injuſtice. Again, *Words* being inſtituted for no other end but to ſignify our Meaning, and to be the Inſtrument of our Intercourſe and *Society* with one another, every one who is a Member of human *Society*, has a right to have our Meaning truly ſignify'd to him by our Words; and whoſoever lyes or equivocates to another, does injuriouſly deprive him of the natural Right of *Society*. Again, a *good Name* being the Ground of Truſt and Credit, and Credit the main Sinew of *Society*, 'till Men have forfeited their good Name, they have a natural Right to be well reputed and *ſpoken* of, and whoever, either by *falſe Witneſs*, *publick Slander*, *or private Whiſperings*, endeavours to attaint an innocent Man's Reputation, does thereby injuriouſly attempt to exclude him from the Converſation of Men, and ſhut the door of human Society againſt him. Once more, Promiſes being the great Security of our mutual Intercourſe and Society with one another, every Man that has a Right to Society, has a Right to what another *promiſes* him, provided it be lawful and poſſible; and therefore to promiſe what he intends not to perform, or to go back from his *Promiſe* when he lawfully may and can perform it, is

an Act of unjuſt Rapine; and I may every whit as honeſtly rob another *Man* of what is his without my *Promiſe*, as of what I have made his by it, he having an equal Right to both, by fundamental Laws of *Society*. In fine, the great Deſign of our Society, being to help and aſſiſt one another; every Man has a Right to be aided and aſſiſted by every one with whom he has any Dealing or Intercourſe, to have ſome Share of the Benefit of all that Exchange, Traffick and Commerce, which paſſes between him and others; and therefore for any Man in his Dealings with others, to take Advantage from their Neceſſity or Ignorance, to oppreſs or over-reach them, or to deal ſo hardly by them, as either not to allow them any Share of the Profit which accrues from their Dealings, or not a ſufficient Share for them to ſubſiſt and live by, is an injurious Perverſion of that natural Right, which the very End and Deſign of Society gives them: But then beſides theſe *natural*, there are alſo *acquir'd Rights*, and ſuch are thoſe, which either by legal Conſtitution, or by mutual *Compacts* and *Agreements*, we are ſtor'd and veſted with; which *Conſtitutions* and *Compacts*, being abſolutely neceſſary to the upholding and regulating of human Societies, it is no leſs neceſſary that all thoſe Rights which they confer, ſhould be inviolably preſerv'd; and whoever knowingly or wilfully takes away, or detains from another, what he is thus intitled to by Law or Agreement, is guilty either of a *Fraud* or *Robbery*, either of which is an unjuſt Violation of the Rights of human *Society*.

The Practice of *Juſtice* and *Righteouſneſs*, as it is confin'd to human *Society*, conſiſts therefore in not intrenching either upon the natural or acquir'd Rights of thoſe with whom we have any Dealing or Intercourſe; in not endeavouring to deprive them either of their *Lives* or *Livelihoods*; unleſs by their own Actions they forfeit them to us, in imparting our true meaning to them by our Words, and neither hiding it under *Lyes and Falſhoods*, nor diſguiſing it with equivocal *Reſervations*, in making

good

good to them all our lawful and poſſible *Promiſes*, in not falſly aſperſing their *good Names* and *Reputation*, nor ſuffering them to be falſly aſpers'd, when we are able to vindicate them, in neither uſing them cruelly in our Dealings, ſo as wilfully to damnify them, nor ſo hardly as either to take all the Advantage to ourſelves, or not to allow them ſuch a competent Share of it, as is neceſſary to ſupport and maintain them. In a word, not to defraud or rob them of any thing, which either by Conſtitution of Law, or by Compact and Agreement, they have a right to. This is civil Righteouſneſs, and without it 'tis impoſſible that any *Society* ſhou'd be happy: for how can any one be ſecure in a *Society* where Violence and Rapine, Falſhood and Oppreſſion reign; where Cauſes are decided not by rules of Juſtice, but by dint of Power, and the ſtrongeſt Arm is the ſole Arbitrator of *right* and *wrong*, where *Promiſes* and *Profeſſions* are only *Traps* and *Snares*, and every Man lays *Ambuſhes* in his *Words*, and lurks behind them in reſerv'd Meanings, only to wait an Opportunity to ſupriſe and ruin every one he converſes with? It wou'd doubtleſs be far more eligible for Men to diſperſe and disband their *Society*, and live apart as *Vermin* do, and ſubſiſt by robbing and filching from one another, than to live together (as they muſt in ſuch a ſtate of Injuſtice) like bundles of *Briers* and *Thorns*, and out of their mutual Jealouſies and Diſtruſts, be continually tearing and ſcratching one another.

If we go out of this World with an unrighteous Temper, we muſt expect to be confin'd in the other to an unrighteous *Society*; and if *Unrighteouſneſs* be ſuch a Nuſance to our *Society* in this Life, what a Plague will it be to it in the Life to come? For the moſt barbarous Societies of Men in this *Life*, have ſome remains of Juſtice and Equity among them; and tho' the beſt of them have many corrupt Members that are bad in the main, yet whether it be by their natural Temper, or their fear of Puniſhment or Diſgrace, or by their Senſe of Honour or Checks of Conſcience, they are frequently reſtrain'd

from many bad things, particularly from *Diſhoneſty* and *Injuſtice*, by which means their Society is render'd much more tolerable. But in the other Life, as they are all perfectly *good* that are in the *Society* of the *Good*, ſo they are all *wicked* that are in the *Society* of the *Wicked*; and whatever Checks there may be in their Natures, to any particular Acts of Wickedneſs, they are all born down by their inveterate Malice againſt God, and outrageous Deſpair of ever being reconcil'd to him. This is all their *Society* with one another, there is not the leaſt intermixture of juſt and righteous Intercourſes, but all their Converſation is Falſhood and Treachery, Violence and Oppreſſion, and whatever elſe is hurtful and injurious to one another: For the Devil, who is the ſovereign *Prince* of their *Society*, is deſcrib'd in Scripture to be the *Father of Lyes, and a Murderer from the beginning*, and doubtleſs the miſerable Vaſſals of that dark Kingdom do all imitate his Manners, and tread in his Footſteps. That we may not have our Portion among them, it is a great part of the buſineſs of our *Holy Religion*, to train us up for better Company, by inuring us to the practice of *Righteouſneſs* and *Juſtice*; for ſo it obliges us to *do unto Men whatſoever we would that Men ſhould do unto us*; to be *harmleſs as Doves, and wiſe as Serpents*; *to converſe in the World with Simplicity and godly Sincerity, to keep up an honeſt Converſation in the World, not to lye to one another, not to go beyond or defraud our Brother in any Manner.* Theſe are Obligations laid upon us by the *Goſpel*, that we maintain a ſtrict *Integrity* in all our Profeſſions and Intercourſes with Men, and not to allow ourſelves in any courſe of Action, which the Laws of Juſtice and Sincerity diſapprove; to meaſure our Words by our Meaning, and our Meaning, ſo far as we are able, by the truth and reality of things; to converſe among Men with a generous Openneſs and Freedom, and with as little Reſerve and Diſguiſe as is poſſible and prudent, conſidering what a treacherous and ill-natur'd World we have to deal with; to be what we ſeem, and not to paint

paint ill Meaning with ſmiling Looks and ſmooth Pretences: to notify our Intenſions, and unfold our Hearts; and ſo far as innocent Prudence will admit, to turn ourſelves inſide outwards to all we converſe with; to give to every one his due, and not to intrench upon other Mens Rights, whether it be to their Lives or Liberties, Reputations or Eſtates: In a word, to weigh to our Neighbours and ourſelves in the ſame Balance, and to do to them whatever we cou'd reaſonably wiſh they ſhou'd do to us, if we were in their Perſons and Circumſtances. By the Practice of which excellent Rules, our Minds will, by degrees, be refin'd and purify'd from all Diſpoſition to Fraud and Injuſtice; and then when we go from hence into *Eternity*, we ſhall carry thither with us ſuch a juſt and righteous frame of Mind, ſuch an honeſt plainneſs and integrity of Temper, as will immediately qualify and diſpoſe us for the Society of juſt Men made perfect, who finding us already united to them in Diſpoſition and Nature, will joyfully receive us into their bleſſed Communion.

Oh the bleſſed State we ſhall be in, when being ſtrip'd of all Partiality and unjuſt Deſire, of all *inſincerity* and *craftineſs* of Temper, we ſhall be admitted into a Nation of juſt and righteous People, where every one has his appropriate Seat and fulneſs of Glory, and is ſo perfectly contented with it, that he never covets what another enjoys! Thus every one poſſeſſes what is his own, without the leaſt Suſpicion of being ejected by a ſubtler, or more powerful Neighbour; where being perfectly aſſur'd of each others Integrity, they converſe together with the greateſt Openneſs and Freedom, and in all their Language, whatever it be, they read their Hearts, and convey their Intentions to one another; their Souls converſe Face to Face, and they freely unboſom themſelves to one another, without the leaſt *Diſguiſe* or *Diſſimulation*; there is no ſuch thing in all their *Society* as a *Myſtery* or *Secret*, they are all Friends to one another, and every one has a Window in every ones Breaſt.

Oh bleſſed God! what a moſt happy Converſation muſt ſuch Souls as theſe enjoy with one another, from whoſe *Society* all *Fraud* and *Falſhood*, *Violence* and *Oppreſſion* are for ever baniſh'd! For while they live together as they do, in the continual Exerciſe of perfect *Righteouſneſs* and *Integrity*, they can neither deſign upon, nor ſuſpect one another, and ſo conſequently muſt needs converſe together with infinite Security and Freedom; and being all of them thus inviolably ſafe in each others *Sincerity* and *Juſtice*, every one enjoys his proper Rank and degree of Glory, without Fear or Diſturbance, and freely communicates his wiſe and excellent Thoughts to every one, without any Strangeneſs and Reſerve. Thus all Heaven over, there is a moſt perfect Freedom of Converſation among thoſe righteous People that inhabit it, and every one is every ones Neighbour, and every ones Neighbour is as himſelf; for in all their Communication and Intercourſe, they mutually exchange Perſons with one another, and there is no one that does that to another, which he wou'd not gladly have done to himſelf in the ſame Condition and Circumſtances; none of them all can poſſibly be aggriev'd, becauſe they are every one dealt by, juſt as they wou'd be, moſt fairly, moſt righteouſly, and faithfully: And hence there can be no Grudgings among them, as *Whiſperings*, *Backbitings*, or ſpiteful *Miſrepreſentations*, becauſe every one likes what every one does, and ſo they are perfectly ſatisfy'd with one another: And thus we ſee, that in the exerciſe of perfect Righteouſneſs and Integrity, all the Society of Heaven is render'd perfectly happy.

As we are rational Creatures, related to one another, *we are oblig'd to behave ourſelves peaceably in our reſpective States and Relations*; for *Society* being nothing but an *united* Multitude, it is indiſpenſably neceſſary for the preſervation of its *Union*, that every individual Member of it ſhou'd peaceably comport himſelf towards every one in that Degree and Order in which he is placed; becauſe, as the *Health* of natural Bodies depends upon the

the Harmony and Agreement of their Parts, ſo does the proſperity of *Societies* on political ones; for 'tis *Peace* and mutual *Accord*, which is the Soul that animates and unites *Society*, and keeps the Parts of it from diſperſing and flying abroad into *Atoms*, which nothing but Force and Violence can hinder them from, when once they are broken into Diſcords and Diſſenſions; ſo true is that of our Saviour, *A Kingdom divided againſt itſelf cannot ſtand*; for beſides that Diviſion impairs the Strength of a *Society*, which like an impetuous Stream, being parted into ſeveral Currents, runs with far leſs Force, and is much more eaſily fordable; beſides this, I ſay, *Faction* and *Diſcord* naturally diſunite and ſeparate *Society*, as they diſſolve the bouds of Peace which hold it together; for a *Society*, without Peace, is but an aggregated Body, whoſe Parts lie together in a confus'd Heap, but have no Joints or Sinews to faſten them to one another; for want of which, inſtead of mutually aſſiſting, they do but mutually load and oppreſs each other, which muſt neceſſarily divide their Wills and their Intereſts; and when that is done, 'tis only external Force that hinders them from dividing and ſepatating their Perſons. Upon this account therefore, every Man is oblig'd, as he is a member of *human Society*, to comport himſelf peaceably with all Men; becauſe otherwiſe he will neceſſarily render himſelf a publick Peſt and Nuſance. For ſo long as he's of an unquiet and turbulent Spirit, inſtead of being an Help, he muſt neceſſarily be a diſeaſe to every Community of which he is a Member; and if thoſe with whom he is join'd were all of his Humour and Spirit, it wou'd be much better for them all to live aſunder in the moſt ſolitary Condition, than continue in Society together; becauſe inſtead of helping and aſſiſting, they wou'd be ſure to be continually vexing and plaguing one another.

How many ſad Inſtances have we in theſe diſtracted Times, of the Miſchiefs done by Children of Faction and Diſcord? What Havock have they made with the Reputation

putation of the moſt Worthy? How have they ſet Neighbour againſt Neighbour, Friend againſt Friend, and ruin'd all that Strength which depended on the united Hearts of good *Proteſtants* and good *Engliſhmen?*

If any of us ſhou'd go into the other World with an *unquiet* and *quarreſom* Temper, we ſhall be thereby inclin'd to, and prepar'd for, the moſt wretched and miſerable *Society*, even the *Society* of thoſe *factious* Fiends, that cou'd not be quiet in Heaven itſelf, but rais'd a Mutiny before the throne of God, and for ſo doing were driven thence, and damn'd to keep one another company in endleſs Miſery and Deſpair. The Souls of Men therefore, being by the Laws of the inviſible State always aſſign'd to that ſociety of Spirits to which they are moſt connaturaliz'd in their Temper, we muſt expect, if we go into Eternity with turbulent and contentious Minds, to be thruſt into the ſociety of Devils and damn'd *Ghoſts*, with whom we are already join'd in a ſtrict communion of Natures. The moſt horrid and frightful Idea I can form in my Mind of ſuch wretched Company is, that of an infinite Multitude of ſnarling and quarrelſom Spirits, crowded like ſo many *Scorpions* and *Adders* in a *Den* together, and there forc'd, by the venom of their Temper, to live in continual Mutiny, and be perpetually *hiſſing* and ſpitting Poiſon at one another.

Wherefore ſince to be united by indiſſoluble Ligaments to ſuch miſerable Company will be the certain Fate of all *Factious* and contentious Souls, enemies of *true Peace*, *Union* and *Concord*, our bleſſed *Religion*, whoſe great Deſign is to advance our Happineſs, has taken abundant Care to educate our Minds in *Quietneſs* and *Peace*. For hither tend all thoſe Precepts of it, which require us to *follow Peace with all Men, to be at peace among ourſelves, to follow after the things that make for Peace, to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace, to be of one Mind, and to live in Peace; and if it be poſſible to live peaceably with all Men.* Theſe are the Leſſons taught us in the holy

holy Scriptures. How they are practis'd by thoſe that foment our Diviſions, fill the World with Scandal and Calumny, and at the expence of Truth and Charity, nay even of common Senſe and common Honeſty, inflame the Minds of Chriſtians and Proteſtants, with unnatural Heats and fatal Animoſities, let every Chriſtian Reader judge. We are reſtrain'd by the ſtricteſt Obligations in holy Writ, from all factious and turbulent Behaviour, from a ſpirit of Diſcord and Perſecution; and to demean ourſelves in thoſe ſacred or civil Societies, of which we are Members, with all Gentleneſs and Moderation. And unleſs we do ſincerely endeavour to fulfil theſe Obligations, however we may monopolize Godlineſs to our own Party, and *claw* and *canonize* one another, we are *Saints* of a quite different Strain from thoſe bleſſed ones above, and are acted by the factious Spirit of the Devil, whoſe Buſineſs it is to kindle Diſturbances and Commotions wherever he comes. This therefore muſt be our great Care, if we deſign for Heaven, to root out of our Tempers all Inclination to *Contention* and *Diſcord*, and to compoſe ourſelves into a *ſedate* and *peaceable*, *calm* and *gentle* frame of Spirit; and not only to avoid all unneceſſary *Quarrels* and *Contentions* ourſelves, but ſo far as in us lies, to be *Peacemakers* between others, and to preſerve a friendly Union with, and among our Fellow-Members. And if through human *Frailty* and *Infirmity*, through our own Ignorance of the plauſible *Pretences* of *Seducers*, through the too great Prevalence of our *worldly Intereſt*, or the Principles of a *bad Education*, it ſhou'd be our Misfortune to be inſenſibly miſled into unwarrantable Diſſents and Diviſions, yet ſtill to keep our Minds in a teachable Temper, and our Ears open to *Truth* and *Conviction*, to be deſirous of *Accommodation*, to be willing to hear the Reaſons on both ſides; and as ſoon as we are convinc'd of our *Error*, to repent of our *Diviſion*, and immediately to return to *Unity* and *Peace*.

Which

Which if it be our conſtant Practice and Endeavour, we ſhall by degrees form our Minds into ſuch a peaceable and amicable Temper, that when we go into the other World, where we ſhall be perfectly diſengag'd from all temporal Intereſts, and thoroughly convinc'd of all our erroneous Prejudices, our Souls will be effectually contemper'd with the quiet and peaceable *Society* of the Bleſſed, who having no private Intereſts to purſue, no particular Affections to gratify, no Ends or Aims but what are common to them all, which is to *adore*, and *imitate*, and *love*, that never-failing Spring whence all their Felicity flows; it is impoſſible there ſhou'd be any Occaſion adminiſter'd by any of them, of any Rupture of Communion. If we wou'd live for ever with theſe bleſſed Spirits, we muſt now endeavour to calm and compoſe ourſelves with their Temper, to diſcharge our Minds, as much as we are able, of every froward and contentious Humour, and reduce our Wills to a perfect lothing of them; and ſo being qualify'd for their Society, we may be admitted to it when we go away from this wrangling World. All their Communion is a perfect *Concord* of Souls, wherein there is no ſuch thing as *Diviſion*, paſſing cruel Cenſures, affixing *hard Names*, or bandying *Anathemas* at one another; but in Mind and Heart they are all as perfectly *one*, as if they were all animated by one and the ſame Soul. And thus they live unſpeakably happy, in the mutual exerciſe of an everlaſting Peace, and all their Converſation with one another, is perfect *Harmony* without *Diſcord*.

As we are *rational Creatures* related to one another, we are oblig'd modeſtly to ſubmit to our *Superiors*, and chearfully to condeſcend to our *Inferiors*, in thoſe reſpective *Societies* of which we are *Members*. It being neceſſary to the Order and End of all *Societies*, that their Members ſhou'd be diſtinguiſhed into *ſuperior* and *inferior* Ranks and Stations; that ſome ſhou'd be truſted with the power of *Commanding*, and others reduc'd to the condi-

tion

tion of *Obedience*; that ſo in this regular *Subordination*, they may every one in their ſeveral Stations be oblig'd to, and aſſiſt each other, and according to their ſeveral Capacities to contribute to the *good* of the *whole*, which in a *State* of *Equality*, wherein every Man wou'd be abſolute Lord of himſelf, cannot be expected, conſidering the differing Humours and Intereſts by which Men are acted. This, I ſay, being upon this account neceſſary, it is upon the ſame account equally neceſſary, that they ſhould mutually perform thoſe Offices to one another, which are proper to their reſpective Ranks and Stations, and are indeed the Foundations and Conditions of their Inequality. *Superiors* ſhou'd look upon themſelves as Truſtees for the *publick Good*, whom God has inveſted with Authority over others, not to *domineer* and gratify their own *imperious* Wills, but to provide for, and ſecure the *Commonwealth*, and conſequently to take care that they do not proſtitute their *Power* to their own private *Avarice* and *Ambition*, but that they employ it for the *common* Good and Benefit of their *Subjects* and *Inferiors*; that they be ready to do them all good Offices, to compaſſionate their *Infirmities*, conſult their Conveniencies, and comply with all their reaſonable Supplications; conſidering that for this End they deriv'd their Authority from God, who is the fountain of Authority, and will ſtrictly call them to account for their good and bad Adminiſtration. And ſo for the *Inferiors*, 'tis no leſs neceſſary for the *common Good*, that they perform their Parts towards thoſe that are above them; that they behave themſelves towards them with all that *Loyalty* and *Modeſty*, *Reſpect*, and *Submiſſion*, which their Place and Authority call for; that they reverence them in the *legal Exerciſe* of their Offices, as the *Vicegerents* of God, and addreſs to them as to ſacred Perſons, rendring a chearful Obedience to that divine Authority which is ſtamp'd upon all their *juſt* Laws and Commands; conſidering, that in their ſeveral Degrees they repreſent the Perſon of the great Sovereign of the World, to whom we owe an entire

tire *Subjection*, and conſequently are to be *obey*'d and *ſubmitted* to, in every thing that he hath not expreſly countermanded. And that *Subjects* and *Superiors* ſhould thus behave themſelves towards one another, is indiſpenſably neceſſary to the welfare of all *Societies*; for while the *Inferiors* of any *Society* do obſtinately refuſe to ſubmit to the juſt commands of their *Superiors*, and the *Superiors* to condeſcend to the *common Good* of their *Inferiors*, they are contending together, either for a *Confuſion* or a *Tyranny*. If the *Superiors* prevail, *Tyranny* follows; if the *Inferiors*, *Confuſion*; either of which is extremely miſchievous, not only to the *Society* in general, but to each of the contending Parties: For if *Confuſion* follows, 'tis not only the *ſuperior* Party ſuffers, by being depos'd from his Authority, which is always to be conſider'd as given him for the *common Good*, but the *Inferior* too, by being depriv'd of *Protection*, and expos'd to one another's *Rapine* and *Violence*. If *Tyranny* follows, 'tis not only the *inferior Party* ſuffers, by being forced to a rigorous and uneaſy Obedience, but the *Superior* too, by being continually perplex'd how to force and extort that *Obedience*. Thus both Parties ſuffer under the bad Effects of each others Miſdemeanor. To make our Society happy, it is neceſſary, that whether we be *Superiors* or *Inferiors*, we ſhou'd be of a *gentle*, *eaſy*, and *tractable* Spirit; that ſo which Rank ſoever we are placed in, we may be pliable either way to a *fair* Condeſcenſion, or a *juſt* Submiſſion. For while we are of obſtinate, perverſe, untractable Tempers, we are neither fit to be Superiors nor Inferiors, but muſt neceſſarily be *Plagues* and *Grievances* to our *Society*, which Rank or Order ſoever we are placed in. And tho' in this Life we have not always ſuch a ſenſible Experience of the Evil and Miſchief of this malignant Temper, becauſe now it is counter-influenced by thoſe more *meek* and *auſpicious* ones, that are in Conjunction with it: Yet when we go into *Eternity*, we ſhall be confin'd to ſuch a *Society* of Spirits, as are all throughout of our own Genius and Temper.

Temper. For as in the Society of the Bleſſed, there is a Conjunction of every *Virtue* in every Member, ſo there is of every *Vice* in the Society of the Wicked; who do not only retain thoſe Vices in their Natures which they were here inclin'd and addicted to, but are alſo continually excited to all other Vices they are capable of, by their inveterate enmity againſt God; which in that miſerable Eſtate is perpetually enrag'd, by their Deſpair of being ever reconcil'd to him. Thus whatever wicked Temper we carry with us into Eternity, we ſhall be ſure to meet with it in every individual Member of the Society of the Wicked; and conſequently if we carry thither with us a perverſe and untractable Temper, that will not endure either to *ſubmit* or condeſcend, we ſhall be ſure to find the ſame Humour reigning throughout all the Society of the Wicked; and then being eternally united to it, as we muſt expect to be, if we are call'd to it by Nature; in what a wretched State ſhall we be, when every Member of our *Society* ſhall be of the ſame unconverſable Temper with ourſelves, and we ſhall find none that will comply with, or endeavour to ſooth and mollify our Obſtinacy? When all our whole *Society* ſhall conſiſt of a Company of ſtiff and ſtubborn Spirits, that will neither ſubmit to, nor bear with one another, but every one will have his Will upon every one, ſo far as he is able to force and extort it? when thoſe that are *ſuperior* in Might and Power, do all rule with a fierce and tyrannical Will, and will condeſcend to nothing that is beneficial for their *Subjects*; and thoſe that are *inferior*, do *obey* with a *perverſe* and *ſtubborn* Heart, and will *ſubmit* to nothing but what they are forced and compelled to? In a word, when they all mutually hate and abominate each other, and thoſe that command are a Company of *cruel* and *imperious* Devils, that impoſe nothing but *Grievances* and *Plagues*; and thoſe that *obey* are a company of ſurly untractable Slaves, that *ſubmit* to nothing but what they are driven to by *Plagues*; and thus *Plagues* and *Grievances* are both the Matter

Matter and the Motion of all their *Obedience* and *Subjection.* Thoſe that *compel* are like ſo many ſavage Tyrants, continually vexed and enraged with *ſtubborn* Oppoſitions and Reſiſtances; and thoſe that are *compell'd*, like ſo many obſtinate gally Slaves, are continually laſh'd into an *inſufferable Obedience*, and *forced* by one Torment to *ſubmit* to another.

This being therefore the miſerable State and Iſſue of a *perverſe*, *ſtubborn*, and *untractable* Temper, the Goſpel, whoſe great deſign it is to direct us to our Happineſs, does induſtriouſly endeavour to root it out of our Minds, and ſo plant in its room a *gentle*, *obſequious*, and *condeſcending* Diſpoſition. For thither tend all thoſe evangelical Precepts, which require us, *to become weak to the Weak, that we may gain them, to bear with their Infirmities, to ſupport them and be patient towards them, to ſubmit ourſelves to our Elders, and to thoſe that have rule over us; to obey our Magiſtrates, our Parents and our Maſters; to be ſubject to Principalities, not to ſpeak evil of Dignities; to honour all Men as they deſerve, to hold good Men in Reputation, and in Honour to prefer one another:* The Senſe of all which is, to *oblige* us to treat all Men as *becomes* us, in the Rank and Station we are placed in; to *honour* thoſe that are *Superiors*, whether in Place or Virtue; to give that modeſt *Deference* to their *Judgments*, that *Reverence* to their *Perſons*, that *Reſpect* to their *Virtues*, and *Homage* to their *Deſires* or *Commands*, which the *Degree* or *Kind* of their *Superiority* requires; to *condeſcend* to thoſe that are *Inferior*, and treat them with all that *Candor* and *Ingenuity*, *Sweetneſs* and *Affability*, that the reſpective *Diſtances* of our *State* will allow; to conſult their *Conveniencies*, to do them all good *Offices*, and *bear* with their *Infirmities*, ſo far as is ſafely and wiſely tolerable. By the conſtant Practice of which our Minds will be gradually cur'd of all that *Perverſeneſs* and *Surlineſs* of Temper, which indiſpoſe us to the reſpective Duties of our Relations; of all that *Contempt* and *Selfiſhneſs*, which renders us averſe to the proper Duties of Superiors; and of all

that

that *Self-conceit* and *Impatience* of *Command*, which indiſpoſe us to the Duty of *Inferiors*. And our Wills being once wrought into an eaſy Pliableneſs, either to Submiſſion or Condeſcenſion, we are in a forward Preparation of Mind, to live under the Government of Heaven; where doubtleſs, under God, the ſupreme Lord and Sovereign, there are numberleſs Degrees of *Superiority* and *Inferiority*. Some are ſaid to reap *ſparingly*, ſome *abundantly*; ſome to be *Rulers* of five Cities, ſome of ten; ſome to be the *leaſt*, and ſome to be the *greateſt* in the Kingdom of *Heaven*: All which implies, that in that bleſſed State, there is a great Variety of Degrees of Glory and Advancement: And indeed it cannot be otherwiſe in the Nature of the Thing; for our Happineſs conſiſting in the Perfection of our Natures, the more or leſs perfect we are, the more or leſs happy we muſt neceſſarily be; for every farther Degree of Goodneſs we attain to, is a Widening and Enlargement of our Souls for farther Degrees of Glory and Beatitude: And accordingly, when we arrive at *Heaven*, which is the Element of Beatitude, we ſhall all be fill'd according to the Content and Meaſure of our Capacities; and drink in more or leſs of its Rivers of Pleaſure, as we are more or leſs enlarg'd to contain them. But tho' in the Kingdom of Heaven, as well as in the Kingdoms of the Earth, there are numberleſs Degrees of Advancement and Dignity; and one *Star* there, as well as here, differs from another *Star* in Glory; yet ſo *freely* and chearfully do all they condeſcend and ſubmit to one another, in theſe their reſpective Differences of Rank and Station, that in the wideſt Diſtances of their State and Degrees of Glory, they all maintain the deareſt Intimacies and Familiarities with each other; and neither thoſe that are Superior, are either envy'd for their Height, or contemn'd for their Familiarity: nor thoſe that are Inferior, deſpis'd for their Meanneſs, or oppreſs'd for their Meekneſs.

For in that bleſſed State, every one being beſt pleas'd with what beſt becomes him, it is every ones Joy to behave

have himſelf towards every one as beſt becomes the Rank and Station he is placed in; and thoſe that are *above* do glory in condeſcending to thoſe that are *below* them; and thoſe that are *below* do triumph in ſubmitting to thoſe that are *above* them. Thus, in all thoſe Differences of Glory and Dignity between them they alternately reverence their Superiors, and condeſcend to their Inferiors, with the ſame unforc'd Freedom and Alacrity; and ſo do eternally converſe with one another, notwithſtanding all their Differences, with the greateſt Freedom, and moſt endearing Familiarity.

And now, having largely ſhewn that the Practice of all divine and ſocial Virtues in this Life, tends directly towards the heavenly State, and naturally grows up to it, I'll uſe a few Perſuaſions to preſs Men to practiſe them.

Let us in the firſt Place conſider the *Suitableneſs* of theſe *Virtues* to our preſent *State* and *Relation*. In our Baptiſm, wherein we gave up our Names to Chriſt, we became *Denizens* and *Freemen* of Heaven; and were receiv'd into a Covenant, that upon Performance of our Part of it, actually intitl'd us to all its bleſſed Privileges and Immunities; inſomuch, that as *Fellow-Citizens with the Saints, and of the Houſhold of God*, we are Confederates with them in the ſame Covenant, by which they hold all the Joys and Glories they are poſſeſs'd of; and if we will do as they have done, perform the Conditions of it, we ſhall be Cohabitants with them in the ſame Glory. We are adopted Children of the ſame Father with them, Members of the ſame Family, and Co-heirs of the Promiſes of the ſame Glory; and all the Difference between them and us is only this, that we are abroad, and they are at home; we are journeying toward, and they are in Poſſeſſion of the heavenly *Canaan*, to which we are intitled as well as they, and that by the ſame Grant from the ſupreme Proprietor. And what can be more ſuitable to our Chriſtian Profeſſion, than for us to live, as the Saints in Heaven live, in the continual Practice of all theſe

theſe heavenly Virtues? What a Shame will it be for us, that are their profeſs'd Brethren, not to copy and imitate their Behaviour? That we, who are below Stairs in the ſame Houſe and Family, ſhou'd abandon ourſelves to *Senſuality* and *Deviliſhneſs*, while our bleſſed Kindred above, are entertaining themſelves with thoſe heavenly Pleaſures, which reſult from the perfect Exerciſe of all heavenly Virtue? That we ſhou'd be neglecting, provoking and blaſpheming God, while they are *contemplating* and *admiring*, *loving* and *praiſing*, *imitating* and *obeying* him; that we ſhould be *cheating* and *defrauding*, *envying* and *deſpiſing*, *maligning* and *embroiling* one another; while they are converſing together with the *greateſt Freedom* and *Integrity*, with the moſt obliging *Reſpects* and *Condeſcenſions*, and in the ſtricteſt Unity and deareſt Friendſhip. 'Tis really a burning Shame, that we ſhould profeſs ourſelves Fellow-Citizens with them, for no other Purpoſe but to ſcandalize and reproach them; and it were heartily to be wiſh'd, even for the Credit of Heaven, and our bleſſed Brethren that inhabit it, that if we will not be ſo generous as to follow their Example, we wou'd at leaſt be ſo honeſt as to renounce their *Kindred*, and not claim a Relation to their Family, merely to ſhame and diſgrace *them*.

Let us alſo conſider the *Honour* and *Dignity* of the *heavenly Life:* For we may eſtimate Actions by the Examples from whence they are copy'd, as in other Caſes we are wont to do; doubtleſs the moſt noble and honourable are ſuch as are copy'd from the Lives of the glorious Inhabitants of Heaven. Beſides that ſublime Rank of Dignity to which they are advanced, as being the *Courtiers* and *immediate Attendants* of the *Almighty Sovereign* of *Heaven* and *Earth*; their *Examples* being the moſt perfect *Copies* and *Imitations* of the *Life* of *God*, are thereby rendered, not only more eminent and glorious, but alſo more obliging and authoritative: For by following them we follow God, who is the Standard of all rational Perfection; and who by ſeeing the *firſt* and

beſt

beſt in the whole Kind of *rational Beings*, is the ſupreme *Rule* and *Meaſure* of them all. In imitating the bleſſed People above, we do what God himſelf wou'd do, were he in our Place; and what the Son of God himſelf did, when he was in our Nature; and there is no other Difference in his Life and ours, but what neceſſarily ariſes out of different States and Relations. And what more glorious thing can we do, than to live by the Pattern of their Lives, who live ſo exactly by the Pattern of God's? Their Example is an Imitation in kind of all thoſe particular Excellencies in him, which they may and ought to imitate; and is an Imitation in general, of that eternal Decorum, with reſpect to Conditions and States, which he conſtantly obſerves in all his Tranſactions with his Creatures. And as their Example is a perfect Copy of God's, ſo 'tis a Copy, fitted in all Particulars, for our Uſe and Imitation: For it does not only deſcribe to us all thoſe particular Excellencies in him, which are to be imitated by us, but all thoſe particular Duties, which that eternal Law of Equity and Goodneſs, by which he governs himſelf in his State, requires of us in ours; and ſhews not only wherein we are to imitate him in kind, but alſo wherein we are to follow him in general, in doing what is moſt fit for us in the State and Relation of *Creatures*, even as he does what is moſt fit for him, in the State and Relation of a God and Creator. The Example of thoſe heavenly Inhabitants is the Example of God himſelf, exactly fitted and attemper'd to the State and Condition of Creatures. For juſt as they live, the All-wiſe, and All-good God himſelf would live, if he *were* in their State and Relation. Wherefore by imitating their heavenly Lives and Manners, we do ourſelves the greateſt Right, and do moſt effectually conſult the Glory and Honour of our own Natures. For while we tread in theirs, we tread in the Fooſteps of God, and have his glorious Example to warrant and juſtify our Actions, we behave ourſelves as it becomes the Children of the King of Heaven, and ſo far as it con-

conſiſts with the Condition of Creatures, we live like ſo many Gods in the World, which is doubtleſs the utmoſt Height of Honour and Glory, that any rational *Ambition* can aſpire to.

In the next Place, let us conſider the great *Freedom* and *Liberty* of a religious Life. So long as we live earthly and ſenſual Lives, our free-born Souls are impriſon'd in Senſe, and all their Motions are circumſcrib'd and bounded in this the narrow Sphere of *Senſitive* Goods and Enjoyments. When we would follow our Reaſon, and do as that preſcribes and dictates, we find ourſelves miſerably hamper'd and entangled. The *Luſts* of our *Fleſh* do hang, like Gives, ſo heavily upon us, that whenever our Reaſon and Conſcience call, we cannot move with any *Freedom*; but are fain to labour at every Step, and after a few faint Eſſays, are utterly tir'd under the Weight of our reluctant Inclinations. The Good which many times we wou'd do, we do not; the Law in our Minds being countervoted by the Law in our Members: Our Reaſon and Conſcience tell us, that we ought to love God above all, to adore and worſhip him, and ſurrender up ourſelves to his Command and Diſpoſal, and we are many times ſtrangely inclin'd to follow their Dictates and Directions: But alas! when we come to put them in Execution, we find ſo many pull-backs within us, ſo many ſtrong and ſtubborn Averſions to our good Inclinations, that we have not the Power to do as we wou'd, or to diſpoſe of ourſelves according to our own moſt reaſonable Deſires; but like miſerable Slaves that are chain'd to the Oar, we are fain to row on wherever our ſuperior Luſts do command us, tho' we plainly ſee we are running on a Rock, and invading our own Deſtruction. And as we are not free in this ill State of Life to follow our Reaſon, ſo neither are we free to follow our *Luſts*. For as when we wou'd follow our Reaſon, our Luſts cling about and entangle us, ſo when we would follow our Luſts, our Reaſon *clogs* and *reſtrains* us; and by objecting to us the Indecency and

and Danger, the infinite Turpitude and Hazard of our ſinful Courſes, lays ſo many Rubs in our way, that we cannot ſin with any *freedom*, but wherever we go we walk like Priſoners, with the Shackles of *Shame* and *Fear* at our *Heels*. In this Extremity therefore, what is to be done that we may be *free?* The Caſe is plain, we muſt reſolve to conquer either our *Reaſon* or our *Luſts*; if we conquer our *Reaſon*, which we ſhall find by far the harder Task of the *two*, we ſhall *acquire* the *Freedom* of *Devils* and *Brutes*; the *Freedom* to do Miſchief, and to wallow in the Mire without Shame or Remorſe; but if we conquer our *Luſts* we acquire the *Freedom* of Men, nay of *Saints* and *Angels*; the *Freedom* to act reaſonably without Reluctance or Averſation; and this being much more eaſily to be acquir'd than the former, I dare appeal to any Man's Reaſon, which of the two is in itſelf more eligible; tho' at firſt we muſt expect to find ourſelves confin'd and ſtraiten'd by our vicious Averſations, we ſhall be immediately releas'd from all that Shame and Fear, which did ſo continually curb us in the Career of our Wickedneſs; and even our vicious Averſation, if we courageouſly perſiſt in our good Reſolution, will grow weaker and weaker, and be every Day leſs and leſs cumberſom, 'till it is totally extinguiſhed; and then we ſhall feel ourſelves entirely reſtor'd into our own Power, and be able, without Check or Control, to diſpoſe of ourſelves and all our Motions, according as ſhall ſeem to us moſt fit and reaſonable. By engaging ourſelves in the heavenly Life, we enter into a State of glorious Liberty; and if we conſtantly perſiſt in it, and do ſtill prevalently liſt to live as becomes us, we ſhall be more and more *free* to live as we *liſt*, 'till at laſt we are arriv'd into a perfect *Liberty*, in which we ſhall live without *Reſtraint* or *Control*, without Check of Conſcience, or Reluctance of Inclination; which are the two main Bars that confine and ſtrengthen Men in their Operations. If therefore we would ever be *free*, let us immediately come off from our vicious Courſes to the Practice of this divine

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and heavenly Life; wherein by degrees, if we courageouſly hold on, we ſhall wear off thoſe Shackles that do ſo miſerably hamper and entangle us, and then we ſhall be entirely free to do whatever our *Reaſon* dictates to us, then we ſhall *run the ways of God's Commandments*, and, like our bleſſed Brethren above, be all Life, Spirit and Wing, in the Diſcharge of our Duty to him.

Farther, let us conſider the *Pleaſure* of this *heavenly Life*. 'Tis true, there is a ſort of Pleaſure that reſults from all the Acts of a ſenſual and earthly Converſation; but we find by Experience, that tho' in the Purſuit it ſtrongly allures and enchants us, yet in the Fruition it always diſappoints our Expectation, and ſcarce performs in the Enjoyment one half of what is promiſed to our *Hopes*. At the beſt, 'tis but a preſent and tranſient Satisfaction of our brutiſh Senſe, a Satisfaction that dims the *Sight*, ſullies the *Beauty*, impairs the *Vigour*, and reſtrains the *Activity* of the *Mind*, diverting it from better Operations, and indiſpoſing it to the Fruition of *purer* Delights, leaving no comfortable Reliſh or gladſom Memory behind it, but often going out in a *Stink*, and determining in Bitterneſs, Regret, and Diſgrace. But in each Act of this divine and celeſtial Light there is ſomething of the Pleaſure of Heaven, ſomething of thoſe divine Refreſhments and Conſolations upon which the good Spirits of Heaven do live. For the greateſt part of their Heaven ſprings from within their own Boſoms, even from the Conformity of their Souls to the heavenly State, and the Sprightful Outgoings of their Minds and Actions to the heavenly Objects, from their *contemplating* and *loving*, their *praying* and *adoring* the moſt high God; from their Imitation of his Perfections, their Subjection to his Will, and Dependence on his Veracity. All which Acts have the moſt raviſhing Pleaſures appendent to them, and are ſo neceſſary to the Felicity of rational Creatures, that the Wit of Man cannot fancy a *rational Heaven* without them. For the Heaven of a rational Creature conſiſting in the moſt

intenſe and vigorous Exerciſe of its rational Faculties, about the moſt ſuitable and convenient Objects, what Object can be more converſant to ſuch Faculties than that Almighty Sovereign of Beings, whoſe Power is the Spring of all Truth, and whoſe Nature is the Pattern of all Goodneſs? Thus, without a perfect Union of our Minds, and Wills, and Affections with God, there can be no poſſible Idea of a perfect Heaven of *rational Pleaſures*, but in this bleſſed Union lies the very Soul and *Quinteſſence* of Heaven. Since therefore in every Act of every Virtue of the divine Life, there is at leaſt an imperfect Union of the Soul with God, it neceſſarily follows that there muſt be ſome Degree of the Pleaſure of Heaven in every one. And if we do not experience much greater Joy and Delight in the Acts of this divine Love, than ever we did in the higheſt Epicuriſms and Senſualities, 'tis not becauſe there are not much greater in them, but becauſe we never exerted them with that Sprightlineſs and Vigour that we do our ſenſual Appetites and Perceptions; becauſe we are clogg'd in the Exerciſe of them, either by falſe Principles, or bodily Indiſpoſitions, or ſinful Averſations. But if we would take the Pains to inure and accuſtom ourſelves to theſe heavenly Acts, we ſhould find by Degrees they would grow natural and eaſy to us, and our Souls would be ſo habituated, contemper'd, and diſpos'd to them, that we ſhould upon all Occaſions exert them with great Freedom and Enlargement. And then we ſhou'd begin to feel and reliſh the Pleaſure of them, then we ſhou'd feel a heavenly Delight ſpringing up from within us, and unfolding itſelf in each beatifical Act of our heavenly Converſation: We ſhould find ourſelves under the central Force of Heaven, moſt ſweetly drawn along and attracted thither by the powerful magnetiſm of its Joys and Pleaſures; and in every Act of our celeſtial Behaviour we ſhould have ſome Foretaſte of the celeſtial Happineſs: We ſhou'd no longer need external Arguments to convince us of the Truth and Reality of that bleſſed State, for we ſhould feel it within

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ourſelves, and be able to penetrate into its bleſſed Myſteries, by the Light of an infallible Experience. We ſhould have no occaſion to ſearch the Records of Heaven, to aſſure ourſelves of our Intereſt in it; for by a moſt ſenſible Eearneſt of Heaven within us, we ſhould be as fully ſatisfy'd of our Title to it, as if one of its wing'd Meſſengers ſhould come down from thence, and tell us he ſaw our Names enroll'd in the Book of Life. And with this ſweet experience of Heaven, we ſhould go on to the *Perfection* of Happineſs, with unſpeakable Joy and Triumph. In every vigorous Exerciſe of every Virtue of the heavenly Life, we ſhou'd have ſuch lively Taſtes and Senſations of Heaven as would continually excite us to exert them more vigorouſly; and ſtill the more vigorouſly we exerted them, the more of Heaven we ſhould taſte in them. Wherefore as we love Pleaſure, which is the great Invitation to Action, let us be perſuaded once for all to make a thorough Experiment of the heavenly Life; and if upon a ſufficient Trial you do not find it the moſt pleaſant kind of Life that ever you led, if you do not experience a far more noble Satisfaction in it than ever you did in all your ſtudy'd and artificial Luxuries, we may very well treat all the Writers upon Divinity as Impoſtors.

Another Conſideration, which ſhould weigh with us, is the great *Eaſe* and Repoſe of a heavenly Life and Converſation. In every ſenſual and deviliſh Courſe of Life we find, by Experience, there is a great deal of *Uneaſineſs* and *Diſquiet*. For the Mind is *diſturb'd*, the Conſcience galled, the Affections divided into oppoſite Factions, and the whole Soul in a moſt diſeaſed and reſtleſs Poſture. Indeed it is no wonder it ſhould be ſo, ſince it is an unnatural State and Condition: For while 'tis in any unreaſonable State of Action, the very Frame and Conſtitution of it, as it is a rational Being, ſuffers an unnatural Violence, and is all unjointed and diſorder'd. And therefore as a Body, when its Bones are out, is never at reſt till they are ſet again; ſo a rational Soul, when its Faculties and Powers are *diſlocated*, and put out

of their *natural*, that is, their rational Courſe of Action, is continually reſtleſs and diſturb'd, always toſſing to and fro, ſhifting from one Poſture to another, turning itſelf from this to t'other Object and Enjoyment; but finding no Eaſe or Satisfaction in any, 'till 'tis reſtor'd again to its own rational Courſe of Motion, which is to act and move towards God, for whom it was made, and in whom alone it can be happy. And if its Reaſon were not ſtrangely dos'd and ſtupify'd with Senſe and ſenſitive Pleaſures, it would doubtleſs be a thouſand times more reſtleſs and diſſatisfy'd in this its preternatural State than it is. It would feel much more Diſtraction of Mind, Anguiſh of Conſcience, and Tumults of Affections, than 'tis now capable of, amidſt the numerous Enjoyments and Diverſions of this World. For as a muſical Inſtrument, were it a living thing, would doubtleſs be ſenſible of Harmony as its proper State, and abhor *Diſcord* and *Diſſonancy* as a thing preternatural to it: So were our Reaſon but alive and awake in us, our Souls, which, according to our natural Frame, were made *uniſom* with God, would be exquiſitely ſenſible of theſe divine Virtues, in which its *Conſonancy* conſiſts, as of that which is its proper State and native Complexion; and complain as ſadly of the vicious Diſtempers of its Faculties, as the Body does of Wounds and Diſeaſes. Now by relying on God, we ſhall totally quit and diſcharge ourſelves of all thoſe reſtleſs Cares and Anxieties, which circle and prick us like a Crown of Thorns; by our hearty Submiſſion to his heavenly Will, we ſhall eaſe our Conſciences of all that Horror, Rage, and Anguiſh, which proceed from the envenom'd Stings of our Guilt; by *loving*, *admiring*, and *adoring* him, our Affections will be cur'd of that Inconſiſtency and Inordinacy, which render them ſo *tumultuous* and *diſquieting*. Theſe things being once accompliſh'd, the ſick and reſtleſs Soul will preſently find itſelf in perfect Health and Eaſe; ſhe will be no more toſs'd and agitated in a ſtormy Sea of troubled Thoughts and guilty Reflexions, no more ſcorch'd with

with Impatience or drown'd with Grief, or ſhaken with Fear, or bloated with Pride or Ambition, but all her Affections will be reſign'd to the bleſſed Empire of a ſpiritual Mind, and clothed in the Livery of her Reaſon: All the War and Conteſt between the *Law* and her *Members*, and the *Law* in her *Mind*, is ended in a glorious Victory and happy Peace; and thoſe divided Streams, her Will and Conſcience, her Paſſions and her Reaſon are united in one Channel, and flow towards one and the ſame Ocean. Being thus join'd and knit together, by the Ties and Ligaments of Virtue, the Soul is perfectly well and eaſy, and enjoys a moſt ſweet Repoſe within itſelf. Wherefore if we value our own Eaſe and Reſt, and wou'd not be endleſly tormented and diſquieted, we ſhould heartily engage ourſelves in a Courſe of heavenly Converſation; and then, tho' at firſt we muſt expect to find ſome Difficulty in it, by reaſon of its Contrariety to our corrupt Natures, yet if we vigorouſly perſiſt in it, we ſhall find the Difficulty will ſoon wear off, and then it will be all Eaſe and Pleaſure. For when our Nature is deprav'd, either by *Senſuality* or *Deviliſhneſs*, 'tis like a Bone out of Joint, full of Pain while it is out, and much more painful while it is ſetting; but as ſoon as that is done, 'tis immediately well and eaſy.

We muſt conſider, in the laſt Place, the abſolute Neceſſity of this heavenly Life and Converſation; for beſides that God exacts it of us, as an indiſpenſable Condition of our Happineſs, an heavenly Converſation is, in the Nature of the thing, neceſſary to qualify us for Heaven: For Happineſs being a *relative* thing, implies in the very Nature of it a mutual Correſpondence between the Objects, which preſent us with Happineſs, and the Faculties which taſte and enjoy them; and be the Objects never ſo good in themſelves, never ſo pregnant with Pleaſure and Bliſs, yet if they do not agree with the Faculties to which they are objected, inſtead of bleſſing they will but afflict and torment them: And if a Man were placed in the midſt of Heaven, among all the

raviſhing Fruitions with which that bleſſed Place abounds, yet unleſs his Mind and Temper did ſuit and agree with them, they would be ſo many Miſeries and Vexations to him, and he would be afflicted even in *Abraham*'s Boſom, and grope for Heaven in the midſt of Paradiſe. Wherefore ſuppoſing God were ſo unreaſonably fond of the Happineſs of wicked Souls, as to prefer it before the Honour of his Government, the Purity of his Nature, and the Sanction of his Laws, yet ſtill there is an unmoveable Obſtacle behind, which muſt render their future Felicity impoſſible, and that is, that it cannot be without a plain Contradiction to the nature of things; the Temper of wicked Souls being ſo wholly repugnant to all the Felicities of the other World, that if they were all ſet before them, they would not be able to enjoy them, but muſt be forced to pine and famiſh amidſt all that Plenty of Delights, there being no Viand in all that heavenly Entertainment which they would reliſh with any Sweetneſs. If God therefore ſhould ſo far pardon them, as not to puniſh them himſelf by an immediate Stroke of Vengeance, 'twou'd be the utmoſt Favour his omnipotent Goodneſs could do for them, while any continu'd in their Sins, which, notwithſtanding ſuch a Pardon, wou'd for ever continue them extremely miſerable. 'Tis not ſo much the Place as the State which makes either Heaven or Hell: The State of Heaven and Hell conſiſts in perfect Holineſs and Wickedneſs, and proportionably as we improve in either of theſe, ſo we approach towards the one State or the other. For as Heaven is the Center of all that is *virtuous*, pure and holy, and all that is good tends thither by a natural Sympathy; ſo Hell is the Center of all *Impiety* and *Wickedneſs*, and all that is bad naturally preſſes and ſinks down thither, as towards its proper Place and Element. And ſhould not the divine Vengeance concern itſelf to exclude all wicked Souls out of Heaven, yet their own Wickedneſs wou'd do it; for that is a Place of ſuch inacceſſible Light and Purity, that no Impurity or Wickedneſs can approach it,

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but of Neceſſity be beaten off with the dreadful Lightnings of its Glory, and tumbled headlong down as often as it tries to climb up thither. As on the other hand, ſhould not God by an immediate Vengeance precipitate wicked Souls into Hell, yet their own Wickedneſs, by the mighty weight of its own Nature, would inevitably preſs and ſink them down into that miſerable Condition. If therefore we mean to go to Heaven, and to be happy there, we muſt now endeavour to diſpoſe our Minds to it; which is no other way to be done, but by leading a heavenly Life and Converſation, which by Degrees will habituate and naturalize our Souls to the heavenly Virtues, and ſo work and inlay them into the Frame and Temper of our Minds, that 'twill be our greateſt Pleaſure to be exerting and exerciſing them. They will then be dreſt and made ready for Heaven, and when we go hence to take poſſeſſion of its Joys, they will be all ſo agreeable to our prepar'd Appetites, that we ſhall preſently fall to, and feed upon them with infinite Guſt and Reliſh. But 'till by living a heavenly Life we have diſpos'd ourſelves for Heaven, we are utterly incapable of enjoying it. Wherefore things are now reduced to this Iſſue, that our *Sins* or our *Souls* muſt die, and we muſt neceſſarily ſhake Hands either with *Heaven* or our *Luſts*. Unleſs then we value eternal Happineſs ſo little, as to exchange it for the ſordid and trifling pleaſures of Sin, and unleſs we love our Sins ſo well as to ranſom them with the Blood of our immortal Souls, it concerns us ſpeedily to engage ourſelves in this heavenly Life and Converſation. For this is an eternal and immutable Law, that if we will be *wicked*, we muſt be *miſerable*.

One would think that ſuch Conſiderations as theſe ſhould of themſelves be ſufficient to ſet People in the right way which leads to Heaven, to make them in love with Holneſs for the pleaſantneſs of its Paths, as well as for the Glory to which they tend; but there are certain Minds ſo clogg'd with Earth, that they can reliſh nothing which has not a little mixture of Earthlineſs. The

Road to Heaven muſt be more accommodated to their uſual Walk, or they will not be kept in it, they will return as ſoon as they have enter'd it, and be frighten'd at ſo ſtrict and difficult a Paſſage: To engage theſe, there are other Reflexions to be offer'd on this Subject, and thoſe that ariſe not ſo much from the notion of Religion, as the true idea of Things.

'Twould be an endleſs labour to declare what God and his Saints judge of all the things we ſee in this World; it would alone comprehend whatever can be ſaid with Truth: however, 'twill be worth our pains to make an Eſſay as to ſome of the principal Objects of Man's Deſires, that it may ſerve for a Model how to judge of all others.

One of the greateſt Miſeries is, to ſet too high an Eſteem on temporal things; and the Reaſon we do ſo is, becauſe we ſeldom conſider ourſelves but in that ſmall part of our Duration which makes up our Life here, and becomes part of that *Vortex* which hurries it away without looking any farther: Hence does that falſe Grandeur we allow to things of this World take its Riſe, and the only means to undeceive ourſelves, is to take another Proſpect, and to look on ourſelves ſuch as we are in Truth, and in the ſight of Almighty God: We then immediately find that we have an immortal Being, whoſe Duration extends to an Eternity that follows, and that we are ordained to be eternally happy or miſerable.

Man compar'd to God Almighty, is not only *nothing*, but even all Men together, to him appear but as a drop of Water to the whole Ocean; all the Greatneſs and Advantages of the World compar'd to the leaſt of Men, are alſo to be look'd on as nothing, ſince they fill up but an indiviſible part of his Duration: Therefore taking him whole and entire, they can neither give a greater Value to him, nor make him more happy. Eternity admits of no Meaſure or Compariſon; if ſo, what is a Kingdom enjoy'd during the ſpace of ſeventy Years, and that even of the

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whole Univerſe? what is ſome ſmall Principality in this Kingdom? what ſhall we ſay of the ſeveral Degrees and States under thoſe of Princes? To what a ſurpriſing Littleneſs does this Proſpect reduce them? and yet Man takes from hence the occaſion and riſe of his Vanity.

'Tis ſtrange to imagine what difficulty Men have to perſuade themſelves of the *Nothingneſs* of this World, ſince every thing they ſee, minds them of it: What elſe is the hiſtory of Men and Nations, but a continual Leſſon that Men and Things are nothing? for by deſcribing to us what they were, they at the ſame time let us ſee they are no more: They tell us, that all that Greatneſs, all that Pomp, which from time to time was the wonder of Men, that all theſe Princes, all theſe Conquerors, with all their Magnificence and great Deſigns, are, in reſpect to us, ſhrunk into nothing; that they were certain Vapours which are diſpers'd, certain Phantaſms which are vaniſh'd.

What can we deſcry in this World, but Proofs of this ſad Truth? Don't we ſee every Hour thoſe diſappear, who have ſhone with the greateſt Splendor, who have made the greateſt Noiſe, during their Life, while there remains nothing of them; but a ſlight and fading Memory? Do not we ſee that all things are continually ſwallow'd up in the Abyſs of Time paſt? That even our Life ſlips out of our Hands? that what of it is ſpent, appears no more to our Sight, and that Time has hurry'd away all our Miſeries, all our Pleaſures, all the Troubles and Cares we have, or feel, without leaving behind any other Remembrance of themſelves, than ſuch as Dreams do; and it is for this Reaſon the wiſe Man bids us look on temporal things, as on the fond Imaginations which trouble our Sleep.

What is moſt dreadful in this, is, that on one ſide, we will not conceive the Nothingneſs of the World; and on the other, we apprehend it but too much: Whatever is paſt and gone, we look on as nothing, all thoſe that are dead, are nothing with us; we take thoſe whoſe Actions

are recorded in Story, for People who have been, but are no more, nor do we reflect that they yet live more than ever, becauſe their Souls are infinitely more active, and that this Life producing only weak and languiſhing Actions, is rather to be eſteem'd a State of Death than Life, in reſpect of the other. 'Tis alſo hence, that we nouriſh in us an Eſteem for the Grandeurs of this World, becauſe we take them to be as durable and as laſting as ourſelves, nor do we dream that we ſhall ſubſiſt after they ſhall periſh; and that thoſe who were once Maſters of them, tho' they do not ceaſe to be, ſhall yet be depriv'd to all Eternity of thoſe things which were the objects of their Pride.

What ſhall we ſay of human Glory, which makes ſo deep an Impreſſion on our Minds? What has it of ſolid and real in the ſight of Almighty God? It ſubſiſts only in the Knowledge we have of the good Opinions others have of us: And theſe, for the moſt part, are ſuch as know us little, love us not much, and whoſe Judgments, even in our Opinions, are neither ſolid, nor greatly to be valued. In all other things, we often ſlight and contemn their Sentiments. Beſides, this good Opinion others have of us, is perfectly uſeleſs; it adds nothing either to Soul or Body, nor does it leſſen the leaſt of our Miſeries; it only contributes to deceive and cheat us, while by them we are inclin'd to judge of ourſelves, not by the rule of Truth, but by that of other Mens Opinions, which having buſy'd our Heads during Life, when Death comes, they diſappear on a ſudden, for then we have no Senſe or Sentiment for ſuch Trifles; and this is that Smoke, that Vapour which thus fills and puffs us up.

What a Difference then is there between this *human Glory* and that which the Saints ſhall enjoy to all Eternity? A Glory as ſubſtantial and valuable as that of Man is vain and contemptible, becauſe it has Qualities quite oppoſite: The beatitude of the Elect ſhall be accompany'd with that endearing ſpirit of Society and Union, before ſpoken of; they ſhall know one another perfectly; they

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ſhall jointly give Glory to God for the Favour he has done each one in particular; the good deeds of each Saint ſhall then be known to all the reſt, and for ever ſhall they be occaſions of Joy, Praiſe, and Thankſgiving, to every bleſſed Member of thoſe Regions of Bliſs; they will caſt all their Crowns at the Feet of the *Lamb*, not their own only, but thoſe of all the reſt, becauſe they will not only glorify God in themſelves, but ſhall glorify him in all his Saints.

Oh the truly ſolid *Glory* of the elect of God! A Glory that conſiſts not in a fleeting Splendor, but remains for ever! a Glory not confin'd and built on the knowledge of ſome few envious and ignorant People, but which ſhall have as many Witneſſes as there are Citizens in the celeſtial *Jeruſalem!* a Glory that conſiſts not in the uſeleſs and raſh Approbation of thoſe who know us not, who know not themſelves, but in the joy of an innumerable number of holy Spirits, who by the light of Truth ſhall ſee the bottom of our Hearts.

The Wicked little enjoy their Glory during Life, and it quite vaniſhes at the hour of their Death; if for any time it continues in the memory of Man, 'tis not for them, they have no Share in it; and when all is done, it ſhall be entirely deſtroy'd at the Day of Judgment: For the Puniſhment of the Wicked ſhall be attended with a ſpirit of Diviſion among themſelves, as has been already explain'd: The intenſeneſs of their Torments will ſo entirely employ them about themſelves, that they ſhall leave no room for the remembrance of that Eſteem others had for them when alive; which is a mortifying Conſideration for the Men of the World, who are taken up with nothing more than what they call *Quality*, and that which gives ſome the denomination of Perſons of Quality, to diſtinguiſh them from ſuch as are not ſo; they extend this Diſtinction ſo far, that a Man is thought to differ leſs from a Beaſt, than a Man of Quality from one of mean Birth. This Quality ſtifles almoſt all others, even the moſt ſpiritual and divine; we do not only

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raiſe it above the Mind, but even above Virtue and the Quality of being a Chriſtian: And if it happen we do not make this Difference in poſitive Words, at leaſt we do in our Judgment; for who are they that ſincerely value the Condition of a poor and meanly born Chriſtian, above that of a debauch'd Man of Quality? Who is he that can ſee the profound Abjection of this great one, and high Elevation of that poor Chriſtian? 'Tis plain therefore, that the Idea we have of *Condition* and *Quality*, deceives us, and that it is worth our while to examine what there is of real and ſubſtantial in this common Object of Man's Vanity, to the end we may diſabuſe ourſelves. Something has been ſaid on this Subject, in treating of others, but the vanity of Birth is ſo apt to ſwell the Mind, and elate even the Temper of a Chriſtian, that one cannot do better than look a little into this boaſted Superiority.

To be a Perſon of Quality and Birth, according to the World, is to be ſprung from Parents who hold a conſiderable Rank in it; but this Birth of itſelf, gives no advantage of either Mind or Body; it takes away no Defect, and Perſons of Quality have Faults as great as others: There is therefore no ſolid Reaſon which makes Perſons of Quality more to be eſteem'd than others; nevertheleſs, becauſe there ought to be a Decorum among Men, 'tis with Reaſon, that in ſome Places Cuſtom carries it, that Perſons thus born ſhall enjoy the Precedence of others, and be preferred before them.

If we ſtop'd here, there would be nothing unjuſt in the Idea we have of what is call'd *Quality*; but we proceed farther: Of this arbitrary Order eſtabliſh'd by Men upon no Grounds, taken from the Perſons themſelves, we create another which is natural and indiſpenſable, and we accuſtom ourſelves to look on it as ſomething faſtned to the very Being of thoſe to whom we give this Precedence.

We do not content ourſelves with giving them that exterior and interior Reſpect which is due to them, (for

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in this there wou'd be nothing but what's *rational* and *warrantable*) but we add to this what is not due to them, a Reſpect which ſprings from our own Errors and Corruptions; we frame to ourſelves large and corrupt Ideas of this State, we look on it as the very height of all Happineſs; we deſire it ourſelves, we envy it in thoſe that have it; and if we prefer them before others, 'tis only out of an ardent Paſſion we have for the Goods and Honours they enjoy. Thus there is no kind of People Great ones ought to fear more than thoſe that admire them moſt, becauſe they will be always ready, if they cou'd, to rob them of their Greatneſs: In the mean time, that ſuch Admirers are very numerous, and we conſider not that Diſpoſition which they conceal, but only that Eſteem they make Shew of, they are not the leaſt Contributors to this imaginary Felicity of the Great, becauſe in them they find thoſe Sentiments and that Diſpoſition, the Proſpect of which is that, which flatters moſt of the Vanity of ambitious Souls.

All theſe Judgments are falſe; for 'tis no Happineſs to receive from others theſe marks of Eſteem, and 'tis a plain piece of Injuſtice to take Delight in being the object of that Admiration, which ſprings only from the corruption of Men. However Perſons of Quality, knowing the Sentiments and Ideas, which the generality have of their Condition, frame thence the Conceit they have of it; they look on it as incorporated in their Being; they fancy themſelves rais'd infinitely above the Heads of others; and 'tis almoſt impoſſible for them to conſider themſelves as levell'd with thoſe who are below them in the order of the World. Theſe are thoſe falſe Ideas we ought to correct, by conſidering the Judgment God paſſes in this Eſtate, even that theſe marks of Honour, theſe Differences eſtabliſh'd by Men, contain nothing of true and ſolid, becauſe they are *only Ceremonies and Shews, void of Reality*, as St. *Chryſoſtom* terms them. The ſame muſt be ſaid of thoſe Judgments, becauſe they

they are falſe, and are uſeleſs to ſuch as take Pleaſure in them, rendering thoſe who delight in them miſerable. The Riches and Delights of the Great, lie under the ſame Cenſure, giving both alike the ſame Occaſion of Temptation, and proving great Obſtacles in their way to Heaven. This is the Judgment God paſſes on what we call Greatneſs and Quality; and hence it follows, that whoever judges otherwiſe, judges wrong; and whatever Diſcourſes give another Idea of them, which inclines us to deſire them when wanting, to take Pleaſure in them when obtain'd, and to contemn thoſe who have them not, are falſe and deceitful.

Next to being nobly born, nothing raiſes Man higher in the eſteem of the World, than Valour; nor is there any thing, the repute of which does in a greater Degree flatter Perſons of Quality, and touching which, they are more ſenſible and delicate. A Gentleman will ſuffer any Reproach ſooner than that of want of Courage, becauſe he knows the World has allotted Valour the higheſt Eſteem, and Cowardiſe the greateſt Infamy, when found in Perſons of this Condition.

If our Task here was only to juſtify Men in this Point, it wou'd not be a hard one; for ſince 'tis *Valour* that keeps up Kingdoms, and makes them formidable to their Enemies, 'tis with Reaſon, ſince the Services of all the valiant Men, of whom a State has need, cannot be recompens'd with Rewards equal to their Deſerts, that this Quality is become honourable; nor has it been in the power of ill-minded Men to bring it into Diſparagement, whatever Artifices have been us'd to ſet the glorious Services of true Valour in the moſt odious Light. Honour was ever the Recompenſe of thoſe, who by their Courage ſerv'd their Country well: There is therefore ſome Juſtice in this Eſteem in relation to Men, and conſequently ſome alſo in relation to God, for he approves all that is juſt and neceſſary for the Conſervation of human Societies.

But

But becauſe in the Eſteem we allow *Valour*, we may go beyond the bounds of Truth, and by falſe Praiſes extol in it what deſerves no Eſteem; we muſt conſult what God judges of it, and learn of him what there is in this quality of Real and Great, and what only appears ſuch by the Error and Illuſion of Men.

Tho' the Ladies do not ſeem to be ſo much concern'd in this Subject, as to have it laid before them, yet when we conſider what has been the ill Conſequences of their ſetting too high a value on this Quality in the other Sex, and ſometimes of inflaming it on every unwarrantable Occaſion, it will not be found improper to handle it for their Sakes, as well as for the Mens, whoſe more immediate Concern it is to form a right Notion of a thing that is ſo very much miſtaken. We have in a preceding Volume given a Hint or two on this Head, to which we ſhall now add:

That *Valour* may be conſider'd two ways: either as a Paſſion, that is, an Impreſſion coming from the Imagination and Body, or as regulated and guided by the Will. To conſider it in the firſt Place, we may take notice, that as there are ſome who being rais'd high above the reſt, are not ſubject to be dazzled, nor feel thoſe Weakneſſes caus'd by the force of Imagination on ſuch as have not been us'd to thoſe fearful Sights; ſo there are others who either by Nature, or out of Cuſtom, are not ſurpris'd by the Dangers of War; who preſerve there the ſame Calmneſs and Preſence of Mind, who can foreſee all, take all Advantages, and to whom the ſight of an arm'd Enemy inſpires new Vigour and Force to encounter and ſurmount them, and theſe are thoſe we call *valiant* and *brave Men*.

There is no doubt but ſuch a Diſpoſition as this deſerves our Eſteem; but while we look on it only in this degree, the Imagination and Body ſhare more in it than the Will. For if in theſe Perſons the Spirit and Blood took ſome other Courſe, all their Valour cou'd not free them

them from Fear, as it cannot hinder them from being ſtartled, when from an high Place they look down a Precipice.

Thus, as God ſets no Value on any thing in us, which is not voluntary and virtuous, ſo if he allow that Men out of neceſſity ſhou'd have allotted Valour certain human Rewards, yet he will not have them equaliſe it to the leaſt of thoſe Virtues he is the Author of. Wherefore the joint valour of all Conquerors, conſider'd in this Degree, and as only a natural Diſpoſition of the Imagination, deſerves not to be compar'd to the leaſt motion of Grace, which God produces in the heart of ſome ſimple Women: Becauſe all Qualities, purely human, die with Man, while the leaſt Virtues have Effects that ſubſiſt to all Eternity. The Idea therefore which the diſcourſes of the World frame of Valour is falſe, in as much as it exceeds *Truth*, and that in lieu of having it plac'd among purely *human Qualities*, it raiſes it above the moſt *ſpiritual* and *divine Virtues*.

But their Illuſion is infinitely greater in the Judgment they paſs on Valour, conſider'd as voluntary, that is, on the Uſe that's made on it; for they equally eſteem thoſe that are accounted *brave* and *valiant*, whether their *Valour* be accompany'd with *Juſtice* or *Injuſtice*, *Prudence* or *Raſhneſs*. Yet what a prodigious difference does *Truth* itſelf place, between things which Man ſcarce diſtinguiſhes? To expoſe our Lives where Duty and Juſtice require, and to ſacrifice them to God, where he engages us, is an Act of ſo high a Generoſity, that the Chriſtian Religion has nothing that's greater. But to expoſe them in an ill Cauſe, and ſo by Death raſhly thruſt ourſelves into the Hands of an exaſperated and omnipotent God, is ſo prodigious a Folly, that we need no greater Proof of the blindneſs of Man, than the placing his Glory in ſo ſenſeleſs an Action.

Nay, it often happens, that we beſtow moſt unjuſtly the name of Courage on the weakeſt part of thoſe Actions.

ons. Men do not expoſe themſelves to Danger becauſe they ſlight it, but becauſe they ſee it not: Their Souls are wholly taken up, either by the Renown they pretend to, or ſome other Trifle, which filling the whole Capacity of the Mind, conceals all things elſe from it. The Praiſes they expect from Men cannot ſpring but from Folly, while even the greateſt Number of thoſe who are truly valiant, look on theſe Actions as marks of a falſe and baſtard *Valour*: A Moment ſees them at an end, and an eternal Repentance follows them. This Vanity is in the *Devils* the object of their Laughter, in *Angels* of their Indignation, in *God* of his Wrath againſt a wretched Man, who being touch'd with ſo little dread of his Juſtice, and ready to fall into his Hands, dare affront him with ſo much Inſolence, as all do who dare engage in an ill Cauſe; and to diſtinguiſh a good from an ill one, is ſeldom the care of ſuch irregular Minds.

Life, the ſole good of Men, a Treaſure whoſe Loſs is irrecoverable, a Price with which Eternity is bought, is the thing in the World the moſt contemn'd and ſlighted by thoſe thoughtleſs Heroes, who know as little how to live reaſonably in this World, as they are prepar'd for the next. There is no Reward ſo baſe or mean, for which ſome Men will not hazard it, and for which at every Turn it is not caſt away. Men ſeem to be weary of Life, ſince they ſeek to be quit of it ſo raſhly, and for ſo ſmall Trifles throw it away. Thus we may diſcover as a certain Truth, that all this falſe *Valour* which caſts Men headlong into Duels, unjuſt Quarrels, and uſeleſs Dangers, to which they expoſe themſelves thro' a ridiculous Vanity, is nothing elſe but either a not knowing the Value, or forgetting the end of Life, a darkening of the Soul, which conceals Danger, or a fooliſh and unreaſonable Aſſurance of eſcaping it, or a violent Application to ſome Object of our Paſſions; and what is it that deſerves our Eſteem in all this? Is it a ſign of an undaunted Courage in a deaf Man not to

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ſtartle at the thunder of a Cannon? Or in a blind one, not to be mov'd at the dreadful ſight of an Enemy? There is no Courage in not ſtanding in dread of God Almighty, becauſe nothing but a horrible Blindneſs can be exempt from ſuch a Fear. God is ſo terrible, that when he has a mind to make us ſenſible of his Anger, no fond Belief of ours, with which we flattered our *Guilt*, can ſhelter us from the leaſt of his Regards, and even the Wicked are forc'd to cry, in the exceſs of their Conſternation, *to the Hills, that they fall upon them.* How mad then are weak and wretched Men, to out-dare God Almighty, tho' for a Moment, when he delays his Puniſhment; ſince they thus run the hazard of being the Objects for ever of his rigorous Juſtice, when they cannot at all hinder their coming under the laſh?

What then muſt we think of thoſe Bravos the World with ſo little Judgment eſteems ſo much? We muſt think and judge as God judges, we muſt approve of thoſe he approves, we muſt condemn thoſe he condemns, and make the Differences between ſuch and ſuch that he does. And as we ought not to deny ſome thoſe due Praiſes their Generoſity deſerves, ſo ought we to have for others that juſt Contempt which is due to their brutiſh *Valour.*

It may be alledg'd, that there is ſomething more ſolid and real in the Qualities and Endowments of the Mind, ſuch as are Sciences, Eloquence, a graceful mien in Converſation, addreſs in Buſineſs, capacity of great Affairs, with ſtrength of Brain to go thro' with them, and particular Prudence in the Conduct of our Deſigns, and management of our Fortunes. Now the whole Value we ought to ſet on theſe, conſiſts only in the Uſe we make of, and the End to which we refer them. They are neceſſary Inſtruments for the employment of Life; and hence thoſe who live in the World, lie under an Obligation of cultivating them with great Care, becauſe they ought to know that ſince Men have aſſign'd them a great Value, 'tis impoſſible to ſucceed in any thing without being Maſter of them.

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But if we ſeparate them from their Uſe, and only conſider them in themſelves; or as the Meaſures to arrive at ſome low and temporal End, they loſe ſo much their Eſteem and Value, that the Condition of thoſe who are Maſters of them, is not at all preferable to that of others who want them. And for this Reaſon 'tis of greateſt Importance, not to be deceiv'd with the vain Panegyricks of thoſe that wou'd flatter us on ſuch Endowments, as conſider'd in themſelves, and ſeparated from the Uſe which might be made of them.

Wit is what Men are moſt ambitious to have the Character of, as it gives a kind of Superiority of Mind, when taken in the beſt Senſe; but the very Idea we have of what is called a Man of Parts or Wit, is perfectly falſe; and one of thoſe, in which we moſt of all ought to diſabuſe ourſelves. For we call Wit a certain Faculty to learn Sciences, to diſcourſe well on what is offer'd, to manage Affairs with Addreſs, or to find out ſome happy Means to bring difficult Matters to a good Concluſion; nothing of which goes to the making up that true *Light of Mind* which forms a juſt Wit, ſince thoſe Endowments may be found in thoſe, who, as the Scriptures tell us, are blind wretched Fools, inſenſate and void of underſtanding. What is it then to be a Man of Wit? Let us judge of it by taking a View of the ſight of our *Body*, which is the Image of our Souls: To ſee well is to ſee things ſuch as they are, what's great as great, and what's little as little. Thoſe to whom a Mountain ſhall appear a Mole-hill, and a Mole-hill a Mountain, would be ſaid to be very ill-ſighted: They who can conceive things that are great as ſuch, and that with an Apprehenſion full of Light and Life, and who ſee things that are little in their natural Dimenſion, without increaſing or leſſening them by their Imagination, are great Wits, and Men of accurate right Judgments. Thus he who ſaid, *He fear'd God as a ſwoll'n Sea hanging over his Head*, and he who ſaid, *Who is like to thee, O Lord, who is like to thee?* and he who ſaid, *The Magni-*

Magnificence of God was rais'd above the Winds, was one of a great Wit, becauſe God appear'd great in his Eyes, and he was fully poſſeſs'd and convinc'd of his Magnificence and Greatneſs. He had then a Sight which was clear; and extended far. Thus an infinite Number of ſimple Women, who in Concerns of this World appear of no Parts, are great Wits, becauſe to them God ſhews, and as it were makes himſelf even to be touch'd and ſeen; whereas ſuch as have only a Wit to underſtand a mathematical Demonſtration, to diſcourſe well, to carry on a Negotiation or Intrigue, without ſeeing the things of the next World, under any other Dimenſions than thoſe of Atoms, are but little Wits, and deſerve no other Names than thoſe the Scripture affords them, *Of little Ones, of Simple, without either Sight or Light.* As the Idea which is commonly fram'd of Wit, taken as the *Light* of the *Mind*, is falſe, ſo that which we have of its Strength is no leſs ſo: We make it conſiſt in being able to ſuſtain the Weight of a great Number of Affairs, without being diſmay'd, tir'd, or confounded with them. Behold, ſays the World, a ſtrong Brain that's able to comply with and manage ſo great a Number of different Affairs: But perhaps, on the contrary, we ought to ſay, what a weak Head is this that ſtands in need of ſo many Employments to ſuſtain and keep it up? and how little Vigour has this Soul, that wants ſo many Helps to prevent its being diſmay'd or weary of itſelf? Take theſe Employments from this Man, and you ſhall preſently ſee him dull and languiſhing. 'Tis not we that ſupport our Affairs, 'tis they that bear us up; on them we find a Bed, on which our Souls in their Weakneſs *repoſe*. The Strength and Vigour of a Soul conſiſts in being able to continue without theſe Stays, and pleaſing itſelf only with God, and in his Preſence. If there be any Strength in thoſe who are not tir'd with the tumultuous Employments of this World, 'tis a Strength which depends on the *Organization* of the Body, not a true Strength of the Soul.

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'Tis true, there's ſomething in Man that's great, and let him apply his Mind to what he pleaſes, there will always appear ſome Sign of Grandeur and Excellence. But even from this Grandeur proceeds his Miſery and Meanneſs, when he gives his Mind to what merits not his Application, and neglects thoſe other things which only deſerve his careful Thoughts and Affections. If Man were leſs than he is, all theſe Qualities and Endowments wou'd be greater: and they are but mean and little, becauſe he is call'd to things of a far higher Strain, and infinitely more important, which he paſſes by and neglects, while he too much applies himſelf to thoſe other.

Science has ſomething in it that looks glaring, but the greateſt part of *human Sciences* are ſo inconſiderable in themſelves, and contribute ſo little to Man's Felicity, that we are every whit as happy living in Ignorance and Contempt as in the Knowledge and Over-value of them. Vanity and Opinion ſet a Price on them, and we deſire only to be learn'd for others, not for ourſelves. Hence *Seneca*, all *Stoick* as he was, confeſſes that he car'd not for *Wiſdom*, which was the *Idol* of thoſe of his Sect, were he prohibited to diſcourſe of it with others. The whole Reward and Fruit he deſired to draw from thence, was only the Praiſe and Approbation he expected to have from others. But as *Opinion* ſets the *Rate* on *Sciences*, ſo does it alſo debaſe them when it pleaſes. *Men* have been pleas'd not to judge *Learning* fit for *Women*, and yet *Men* do not think them miſerable, nor are they themſelves ſenſible of the Want. Some Ladies of Quality conceal the Skill they have in polite Literature, as aſham'd of it, and they are in the right, for there's always ſome Shame in being burden'd with an uſeleſs Knowledge. If all thoſe of that Sex, who have apply'd themſelves to the Study of curious *Sciences*, did the like, they would but thence deſerve more Eſteem.

Nevertheleſs 'tis true, that ſome of theſe *Sciences* are very beneficial to *human Society*, and afford to ſome great Advantages: And for this Reaſon it has been well done

done to affix to them certain Honours and Rewards, but for the moſt part they procure their Owners more Harm than Good.

Let us run over all thoſe we know to have been Men of Wit and Parts in the World, and upon Conſideration we ſhall find very few who have not thereby been damag'd for the next World: Had not ſuch a one been a Man of Parts he had never been choſen Biſhop; he had never then been charg'd with the Sins of the whole Dioceſe: 'Tis by his good Parts that another is rais'd to a great Office, and great Employments, and thereby hazards his Conſcience, thro' a thouſand dangerous Intrigues. If another had not had an eaſier Utterance, he had never been a Preacher, and ſo not ſpent his Life in an abuſive Diſpenſation of God's Word. Without Parts we preſs not forward in the World, and by living privately we ſhun a thouſand unfortunate Engagements.

But it is not poſſible to ſet a value on theſe Endowments, by conſidering them ſeparately, from the good or bad Uſe that may be made of them. This is neceſſary to be done, becauſe they are often known, but not the bad Uſe they are put to. However, 'tis certain that this way of conſidering them by themſelves, without reflecting on the Uſe that's made of them, is the Origin of great Illuſion both to us and others. For theſe Qualities conſiſt not in the Air abſtracted from their good or bad Uſe; and when they are ill employ'd they derive no Eſteem, ſince they only increaſe the Guilt of thoſe that have them.

The holy Scripture only calls that *Science* which teaches us how to live, accounting all that are ignorant of it *Fools* and *Mad-men*. Nor wou'd *Man*, were he rational, ſpeak any other Language than this; for 'tis moſt conformable to *Reaſon* and *Nature*, and only his Blindneſs has brought another Dialect into Faſhion. Not but that each *Science* teaches ſome particular *Truths*, but becauſe we ſtand in ſo urgent a Neceſſity of that Knowledge which

which leads to Heaven, we are not permitted to reckon the reſt for any thing. Were we in a Storm, we ſhould only value that Art which might ſerve us there; and no body ever thought of praiſing a Paper of Verſes, when the Queſtion was how to avoid a threaten'd Shipwreck. Let a Man be ſick, he only in his Phyſician values that Skill which may cure his Diſeaſe, all the reſt of his good Qualities vaniſh, and are not taken notice of. In a word, all thoſe great Concerns, which ought totally to employ and take us up, give us leave only to conſider ſuch Abilities as may be ſerviceable to them. But what greater Concern can we have, than that of ſaving our Souls, ſhunning Hell and purchaſing Heaven? What greater and more terrifying Danger, than that of periſhing eternally? What deſerves more to take up all our Thoughts, than the Care of preparing for an Eternity? It is therefore againſt Nature and Reaſon, to ſet ſo high a Price on certain Qualities and Endowments that contribute nothing to it.

Nor is this a mere Queſtion about Words; Things themſelves are concerned, ſince the Words carry the Things along with them. Were it only about Words, it would be a ſmall Inconvenience to beſtow the Name of learned, skilful and Men of good Parts, on thoſe who might excel in *human Societies*, becauſe in reality, as uſeleſs as they are, conſider'd in themſelves, they yet continue to be the Marks of the Greatneſs of human Wit: But we ſtop not here; to theſe Words we faſten certain Sentiments of our Souls, and we always accompany them with an interior Judgment of Eſteem and Excellency, we raiſe thoſe on whom we beſtow theſe Names above others, and here they become falſe and deceitful. For whereas a *Poet* that's no *Chriſtian*, an eloquent Preacher that leads a diſorderly Life, or an able Politician that thinks not on God, are infinitely leſs eſtimable than the weakeſt Woman that lives according to his Laws; yet under the Favour of theſe Names, we fail not in our own Thoughts and Imaginations to beſtow a moſt

a moſt eminent Degree and Place on thoſe Perſons whom we ought notwithſtanding their Knowledge and Learning, to conſider as in the loweſt Degree of Blindneſs and Abjection.

If Men are not capable of being ſpoken to in this Language, at leaſt we ought to ſpeak it to ourſelves. And thus by judging of things by the Relation they have to God and what's eternal, inſtead of thoſe ſeveral Conditions and Degrees of Men in the World, we ſhall only find two, but thoſe prodigiouſly different, if we look on them with the Eyes of Faith, tho' the Difference be unknown to Senſe. One of the Claſſes is made up of the *Juſt*, the other of *Sinners*. It will be profitable, to excite in us the livelieſt Idea we poſſibly can have of theſe two States, to the end it may help to obſcure and ſtifle in our Minds all thoſe Diſtinctions which Men have eſtabliſh'd and built among themſelves on certain Qualities, whether exterior or interior, real or imaginary.

What then does a *Sinner*, and one without God, appear to the Eyes of Faith, that, is, to Truth itſelf? He is one that's blind, becauſe he does not partake of true Light, knowing neither God nor himſelf, his Friends nor Enemies, Good nor Evil. Let him be as intelligent as he will in the Affairs of this World, yet does he live and walk in Darkneſs, ſince he blindly falls at every Step, and knows not where to place his Feet.

He's one that's Deaf, ſince he hears not the Voice of God, nor admits to his Heart his divine Word, tho' it may make a Noiſe in the Ears of his Body. He is one ſick of a Palſy, becauſe his Heart is without Motion, nor aſpires up towards God, is always on the Ground, and in an utter Diſability of ever raiſing itſelf.

He is a Man reduc'd to an Extremity of Want and Beggary, becauſe deſpoil'd of all true Riches which are only Spiritual: He has loſt whatever God beſtow'd on him in his *Baptiſm:* To him no more belongs any Right to his Inheritance, which is Heaven.

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He is not only poor as to the Riches of Grace, but even as to the Goods of this World: For tho' to Appearance he is in poſſeſſion of great Wealth, and others have no Right to deprive him of it, yet does he *unjuſtly* keep it, as to God. He no more deſerves to enjoy it. He's unworthy the Uſe of any of his Creatures.

He's a Bond-ſlave, not only to his Paſſions which domineer over him, but to the Devil who poſſeſſes him, dwells in him, moves, agitates, and makes him do and act as he pleaſes, who without ceaſing deceives him, and turns him into the Subject of his Diſport and Laughter, according to the Phraſe of holy Scripture. Nay he's a Slave of the *Juſt*, and thoſe God has choſen; that is his whole Employment during his Life, is to labour for the Good of others, not for his own, and to contribute to the Good of the *Elect*, without drawing thence any Benefit for himſelf. 'Tis thus the *Angels* and *Saints* look on thoſe who are Great and Wealthy, who fancy the whole World only made for themſelves, while on the contrary, God only eſteems them made for others; nor does he permit them to live but for the Service of the *Elect*, who are the only *Maſters* and *Kings* in his Sight, and who will drive them out of their Houſe, when the time ſhall come that they ſtand in no more need of them, *becauſe the Slave does not remain in the Houſe of his Maſter.*

A *Sinner* is a Man reduced to a ſhameful *Nakedneſs*, becauſe he has loſt the Robe of *Innocence* and *Juſtice:* Let his *Magnificence* be never ſo great, with which he endeavours to clothe his Ignominy; his *Greatneſs*, as St. *Auſtin* ſays, are but the *Rags of the Devil.* Theſe are not only Shameful, but over and above great *Deceivers*, becauſe the Devil only lends them, to the end that Man fixing there, and making them the Object of a ridiculous Vanity, he may loſe all Senſe of his true Miſery, and never endeavour to recover what he has loſt. Theſe he will take from him at his Death, and make him for all Eternity ſenſible of the *Nakedneſs* he is reduc'd to.

A *Sinner* is a Man that is dead, and a thouſand times more ſenſeleſs than the Dead themſelves. His very Soul is dead; whereas others die only as to the Body, I ſay, his very Soul is dead; nor do I here uſe any *Metaphor*. The Soul only lives by Love and Knowledge. Thus the Love and Knowledge (of what is the Good of Man, that is) of God, is the true Life of the Soul; and when it loſes this Love and this Knowledge, it loſes its true Life, tho' it retains another poor and miſerable one, by the Love it bears to, and the Knowledge it has of the Creatures. 'Tis for this Reaſon, that it is ſaid by *Wiſdom* to its *Children, Wiſdom gives her Sons Life*, becauſe on them it beſtows the Knowledge and Love of God.

The Compariſon therefore is very natural and exact, which the Fathers make between a Soul in Sin, and a moving Sepulchre; becauſe the Soul being dead, the Body that incloſes it may in ſome ſort be ſaid to be its Grave. And this Compariſon runs ſo much the better, in that, as a *Tomb* is adorn'd without, but fill'd within with nothing but Dirt and Corruption; ſo the *Sinner*, whoſe Outſide appears ſo pleaſing and grateful, flattering our Senſes by theſe exterior Endowments, conceals within ſo horrible a Corruption and Stench, that it would prove intolerable, were it laid open to Sight.

The dreadful Miſery of *Sinners*, may help us to conceive the ineſtimable Happineſs of the Juſt, ſince we know already, that 'tis a great good Fortune to be freed from ſo wretched a Condition. The *Juſt* are no more either *blind* or *deaf Beggars*, or benumm'd with *Palſies*; they are no *Slaves* nor *naked*, nor in a State of Death; but they enjoy the Light of Almighty God; they, as Friends, hear his Voice; they raiſe themſelves up towards him, by the Motions and Sentiments of their *Hearts*; they are poſſeſs'd of the Treaſures of Grace, and freed from the Slavery of the *Devil* and *Sin*; they are clad with the Robes of Innocency, and live the true Life, that is the Life of *Charity*.

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But we muſt yet make a farther Progreſs, before we can conceive any Part of their Grandeur, we muſt ſay they are *Kings*, being Aſſociates in Royalty with our Saviour *Jeſus Chriſt*; that they are Lords of the World, ſince the whole *Creation* continues but for, and in relation to them; that they are *Children* of God, ſince they are adopted for his by being united to his only Son: that they are *Heirs* of *Heaven*, ſince that is the Inheritance of our Saviour, and a Right to it has been conferr'd on them by the Pledge of the Holy Ghoſt, which they have receiv'd; that they are the *Temple* of God, ſince he dwells in them, and that they are animated by his Holy Spirit; that they are *Members* of *Jeſus Chriſt*, making up part of his Body, by the Participation of his Spirit.

We muſt endeavour to imprint in our Minds, as deep as we can, theſe Ideas, that we may be able to reſiſt the Impreſſions made only by the Diſcourſes of Men, who fill our Heads with Conceits of falſe Grandeur, falſe Abjections, falſe Goods and Evils: And for this Reaſon it is, the holy Scriptures ſo often raiſe us up to admire the juſt. *Bleſſed are thoſe who are without Blame in the ways of God: Bleſſed are thoſe who ſound the Depth of his Precepts: Bleſſed is the Man who fears God: Bleſſed is the Man who follows not the Counſel of the Wicked: Bleſſed, O Lord, are thoſe who dwell in thy Houſe.* On the contrary, they endeavour to take from us that Eſteem we have for all thoſe human Qualities, which are the uſual Object of Man's Vanity. *Let not the Wiſe glory in his Wiſdom, nor the Strong in his Strength, nor the Rich in his Riches; but he that has a mind to glorify himſelf, let it be in knowing me, in knowing that I am the Lord, who exerciſe Mercy, Judgment and Juſtice in the Earth: for theſe are the things that pleaſe me, ſays the Lord.*

The ſacred Writ proceeds yet farther, and wills us to look on *Sinners*, not only as reduc'd by Sin to a low degree of *Abjection*, but even to a State of *Annihilation*.

And while in this manner it paints them forth, at the ſame time it buries and annihilates with them all their *Greatneſs*, all their Riches, all their Qualifications, as well the interior as the exterior ones. It will not permit that any thing of theſe ſhou'd make them even to ſubſiſt in our ſight, or make us to judge there is any thing of real and ſolid in their Condition.

And it is thus the holy Scripture wou'd have us to conſider whatever has no Relation to God. This is that expreſs Concluſion which it made a great King, on whom God had heap'd all the Grandeurs and Pleaſures of the World, to deduce, to the end he might be more able to teach us the Vanity of them all. In purſuit of this Deſign he does in particular repreſent to us the Nothingneſs of all Pleaſures, of all Greatneſs, of all Employments, of all Enterpriſes conſider'd in themſelves, and not referr'd to God. After all he concludes the Sum of his Inſtructions with theſe Words, *Fear God, and keep his Commandments; for in this conſiſts the very Being of all Men.* That is to ſay, Whatever tends not to God and the keeping his Law, has no Being, no Reality, cannot be ſolid and happy; and ſo before Almighty God, is a total Privation of Good. Thus it is God judges of the things of this Earth, and therefore we ought not to judge otherwiſe; and by this Rule it is, that we ſhould reform all thoſe falſe Ideas and Notions we receive from our Converſation; which would naturally lead us to live a Life of *Religion*, the end of which is a Life of eternal Glory.

PRAYER.

THE ſeveral Duties and Exerciſes of Religion, which will be treated of under the following Heads, *Prayer*, *Faſting*, *Repentance*, the *Sacrament*, &c. have been touch'd upon in ſeveral of the *preceding*; but having not been ſo thoroughly and particularly conſider'd, as the Importance of them requires, 'twill be neceſſary to treat of them at large, for the greater Inſtruction and Profit of the Reader: In doing which we ſhall begin with *Prayer*.

There is no greater Argument in the World of our ſpiritual Danger, than the manifeſt Indiſpoſition there is in us to religious Duties, nor any plainer Inſtance of that than the backwardneſs which moſt Men have always, and all Men have ſometimes, to ſay their *Prayers*: So weary are we of their Length, ſo glad when they are done, ſo witty to excuſe and fruſtrate an Opportunity; and yet all Prayer is nothing but a deſiring of God to give us the greateſt and the beſt things we can need, and which can make us happy. It is a Work ſo eaſy, ſo honourable, and to ſo great Purpoſe, that in all the inſtances of Religion and Providence, except only the Incarnation of his Son, God has not given us a greater Argument of his Willingneſs to have us ſav'd, than by rewarding ſo eaſy a Duty with ſo great Bleſſings; neither do we in any caſe more plainly ſhew our contempt of his Mercy.

Ought we not ſeriouſly to conſider, that God and his bleſſed Son command it, that 'tis an act of Grace and higheſt Honour, that we, *Duſt* and *Aſhes* as we are, are admitted to ſpeak to the eternal God, to run to him as to a Father, to lay open our Wants, to complain of our Burdens, to preſent our Scruples, to beg Remedy and Eaſe, Support and Counſel, Health and Safety, Deliverance and Salvation? God has invited us by many gracious Promiſes of hearing us; he has appointed his moſt glorious Son to be the Mediator between us and him, and to make continual Interceſſion for us at the throne of Grace; he has put it into the hands of Men, to reſcind or alter all the decrees of God which are conditional, and concern our Eſtate whether temporal or eternal, by the power of Prayers. The Prayers of good Men have ſav'd Cities and Kingdoms from Ruin, have rais'd the *Dead* to *Life*, have ſtopp'd the *Violence* of *Fire*, ſhut the *Mouths* of *wild Beaſts*, alter'd the courſe of Nature, caus'd *Rain* in *Egypt*, and *Drought* in the *Sea*. *Prayer* has made the *Sun* to go from *Weſt* to *Eaſt*, and the *Moon* to ſtand ſtill; it has compell'd *Rocks* and *Mountains* to *walk*; it cures Diſeaſes without *Phyſick*; and makes *Phyſick* do the Work of *Nature*, *Nature* do the Work of *Grace*, *Grace* do the Work of *God*, and does Miracles in Accident and Event. Tho' it does all this, 'tis of itſelf nothing but an aſcent of the Mind to God, a deſiring of things fit to be deſired, and an Expreſſion of this deſire to God, as we can, and as becomes us. Our Unwillingneſs to pray, is nothing elſe, but a not deſiring what we ought paſſionately to long for; or if we do deſire it, 'tis a chooſing rather to wiſh our Satisfaction and Felicity than to ask for it.

In the exerciſe of *Prayer*, we muſt be careful that we never ask any thing of God that's ſinful, or that directly miniſters to *ſin*; for that wou'd be to ask God to diſhonour himſelf, and to undo us. It equally imports us, to conſider what we *pray* for; before it returns in Bleſſing, it muſt be join'd with Chriſt's Interceſſion, and

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preſented to God: Let us principally ask of God, Power and Aſſiſtance to do our Duty, to glorify him, to do good Works, to live a good Life, to die in his Fear and Favour, and after Death to enjoy Life Eternal. Theſe things God delights to give, and commands that we ſhou'd ask; wherefore we may with Confidence expect to be graciouſly anſwer'd. For theſe things are procur'd without any reſervation of a ſecret Condition: If we ask them, and do our Duty towards the obtaining of them, we are ſure never to miſs them.

We may lawfully *pray* to God for the Gifts of the Spirit that miniſter to holy Ends, ſuch as are the Gift of *Prayer*, good Underſtanding, Learning, Opportunities to publiſh them, and the like; with theſe only Reſtraints, That we cannot be ſo confident of the event of thoſe *Prayers* as of the former; that we muſt be curious to ſecure our Intentions in theſe Deſires; that we may not ask them to ſerve our own Ends, but only for God's Glory; and then we ſhall have them, or a Bleſſing for deſiring them. In order to ſuch Purpoſes, our Intention in the firſt Deſires cannot be amiſs, becauſe they are able to ſanctify other things, and therefore cannot be unhallow'd themſelves. We muſt ſubmit to God's Will, deſiring him to chooſe our Employment, and to provide for our Bodies as he ſhall ſee expedient.

Whatever we may lawfully deſire of temporal things, we may lawfully ask of God in *Prayer*, and we may expect them as they are promis'd. Whatever is neceſſary to our Life and Being, is promis'd to us, and therefore we may with Certainty expect *Food* and *Raiment*. We may be ſure of Maintenance, but not of our Life; for *that* is promis'd, not *this*. Only concerning Food and Raiment we are not to make Accounts by the meaſure of our *Deſires*, but by the meaſure of our *Needs*. Whatever is convenient for us, pleaſant and modeſtly delightful, we may *pray* for it, provided we do it with Submiſſion to God's Will, without impatient Deſires, if it be not a Trifle and inconſiderable, but a Matter ſo

grave, as to be fit to be treated on between God and our Souls. We muſt not ask it to ſpend upon our Luſts, but for ends of Juſtice, or Charity, or Religion, and whatever we ask, muſt be employ'd with Sobriety.

He who would pray with Effect, muſt live with *Care* and *Piety:* For tho' God gives to Sinners the common bleſſings of Life and Chance, yet either they want the comfort of thoſe Bleſſings, or they become occaſions of ſadder Accidents to them, or ſerve to upbraid them with their Ingratitude and Irreligion; and in all Caſes they are not the Effects of *Prayer*, or the Fruits of *Promiſe*, or Inſtances of a Father's Love, for they cannot be expected with Confidence, or receiv'd without Danger, or us'd without a Curſe and Miſchief in their Company. But as all *Sin* is an impediment to *Prayer*, ſo ſome are a ſpecial Obſtacle to Acceptance; ſuch are Uncharitableneſs and Wrath, Hypocriſy in the preſent Action, Pride and Luſt, becauſe theſe by defiling the Body or the Spirit, or by contradicting ſome neceſſary ingredient in *Religion*, ſuch as are Mercy, Humility, Purity and Sincerity, do defile the *Prayer*, and make it a direct Sin in the circumſtances or formality of the Action.

All *Prayer* muſt be made with *Faith* and *Hope*. We muſt certainly believe we ſhall receive the *Grace* which God has commanded us to ask; and we muſt *hope* for ſuch things as he has permitted us to ask: Our *Hope* ſhall then not be in vain, tho' we miſs what is not abſolutely promis'd; becauſe we ſhall at leaſt have an equal Bleſſing in the Demand as in the Grant. Therefore former Conditions muſt firſt be ſecur'd: Whatever we ask for muſt be neceſſary, or at leaſt good, innocent, and profitable. Our Perſon muſt be render'd gracious in God's Sight, or elſe what he has promis'd to our natural Needs, he may, in many Degrees, deny to our perſonal Incapacity. After our good Intentions are ſecur'd, we are ſure of a Bleſſing, but in what Inſtance we are not yet aſſur'd.

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Our *Prayers* muſt be fervent, intenſe, earneſt and importunate, when we *pray* for things of high Concernment and Neceſſity. *Continuing in Prayer, ſtriving in Prayer, labouring fervently in Prayer, Night and Day praying exceedingly, praying always with all Prayer.* And this is not at all to be abated in Matters ſpiritual, and of Duty; for according as our Deſires are, ſo are our Prayers; and as our Prayers are, ſo ſhall be the Grace; and as that is, ſo ſhall be the meaſures of Glory. But this admits of Degrees, according to the Perfection or Imperfection of our State of Life. It has no other Meaſures, but ought to be as great as it can. The bigger the better; we muſt make no poſitive Reſtraints upon ourſelves. In other things we are to uſe a Bridle; and as we muſt limit our Deſires with Submiſſion to God's Will, ſo alſo we muſt limit the Importunity of our *Prayers*, by the Moderation and Term of our Deſires.

Our *Deſires* muſt be laſting, and our *Prayers* frequent, aſſiduous, and continual; not asking for a Bleſſing once and then leaving it, but daily renewing our Suits, and exerciſing our *Hope, Faith, Patience, Long-ſuffering, Religion, Reſignation*, and *Self-denial*, in all the Degrees we ſhall be put to. This circumſtance of Duty is taught us by our bleſſed Saviour himſelf; *Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.* But becauſe we cannot always ask ſeveral things, and we have alſo frequent need of the ſame things, and thoſe ſuch as concern our great Intereſt, the Precept comes home to this very Circumſtance, and St. *Paul* calls it, Praying *without ceaſing*; himſelf in his own Caſe giving us a Precedent. *For this cauſe I beſought the Lord thrice.* And ſo did our bleſſed Redeemer, *he went thrice* to God on the ſame Errand, with the ſame Words, in a ſhort Space, about half a Night, for his time to ſolicit his Suit was but ſhort. The *Philippians* were remember'd by the Apoſtle, *always in every Prayer of his.* And thus we muſt always *pray* for the pardon of our *Sins*, for the Aſſiſtance of God's *Grace*, for *Charity*, for *Life-eternal*, never giving

over till we die: And thus alſo we pray for ſupply of great temporal Needs in their ſeveral Proportions; in all Caſes being curious, we do not give over out of Wearineſs or Impatience. For God often defers to grant our Suit, becauſe he loves to hear us beg it, and has a deſign to give us more than we ask, even a ſatisfaction of our Deſires, and a bleſſing for the very Importunity.

The Words of our *Prayers* ſhou'd be pertinent and grave; material, not ſtudiouſly many, but according to our Need, ſufficient to expreſs our Wants, and to ſignalize our Importunity. God hears us not the ſooner for our many Words, but much the ſooner for our earneſt Deſire. A long *Prayer* and a ſhort, differ not in their Capacities of being accepted, for both of them take their Value, according to the fervency of Spirit, and the charity of the *Prayer*. That *Prayer* which is ſhort, by reaſon of an impatient Spirit, or Dulneſs, or Slight of holy Things, or Indifferency of Deſires, is very often criminal, always imperfect; and that *Prayer* which is long out of Oſtentation, or Superſtition, or a trifling Spirit, is as criminal and imperfect as the other in their ſeveral Inſtances. This Rule relates to private *Prayer*; in publick our Devotion is to be meaſur'd by the appointed Office, and we are to ſupport our Spirit with ſpiritual Acts, that our *private* Spirit may be a part of the *publick* Spirit, and accepted into the Society and Bleſſings of the Communion of Saints.

In all Forms of *Prayer*, mingle *Petition* with *Thankſgiving*, that you may endear the preſent *Prayer* and the future Bleſſing, by returning Praiſe and Thanks for what you have already receiv'd. This is St. *Paul*'s Advice, *Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by Prayer and Supplication, with Thankſgiving, let your Requeſts be made known unto God.*

Whatever we beg of God, let us alſo work for it, if the thing be matter of Duty, or a conſequent to Induſtry.

For

For God loves to bleſs Labour and to reward it: Therefore our bleſſed Saviour in his Sermons, joins *Watchfulneſs* with *Prayer*; for God's Graces are but Aſſiſtances, not new Creations of the whole Habit, in every Inſtant or Period of our Life. Read the Scriptures, and then pray to God for Underſtanding. *Pray* againſt Temptation, but you *muſt alſo reſiſt the Devil*, and then he *will flee from you*. Ask of God competency of Living; but you muſt alſo *work with your Hands the things that are honeſt, that you may have to ſupply in time of Need*. We can but do our Endeavour, and pray for a Bleſſing; the Succeſs we muſt leave to God.

We muſt be careful in all our *Prayers* to attend our preſent Work, having a preſent Mind, not wandring upon impertinent Things, not diſtant from our Words, much leſs contrary to them. If our Thoughts do at any time wander, and divert upon other Objects, we muſt bring them back again with prudent and ſevere Arts, by all means ſtriving to obtain a diligent, ſober, and compos'd Spirit.

The Poſture and Geſture of our Body in *Prayer* ought to be reverend, grave, and humble, both in publick and private, either *ſtanding* or *kneeling*, in your ordinary or more ſolemn *Prayers*; but in your extraordinary, caſual, and ejaculatory *Prayers*, the Reverence and Devotion of your Soul, and the lifting up the Eyes and Hands to God, with any other Poſture not indecent, is uſual and commendable. For we may pray in *Bed*, on *Horſeback, every where, and at all times*, and in all Circumſtances. Some Servants have not Opportunity to pray ſo often as they wou'd, unleſs they ſupply the appetites of Religion with ſuch accidental Devotions.

The Apoſtle St. *Paul* directs, *That Prayers and Supplications, and giving of Thanks, be made for all Men, for Kings, and all that are in Authority; for this is good and acceptable in the ſight of God our Saviour*. We who muſt *love our Neighbours as ourſelves*, muſt alſo pray for them as for ourſelves, with this only Difference, that

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we may enlarge in our temporal Deſires, for Kings and Governors ruling in Righteouſneſs and the fear of the Lord. We may pray for ſecular Proſperity to them, with more Importunity than for ourſelves, becauſe they need more to enable them to diſcharge their Duty in Government for the intereſts of Religion and Juſtice. This part of Prayer is by the Apoſtle call'd *Interceſſion*, in which with ſpecial Care we are to remember our Relations, our Family, our Benefactors, not forgetting to beg pardon and charity *for* our Enemies, and protection *againſt* them.

We are not to rely on a ſingle *Prayer* in matters of great Concernment, but to make it as publick as we can, by obtaining of others to pray for us: This being the great bleſſing of the Communion of Saints, that a *Prayer* united is ſtrong, like a well-order'd Army, and God loves to be ty'd faſt with ſuch cords of Love, and conſtrain'd by a holy Violence.

Every Time that is not ſeiz'd upon by ſome other Duty, is ſeaſonable enough for *Prayer*, but let it be perform'd as a ſolemn Duty Morning and Evening; that God may begin and end all our Buſineſs, and the *Outgoings of the Morning and Evening may praiſe him*: For ſo we bleſs God, and God bleſſes us. Yet ought we not to fail of taking other Opportunities to worſhip God at ſome other times of the Day; at leaſt by Ejaculations and ſhort Addreſſes, more or leſs, longer or ſhorter, ſolemnly or without Solemnity, privately or publickly, as you can or are permitted; always remembring, that as every *Sin* is a degree of Danger and Unſafety, ſo every pious *Prayer* and well-employ'd Opportunity is a degree of Return to Hope and Pardon.

A *Vow* to God is an Act of *Prayer*, a great degree and inſtance of Importunity, and an increaſe of Duty by ſome new uncommanded Inſtance, or ſome more eminent degree of Duty, or frequency of Action, or earneſtneſs of Spirit in it And becauſe it has pleas'd God, in all ages of the World, to admit of Intercourſe with

with his Servants in matters of *Vows*, it is not ill Advice that we make Vows to God in ſuch Caſes, in which we have great Need or great Danger. In doing which we muſt obſerve the following Cautions.

That the matter of the *Vow* be lawful; that it be uſeful in order to *Religion* or *Charity*; that it be grave, not trifling and impertinent, but great in our propoſition of Duty towards the Bleſſing; that it be an uncommanded Inſtance, that is, that it be of ſome thing, or in ſome manner, or in ſome degree to which formerly we were not oblig'd, or which we might have omitted without *Sin*; that it be done with Prudence, and be ſafe in all the circumſtances of Perſon, leſt we beg a Bleſſing and fall into a Snare; that every *Vow* of a new Action be alſo accompany'd with a new Degree and Enforcement of our eſſential and unalterable Duty, ſuch as was *Jacob*'s *Vow*, that beſides the payment of a Tithe, *God ſhould be his God*, that ſo he might ſtrengthen his Duty to him firſt in Eſſentials and Precepts, and then in Additionals and Accidentals. For 'tis but an ill Tree that ſpends more in Leaves, Suckers, and Gums, than in Fruit; and that Thankfulneſs and Religion is beſt that firſt ſecures Duty, and then enlarges in Counſels. Therefore let every great *Prayer*, and great Need, and great Danger, draw us nearer to God, by the approach of a pious Purpoſe to live more ſtrictly.

And let every Mercy of God, anſwering that *Prayer*, produce a real Performance of it. Let not young Beginners in Religion enlarge their Debts and ſtraiten their Liberty, by vows of long Continuance; nor indeed any one elſe, without a great Experience of himſelf, and of all accidental Dangers. *Vows* of ſingle Actions are ſafeſt, and proportionable to thoſe ſingle Bleſſings, ever begg'd in ſuch Caſes of ſudden and tranſient Importunities. No Action, which is *Matter* of *Queſtion* and *Diſpute* in *Religion*, ſhould ever become the matter of a *Vow*. He *vows* fooliſhly, that promiſes to God to live and die in ſuch an Opinion,

Opinion, in an Article not neceſſary nor certain; or that upon confidence of his preſent Guide, binds himſelf for ever to the Profeſſion of what he may afterwards more reaſonably contradict, or may find not to be uſeful, or not profitable, but of ſome Danger, or of no Neceſſity. Solemn Promiſes to God, of new and better Obedience, will be great Helps to keep the Will in awe; and Chriſtians, by ſuch ſalutary Vows, may avoid the falling into Errors and Snares, which they might not have eſcaped, had not they been beforehand ſo guarded againſt them.

Becauſe even the duty of *Prayer* has in it ſome ſpecial *Temptations*, 'tis neceſſary that we be arm'd by ſpecial *Remedies* againſt them: The Dangers are *wandring Thoughts* and *Tediouſneſs of Spirit*.

If we feel our Spirits apt to wander in our *Prayers*, and to retire into the World, or to things unprofitable, or vain and impertinent, we muſt uſe *Prayer* to be aſſiſted in *Prayer*, for a ſober, fix'd, and recollected Spirit: And when to this you add a moral Induſtry to be ſteady in your Thoughts, whatever Wandrings, after this, return irremediably, are a miſery of Nature and an *Imperfection*, but no *Sin*, while it is not cheriſh'd and indulg'd.

In private it is not amiſs to attempt the Cure, by reducing our *Prayers* into ſhort Forms, making voluntary Interruptions, and beginning again, that the want of Spirit and Breath may be ſupply'd by the ſhort Stages and Periods.

When we have obſerved any conſiderable Wandrings of our Thoughts, we ought to bind ourſelves to repeat that *Prayer* with actual Attention, or elſe revolve the full Senſe of it in our Spirit, and repeat it in all the Effects and Deſires of it: And poſſibly the Tempter may be driven away with his own Art, and may ceaſe to interpoſe his Trifles when he perceives they do but vex the Perſon into Carefulneſs and Piety, and yet he loſes nothing of his Devotion, but doubles the earneſtneſs of his Care. If this be not ſeaſonable or opportune, or adapted to any

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Man's Circumſtances, yet be ſure with actual Attention to ſay a hearty *Amen* to the whole *Prayer*, with one united Deſire, earneſtly begging the Grace mention'd in the *Prayer*; for that deſire, does the great work of the *Prayer*, and ſecures the Bleſſing, if the wandring Thoughts were againſt our Will, and diſclaimed by contending againſt them.

We can never pray fervently, frequently, and as we ought to do, unleſs we avoid multiplicity of worldly Affairs; and in thoſe that are unavoidable, labour for an evenneſs and tranquillity of Spirit, that we may be untroubled and ſmooth in all tempeſts of Fortune. By this means *Religion* will be better tended by us, when we are not torn to pieces with the cares of the World, and ſeiz'd upon with low Affections, Paſſions, and Intereſts.

It helps much to Attention in our *Prayers*, if we ſay them ſilently, without the Voice, only by the Spirit: For in mental Prayers, if our Thoughts wander, we only ſtand ſtill; when our Minds return, we go on again; there is none of the *Prayer* loſt, as it is if Mouths ſpeak, and our Hearts wander.

To incite us to the uſe of theſe, or any other Counſels that may be given us, we muſt remember that it is a great Indecency to deſire of God to hear thoſe *Prayers*, a great part of which we do not hear ourſelves: If they be not worthy of our Attention, they are far more unworthy of God's.

The other Temptation in Prayer is *Tediouſneſs of Spirit*, or a wearineſs of the Employment; like that of the *Jews*, who complained that they were weary of the *New Moons*, and their Souls lothed the frequent Returns of their *Sabbaths*. So do many *Chriſtians* now, who pray without fervour and earneſtneſs of Spirit, meditate but ſeldom, and that without Fruit, or Senſe, or Affection; who ſeldom examine their Conſciences, and when they do it, they do it but ſleepily, ſlightly, without Compunction, or hearty Purpoſe, or Fruits of Amendment; they enlarge themſelves in the Thoughts and Fruitions

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of temporal Things, running for Comfort to them only in any Sadneſs and Misfortune; they love not to frequent the Sacraments, nor any the Inſtruments of Religion, as Sermons, publick *Prayers*, Faſtings, and the like, but love Eaſe, and a looſe undiſciplin'd Life; they obey not their Superiors, but follow their own Judgment when their Judgment follows their Affections, and their Affections follow Senſe and worldly Pleaſures; they neglect, or diſſemble, or defer, or do not attend to the Motions and Inclinations to Virtue, which the Spirit of God puts into their Soul; they repent them of their Vows and holy Promiſes, not becauſe they diſcover any Indiſcretion in them, or intolerable Inconvenience, but becauſe they bring with them Labour, which, as the Caſe now ſtands, they are diſpleas'd at. They content themſelves with the firſt Degrees and neceſſary parts of Virtue, and when they are arriv'd thither, they ſit down as if they were come to the mountain of the Lord, and are not to proceed on to Perfection. They enquire into all Caſes in which it may be lawful to omit a Duty, and tho' they will not do leſs than they are bound to, yet they will do no more than needs muſt; for what they do is out of Fear and Self-Love, not out of the Love of God, or the Spirit of Holineſs and Zeal: The Event of which will be this, He who will do no more than needs muſt, will ſoon be brought to omit ſomething of his Duty, and will be apt to believe leſs to be neceſſary than is.

The Remedies againſt this Temptation are theſe: We muſt order our private Devotions ſo, that they become not Arguments and Cauſes of Tediouſneſs by their indiſcreet Length. Let us reduce our Words into a narrow Compaſs, ſtill keeping all the Matter, and what is cut off in the length of our *Prayers* we ſhould ſupply in the earneſtneſs of our Spirit. For ſo nothing is loſt, while the Words are changed into Matter, and length of Time into Fervency of Devotion; the Forms are made not the leſs perfect, and the Spirit is more, and the Scruple is remov'd.

It is not imprudent if we provide Variety of Forms of *Prayer* to the ſame Purpoſes: If we find not our Spirits in Frame to call upon God with apt Petitions, as ſudden and neceſſary Occaſions require, the Change by conſulting with the Appetites of Fancy, may better entertain the Spirit; but doubtleſs thoſe *Prayers* are moſt acceptable to God, where the Heart is wholly engag'd of itſelf, and needs not the Aſſiſtance of Fancy, or any outward Helps. However, we may ſometimes be pleas'd to recite a *Hymn*, when a *Prayer*, tho' never ſo ſhort, would ſeem flat and unpleaſant to us. The Soul may be more inclin'd to be trenſported with *Praiſes* than to content itſelf with *Prayer:* We may be more willing to *ſing* than to *ſay*, or to *ſing this*, rather than *that*. Certain we are, Variety is delightful, and whether that be natural to us, or an Imperfection, yet if it be comply'd with, it may remove ſome part of the Temptation.

We ſhould break our Office and Devotion into Fragments, and make frequent Returnings by Ejaculations and abrupt Intercourſes with God; for ſo no length can offend our Tenderneſs and Fickleneſs of Spirit; and by often praying in ſuch a manner, and in all Circumſtances, we ſhall habituate our Souls to *Prayer*, by making it the Buſineſs of many leſs Portions of our Time, and by thruſting it in between all our other Employments, it will make every thing of Religion reliſh, and by Degrees turn all into its Nature.

We muſt learn to abſtract our Thoughts and Deſires from the Pleaſures and Things of this World. For nothing is a direct Cure to this Evil, but cutting off all other Loves and Adherences. We are to order our Affairs ſo, that Religion may be propounded to us as a Reward, and Prayer as our Defence, and holy Action as our Security, and Charity and good Works as our Treaſure. Let us conſider that all things elſe are Satisfactions but to the brutiſh part of a Man, and that theſe are the Refreſhments and Reliſhes of that noble Part by which we are better than Beaſts; and whatever other Inſtrument

ſtrument, Exerciſe, or Conſideration, is of uſe to take our Loves from the World, the ſame is apt to place them upon God.

Let us not ſeek for Deliciouſneſs or ſenſible Conſolations in the Actions of Religion, but only regard the Duty and Conſcience of it. For tho' in the beginning moſt frequently, and at ſome other times, God complies with our Infirmities, and encourages our Duty with little overflowings of ſpiritual Joy, and ſenſible Pleaſure and Delicacies in Prayer, inſomuch that we ſeem to feel ſome little Foretaſte of Heaven, and great Refreſhments from the Spirit of Conſolation; yet this is not always ſafe for us to crave, neither to expect and look for, for when we are diſappointed, 'tis apt to make us cool in our Enquiries, and Waitings upon Chriſt, when we want them. It is a running after him not for the *Miracles* but for the *Loaves*, not for the wonderful things of God, and the Deſire of pleaſing him, but for the Pleaſure of pleaſing ourſelves. And as we muſt not judge our Devotion to be barren and unfruitful, when we want the overflowings of Joy, ſo neither muſt we ceaſe for want of them. If our *Spirits* can ſerve God willingly and readily, out of pure Conſcience of our Duty, it is better in itſelf and more ſafe to us.

Let us uſe to ſoften our Souls with frequent Meditation upon ſad and dolorous Objects, as of Death, the Terrors of the Day of Judgment, fearful Judgments upon great *Sinners*, ſtrange horrid Accidents, Fear of God's Wrath, the Pains of Hell, the unſpeakable Amazements of the Damn'd, the intolerable Load of a ſad Eternity. For whatever creates Fear, or makes the Spirit dwell in a religious Sadneſs, is apt to melt it, and render it devout and pleaſant to any part of Duty. For a great Fear, when it is ill manag'd, is the Parent of Superſtition, but a diſcreet and well-grounded Fear produces Religion.

Pray often, and you ſhall *pray* oftner, and when you are accuſtom'd to a frequent Devotion, it will ſo inſenſibly unite to your Nature and Affections, that it will become

become a Trouble to you to omit your uſual or appointed *Prayers*, and what you obtain at firſt, by doing Violence to your Inclinations, at laſt will not be left without as great Unwillingneſs, as that by which at firſt it enter'd. This *Rule* relies not only upon *Reaſon* deriv'd from the Nature of Habits, which turn into a ſecond Nature, and make their Actions eaſy, frequent and delightful; but it relies upon a Reaſon depending upon the Nature and Conſtitution of Grace, whoſe Productions are of the ſame Nature with the Parent, and increaſes itſelf, naturally growing from Grains into huge Trees, from Minutes to vaſt Proportions, and from Moments to Eternity. But be ſure not to omit your uſual *Prayers* without great Reaſon (even tho' it might be done without Sin) becauſe having often omitted ſomething, in a little while you will be paſt the Scruple of that, and begin to be tempted to leave out more: Keep yourſelf up to your uſual Forms and Length; you may enlarge when you will, but do not contract or leſſen them without a very weighty Reaſon.

Let a Man frequently or ſeriouſly, by Imagination, place himſelf upon his Death-bed, and conſider what great Joy he ſhall have for the remembrance of every Day well ſpent, and what then he would give, that he had ſo ſpent all his Days; he might gueſs at it by Proportions, for it is certain he ſhall have a joyful and proſperous Night, who has ſpent his Days holily, and he reſigns his Soul with Peace into the Hands of God, who has liv'd in the Peace of God and the Works of Religion in his Life-time. This conſideration is of a real Event, it is of a thing that will certainly come to paſs: *It is appointed for all Men once to die, and after Death comes Judgment*; the Apprehenſion of which is dreadful, and the Preſence of it is intolerable, unleſs by Religion and Sanctity we are diſpos'd for ſo venerable an Appearance.

Here it may be uſeful, that we conſider the Eaſineſs of Chriſt's Yoke, the Excellencies and Sweetneſs that are in Religion, the Peace of Conſcience, the Joy of the Holy Ghoſt,

Ghoſt, the rejoicing in God; the Simplicity and Pleaſure of Virtue, the *Intricacy*, *Trouble* and *Vileneſs* of *Sin*; the *Bleſſing* and *Health* and *Reward* of *that*; the *Curſes*, the *Sickneſſes* and ſad Conſequences of this; and that if we are weary of the Labours of Religion, we muſt eternally ſit ſtill and do nothing; for whatever we do contrary to it, is infinitely more full of Labour, Care, Difficulty and Vexation.

Conſider this alſo, that *tedioufneſs* of Spirit is the beginning of the moſt dangerous Condition and Eſtate in the whole World; for 'tis a great Diſpoſition to the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt; it is apt to bring a Man to Backſliding, and the State of Un-regeneration, to make him return to his Vomit and his Sink, and either to make him impatient, or his Mind ſcrupulous, diſſatisfy'd, irkſom, and deſperate. *It is better that he had never known the way of Godlineſs, than after the Knowledge of it, that he ſhould fall away.* There is not in the World a greater Sign that the Spirit of Reprobation is beginning upon a Man, than when he is habitually and conſtantly, or frequently weary, and ſlights or lothes holy Offices.

The laſt Remedy which preſerves the Hope of ſuch a Man, and can reduce him to the State of *Zeal* and the Love of God, is a pungent, ſad and heavy Affliction; not deſperate, but recreated with ſome intervals of Kindneſs or little Comforts, or entertain'd with Hopes of Deliverance; which Condition, if a Man ſhall fall into, by the Grace of God he is likely to recover; but if this help him not, it is infinite odds but he will *quench the Spirit.*

But to ſpeak a little more particularly of this great Duty of *Prayer*, which is, as has been ſaid, a ſpeaking to God, and in which there are ſeveral Parts, according to the different things about which we ſpeak.

The firſt is *Confeſſion*, and acknowledging our *Sins* to God, whether we only confeſs in groſs as we are ſinful, or mention the ſeveral Sorts and Acts of our *Sin*; the former is neceſſary, and to be always a part of our ſolemn

Prayers,

Prayers, whether *publick* or *private*, the latter is proper for private *Prayer*, and there the oftner 'tis us'd, the better. In our daily private *Prayer*, 'twill be fit conſtantly to remember ſome of our greateſt and fouleſt Sins, tho' never ſo long ſince paſt; for ſuch we ſhould never think ſufficiently confeſs'd and bewail'd: This bewailing muſt always go along with Confeſſion, we muſt be heartily ſorry for the Sin we confeſs, and from our Souls acknowledge our own great unworthineſs in having committed them; for our *Confeſſion* is not intended to inſtruct God, who knows our Sins much better than we ourſelves do, but it is to humble ourſelves; and therefore we muſt think we have not *confeſs'd* aright till that be done.

Petition is the ſecond Part of *Prayer*, and the begging of God, whatever we want for our *Souls* or *Bodies*; for our Souls we muſt firſt beg Pardon of our Sins, and that for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhed his Blood to obtain it; we muſt then beg the Grace and Aſſiſtance of God's Spirit to enable us to forſake our Sins, and to walk in Obedience to him: for our Bodies we are alſo to pray, and to ask of God the Neceſſaries and Conveniences of Life.

Deprecating is another part of *Prayer*, in which we pray to God to turn away ſome Evil from us, as the Evil of Sins, and the Evil of Puniſhment, both Temporal and Eternal: We have already ſpoken ſufficiently of *Interceſſion*, *Thankſgiving*, and the other parts of *Prayer*, and ſhall proceed now to ſhew what Miſcarriages good Chriſtians may fall into by the Neglect of this Duty, and that it is as much their Intereſt as their Duty.

'Twas the Obſervation that *Origen* made of himſelf, that the Day in which he ſo ſhamefully fell by ſacrificing to *Idols*, he had ventur'd out in the Morning before he had compleated his uſual *Prayers*; the *Devil* finding him ſo unarm'd, took the Advantage to aſſault him, as knowing he had then but a ſingle impotent Man to wreſtle with, who had forfeited (by not invoking) the *Protection* of

of God: And indeed, ſince *Prayer* is the moſt powerful Exorciſm to eject him, we may well conclude, the Omiſſion of it is a likely means to invite him; for if God has not the Prepoſſeſſion, if we do not by hearty *Prayer* ſurrender our Souls to him in the *Morning*; they are then all the Day after like that empty Houſe in the Goſpel, a fit Receptacle for as many evil Spirits to inhabit there. Nor are theſe *Spiritual* the only *Dangers* that attend us, we are liable to a multitude of *ſecular* ones alſo: Our Perſons, our Fortunes, our Reputation, every thing wherein we can receive a Benefit, renders us equally capable of a Prejudice; and ſhe that fears not to fall into *Sin*, will yet fear the tumbling into a *Precipice*; and tho' ſhe cares not for the ſpotting of her Innocence, would be very loth any Accident ſhould blemiſh her Face, diſparage her Fame, or impoveriſh her Fortune; and yet from any, or all of theſe, ſhe is utterly unable to guard herſelf. Thus if *Piety* will not, yet *Intereſt* methinks ſhould render her an *Homager* to that Omnipotent Power, from whence alone ſhe can derive her Safety.

I wiſh I cou'd ſay, that this Duty is never eaſily ſhaken off; but I fear there are ſome of thoſe I now ſpeak of, who neglect it in ſpite of all theſe Inducements, who, tho' they can pretend nothing ſerious enough to own the name of Buſineſs, do yet ſuffer a Succeſſion of I know not what Impertinences to divert them: Indeed, were the Expence of ſome *Ladies* Days calculated, we ſhould find every Hour ſo full of Emptineſs, ſo over-laden with Vanities, that 'tis ſcarce imaginable where an Office of *Devotion* ſhould crowd in.

The *Morning* is divided between *Sleep* and *Dreſſing*, nor would the *Morning* ſuffice, but that they are fain to make a new Computation to meaſure it, not by the *Sun*, but by the time of *dining*, which is often as late as the *Stationary* Hours of the *Primitive Faſts*, tho' upon a far different Motive. The *Afternoon* being by this means reduc'd, is too ſhort for thoſe many Divertiſements that wait them, and muſt therefore borrow as much of the

Night

Night as they lent to the *Morning*; and when the mere Fatigue of Pleaſure ſends a *Lady* to her Reſt, 'tis not imaginable that ſhe will admit *Devotion*, to induce yet greater and more diſagreeable Wearineſs. Thus the whole *Round* of her Life ſeems to be a kind of Magick *Circle*, in which nothing that is *Holy* will appear: Indeed 'tis one of the higheſt *Stratagems* of Satan, thus to foreſtal their Time, and by a perpetual Supply of Diverſions, inſenſibly ſteal from them the Opportunities of divine Offices, an Artifice by which he prevails on ſome who would ſtartle at his groſſer and more apparent Temptations.

If this habitual Neglect of Piety ſhould not end at laſt in great and criminal Commiſſions, as 'tis naturally very apt to do, yet his Intereſt is ſufficiently ſerv'd by ſuch a cuſtomary Omiſſion, which amounts to no leſs than the living *without God in the World*; a State ſo hopeleſs, that when the Apoſtle recollects to the *Epheſians* the wretchedneſs of the *Gentile* State, he does it in theſe very Words; and ſure thoſe that live under *Chriſtianity* are not in a better but worſe Condition, by how much *Contempt* of God is more unpardonable than *Ignorance*.

'Tis of infinite Concern therefore to thoſe who are in Danger of ſo fatal a Snare, to look about them, and endeavour to countermine *Satan*, and be as induſtrious to ſecure their Duty, as he to ſupplant is; a very uſeful Expedient to this Purpoſe, is to be aforehand with him, I mean to make their Devotions, the firſt Buſineſs of the Day, by which are intended, not only thoſe *Ejaculations* wherewith we ſhou'd all open our Eyes, but their more ſet and ſolemn *Prayers*. If this be not done 'till ſome *Ladies* Dreſſings be finiſh'd, 'twill be a half Mockery, and a moſt prepoſterous Requeſt as to the greateſt part of the Day, which will be paſt before: And beſides the Abſurdity, there is Danger in it, for all the preceding Time is, as it were, *out-law'd* by it, and from under the divine Protection. Are God's *Safe-guards* to ſhine out only with the Noon-day *Sun?* Do they ſuppoſe the Devil

Devil keeps their Hours, and ſtirs not abroad *till the Afternoon*, that there is no Danger of corporal or ſpiritual Miſchiefs before that time of the Day? Certainly if the noiſe of the *Harp and the Viol* does not drown it, they may hear a Morning as well as Evening *Paſſing-bell.* With how many others does the *Glaſs* of Life run out, while they are at their *Looking-glaſſes?* and yet what Tenure have they in the Safety of one Moment? What rational Expectation can they have of that, when they do not invoke it? Nor are the *ſpiritual* Dangers leſs than the *corporal*, but rather much more; and they muſt be very ſlight Obſervers of themſelves, if they do not diſcern that Snares may be laid for them in their Receſſes in their Chambers, as well as in Places of the moſt publick Reſort. Indeed were there no other than what relates to their *Dreſs*, and its Curioſity, it were enough to evidence their Danger; ſcarce any part of that, but a Temptation is in it to *Pride*, if it hits right and pleaſes their *Fancy:* to *Anger* and *Vexation*, if it does not; They had need for this Reaſon to put on their *Armour* before their *Ornaments*, by a Prepoſſeſſion of *Prayer* and *Meditation*, to ſecure their *Vitals*, leſt by an internal *Death* of *Grace*, their Bodies in their utmoſt Luſtre prove but the painted *Sepulchre* of their *Souls.*

How inverted an Eſtimate do they make of things who poſtpone the Intereſts of their *Souls* to the meaneſt of their *Bodies*, pay a ſupererogating Attendance to the one before the other comes at all into their Care? But what is yet worſe, how vile a Contumely is offered to the Majeſty of God who is us'd as they do their dunning Creditors, poſted off with an Excuſe of no leiſure yet to ſpeak to him, while in the mean time, all the *Factors* for their Vanity can have ready, free, and full Audience? God muſt attend 'till their *Tailors* or their *Shoemaker* pleaſe to diſmiſs them, and at the laſt can be allowed only to bring up the Rear of a whole Shole of *Artificers.*

'Tis very doubtful whether he ſhall obtain ſo much as that from them, for it may often happen that he ſhall be quite

quite precluded; ſo numerous are the Parts of a modiſh Equipage, and ſo exact a Symmetry is requir'd in the whole, that 'tis the Buſineſs of many Hours to complete it: when (as 'twas ſaid of the *Roman Ladies*) a Council is call'd about the placing of a Hair that ſits irregularly: When one thing after another ſhall be try'd, and again rejected, as not exact or not becoming, *Time* all the while inſenſibly ſteals away, and tho' that will not ſtay for them, yet *Dinner* does, and their *Bellies* begin to murmur to pay any longer Attendance on their *Backs*, and claim the next turn: Between theſe two Competitors 'tis odds but *Devotion* will quite be excluded, or reduc'd only to a *Grace* before *Meat* (and well if that) conſidering how unfaſhionable 'tis grown. In the mean time, what a wretched *Improvidence* is it, to reduce the one neceſſary Buſineſs of the Day to ſuch Uncertainties, nay, almoſt to a certain Diſappointment?

Suppoſe this Hazard was only imaginary, and a Lady were infallibly ſure not to loſe the time for her *Prayers*, yet ſhe will be likely by ſuch preceding Diverſions to loſe ſo much of her Zeal in them, that if they be ſaid at all, they will ſcarce be ſaid in a due manner. There is, alas! ſuch a Repugnancy in our Nature to any thing *ſpiritual*, that we cannot cloſe in an inſtant; but as a benumm'd frozen Body will need ſome rubbing and chafing before it can be fit for Motion, ſo our more frozen Souls require ſome previous Incitations before they can with any Vigour exert themſelves in *Devotion*. Now ſure ſuch a Dreſſing time as we have been ſpeaking of, which is too common among the Ladies, is not very proper for ſuch Preparations; 'tis the contrary, extremely apt to indiſpoſe and unfit them, for when the Fancy is poſſeſs'd with ſo many little Images of Vanity, they will not eaſily be ejected; that ranging Faculty is, God knows, too apt to bring in the remoteſt Diverſions; but when it has ſuch a Stock ready at hand, how will it pour them in upon the Mind, to the great allaying, if not utter extinguiſhing, of Devotion!

When all theſe Conſiderations are put together, 'twill ſure appear wholſom Counſel, that ſuch Perſons ſhould not truſt ſo important a Duty to ſo many Caſualties, but in the firſt Place ſecure a Time for that; repair to their *Oratory* before their *Dreſſing-room*, and by an early Conſecration of themſelves to God, defeat Satan's Claims, and diſcourage his Attempts for the reſt of the Day. We know there is a natural Efficacy in a good *Beginning* toward producing a good *Ending*; but in ſpiritual things the Influence is yet greater, becauſe it draws in Auxiliaries from above, and engages the yet farther Aſſiſtances of Grace, upon which account one may reaſonably believe, that where this Duty is perform'd in the *Morning*, it will not be totally neglected in the ſucceeding Parts of the Day; 'twill be eaſy to diſcern the ſame Obligation, the ſame Advantage of *cloſing* the Day with God, that there was to begin it; and when thoſe two Boundaries are ſecur'd, when thoſe are look'd upon as a ſtrict Duty, and conſtantly obſerv'd, 'tis not unlikely but their Piety may grow generous, and with *David*, add to the *Evening and Morning a Noonday Office*. Devotion being advanced thus far, will probably go farther, and not keep itſelf only on the *defenſive* Part, but invade its Oppoſites, get daily ground of thoſe Vanities by which it was before oppreſt; for when a Lady has in her Cloſet waſh'd her Cheeks with penitential Tears, ſhe cannot, when ſhe comes out, think them prepar'd for the Varniſh of the *Paint* and *Fucus*; when ſhe has attentively examined her Conſcience, that impartial *Mirror*, and there diſcern'd all the Blemiſhes of her noble Part, ſhe will with ſomewhat a more cold Concern conſult her *Looking-glaſs*; and when ſhe has by pious Vows and Reſolutions *put on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, 'twill be impoſſible for her to be very anxiouſly careful about her Garments. This devout Temper of her Mind will not let her dream away her Time in fantaſtick Scenes, and elaborate nothing, but prompt her to *give all Diligence to make her Calling and Election ſure*. In a word, when ſhe once underſtands what

what it is to ſpend an Hour devoutly, ſhe will endeavour to reſcue all the reſt from Trifles and impertinent Entertainments, and employ them to purpoſes more worthy the great End of her Being.

But *private* Devotion, tho' of excellent Effect, cannot commute for the Omiſſion of *publick*, nor indeed can it long maintain its Vigour, unleſs ſometimes cheriſh'd by the warmth of Chriſtian *Aſſemblies*; and if God pleaſes to *viſit* them in their Cloſets, they are ever by their own Rules of Civility oblig'd to return *Viſits*, and attend him in his *Houſe*: 'Tis to be fear'd, too many adapt the Inſtance in the Formality too, and come as unconcernedly to him, as they do to one another; 'tis true, thoſe that pay him a cordial Reverence at *home*, will certainly do it at the *Church*; and therefore by the little we ſee perform'd by ſome there, we may fear, God ſees as little in their Retirements. But what do we ſpeak of a hearty Reverence, when 'tis viſible that there are thoſe who pay none at all? How rare a Sight is it for ſome Ladies to appear at *Church?* How many times (one may almoſt ſay hundreds) do we ſee their Coaches at the *Playhouſe*, for once at God's? They ſeem to own no diſtinction of Days, unleſs it be, that *Sunday* is their moſt vacant Seaſon to take *Phyſick*, or to lie a-bed; and if ſuch do ever come to *Church*, Devotion is like to be the leaſt of their Errand; ſome new Garment perhaps, or Dreſs is to be ſhew'd, and that thought the Place where the moſt critical Judges of theſe things will be moſt at leiſure to obſerve them; or if they come not to *teach* new Faſhions, it may be they come to *learn*, and ſuch *Documents* will be ſurer to be put in Practice, than any in the *Sermon*; poſſibly they expect to ſee ſome Friend or Acquaintance there, and as if Chriſt were to be ſerv'd as he was born, in an *Inn*, make his *Houſe* the common Rendezvous in which to meet their Aſſociates: If they have any more ingenious Attractive, 'tis commonly that of *Curioſity*, to hear ſome new celebrated *Preacher*, and that rather for his *Rhetorick* than his *Divinity*; and this Mo-

tive, tho' the beſt of the Set, is but like that which prevail'd with the *Jews*, who came to *Jeſus that they might ſee Lazarus*.

We ſhall not reckon among theſe Motives, that of *Hypocriſy* and ſeeming Holineſs, for from that all the reſt do acquit them. This is the only Sin which this Age has ſeem'd to *reform*, and that too not by the Virtue, but the Iniquity of the Times. *Religion* is grown ſo unfaſhionable, ſo contemptible, that none can be now tempted to put on ſo ridiculous a Diſguiſe: Tho' as to *ſingle* Perſons, I confeſs Hypocriſy one of the deepeſt Guilts, ſuch as has a peculiar Portion aſſign'd to it by Chriſt, in the Place of Torment; yet as to *Communities*, I cannot but think it better to have a Face of *Religion* than *Profaneneſs:* The Example of the former may work beyond itſelf, and a *Form* of Godlineſs in ſome, may produce the Power of it in others; but a Pattern of Profaneneſs, the farther it operates, the worſe, and all the Progreſs it can make, is from one Wickedneſs to another: 'Tis to be fear'd, that as St. *Bernard* wiſh'd for his Fever again, ſo the Church may ere long for her *Hypocrites*.

Let us now inquire a little, how thoſe whom the forementioned Motives bring to the *publick Worſhip*, behave themſelves at it; and that is indeed with great Conformity to the Ends of their coming; their Errand is not to be Suppliants, neither do they put themſelves in the Poſture: Kneeling is impertinent for them, who mean not to pray; but as the Apoſtle deſcribes the idolatrous Service of the *Iſraelites*, *They ſat down to eat and drink, and roſe up to play*; ſo theſe ſit down to talk and laugh with their Pew-fellows, and riſe up to gape and look about them. When they ſhould be confeſſing their Sins to Almighty God, they are apologizing perhaps to one another for the Omiſſion of a ceremonious Viſit, or ſome other Breach of Civility: When they ſhould be *obſerving the Goings of God* in the Sanctuary, they are inquiring when this *Lady* comes to Town, or when that goes

out,

out. Nay, probably the *Theatre* is brought into the *Temple*; the laſt Play they ſaw is recollected, and Quotations enough brought from thence to vie with the Preacher. 'Tis well if they do not hum an Air of the *Opera*, inſtead of a Pſalm of *David*. It is impoſſible to reckon up all their *Topicks* of Diſcourſe, and all their *Church Amuſements:* Indeed it were ſcandalous for one that reproves them, to pretend to know by how many Impertinencies, not to ſay worſe, they profane that holy Place and Time.

But that All-ſeeing *Eye*, in whoſe Preſence they are, keeps an exact Account, and will charge them not only with the *Principal* but the *Product*; not only with their own Irreverences, but with thoſe which by their Example or Encouragement they have occaſion'd in others; nay, farther, even with that Scandal which redounds to *Chriſtianity* by it. For when one that is to chooſe a *Religion*, ſhall read the Precepts of *Pythagoras*, injoining that the Gods muſt not be worſhipp'd in paſſing by as it were accidentally, but with the greateſt Solemnity and Intention: When he ſhall conſider the Care of *Numa* in inſtituting Officers, who at *Sacrifices* and all Divine Services, ſhould call upon the People to keep ſilence and mind their Devotion; or even the Practice of the preſent *Mahometans*, who permit none to ſit in their *Moſques*, nor to pray without *Proſtration:* When, I ſay, this is conſider'd, and compar'd with the ſcandalous Indecency obſerv'd in our Churches, he will certainly exclude *Chriſtianity* from all Competition in his Choice, not allow it the Name of Religion, whoſe very *Worſhip* appears ſo profane, and whoſe *Votaries* mock the God they pretend to ſerve.

Yet however ſevere the Charge may be againſt ſome, I am far from including all under it. There are many *Ladies* whoſe Examples are Reproaches to the other Sex, that help to fill our *Congregations* when *Gentlemen* deſert them. We have had in *England* a Royal Example of Chriſtian Devotion, whoſe Behaviour at Church was ſo

devout, ſo humble, ſo zealous, that ſhe adorn'd the Religion ſhe profeſs'd, and now wears the Crown of Glory in Heaven, which is the ſure Reward of all that ſo live and ſo die as ſhe did. Tho' her Train was never failing, ſhe would be ſo conſtantly at Divine Service: And ſuch ſhining, ſuch exemplary Piety, could not but bring Religion into Repute again with thoſe, who think it becomes them to do every thing in Imitation of the Court. The Zeal, the Worſhip of ſuch may probably be too affected, but there are not wanting Ladies of the higheſt Rank, who contemn the impertinent Trifles of the Toilet, and the vain Employments of their Sex in the Morning, making it the firſt Buſineſs of the Day to ſeek God with Prayers and Praiſe in their Cloſets, and the next to pay him their Homage in his own Houſe. To theſe ſometimes we alone owe, that our Churches are not furniſh'd like the Feaſt in the Parable, out of the *Highways and Hedges, with the Poor and the Maimed, the Halt and the Blind.* Yet ſome of theſe too may be liable to ſome Irregularity, which may be the Effects of Inadvertency or Miſperſuaſion, tho' not of Contempt or Profaneneſs.

In ſome 'tis obſervable, that tho' they come *conſtantly*, yet they come not *early*, by which means a conſiderable part of the *Prayers* is over, before they enter the *Church*. This cauſes Diſturbance to others, the ſucceſſive Entry of new Comers keeping the *Congregation* in a continual Motion and Agitation; which how unagreeable it is to Devotion, *Numa*, a Pagan Prince, may teach us. *Plutarch* tells us, he took a particular Care that in the Time of Divine Worſhip, no *knocking*, *clapping*, or other Noiſe ſhould be heard; as well knowing how much the Operations of the Intellect are obſtructed by any thing that importunes the Senſes. What would he have ſaid, ſhould he come into one of our City *Congregations*, where often during the whole Time of *Prayer* the clapping of Pew-doors does out-noiſe the Reader.

But

But beſides the indecency of the thing, and the interruption it gives to others, 'tis very injurious to themſelves; a kind of partial Excommunication of their own inflicting, which excludes them from part of the divine Offices, and from that part too which is of the moſt univerſal Concern, the *Confeſſion* of their *Sins*; which the wiſdom of our Church has fitly placed in the beginning of her Service, as a neceſſary Introduction to all the reſt. And even in ſeparate *Congregations*, the coming of People ſucceſſively after Prayer is begun, diſtracts the Mind both of the Miniſter and his Auditory, ſhews a Negligence in thoſe that do it, and gives Offence to thoſe that ſee it. It will much better become them to anticipate the time, *to wait at the Poſts of the Doors*, and contrive to be at the publick Worſhip before Prayer begins; that ſo by previous Recollection they may put their Minds in a fit Poſture of *Addreſs* at the publick Audience; which by the way ſpeaks it to be no very laudable Cuſtom which almoſt univerſally prevails, that thoſe few who do come early, ſpend the Interval before Service in talking with one another, by which they do not only loſe the advantage of that time for Preparation, but convert it into the direct contrary, and thereby actually unfit and indiſpoſe themſelves. Our Hearts, in their moſt compos'd Temper, are too apt to create Diverſions; we need not ſtart Game for them to chaſe, and by prefacing our Prayers with *ſecular* Diſcourſe, make room for the ſame Thoughts to return upon us in them. Beſides, in relation to the Place, it has a ſpice of Profaneneſs, 'tis the bringing the *Moabite* and *Ammonite* into the *Temple*; a kind of Invaſion on God's Property, by introducing our worldly Concerns of Diverſiſements into the Houſe which is called by his Name, ſolemnly dedicated to him, and therefore dedicated that it might be his Peculiar. We may to ſuch, with a little Variation, apply the expoſtulatory Reproof of the Apoſtle to the *Corinthians*, *What, have ye not Houſes to talk and converſe in, or deſpiſe ye the Church of God?* This, I

confeſs, is a Reproof that will not reach to many, there being ſo few of the Better-ſort who come early enough to talk before Service. And as for thoſe who talk at it, we have already rank'd them under another Claſs. Thoſe fall not much ſhort of that degree of Profaneneſs, who come late only becauſe they are loth to riſe, or abate any thing of the *Curioſity* of their *Dreſs:* For ſhe who prefers her *Sloth* or Vanity before God's Service, is like, how decently ſoever ſhe behaves herſelf, to give but an inſignificant Attendance at it.

This may in many proceed from another Cauſe, which tho' leſs ill in their Intentions, is not ſo in reſpect either of its Unreaſonableneſs or its Effects; and that is an unequal Eſtimate they make of the Parts of God's Service. Some are ſo very partial to the Sermon, that the *Prayers* ſeem, comparatively, deſpicable in their Eyes: Sure theſe do not underſtand their Energy aright, and think that having them by *rote*, they need not pour forth their Hearts with them, as often as they are offer'd up to the Throne of Grace. If theſe can but come time enough before the Preacher begins, they think they have diſcharg'd the weightier part of the *Law*, and of their own Duty. This Miſ-perſuaſion, tho' it has too generally diffus'd itſelf thro' both *Sexes*, yet ſeems to have been very eſpecially imbib'd by the *Female*. And beſides the Evidence that *Sundays* give, the *Week-days* afford no leſs. Let there be a *Lecture*, tho' at the remoteſt part of the Town, what hurrying is there to it? but let the Bell toll never ſo loud for the canonical Hours of *Common Prayer*, 'twill not call the neareſt of the Neighbourhood. Now God certainly intends *Harmony* in all ſacred Ordinances, and would not have one part ſet up againſt another, but mutually aſſiſt each others Operation upon us. Thus *Prayer* diſpoſes us to receive Benefit by *Preaching*, and *Preaching* teaches us how to *pray* aright; and God grant we may long enjoy the Opportunities of both: That *Popery* may never ſwallow up *Preaching* in a Sleep of ſuperſtitious Oraiſons, nor *Fanaticiſm*

ticiſm break in upon *Divine Service*, with tedious Lectures of Enthuſiaſm and Impertinence. Since this Age has brought *Prayer* and *Preaching* to a *Competition*, I muſt take leave to ſay, that if we come impartially to weigh them, the Balance will incline another way than it ſeems with many to do; and we ſhall find *Prayer* the moſt eſſential part of Religion.

The end of *Preaching* is either to teach us what we know not, or excite us to practiſe what we already know. Now in relation to our being taught what we know not, I ſuppoſe there is a wide Difference between *Preaching* at the firſt *Promulgation* of the *Goſpel*, and now. 'Twas then the only way of revealing to the World the whole myſtery of our Salvation; wherefore the Apoſtle's Inference was then irrefragable, *How ſhall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? and how ſhall they hear without a Preacher?* But where *Chriſtianity* is planted, and the *New Teſtament* receiv'd, we have therein the whole doctrine of Chriſt. Nay, we have not only the Matter, but the very Form of many of thoſe Sermons which Chriſt and his Apoſtles *preach'd*. Unleſs therefore we think them not ſufficiently *gifted*, we cannot but acknowledge, we have in them ample Inſtruction, both for Faith and Manners; enough, as St. *Paul* ſays, *to make us wiſe unto Salvation*. And the reading of theſe being a conſiderable part of our *Church*'s Service, we have the moſt genuine *Preaching*, even before the *Miniſter* aſcends the *Pulpit*. Beſides, for the help of thoſe whoſe Youth or Incapacity diſables them from making Collections thence for themſelves, our *Church* has epitomiz'd the moſt neceſſary points of Belief and Practice in the Catechiſm, not as the *Popiſh*, to preclude their farther Search, but to ſupply them in the Interim, till they are qualify'd for it, and by that eaſy infuſion of *Chriſtian* Principles, to ſecure them of that Knowledge which is ſimply neceſſary to their Salvation.

Now certainly, to People in this State, *Preaching* is not of ſo abſolute Neceſſity, in reſpect of Inſtruction, as

it was for thoſe, who from *Heatheniſm* and *Idolatry* were to be brought, firſt to the *Knowledge*, and then to the *Faith* of *Chriſt*. Thus we ſeem now to be more generally concern'd in the other end of *Preaching*; the exciting us to Practice. Alas! there are few of us who ſtumble on Sin for want of Light, but either thro' Heedleſneſs, or want of looking before us, or elſe by a wilful Proſtration of ourſelves to it: Wherefore we often need to be rous'd out of our Negligence, to be frighted out of our Stubbornneſs; and by a cloſe Application of thoſe Truths we either forget or ſuppreſs, being animated to our Duty. To this end *Preaching* is doubtleſs of excellent uſe, and the nauſeating of it ſhews a very ſick conſtitution of Mind; yet the overgreedy Deſire may be a *Diſeaſe* alſo. He who eats more than he can concoct, does not ſo much aſſiſt as oppreſs Nature; and thoſe that run from *Sermon* to *Sermon*, that allow themſelves no time to *chew*, much leſs to *digeſt* what they hear, will ſooner confound their *Brains* than mend their *Lives*. Often it betrays them to a very pernicious Deluſion; it diverts them from many of the practical parts of Piety, and yet gives them a Confidence that they are extraordinary pious, and thro' their Belief that *Religion* conſiſts principally in *hearing*, they forget to try themſelves by that more infallible Text, the *doing God's Will*. Whereas God never deſign'd Preaching for more than a Guide in their Way, they make it their Way and their End too; and *Hearing* muſt, like a Circle, begin and terminate in itſelf.

We ſhould, in ſecular Concerns, think him a very unprofitable Servant, that after his Lord had given him Directions what to do, ſhould be ſo tranſported with hearing his Inſtructions, that he ſhould deſire to have them infinitely repeated, and ſo ſpend the Time wherein he ſhould do the Work. And we have reaſon to think, God will make the ſame Judgment of thoſe who do the like in his Service.

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One would now think, that this ravenous Appetite of *hearing* ſhould ſuperſede all Niceneſs in it; yet we find it does not, but that ſome make a ſhift to be at once Voracious and Squeamiſh. If this ſpiritual Food be not artificially dreſt, 'tis too groſs for their Palates. The Phraſe muſt be *elegant*, the Words well *accented*; and the *inticing Words of Mens* Wiſdom, which St. *Paul* diſclaims in his *Preaching*, is that which they principally regard. The *Memory* of the *Preacher* becomes often the moſt material part of the *Sermon*, and the firſt glance on his Book prejudices him. I need not add the Extravagances of an uncouth Tone, a furious Vehemence or fantaſtick Geſture, in which the Soul and vital Efficacy of *Preaching* have been ſolemnly placed. Not that a decent Action is to be condemn'd: It being certain, that the lifeleſs, motionleſs Geſture of the generality of Preachers, is the occaſion that many of their Sermons, miſs of their intended Effect. But 'tis evident that all theſe Accompliſhments are mere Trifles, and that thoſe who inſiſt ſo much on them, make *Preaching* much leſs Sacred and Divine than indeed it is. Therefore they cannot without Abſurdity, lay the main ſtreſs of *Religion* upon it; or make that the higheſt of God's Ordinances, which owes all its Gratefulneſs with them to the Endowments of Men. Some may think I purſue this Subject too far. It is not however done with deſign to derogate from the juſt reſpect due to *Preaching*; only I would not have it monopolize our Eſteem, or juſtle out another Duty, which is of more conſtant Uſe and indiſpenſible Neceſſity.

Such certainly is *Prayer*, that *Reſpiration* of the *Soul* which is ſo neceſſary that it admits not of long Intermiſſion, and for that Reaſon ſeems to carry the ſame Proportion to *hearing*, which *breathing* does to *eating*: We may make long Intervals of *feeding* and yet ſubſiſt, but if we ſhould do ſo in *breathing* we cannot recover it. *Prayer* is like the Morning and Evening *Sacrifice* under the *Law*, which God ordain'd ſhould be *perpetual*; whereas

whereas *Preaching* is but like the *Reading* in the *Synagogues*, on *Sabbaths* and *Feſtivals*. However we have confounded the Terms, 'tis *Prayer* only that can properly be call'd the *Worſhip of God*; 'tis that by which we pay him ſolemn *Homage*, acknowledge his Sovereignty and our own Dependence. When we *hear*, we do no more than what every *Diſciple* does to his *Maſter*; but when we *pray*, we own him as the Spring and Source of all the Good we expect, as the author of our Being and the object of our Adoration. In a word, we do by it profeſs him to be our God, it being an impreſs of mere natural Religion to ſupplicate the *Deity* we acknowledge.

As by *Prayer* we render the greateſt Honour to God, ſo alſo do we procure the greateſt Advantages to ourſelves. *Prayer* is the powerful Engine by which we draw down Bleſſings, the Key which lets us into the immenſe Storehouſe of the Almighty, and that upon which the efficacy of Preaching depends. It enlivens and animates our moſt ſacred Actions. God has promis'd his Spirit to none but thoſe that ask it; accordingly in Scripture we find it ſtill a Concomitant in all eccleſiaſtical Concerns. Our bleſſed Saviour himſelf, tho' he *knew what was in Man*, and needed no Guide but his own Omniſcience in his Choice, yet we find that before his election of the twelve Apoſtles, he continu'd a whole Night in *Prayer*; which was doubtleſs to teach us how requiſite *Prayer* is in all our important Concerns; which, like the pillar of Cloud and Fire to the *Iſraelites*, is our beſt Convoy through the Wilderneſs, thro' all the Snares and Temptations, thro' all the Calamities and Diſtreſſes of this World, and our moſt infallible Guide to the Land of Promiſe.

When all theſe are the properties of *Prayer*, tho' private, they will not leſs belong to the *Publick*. Such a Conſpiration and Union of importunate *Devotion*, muſt have a proportionable Increaſe in its Effect. And if Heaven can ſuffer Violence by the fervour of one ſingle Votary, with what Storms, what Batteries will it be

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forced by a numerous Congregation? We find the Church is by *Chriſt* compar'd to an *Army of Banners*, but ſure never is this Army in ſo good *Array*, in ſo invincible a Poſture as upon its Knees. Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory tells us of a *Legion* of *Chriſtians* in *Aurelius*'s Camp, who in that Poſture diſcomfited two *Aſſailants* at once, the *Enemy* and the *Drought:* That *Breath* which they ſent up in *Prayers*, like a kindly Exhalation, return'd in Rain, and relieved the periſhing Army. And had we but the ſame Fervour, and the ſame Innocency, cou'd we lift up as pure Hands as they did, there wou'd be no Bleſſing beyond our reach; but the leſs any of us find ourſelves ſo qualify'd, the more need we have to put ourſelves among thoſe that are.

There is an happy *Contagion* in Goodneſs; we may perhaps be kindled like green Wood by the neighb'ring Flame; the example of another's Zeal may awaken mine; however there is ſome Advantage in being in the Company; thoſe Showers of Benediction which their Prayers bring down, are ſo plentiful, that ſome Drops at leaſt may ſcatter upon thoſe about them. From all theſe Conſiderations, the neceſſity and benefit of *publick Prayer* cannot but be made evident, and conſequently the unreaſonableneſs of thoſe, who upon any Pretence neglect it; and it is a farther Incitement to it, that by our *ſincere* and *honeſt Prayers*, we are ſure to obtain *Strength* and *Aſſiſtance* from God, to enable us to vanquiſh and ſubdue our *Luſts*, he having promis'd to give his holy Spirit to every one that asks it. Beſides this, by a conſtant and ſecret *Devotion*, our Hearts will be fill'd with ſuch an over-awing Senſe of God, that in all our Actions we ſhall *dread* and *revere* his Authority, and be ready to tremble at every thought of offending him; for there is nothing gives us ſuch a *quick* Senſe of God as *Prayer*, that being the moſt immediate Addreſs that we can make to him, and the higheſt elevation of our Souls towards him; for we are a ſort of Beings that are akin to two Worlds, being placed in the middle between *Heaven* and

and *Earth*, as the common Center in which theſe diſtant Regions meet: By our ſuperior Faculties, we hold Communion with the *ſpiritual* World, and by our inferior, with the *corporeal* one: but to this *ſenſible* or *corporeal* World, we lie open and bare, all its Objects being preſent to us, and ſtriking immediately on our Senſes; whereas, between us and the *ſpiritual* World, there is a cloud of ſenſible things which interrupt our Proſpect of the clear Heaven above them. Thus, before we can perceive that which is *divine*, we muſt remove this World out of the way, and withdraw our Souls from thoſe Thoughts and Deſires, in which theſe lower things have entangled them, that ſo we may lie open to the *heavenly Light*, and our cold Affections may be immediately expos'd to the enlivening Warmths of the *Sun of Righteouſneſs*. From hence ariſes the neceſſity of holy *Meditations* and devout *Prayers*, the one being neceſſary to abſtract our Minds from the objects of *corporeal* Senſe, and the other to inſpire our Affections with the love of thoſe things which are above; by the one we are diſpoſed in our Minds, and by the other in our choice of the better World; for *Prayer* does naturally ſublimate our groſs and earthly *Paſſions*, and by keeping our Minds intent upon God, it wings our Affections towards him, and animates them with divine Fires; we never riſe from our Knees, after a devout Addreſs to God, without deriving a magnetick Virtue from him, and being ſenſibly touch'd with his Charms and Attractions; if therefore we do but inure ourſelves to fervent *Prayer*, theſe holy Affections which we ſhould ſuck in with our Devotions, would be inſtrumental to extinguiſh our vicious Inclinations, and we ſhould go every Day to the throne of *Grace*, with ſuch a lively Senſe of God, and ſuch a vigorous reliſh of divine things, as would be ſufficient to antidote us all againſt the venom of any ſingle Contagion. If we are in good earneſt, and ſeriouſly intend the mortification of our Luſts, let us every Day, before we go into the World, be ſeaſoning of our Minds with holy Devotions, and

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while we are addreſſing to God in the devout Senſe of his unbounded Perfections, and of our Dependence upon him, let us pour out our Souls before him, and make an hearty oblation of our Souls and Bodies to him: let us offer up our Wills to him broken and contrite, that he may put them into what Form and Poſture he pleaſes; ſhew him our Heart, that quits all Intereſt in itſelf, and that would be only led and conducted by him; tell him, that you are ſenſible, that to mortify your Luſts, is far more difficult than to reſolve to do it; and beſeech him to enable you to be valiant in your *Actions*, as thro' his *Grace* you are already in your *Minds*; that you may with as much Certainty, if not with as much Eaſe, *do* and *effect*, as you have projected and *reſolv'd*. And having implor'd his Aid, and ſincerely offer'd up yourſelves to him, you have laid a ſtrong Engagement upon him not to abandon you; he will never throw away a Heart that puts itſelf thus humbly into his Hands, not ſuffer the *Devil* to make a *Prey* of that which has been ſo affectionately devoted to him. For it was by the concurrence of his Grace with our own *Faculties*, that this reſolution of Submiſſion to him was begotten in us, and can we think that the father of Love will ever abandon his own Offspring while it cries out to him, and with pitiful and bemoaning Looks implores his Aid and *Compaſſion*? Surely this cannot chooſe but move his fatherly Bowels, and make them yern and turn towards it; and by a ſtrong Sympathy draw his compaſſionate Arm to aid and relieve it. Let us therefore but faithfully uſe our own Endeavours, and fervently implore every Grace; and he will then never ſuffer that divine Fire, which he has kindled within us, to be extinguiſh'd by our Corruptions, but will kindly cheriſh it with his own Influence, and touch it with a Ray darted from himſelf, till it has burn'd thro' all that Rubbiſh that oppreſſes it, and till it riſes into a victorious *Flame*.

When we conſider *Prayer* as a Part, as an inſtrument of Holineſs, and a Remedy againſt Temptation, what is there

there that a Chriſtian ſhould more delight in the Exerciſe of than in this heavenly Duty?

'Tis an acknowledgment of God's being our God, a *Confeſſion* of his Majeſty and our Meanneſs, by a ſolemn Adoration and Worſhip of him; 'tis a ſacrifice of Praiſe to him; an act of Humiliation, Repentance, Faith and Reliance upon him. We may hence infer, what preparation of Soul is neceſſary to a right diſcharge of this Duty. I ſhall not enter into a debate of the Meetneſs and Excellence of a form of *Prayer* above *Prayer extempore.* It is not to be queſtioned, that either of them coming from the Heart, will be acceptable to God. Thoſe who are apt to fly into a rapturous Confuſion, and rather take Delight in hearing themſelves pray, or imagining that others delight to hear them, are certainly in the right to prevent that Temptation, by making uſe of a Form; and thoſe who have more command of their *Minds*, have more Seriouſneſs and Calmneſs, as well as ſincerity of Spirit, will ſurely find great Relief in the judicious Compoſures of pious and learned Men; not that one would diſcourage ſuch, as under an Impatience of pouring out their whole Souls before God, expreſs theſe holy Sentiments in their own Words, provided they do it with prudent as well as fervent Zeal.

Prayer is as well an *Inſtrument* as a *Part* of Holineſs: It exerciſes all our Graces and refreſhes and improves them by Exerciſe. The breathings of the Divine Spirit, which is in an extraordinary manner aſſiſtant in this holy Exerciſe, fill the Minds of Men with Joy, Peace, and Hope, which confirm them in their chriſtian Warfare, and make them diſreliſh all the Pleaſures of a ſinful Life. But what can be a greater Encouragement to us in the diſcharge of this Duty, than the extraordinary Promiſes annext to it, of receiving whatever we ask with Faith? *Ask and it ſhall be given to you.*

Prayer, as it is an *Antidote* againſt *Temptation*, poſſeſſes the Soul with an awe of the Divine Majeſty, with a ſenſe of his unſpeakable Love, and with a Horror againſt Sin; while we enumerate his Benefits and our Sins with all the aggravating Circumſtances. And certainly no Man can be ſo ſenſeleſs, as to repeat thoſe Sins which he did juſt now bemoan and abhor, renounce and reſolve againſt before God; nor will it be eaſy for him to fall, who comes forth fore-warn'd, and arm'd to encounter a Temptation. *Prayer* alſo convinces a Man of the lovelineſs and happineſs of a holy Life; for he finds that his Peace and Reliance grow up and decay together with his Virtue.

If we pray'd earneſtly and often, how humble, how lowly, how heavenly and exalted wou'd our Souls be? With what glorious Notions of the Divine Majeſty, What dreadful apprehenſions of Sin, What an unquenchable Thirſt of Holineſs, What Fears and Jealouſies of the World and Fleſh, wou'd our Spirits be poſſeſs'd? And what a mighty Influence wou'd all this have upon our Converſation? How humbly, how warily, how uprightly ſhou'd we walk!

But when I do not pray often, or with this Care and Preparation, how lazy and careleſs is my Life? How dim and imperfect my Conceptions? How flat and taſteleſs my Reliſh of ſpiritual Things? How does a worldly ſenſual Temper grow and increaſe upon me, and the divine Life within droop and languiſh!

Having ſaid ſomething of a form of Prayer, and much more of the Duty and Neceſſity of Prayer, we ſhall cloſe this Subject with a petition to Almighty God, which may be of uſe both to us and our Readers, if ſaid with a due frame of Spirit.

O my God, give me Grace to be fervent and frequent in Prayer; aſſiſt me by thy Spirit, to dreſs and prepare my Soul for this more ſolemn Approach to thee; and then I ſhall experience this to be the High-way of Commerce with Heaven.

Heaven. I ſhall feel the Wind blowing upon the Garden of my Heart, and the Spices flowing forth; I ſhall feel the Spirit fanning that ſpark of holy Life till it be kindled into a Flame; and I ſhall feel myſelf tranſported, and aſcending up above this vain World, and all the Allurements of it. O grant me therefore, O my God, thy holy Spirit, that I may pray with Underſtanding and Fervency; that my Prayer may not be the ſacrifice of Fools, and turn'd into Sin, but an acceptable Sacrifice to thee, an Inſtrument of Holineſs, and a Guard againſt Sin, exalting me to fight the good Fight of Faith, that I may receive an everlaſting Crown: And all for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

FASTING.

IF Faſting be conſider'd in itſelf, without Relation to ſpiritual Ends, 'tis a Duty no where injoin'd or advis'd; but Chriſtianity has to do with it, as it may be an *Inſtrument* of the Spirit, by ſubduing the Luſts of the Fleſh, or removing any Hindrance of Religion: And it has been practis'd by all Ages of the Church, and advis'd in order to *Prayer*, *Mortification of Bodily Luſts, and Repentance.* The Rules for the right practiſing this Duty are as follow: *Faſting*, in order to *Prayer*, is to be meaſur'd by the Proportion of the Times of *Prayer*; that is, it ought to be a total *Faſt* from all things during the Solemnity, unleſs an unavoidable Neceſſity intervene. Thus the Jews eat nothing upon the Sabbath Day till their great Offices were perform'd, which was about the *Sixth* Hour; and St. *Peter* us'd it as an Argument, that the Apoſtles in Pentecoſt were not drunk, becauſe it was but the *Third* Hour of the Day, of ſuch a Day in which it was not lawful to eat or drink till the *Sixth* Hour. The *Jews* were offended at his Diſciples, for plucking the Ears of Corn on the *Sabbath* Day, early in the Morning, becauſe it was before the time in which by their Cuſtoms they eſteem'd it lawful to break their *Faſt*. In Imitation of this Cuſtom, and in Proſecution of the Reaſon of it, the *Chriſtian Church* has religiouſly obſerv'd Faſting before the Holy Communion; and the more devout Perſons, tho' without any Obligation at all, refus'd to eat or drink till they had finiſh'd their

their Morning Devotions: And farther yet, upon Days of Publick Humiliation, which are deſign'd to be ſpent wholly in Devotion, and for the averting God's Judgments, if they were imminent, *Faſting* is commanded by the Church, together with *Prayer*; to this End, that the Spirit might be clearer and more angelical, when it is quitted in ſome Proportion from the Load of Fleſh.

Faſting, when it is in order to *Prayer*, muſt be a total Abſtinence from all Meat, or elſe an Abatement of the Quantity. For the Help which *Faſting* yields to *Prayer*, cannot be procured by changing *Fleſh* into *Fiſh*, or Milk Meats into dry Diet, but by turning much into little, or little into none at all, during the Time of ſolemn and extraordinary *Prayer*.

As *Faſting* is inſtrumental to Prayer, it muſt be attended with other Aids of the like Virtue and Efficacy, ſuch as are removing for the Time all wordly Cares and ſecular Buſineſſes; and therefore our bleſſed Saviour includes theſe together in the Caution, *Take heed leſt your Hearts be overcharg'd with Surfeiting and Drunkenneſs, and the Cares of this World, and that Day overtake you unawares.* To which add *Alms*, for upon the *Wings* of *Faſting* and *Alms* holy Prayer infallibly mounts up to Heaven.

When *Faſting* is intended to ſerve the Duty of Repentance, 'tis then beſt choſen when 'tis ſhort, ſharp, and effective; that is, either a total Abſtinence from all Nouriſhment, according as we ſhall appoint or be appointed, during ſuch a time as is ſeparated for the Solemnity and Attendance upon the Employment: Or we may extend our Severity beyond the ſolemn Days, and keep our *Anger* againſt our *Sin*, as we keep our Sorrow, always in readineſs; we ſhould often refuſe a pleaſant Morſel, and abſtain from the Bread of our Deſires, and only take wholſom and leſs-pleaſing Nouriſhment; we ſhould vex our Appetite by refuſing a lawful Satisfaction, ſince in its Petulancy and Luxury it prey'd upon unlawful Delights.

Faſting,

Faſting, when deſign'd in order to Repentance, muſt be ever join'd with an extreme Care that we faſt from Sin; for there is no greater Folly or Indecency in the World, than to commit that for which I am now judging and condemning myſelf. This is the beſt *Faſt*, and the other may ſerve to promote the Intereſt of this, by increaſing our diſlike of Sin, and multiplying Arguments againſt it.

He that faſts for Repentance, muſt, during that Solemnity, abſtain from all bodily Delights, and deny even the Innocent cravings of his Appetites; for 'tis a ridiculous Inconſiſtency for a Man to be at once mourning and merry, at once chaſtning and delighting himſelf, to have a Silence in his Kitchen and Muſick in his Chamber, to judge the Stomach and feaſt the other Senſes.

I deny not but a Man may, in a ſingle Inſtance, puniſh a particular Sin with a proper Inſtrument. If a Man has offended in his *Palate*, he may chooſe to *faſt* only; if he has ſinn'd in *ſoftneſs* and his *touch*, he may chooſe to lie hard or work hard, and uſe ſharp Inflictions. But tho' this *Diſcipline* be proper and particular, yet becauſe the Sorrow is of the whole Man, no Senſe muſt rejoice, or be with any Study or Purpoſe feaſted and entertained ſoftly. This Rule is intended to relate to the ſolemn Days appointed for Repentance, *publickly* or *privately*; beſides which, in the whole Courſe of our Lives, even in the midſt of our moſt feſtival and freer Joys, we may ſprinkle ſome ſingle Inſtances and Acts of *Self-condemning* or *Puniſhing*, as to refuſe a pleaſant Morſel, or a delicious Draught, with a tacit Remembrance of the Sin that then returns to diſpleaſe our Souls. And tho' theſe Actions be ſingle, there is no Indecency in them, becauſe a Man may abate of his ordinary Liberty and old Freedom with great Prudence, ſo he does it without Singularity in himſelf, or Trouble to others; but he may not abate of his ſolemn Sorrow; that may be Caution, but this would be Softneſs, Effeminacy, and Indecency.

Faſting

Faſting being intended as an Act of *Mortification*, to ſubdue a bodily Luſt, as the Spirit of Fornication, or the Fondneſs of ſtrong and impatient *Appetites*, it muſt not be a ſudden ſharp and violent Faſt, but a State, a Courſe of *Faſting*, a daily leſſening our Portion of Meat and Drink, and a chooſing ſuch a coarſe Diet as may make the leaſt Preparation for the *Luſts* of the *Body*. He who *faſts* three Days without Food, will weaken other Parts more than the Miniſters of Fornication, and when the Meats return as uſually, they alſo will be ſerv'd as ſoon as any: In the mean time they will be ſupply'd and made active by the accidental Heat that comes with ſuch violent *Faſtings*, for this is a kind of aerial Devil. The Prince that rules in the Air is the Devil of Fornication, and he will be as tempting with the *Windineſs* of a violent *Faſt*, as with the *Fleſh* of our ordinary *Meal*. But a daily Subtraction of the Nouriſhment will introduce a leſs buſy Habit of Body, and that will prove the more effectual Remedy.

This Devil is not to be cur'd by *Faſting* only, tho' it helps much towards it; it muſt not therefore be neglected, but aſſiſted by all the proper Inſtruments of Remedy againſt this unclean Spirit, and what it is unable to do alone, it may effect in Company with other Inſtruments, and God's Bleſſing upon them.

All *Faſting*, for whatever End it be undertaken, muſt be perform'd without any Opinion of the Neceſſity of the thing itſelf, without cenſuring others; with all Humility, in order to the proper End, and juſt as a Man takes Phyſick, of which no body has reaſon to be proud, and no body thinks it neceſſary, but becauſe he is in Sickneſs, or in Danger and Diſpoſition to it.

All *Faſts*, ordain'd by publick Authority, are to be obſerved in order to the ſame Purpoſes to which they are injoin'd, and to be accompany'd with Actions of the ſame Nature, juſt as it is in private *Faſts*; for there is no other Difference, but that in publick our Superiors chooſe for us what in private we chooſe for ourſelves.

Faſts,

Faſts, ordain'd by lawful Authority, are not to be neglected becauſe alone they cannot do the thing for which they were injoin'd. It may be, one Day of Humiliation will not obtain the Bleſſing, or alone kill the *Luſt*, yet it muſt not be deſpis'd if it can do any thing towards it. An *Act of Faſting* is an *Act of Self-denial*, and tho' it does not produce the Habit, yet it is a good *Act*.

All Chriſtians having the Rule before them, and Conſcience being very delicate in Matters of Worſhip, it were to be wiſh'd that as little Burdens as poſſible were laid on them, in ſuch ſolemn Matters as *Faſts* are. When ſuch Solemnities are politically appointed, to give a Colour to the Conduct of deſigning Mens Actions, 'tis a mocking of God Almighty, 'tis a national Sin, and may perhaps draw down a national Judgment. The Occaſion of publick Faſts ſhou'd not only be lawful but apparent, and in ſome Meaſure neceſſary, to oblige ſincere Chriſtians to the ſtrict Obſervance of them. If they are appointed *partially*, and more out of *Policy* than *Piety*, which will eaſily be diſtinguiſh'd by religious Perſons, Conſcience will not think itſelf ty'd up to apply the Exerciſe of this *Duty* to the pretended Occaſion of it. But perhaps holy Men and Women may think that very Occaſion ſufficient to demand it of them, and to *faſt* even for that Sin of *Faſting*.

When the principal End why a *Faſt* is publickly preſcrib'd, is obtain'd by ſome other Inſtrument in a particular Perſon, as if the Spirit of Fornication be cur'd by the Right of Marriage, or by a Gift of Chaſtity, yet that Perſon ſo eas'd is not freed from the *Faſts* of the *Church* by that alone, if theſe *Faſts* can prudently ſerve any other End of *Religion*, as that of *Prayer*, of *Repentance*, or of *Mortification* of ſome other Appetite. For when it is inſtrumental to any End of the Spirit, it is freed from Superſtition, and then we muſt have ſome other Reaſon to quit us from the Obligation, or that alone will not do it.

When

When the *Faſt* publickly commanded, by reaſon of ſome Indiſpoſition in the particular Perſon, cannot operate to the end of the Commandment, yet the avoiding Offence, and the complying with publick Order, is Reaſon enough to make the Obedience to it neceſſary, when it is viſiible that it was intended to a good End. For he who is otherwiſe not oblig'd, as when the Reaſon of the Law ceaſes as to his Particular, yet remains ſtill oblig'd if he cannot do otherwiſe without Scandal; but this is an Obligation of Charity, not Juſtice.

All *Faſting* is to be us'd with *Prudence* and *Charity*; for there is no End to which Faſting ſerves, but may be obtain'd by other Inſtruments, and therefore it muſt by no means be made an Occaſion of Scruple, or become an Enemy to our Health, or be impoſed upon Perſons that are ſick or aged, or to whom it is in any Senſe uncharitable: Such as are wearied Travellers; or to whom, in the whole Kind of it, it is uſeleſs; ſuch as Women with Child, poor People, and little Children. But in theſe Caſes the *Church* has made Proviſion, and inſerted Caution into her Laws, and they are to be reduced to Practice, according to Cuſtom and the Sentiments of prudent Perſons, with great Latitude, and without Niceneſs and Curioſity; having this in our firſt Care, that we ſecure our Virtue, and next that we ſecure our Health, that we may the better exerciſe the Labours of Virtue; leſt out of too much Auſterity we bring ourſelves to that Condition, that it be neceſſary to be indulgent to Softneſs, Eaſe and extreme Tenderneſs.

Let not *Intemperance* be the Prologue or Epilogue to your *Faſt*, leſt the *Faſt* be ſo far from taking off any thing of the *Sin*, that it be an Occaſion to increaſe it. Wherefore when the *Faſt* is done, be careful that no ſupervening Act of Gluttony, or exceſſive Drinking, unhallow the Religion of the paſt Day; but eat temperately, according to the Proportion of other Meals, leſt Gluttony keep either of the Gates to Abſtinence.

'Tis

'Tis Matter of great Lamentation, to ſee the Abuſes that are committed in the Exerciſe of Chriſtian Duties, and none is more abus'd than this of religious Faſting. 'Tis reduced almoſt intirely to meer Form and Faſhion, and the Mode of eating only chang'd from *Fleſh* to *Fiſh*. Can theſe Hypocrites believe they can deceive God by this Change? That a pompous regale, for which the Rivers at Land, and the Shores of the Sea, have been curiouſly ſearch'd to furniſh Fuel to the Flame of their Luxury, will be deem'd an Obedience to the *Faſting* that is requir'd of us? If they would but ſeriouſly conſider what it is to dally with the living God, they would tremble at ſuch damnable Hypocriſy, and repent them heartily of a Sin which they flatter themſelves (ſo ſtrong is Satan to them) will paſs for Repentance. The Variety, the Richneſs of their Faſt-diſhes, excite and inflame that *Luſt* which their *Faſting* was injoin'd to mortify; the pretended Cure feeds the Diſtemper, and the Antidote increaſes the Poiſon. This is not only a crying Sin among Papiſts, but too much practis'd by Proteſtants, and is grown ſo common that it is hardly thought to be ſinful. But its being common will be far from excuſing the Guilt, or leſſening the Puniſhment, any more than the Company of the *Damn'd* will be a Mitigation of their Torment.

As for thoſe who faſt ſolemnly and ſincerely, and not in Compliance to Cuſtom, and to avoid Scandal, great are the Benefits they receive by the religious Uſe of this Chriſtian Exerciſe. He who undertakes to enumerate them, may, in the next Page alſo, reckon all the Benefits of Phyſick. For *Faſting* is not to be commended as a Duty, but as an Inſtrument, and in that Senſe no Man can reprove or undervalue it, who knows either ſpiritual Arts or ſpiritual Neceſſities. By the Doctors of the Church it is call'd the Nouriſhment of *Prayer*, the Reſtraint of *Luſt*, the Wings of the Soul, the Diet of the Angels, the Means of Humility and Self-denial, the Purification of the Spirit. The Paleneſs and Meagre-

neſs of the Viſage, which is conſequent to the daily *Faſts* of great *Mortifiers*, is by one of the *Fathers* ſaid to be the Mark in the Forehead, which the Angel obſerv'd when he ſign'd the Saints in the Forehead to eſcape the Wrath of God. *The Soul which is greatly vexed, which goeth ſtooping and feeble, and the Eyes that fail, and the hungry Soul, ſhall give thee Praiſe and Righteouſneſs, O Lord.*

Not to build more on the holy Suggeſtion of the good Father than Reaſon and Religion will warrant, 'tis certain that *Faſting* was the univerſal Practice of the Chriſtian Church in all Ages; that our Saviour has preſcribed Rules concerning it, which ſuppoſes plainly enough that it is not a Practice left indifferent, to be omitted or comply'd with at Pleaſure, tho' it is a Free-will Offering, and ſo dependent of various Circumſtances, that the Exerciſe of it cannot be fix'd by particular Rules; beſides, the conſtant Practice of the devouteſt Men, the Nature of this Body we are cloath'd with, and the frequent Sins to which the *Luſts* of it have betray'd us, make it highly reaſonable and neceſſary that we ſhould be often exerciſing ourſelves in this Diſcipline, either in order to our Mortification and our future Security, or as an Act of Affliction or Revenge for our paſt Faults.

Whoever totally neglects it, upon Pretence of the ill Effects it has upon either Body or Mind, ought well to be aſſur'd that the Uneaſineſs of the one or the other be not the Effect of a wanton and carnal Mind, rather than of the Temper of the Body, and that this Body will admit of no Degrees of this ſpiritual Diſcipline; otherwiſe he is oblig'd to it according to his Capacity.

To *Faſting* muſt always be join'd *Alms* and *Prayer*. It muſt never have the leaſt Mixture of Vain-glory. What then will become of all the faſhionable *Faſts* that at certain Reaſons make ſo much Shew in great Houſes? Without Alms *Faſts* are *inſignificant*, with Vain-glory they are *ſinful:* But if any juſt Reaſon diſables any Man to give Alms,

or

or to devote the day intirely to religious Exerciſe, it cannot be thought but that *Faſting* may be us'd as an Act of Affliction, provided it be conſecrated to God by a holy Attention at leaſt.

Let every good Chriſtian, who practiſes this needful Injunction of Chriſt's Church, call then upon God for his Bleſſing.

O glorious God, I ſee in what a World I live, and what a Body this Soul of mine dwells in, how little Fire kindles thoſe Luſts which blaſt its Innocence and deſtroy my Peace. I remember how often I have behav'd myſelf unbeſeeming a Child of God, only to gratify the Inclination of an ungovernable Body. Enable me therefore ſo to mortify and ſubdue it, that I may enjoy an intire Peace and Conqueſt; ſo to humble and afflict it, that my Revenge may teſtify the Sorrow I feel for my Miſdemeanours; and accept thou my Sorrow to the Atonement of my Sins, thro' the Blood of Jeſus Chriſt. Amen.

REPENTANCE.

NOTHING in the World makes ſo great a Change as *Repentance:* It changes Things in *Heaven* and in *Earth*; for it changes the whole Man from *Sin* to *Grace*; from *Vitious* Habits to Holy Cuſtoms; from *Unchaſt* Bodies to *Angelical* Souls; from *Swine* to *Philoſophers*; from *Drunkenneſs* to *ſober Counſels:* And God himſelf, *with whom is no Variableneſs or Shadow of Change*, is pleas'd, by deſcending to our weak underſtandings, to ſay, that he changes alſo upon Man's *Repentance*, that he alters his Decrees; revokes his Sentence; cancels the Bills of Accuſation; throws the Records of Shame and Sorrow out of the Court of Heaven; and lifts up the Sinner from the *Grave* to *Life*, from his *Priſon* to a *Throne*, from Hell and the Guilt of Eternal Torture, to Heaven, and a Title to never-ceaſing Felicities. If we be bound on *Earth*, we ſhall be bound in *Heaven.* If we be abſolv'd here upon ſincere *Repentance*, we ſhall be looſed there. In a word, if we *Repent*, God will *Repent*, and not ſend the Evil upon us which we had deſerv'd.

But *Repentance* is a Conjugation and Society of many *Duties.* It contains in it all the Parts of a Holy Life, from the Time of our Return, to the Day of our Death incluſively; and it has in it ſomething eſpecially relating to the Sins of our former Days, which are now to be aboliſh'd by ſpecial Acts and have oblig'd us to ſpecial Labours, brought in many new Neceſſities, and put us into a very great deal of Danger. It being a Duty con-

conſiſting of ſo many Parts, and ſuch Employments; it alſo requires much Time, and leaves a Man in the ſame Degree of Hope or Pardon, as is his Reſtitution to the State of Righteouſneſs and Holy Living, for which we covenanted in our *Baptiſm*. For we muſt know, that there is but one *Repentance* in a Man's whole Life, if *Repentance* be taken in a Proper, Strict, Evangelical, Covenant Senſe, and not after the ordinary underſtanding of the Word; that is, we are but once to change our whole State of Life, from the Power of the Devil and his intire Poſſeſſion, from the State of Sin and Death, from the Body of Corruption, to the Life of Grace, to the Poſſeſſion of Jeſus, to the Kingdom of the Goſpel; and this is done in the *Baptiſm* of the *Water*, or in the Baptiſm of the Spirit, when the firſt Rite comes to be verify'd by God's Grace coming upon us, and by our Obedience to the Heavenly Calling, we working together with God. After this Change, if ever we fall into the contrary State, and be wholly eſtrang'd from God and Religion, profeſſing ourſelves Servants of Unrighteouſneſs, God has made no more Covenant of Reſtitution with us. There is no Place left for any more Repentance, or intire Change of Condition, or new Birth; A Man can be regenerated but once. Such are Voluntary, Malicious, Apoſtate, Obſtinate, Impenitent Perſons, and the like: But if we be overtaken by Infirmity, or enter into the Borders of this State, and commit a grievous Sin, or Ten or Twenty, ſo we be not in the intire poſſeſſion of the Devil, we are for the preſent in a damnable Condition if we die; but if we live, we are in a recoverable Condition, for ſo we may *repent* often. We *repent* or riſe from Death but once, but from Sickneſs many Times; and by the Grace of God we ſhall be pardon'd if we ſo *repent*. Our Hopes of Pardon are juſt as is our Repentance, which if it be Timely, Hearty, Induſtrious and Sufficient, God accepts, not by weighing Grains and Scruples, but by eſtimating the great Proportion of our Life. A hearty Endeavour, and

an effectual general Change ſhall get our Pardon; the unavoidable Infirmities, paſt Evils, and preſent Imperfections, and ſhort Interruptions, againſt which we Watch, and Pray, and Strive, being put upon the Accounts of the *Croſs*, and Pay'd for by the Holy Jeſus.

He who repents truly, is greatly ſorrowful for his paſt Sins; not with a ſuperficial Sigh or Tear, but a Pungent Afflictive Sorrow; ſuch a Sorrow as hates the Sin ſo much, that the Man would rather chooſe to die than act it any more: This Sorrow is call'd in Scripture, *A Weeping ſorely*; *a Weeping with all Bitterneſs of Heart*; *a Weeping Day and Night*; *a Sorrow of Heart*; *a Breaking of the Spirit*; *Mourning like a Dove, and Chattering like a Swallow*. And we may read the Degree and Manner of it in the *Lamentations*, and ſad Accents of the Prophet *Jeremiah*, when he wept for the Sins of the Nation; in the Heart-breaking of *David* when he mourn'd for his Murder and Adultery; and the bitter Weeping of St. *Peter* after the ſhameful denying of his Maſter. The Expreſſion of the Sorrow differs according to the Temper of the Body, the Sex, the Age, and Circumſtances of Action, and the Motive of Sorrow, and by many accidental Tenderneſſes, or Maſculine Hardneſſes. The *Repentance* is not to be eſtimated by the *Tears*, but by the Grief: And the Grief is to be valued not by the Senſitive Trouble, but by the Cordial Hatred of the Sin, and ready actual Dereliction of it; and a Reſolution, and real reſiſting of its conſequent Temptations. Some People can ſhed Tears for nothing, ſome for any thing; but the proper and true Effects of a Godly Sorrow, are Fear of the Divine Judgments, Apprehenſion of God's Diſpleaſure, Watchings and Strivings againſt Sin, patiently enduring the *Croſs* of *Sorrow*, which God ſends as our Puniſhment; and Accuſation of ourſelves in perpetual begging Pardon; Mean and Baſe Opinions of ourſelves; and all the natural Productions from theſe, according to our Temper and Conſtitution. For if we be apt to Weep in other Accidents; it is ill if we Weep

not

not alſo in the *Sorrow* of *Repentance*; not that weeping is of itſelf a Duty, but that the *Sorrow* of it, if it be as great, will be ſtill expreſs'd in as great a manner.

Our *Sorrow* for Sins muſt retain the Proportion of our Sins, tho' not the Equality. We have no particular Meaſures of our Sins. We know not which is greateſt, Sacrilege, Superſtition, Idolatry, Covetouſneſs, the renouncing of our Religion, or the betraying our Country; and therefore God ties us not to nice Meaſures of *Sorrow*, but only that we keep the general Rules of Proportion; that is, that a great Sin have a great Grief, a ſmaller Crime being to be waſh'd off with a leſs Shower.

Our *Sorrow* for Sin is then beſt accounted of, for its Degree, when it, together with all the Penal and Afflictive Duties of Repentance, ſhall have equall'd or exceeded the Pleaſure we had in Commiſſion of the Sin.

True *Repentance* is a puniſhing Duty, and acts its *Sorrow*, and judges and condemns the Sin, by voluntary ſubmitting to ſuch Sadneſſes as God ſends on us; or ſtrives to prevent the Judgment of God, by judging ourſelves, and puniſhing our Bodies and our Spirits, by ſuch Exerciſes of Piety as are troubleſom to the Body; ſuch as are *Faſting*, *Watching*, *Long Prayers*, troubleſom Poſtures in our *Prayers*, expenſive *Alms*, and all outward Acts of Humiliation. For he who muſt judge himſelf, muſt condemn himſelf if he be guilty; and if he be condemn'd, he muſt be puniſh'd; and if he be ſo judg'd, it will help to prevent the Judgment of the Lord, as St. *Paul* inſtructs us in this particular. Our Grief may be ſo full of Trouble, as to out-weigh all the Burdens of *Faſts* and bodily Afflictions, and then the other are leſs neceſſary: When they are uſed, the Benefit of them is to obtain of God a Remiſſion, or a Leſſening of ſuch Temporal Judgments which God has decreed againſt the Sins; but the Sinner is not by any Thing of this reconcil'd to the Eternal Favour of God; for as yet this is but the Introduction to *Repentance*.

Every true Penitent is oblig'd to confeſs his Sins, and to humble himſelf before God for ever. Confeſſion of Sins has a ſpecial Promiſe; *If we confeſs our Sins, he is faithful and juſt to forgive us our Sins.* God has bound himſelf to forgive us, if we duly confeſs our Sins, and do all that for which Confeſſion was appointed: If we are aſham'd of them, and own them no more; for Confeſſion of our Sins to God, can ſignify nothing of itſelf in its direct Nature: He ſees us when we act them, and keeps a Record of them, and we forget them unleſs he reminds us of them by his *Grace.* Therefore to confeſs them to God, does not puniſh us or make us aſham'd: But Confeſſion, when it proceeds from Shame and Sorrow, and is an Act of Humiliation and Self-Condemnation, and a laying open our Wounds for Cure, is then a Duty God delights in. In all which Circumſtances we ſhall be very much help'd if we follow the Advice of St. *James*, and *confeſs our Sins to one another*; not as the Wicked Ones do, who boaſt of their Wickedneſs, and are even ſo impiouſly vain as to bely their ownſelves to ſhew their Superiority in Sin; but with all Humility, Self-abaſement, and Confuſion, to prudent and pious Paſtors, whoſe Inſtructions may ſerve to recover us and reſtore us to the right Path from whence we wander'd. But we muſt not think that our unburdening our Minds of this Load to a Miniſter will give us any true Eaſe, unleſs we do it with due Contrition and a ſincere Reſolution of new Obedience; or that there is any, the leaſt Efficacy in ſuch an Act of itſelf, except it proceeds from a juſt Senſe of our own Guilt, an Abhorrence of the Crime, and an earneſt Deſire of Forgiveneſs from God by his and our own Prayers. When our Spiritual Guide knows our Needs, he can beſt miniſter Comfort or Reproof, Oil or Cauſticks: He can more opportunely recommend our particular State to God; he can determine our Caſes of Conſcience, and judge better for us than we do for ourſelves. The ſhame of opening ſuch Ulcers may reſtrain our forwardneſs to contract them;

and

and all theſe Circumſtances of Advantage will do very much towards the Forgiveneſs. This Courſe was taken by the new Converts in the Days of the Apoſtles; *for many that believ'd came, and confeſs'd and ſhew'd their Deeds.* And it were well if this Duty was practis'd Prudently and Innocently in order to publick Diſcipline, or private Comfort and Inſtruction.

That it be done to God, is a Duty not directly for itſelf but for its Adjuncts, and the Duties that go with it, and before it, or after it: Which Duties, becauſe they are to be help'd and guided by our Paſtors and Curates of Souls, he is careful of his Eternal Intereſt, who will not loſe the Advantage of uſing a private Guide and Judge; *He that hideth his Sins ſhall not proſper, but whoſo confeſſeth and forſaketh them ſhall have Mercy.* The Condition of Mercy is always the forſaking of Sins. *Abſolution* without *Repentance*, tho' pronounc'd by an Angel, would be of no more effect, than a Bleſſing upon a Sin; but thoſe that Repent, the Church thro' Chriſt pronounces Abſolv'd. Holy Perſons in ancient Times were wont to carry *Table-Books* about them, and wrote in them an Account of all their determinate Thoughts, Purpoſes, Words and Actions, in which they had ſuffer'd Infirmity; that by communicating the State of their Souls, they might be Inſtructed, and Guided, and Corrected, or Encouraged.

True *Repentance* muſt reduce to act all its Holy Purpoſes, and enter into, and run thro' the State of Holy Living, which is contrary to that State of Darkneſs, in which in Times paſt we walk'd. For to reſolve to do it, and yet not to do it, is to break our Reſolution and our Faith, to mock God, to falſify and evacuate all the preceding Acts of *Repentance*, and to make our Pardon hopeleſs, and our Hope fruitleſs. He who reſolves to live well when a Danger or violent Fear is upon him; or when the Appetites of Luſt are newly ſatisfy'd, or newly ſerv'd, and yet when the Temptation comes again, ſins again, and then is ſorrowful, and reſolves once more

againſt it, and yet falls when the Temptation returns; is a vain Man, but no true Penitent, nor in the State of Grace. And if he chance to die in one of thoſe good Moods, he is very far from Salvation; for if it be neceſſary that we reſolve to live well, it is neceſſary we ſhould do ſo: Reſolution being an imperfect Act, a Term of Relation, and ſignifies nothing but in order to the Actions. It is as a *Faculty* is to the Act; it's the Spring of the Harveſt, as Eggs are to Birds, and a Relative to its Correſpondent; nothing without it. No Man therefore can be in the State of Grace, and actual Favour, by Reſolutions and holy Purpoſes; theſe are but the Gate and Portal towards Pardon. A holy Life is the only Perfection of Repentance, and the firm Ground upon which we can caſt the Anchor of our Hope in the Mercies of God thro' Jeſus Chriſt.

No Man is to reckon his Pardon immediately upon his return from Sin to the Beginnings of a good Life, but is to begin his Hopes and Degrees of Confidence according as Sin dies in him and Grace lives, as the Habits of Sin leſſen, and Righteouſneſs grows; according as Sin returns but ſeldom, in ſmaller Inſtances, and without Choice, by Surpriſe, without Deliberation, is highly diſ reliſh'd, and preſently daſh'd againſt the Rock Chriſt Jeſus by a holy Sorrow, and renew'd Care of more ſtrict Watchfulneſs: For a holy Life being the Condition of the Covenant on our Part, as we return to God, ſo God returns to us, and our State returns to the probability of Pardon.

Every Man is to work out his Salvation with Fear and Trembling; and after the Commiſſion of Sins, his Fears muſt multiply, becauſe every new Sin, and every great Declining from the Ways of God, is ſtill a Degree of new Danger, and has increas'd God's Anger, and has made him more uneaſy to grant Pardon. When he does grant it, 'tis upon harder Terms both for Doing and Suffering. We muſt do more for Pardon, and it may be ſuffer much more. For we muſt know that God

pardons

pardons our Sins by Parts; as our Duty increaſes, and our Care is more prudent and active, ſo God's Anger decreaſes; and yet it may be the laſt Sin you committed made God unalterably reſolv'd to ſend upon you ſome ſad Judgment. We are uncertain of the Particulars in all *Caſes*, and therefore we have Reaſon always to mourn for our Sins, that have ſo provok'd God, and made our Condition ſo full of Danger, that it may be no *Prayers*, or *Tears*, or *Duty*, can alter his Sentence concerning ſome ſad Judgment upon us. Thus God irrevocably decreed to puniſh the *Iſraelites* for Idolatry, tho' *Moſes* pray'd for them; and God forgave them in ſome Degree, ſo far as that he would not cut them off from being a People: Yet he would not forgive them ſo, but he would viſit their Sin upon them, and he did ſo.

A true *Penitent* muſt all the Days of his Life pray for Pardon, and never think the Work compleated till he dies; not by any Act of his own, by no Act of the Church, by no Forgiveneſs by the Party injur'd, by no Reſtitution. Theſe are all Inſtruments of great Uſe and Efficacy, and the Means by which it is to be done at length; but ſtill the Sin lies at the Door ready to return upon us in Judgment and Damnation, if we return to it in Choice or Action. And whether God has forgiven us or no, we know not, nor how far he has forgiven us: All that we have done is not of ſufficient Worth to obtain Pardon. Wherefore, let all *Penitents* pray ſtill, and ſtill be ſorrowful for what they have done amiſs, and for ever watch againſt it. Thoſe Beginnings of Pardon which are working all the way, will then at laſt be perfected in the Day of the Lord.

Defer not at all to *Repent*; much leſs may you put it off to a *Death-bed*; 'tis not an eaſy thing to root out the Habits of Sin, which a Man's whole Life has gathered and confirm'd, we find work enough to mortify one beloved Luſt in our very beſt Advantage of Strength and Time, and before it is ſo deeply rooted, as it muſt needs be ſuppos'd to be at the End of a wicked Life: And

therefore

therefore it will prove impoſſible, when the Work is ſo great, and the Strength ſo little; when Sin is ſo ſtrong, and Grace ſo weak; for they always keep the ſame Proportion of Increaſe and Decreaſe; and as Sin grows, Grace decays. The more need we have of Grace, the leſs at that time we ſhall have of it; becauſe the greatneſs of our Sins, which makes the Need, has leſſen'd the Grace of God, which ſhould help us. To which add this Conſideration, That on a Man's *Death-bed* the Day of *Repentance* is paſt: For *Repentance* being the renewing of a *holy Life*, a Living the Life of Grace, it is a Contradiction to ſay, a Man can live a *holy Life* upon his *Death-bed*; eſpecially if we conſider, that for a Sinner to live a holy Life, we muſt firſt ſuppoſe him to have overcome all his evil Habits, and then to have made a Purchaſe of the contrary Graces by the Labours of great Prudence, Watchfulneſs, Self-denial, and Severity; *Nothing that is Excellent can be wrought ſuddenly.*

After the *Beginnings* of a Sinner's Recovery, let him be infinitely fearful of a *Relapſe:* And therefore upon the Stock of his ſad Experience, where his *Failings* were, and by ſpecial Acts, let him fortify that *Faculty* and arm againſt *Temptation.* For if all thoſe Arguments which God uſes to us to preſerve our Innocence, and the Sinner's late Danger, and his Fears, and the Goodneſs of God make him once eſcape; and the Shame of his Fall, and the Senſe of his own Weakneſſes will not make him watchful againſt a Fall; eſpecially knowing how much it coſts a Man to be reſtor'd; it will be infinitely more dangerous if ever he falls again, not only leſt God ſhould no more accept him to Pardon, but even his own Hopes will be made more deſperate, and his Impatience greater, and his Shame turn to Impudence, and his *latter End will be worſe than his Beginning.* Further, Let him conſider that his Sin, which was formerly in a good Way of being pardon'd, will not only return upon him with all its own Loads, but with the Baſeneſs of Unthankfulneſs; and he will be ſet as far back from Heaven as ever.

All

All his former Labours and Fears, and Watchings, and Agonies will be reckon'd for nothing, but as Arguments to upbraid his Folly; who, when he had ſet *one* Foot in *Heaven*, did pull that back, and carry *both* to *Hell*.

One would think there needed no other Arguments to move a Sinner to *Repentance*, than to tell him, unleſs he repents he ſhall certainly periſh; and if he does repent timely and intirely by living a holy Life, he ſhall be forgiven, and be ſaved. But this Conſideration muſt be enlarg'd with ſome great Circumſtances; and we are to remember, That to admit Mankind to *Repentance*, and Pardon, was a Favour greater than ever God gave to the *Angels*, and to the *Devils*; for they had not the Permiſſion to come to ſecond Thoughts. Chriſt never groan'd one Groan for them; he never ſuffer'd one Stripe, nor one Affront, nor ſhed one drop of Blood to reſtore them to hopes of Bleſſedneſs after their firſt Failings. But this he did for us; he paid the ſcore of our Sins only, that we might be admitted to *repent*, and that this *Repentance* might be effectual to the great Purpoſes of Felicity and Salvation.

Conſider, that as it coſt Chriſt many Millions of *Prayers*, and *Groans*, and *Sighs*; ſo he is now, at this Inſtant, and has been 1700 Years, Night and Day, inceſſantly praying for Grace for us, that we may *repent*; and for Pardon, when we do; and for degrees of Pardon, beyond the capacities of our Infirmities, and the merit of our *Sorrows* and Amendment. This Prayer will be continued by him till his ſecond Coming, *for he ever liveth to make Interceſſion for us*. And that we may know what it is, in behalf of which he intercedes, St. *Paul* tells us his deſign; *We are Ambaſſadors for Chriſt, as though he did beſeech you by us; We pray you in Chriſt's ſtead to be reconcil'd to God*. And what Chriſt prays us to do, he prays to God that we may do; that which he deſires of us as his Servants, he deſires of God, who is the fountain of Grace and Power unto us, and without whoſe Aſſiſtance we can do nothing.

That

That ever we ſhould repent, was ſo coſtly a Purchaſe, ſo great a Concernment, ſo high a Favour; and the Event is eſteem'd by God himſelf ſo great an Excellency, that our bleſſed Saviour tells us, *There ſhall be Joy in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth*; meaning, that when Chriſt ſhall be glorify'd, and at the right Hand of the Father, making Interceſſion for us, praying for our Repentance; the Converſion and Repentance of every Sinner is part of Chriſt's Glorification; it is the anſwering of his Prayers; 'tis a portion of his Reward, in which he does eſſentially glory by the Joys of his glorify'd Humanity. This is the Joy of our Lord Himſelf directly, not of the Angels, except only by Reflexion. The Joy, ſaid our bleſſed Redeemer, ſhall be in the preſence of the Angels; They ſhall ſee the glory of the Lord, the anſwering of his Prayers, the ſatisfaction of his Deſires, and the reward of his Sufferings, in the *Repentance* and conſequent Pardon of a Sinner. For this Reaſon he once ſuffer'd, and for that Reaſon he rejoices for ever. Wherefore, when a penitent Sinner comes to receive the Effect and full Conſummation of his Pardon, 'tis call'd *an entring into the Joy of our Lord*; a partaking of that Joy which Chriſt receiv'd at our Converſion, and enjoy'd ever ſince.

Add to this, That the Rewards of Heaven are ſo great and glorious, and Chriſt's Burden is ſo light, his Yoke ſo eaſy, that it is a ſhameleſs impudence to expect ſo great Glories at a leſs Rate than ſo little a Service, at a lower Rate than a holy Life. It coſt the Heart-Blood of the Son of God to obtain Heaven for us upon that Condition: And who ſhall die again to get Heaven for us upon eaſier Terms? What would you do if God ſhould command you to kill your eldeſt Son, or to work in the Mines for a thouſand Years together, or to faſt all your Life-time with Bread and Water? Were not Heaven a very great Bargain even after all this? And when God requires nothing of us, but to live Soberly, Juſtly, and Godly; which Things of themſelves are to a Man a very great Felicity, and neceſſary to our preſent Well-being:

being: Shall we think this to be an intolerable Burden, and that Heaven is too little a Purchaſe at that Price? That God in meer Juſtice, will take a Death-bed Sigh, or a Groan, and a few unprofitable Tears and Promiſes, in exchange for all our Duty?

If theſe Conſiderations, join'd together with our own Intereſt, even as much as the Felicity and the Sight of God, and the avoiding the intolerable pains of Hell, and many intermediate Judgments to come, will not move us to leave the Filthineſs, the Trouble, the Uneaſineſs, and the Unreaſonableneſs of Sin, and turn to God; there is no more to be ſaid, we muſt periſh in our Folly.

This ſure is ſufficient to warn all Chriſtians againſt deferring their Repentance to the Hour of Death. They will from hence perceive, that to ſend for a Miniſter when the Doctor has done with them, or even when Sickneſs has render'd them impotent to Sin, can be no more Help to their Salvation, than to that of the Damn'd. And how comfortably do ſome deluded Wretches ſlide into Perdition, depending on the efficacy of a few apt Prayers by the Miniſter, a too late receiving of the Lord's Supper? Do they think that God will take their Service, when the Devil can have no more of it; and that the Repentance of their laſt Moments, ſhall atone for the Sins of their whole Lives? How dreadful will their Diſappointment be, who die in this ſad Dream! and in what a world of Miſery will they awake!

THE SACRAMENT.

IT has been often obſerved, that the deſign of this Work was ſuited with a particular View to ſerve the *Ladies*, to whom 'tis particularly addreſs'd: But the generality of Authors having ſpoken to the *Men*, that Sex is often nam'd in Imitation of them; but the Women always underſtood too; there being but few or no Virtues or Vices which do not alike concern both them.

There remains another Duty to be treated of, to which many of the female Sex ſeem to need ſome Incitation; and that is, Communicating; a part of Devotion, the looſer Sort ſcarce ever think in Seaſon till their *Death-Beds*. As if that Sacrament, like the *Extreme Unction* of the *Papiſts*, was only fit for expiring Souls. But to ſuch we may apply the Words of the *Angel* to the *Woman*, *Why ſeek ye the Living among the Dead?* Why think ye that the *Sun of Righteouſneſs* is only to ſhine in the *Shades* of Death? or that Chriſt is never to give us his Fleſh, till we are putting off our own? One of the principal Ends of that *Sacrament* is, to engage and enable us to a new Life: How prepoſterous then is it, how utterly inconſiſtent with that End, to defer it to the hour of Death? It is true, 'tis a good *Viaticum* for ſuch as are in their way towards Bliſs; but 'tis too bold a Hope to fancy it ſhall in an Inſtant bring them into

that Way, who have their whole Life poſted on in a contrary. The *Roads* to *Heaven* and *Hell* lie ſure too far aſunder to be within one Step's Diſtance: Nor can it with any Safety be preſum'd, that once receiving at their Death, ſhall expiate ſo many wilful Neglects of *it* in their Life.

It is to be hop'd theſe total Omiſſions are not a common Guilt; yet, with many others, the Fault differs only in Degree; they do not wholly omit, but yet come ſo ſeldom, as if they thought it a very arbitrary Matter whether they come or no. And this truly is obſervable in many, who ſeem to give good Attendance on other parts of Divine Worſhip: 'Tis a ſad Spectacle to ſee, that, let a *Church* be never ſo much crowded at *Sermons*, 'tis empty in an Inſtant when the Communion begins. People run as it were frighted from it, as if they thought with thoſe in *Malachi*, that the *Table of our Lord is polluted:* That ſome Peſt or Infection would thence break forth upon them. A ſtrange Indignity to the Majeſty, and Ingratitude to the Love of our *Redeemer!* Let a King, or but ſome great Man, make a publick Entertainment, how hard is it to keep back the preſſing Multitude? Many Officers are neceſſary to repel the uninvited Gueſt; and yet here there needs more to drive us to it, tho' the Invitation be more general, and the Treat infinitely more magnificent.

I know this Fault, like many others, ſhrouds itſelf under a fair Diſguiſe; and this barbarous *Neglect* pretends to the humbleſt *Veneration*. People ſay 'tis the great *Reverence* they have for the *Sacrament*, which keeps them at ſo great a diſtance. That certainly is a fictitious *Reverence* which diſcards Obedience. And when Chriſt commands our Coming, our drawing back looks more like *Stubbornneſs* and *Rebellion*, than *Awe* and *Reſpect*. I ſuppoſe we pretend not to exceed the primitive *Chriſtians* in Humility and godly Fear; and yet they communicated daily. Our *Reverence* therefore is of a much different

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Make from theirs, if it produces ſuch contrary Effects. Indeed 'tis to be fear'd, that many put a great Cheat upon themſelves in this Matter. The *Euchariſt* is juſtly accounted the higheſt of divine Ordinances; and thoſe who think of no Preparation in others, yet have ſome general Impreſſions of the neceſſity of it in this; but the Uneaſineſs of the Task diſcourages them; they dare not come without a Wedding-Garment, and yet are loth to be at the pains to put it on. Thus all this goodly Pretext of Reverence, is but the Devil in *Samuel*'s Mantle, is but *Sloth* clad in the habit of *Humility*.

And to this *Temptation* of Sloth, there is another thing very ſubſervient, which is the eaſy and ſlight Opinion that is commonly taken of Sins of *Omiſſion*. Many are ſtartled at great *Commiſſions*, think them to carry a face of Deformity and Horror, who in the mean time look on *Omiſſions* as *Privations*, and mere *Nothings*. As if all the *Affirmative* Precepts were only things of Form put in by God, rather to try our Inclinations than to oblige our Performance; and ſo were rather Overtures and Propoſals, which we may aſſent to or not, than Injunctions, which at our Peril we muſt obey. A Fancy no leſs abſurd than impious, that God ſhould be content ſo to compound with his Creatures, and, like a *Prince* overpower'd by his *Vaſſals*, conſent to remit all their Homage, abſolve them from all poſitive Duty, ſo they would be but ſo civil as not to fly in his Face, or commit Outrage on his Perſon: Which wild Imagination needs no other Confutation than that Form of Indictment our Saviour gives us as the Model of that which ſhall be us'd at the laſt Day, in St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel, where the whole Proceſs lies againſt Sins of *Omiſſion*; and yet the Sentence is as diſmal and irreverſible, as if all the Commiſſions in the World had been put into the Bill.

And certainly of all *Omiſſions*, none is like to be more ſeverely charg'd than this of Communicating; which is not only a *Diſobedience*, but an *Unkindneſs*, ſtriking at the *Authority*,

Authority, as well as the love of our Lord, when he ſo affects a *Union* with us, that he creates *Myſteries* only to effect it; when he deſcends even to our *Senſuality*; and becauſe we want *Spiritual* Appetites, puts himſelf within reach of our *Natural*. As he once veil'd his Divinity in *Fleſh*, ſo he now *veils* even that *Fleſh* under the form of our *Corporal* Nouriſhment; only that he may the more indiſſolvably *unite*, nay, incorporate Himſelf with us. When, I ſay, he does all this, we are not only Impious, but Inhuman, if it will not attract us; eſpecially when he does all this upon the moſt endearing Memory of what he has before done for us; when he preſents Himſelf to our Embraces in the ſame Form wherein he preſented himſelf to God for our *Expiation*; when he ſhews us thoſe *Wounds* which our Iniquities made, thoſe *Stripes* by which we were *heal'd*, that *Death* by which we are reviv'd. Shall we, to complete the Scene of his Paſſion, force him to that pathetick Complaint, *Have ye no regard, all ye that paſs by!* Shall we, inſtead of ſmiting our Breaſt, as did other Witneſſes of his Sufferings, turn our *Backs!* If we can habitually do this, 'tis to be fear'd, the next Degree will be to wag our *Heads* too; and we ſhall have the Profaneneſs to deride, what we have not the Piety to commemorate.

This ſeems to be no improbable *Fear*; for in Religion there are gradual Declinations, as well as Advances. Coldneſs and Tepidity, if not ſtopt in the Progreſs, quickly grow to Loathing and Contempt. And indeed, to what can we more reaſonably impute the great *Overflowings* of Profaneneſs among us, than to our ill Husbanding the means of Grace, to the diſuſe and even abuſe of the Holy Sacrament, which of all the means of Grace has the greateſt Energy and Power?

Were there no other Benefit deriv'd from it, except that which the Preparation implies 'twere very conſiderable. It brings us to a Recollection; fixes our indefinite Purpoſes of ſearching and trying our Ways, which elſe

elſe perhaps we ſhould infinitely defer; ſtops our Career in Sin, and by acquainting us with ourſelves, ſhews us where our Danger lies, and how we are to avert it; what Breaches are made upon our Souls, and how we muſt repair them; all which are, with many, ſeldom thought of, but when the time of *Communicating* approaches. We live ſo far from ourſelves, know ſo little what is done in us, that we anſwer the deſcription the Prophet makes of the ſurpriſe of *Babylon*, of which the King knew nothing, till Poſt after Poſt ran to inform him, that *his City was taken at one End.* We often lie ſecure while the Enemy is within our *Walls*, and therefore they are friendly Alarms which the *Sacrament* gives us to look to our Defence. But if when the *Trumpet* ſounds, none will prepare himſelf to the *Battle*; if when the Miniſter gives warning of a *Sacrament*, and the Preparation it requires, we go our Ways, and with *Gallio care for none of thoſe Things*, or with *Felix put it off to a convenient Time*, we wilfully expoſe ourſelves; and 'tis but juſt Chriſt's dreadful Menace ſhould be executed upon us, that we *die in our Sins*, who will fruſtrate ſuch an opportunity of a Reſcue from them.

But 'tis not only this remoter and accidental Advantage, this *preventing Grace*, which the holy *Euchariſt* affords: It contains yet greater and more intrinſick Benefits, 'tis a Spring of *reſiſting Grace* alſo, a magazine of ſpiritual Artillery to fortify us againſt all the Aſſaults of the Devil, the great *Catholicon* for all the maladies of the Soul; that which if duly receiv'd will qualify us to make St. *Paul*'s Boaſt, *I can do all things thro' Chriſt which ſtrengthens me.* In a word, 'tis to us whatever we need, *Wiſdom*, *Righteouſneſs*, *Sanctification*, and *Redemption*, becauſe it poſſeſſes us of him who is ſo; wherefore, whenever we neglect it, we manifeſtly betray our own Intereſt, and implicitly chooſe *Death*, while we thus run from Life.

Thus we ſee, there is a concurrence of all Sorts of Arguments for this Duty. Oh that ſome at leaſt of them

may

may prevail! If we are not tractable enough to do it in *Obedience*, yet let us be ſo ingenuous as to do it for *Love*, for *Gratitude*; or if for neither of theſe, let us be at leaſt ſo wiſe as to do it for *Intereſt* and *Advantage*. People are apt to pretend Buſineſs. The *Farms* and the *Oxen* muſt excuſe their coming to the *Feaſt*. But alas! What Buſineſs can there be of equal Neceſſity with this? Yet even that Apology is ſuperſeded to the Sex I more particularly ſpeak to. It would therefore be one part of the Benefit, its taking up ſome of their Time. Let me then earneſtly beſeech them, not to grudge a few of their vacant Hours to this ſo happy an Employment.

Did any of their near Friends and Relations invite them to an Interview, they would not think him too importunate, tho' he repeated the Summons weekly, nay daily, but would punctually obſerve the Meeting. And when their Saviour much ſeldomer intreats their Company, ſhall he not obtain it? Muſt he never ſee them but at two or three ſolemn Times of the Year? And ſhall they wonder at any intervening Invitation, as the *Shunamite*'s Husband did at her going to the Prophet, when it was neither *new Moon nor Sabbath*, and tell him, 'tis not *Eaſter* or *Chriſtmas?* This were not only to be *Irreligious* but *Rude*. And methinks theſe who ſtand ſo much upon Punctilios of Civility to one another, ſhould not then only lay aſide their good Manners when they are to treat with their *Redeemer*. Certainly he is not ſo unpleaſant Company that they need ſhun his Converſe: If he appears ſo to any, 'tis that ſhunning which is the cauſe of it; he does not open his Treaſures to Strangers: They who come now and then for Form ſake, no wonder if their *Entertainment* be as cold as their *Addreſs*. They that would indeed *taſte how ſweet the Lord is*, muſt by the frequency of their coming ſhew the heartineſs of it, and then they would indeed find it a *Feaſt of fat Things*, as the *Prophet* ſpeaks.

In a word, let them but make Experiment, reſolve, for a certain Time, be it a Year or thereabouts, to omit

no Opportunity, and withal no due Preparation of *Communicating:* I am a little confident they will afterwards need no other Importunity but that of their own Longings. The expiration of that *Definite* Time will prove the beginning of an Indefinite; and their Reſolutions will have no other Limits but their Lives. For in all the whole myſtery of Godlineſs, in all the Oeconomy of the Goſpel, there is not ſo expedite, ſo infallible a Means of Growth in Grace, as a frequent and worthy Participation of this bleſſed *Sacrament*, by which we not only complete all our Devotions, crown and hallow the reſt of of our Oblations to God, but we ſhall be advanced in all the practical Parts of Piety.

For tho' this and other ſacred Offices be perform'd in the *Church*, the Efficacy of them is not circumſcribed within thoſe Walls, but follows the devout Soul through all the Occurrences of human Life.

She who has intently conſider'd the Preſence of God in the *Sanctuary*, has learn'd ſo much of his *Ubiquity*, that ſhe will not eaſily forget it in other Places; and ſhe who remembers that, will need no other Guard to ſecure her Innocence; no other Incentive to animate her Endeavours; ſince ſhe is view'd by him who is equally powerful to puniſh and reward; who regards not the Perſon of the Mighty, nor can be aw'd into connivance by a Prince. Indeed, a ſerious reflecting on the divine Preſence, is the moſt certain curb to all diſorderly Appetites; as on the contrary, the *not having God before their Eyes*, is in Scripture the comprehenſive Deſcription of the moſt wretched, profligate State of Sin.

It concerns therefore all thoſe who aſpire to true Piety, to nouriſh that awful Senſe in their Hearts, as that which will beſt enable them to practiſe the Apoſtle's Advice, *To cleanſe themſelves from all Filthineſs of the Fleſh and Spirit, and to perfect Holineſs in the fear of God.*

There is nothing in our *Religion* ſo ſolemn as the *Sacrament* of the *Lord's Supper*; to the frequent Receiving of which, we are bound as *Chriſtians*, and we cannot neglect

neglect it without a great Contempt of our bleſſed Saviour and his Religion: He has appointed it for a ſolemn Remembrance of his great Love to us, in laying down his Life for us: and therefore he commands us to do it in remembrance of him: And St. *Paul* tells us, That *as often as we eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, we do ſhew forth the Lord's Death till he come.*

Great are both the Comfort and Benefit of it. The Comfort of it, becauſe it does not only repreſent to us the exceeding love of our Saviour, in giving his Body to be broken, and his Blood to be ſhed for us; but it alſo ſeals to us all thoſe Bleſſings and Benefits which are purchas'd and procur'd for us by his Death and Paſſion, the Pardon of Sins, and Power againſt Sin.

The Benefit of it is alſo great, becauſe hereby we are confirm'd in Goodneſs. Our Reſolutions of better Obedience are ſtrengthen'd, and the Grace of God's Holy Spirit to enable us to do his Will, is hereby convey'd to us. The beſt Preparation for it is, a ſincere *Repentance* for all our Sins and Miſcarriages, which we remember ourſelves to be at any time guilty of; Daily *Prayer* to God, that he would give us ſincere *Repentance* for all our Sins, and mercifully forgive them to us; and a ſerious and firm Reſolution to forſake them, and to do better for the future; to be more careful in all our Actions, and more conſtant in *Prayer* to God for his Grace, to enable us to keep his Commandments; a being in *Charity* with all Men, and forgiving thoſe who have injured us by Word or Deed, as we hope for Forgiveneſs from God.

Let none of us ſay that we are not fitted and prepared for it; 'tis our Duty to be ſo; and if we be not prepar'd to receive the *Sacrament*, we are not qualify'd for the Mercy of God, and for his Forgiveneſs; we are not prepar'd for the Happineſs of Heaven, and can have no Hopes to come thither. But if we prepare ourſelves as well as we can by *Repentance*, and Reſolutions of being better, and by praying heartily and earneſtly to God for his

his Grace, he will accept of this Preparation, and will give us the Comfort of this Holy *Sacrament*; the neglect of which is one of the moſt effectual Cauſes of the decay of *Chriſtian* Piety among us. Were it but frequented with that wiſe and due Preparation that it ought to be, 'twou'd doubtleſs be highly inſtrumental to reform the World, and to make Men good in good earneſt. For beſides that theſe ſacred *Elements* are by God's Inſtitution become moral Conſequences of the divine Grace, by which our good Reſolutions are nouriſh'd and confirmed; We have there repreſented openly to our Senſes one of the greateſt Arguments againſt Sin in all our Religion, the *Paſſion* and *Sacrifice* of our bleſſed Saviour: He is there repreſented to our Eyes in all his *Wounds* and *Agonies*, bruis'd and broken for our Sin, and bleeding to expiate our Tranſgreſſions: How can every Chriſtian help crying out in the Omiſſion of this Duty,

Oh my obdurate Heart! Canſt thou behold this tragical Spectacle without Indignation againſt thy Sins, which were the cauſe of it? Does not thy Heart riſe againſt thy Sins, whilſt thou here behold'ſt him wel'tring in his Blood, and heareſt thoſe gaping Wounds it iſſues from, proclaiming them his Aſſaſſins and Murderers! But if thou haſt not Ingenuity enough to prompt thee to revenge thy Saviour's Quarrel upon theſe his mortal Enemies, yet methinks Self-Love wou'd move thee not to be fond of thy Sins, when thou here beholdeſt how much the Son of God endur'd to expiate them: For how canſt thou think of Sinning, without Trembling and Aſtoniſhment, who haſt here before thy Eyes ſuch a dreadful Example of God's Severity againſt it? Does it not ſtrike thy Soul into an Agony, to behold this bloody Tragedy? In which the All-merciful Father is repreſented ſo inexorably incens'd againſt thy Sins, that he who was the moſt innocent Perſon that ever was upon Earth, and the greateſt Favourite that ever was in Heaven, cou'd not with all his Prayers and Tears obtain thy Pardon, without undergoing for thee the bitter Agonies of a woful Death? Sure if thou haſt any

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one ſpark of Love in thee towards thy Saviour, or thyſelf, this ſolemn Commemoration of his Paſſion cannot but affect thee with Horror and Indignation againſt thy Sins.

As in this great Solemnity we commemorate our Saviour's Paſſion, ſo we alſo renew the Vows of our Obedience to him; which is very inſtrumental in itſelf to the ſubduing of our Sins, but much more when 'tis done in ſo ſacred a Manner. For as feaſting upon Sacrifices was always us'd as a *Fœderal* Rite, both among the *Jews* and *Heathens*, whereby God and Man by *Eating* together, did mutually oblige themſelves to one another: So the *Lord's Supper* being a Feaſt upon the Sacrifice of Chriſt's Body and Blood; when we come thither, we eat and drink of his Sacrifice, and thereby devote ourſelves in the moſt ſolemn manner to his Service. We ſwear Allegiance to him upon his own Body and Blood, and take the *Sacrament* upon it that we will be his faithful Votaries. When we take the conſecrated Symbols into our Hands, we make this ſolemn Dedication of ourſelves to God.

Here we offer and preſent unto Thee, O Lord, ourſelves, our Souls and Bodies, to be a reaſonable, holy, and lively Sacrifice unto Thee; and here we call to witneſs this ſacred Blood that redeem'd us, and theſe vocal Wounds that interceded for us, that from henceforth we oblige ourſelves never to ſtart from thy Service, what Difficulty ſoever we may encounter in it, and what Temptation ſoever we may have to forſake it.

Now what can be a greater Reſtraint to us, when we are ſolicited to any Evil, than ſuch a ſolemn and ſacred Obligation? Methinks the Senſe of that dreadful Vow that is upon us, ſhou'd ſo overawe us, that we ſhould not be able to think of ſinning without Horror.

For, Lord, how ſhall I dare to cheat and defraud my Neighbour, when it was but the other Day that I vow'd to be Honeſt, and took the Sacrament upon it? With what Conſcience can I now hate, or deſign Revenge againſt my

Brother, whom I ſo lately ſwore unto God upon the Body and Blood of my Saviour, that I would love and forgive all the World?

Surely if Men had any ſenſe of God and Religion in them, they wou'd not be able, after ſuch Engagements, to look upon any Temptation to Sin without trembling; and whatever Pretences of Unworthineſs Men may make to keep themſelves from this Ordinance, I doubt not but the great Reaſon of their Neglect is this, that they love their Luſts, and are reſolv'd whatever comes of it they will not part with them; They will not come to the Sacrament, becauſe they muſt reſolve to renounce them; which they are extremely unwilling to do. And if this be their Reaſon, as 'tis to be fear'd it *is*, they are unworthy indeed, the more ſhame for them; but 'tis ſuch an Unworthineſs, as is ſo far from excuſing their Neglect, that it is a foul Aggravation of it. For He who will not receive the *Sacrament*, becauſe he will not renounce his Luſts, makes one Sin the Reaſon of another, and ſo pleads that for his Excuſe which will be the cauſe of his Condemnation. But if we are honeſtly reſolv'd to part with all our Sins, and can but willingly devote them as *Sacrifices* to the *Altar*, we are ſufficiently prepar'd for this great Solemnity, and ſhall be welcome Gueſts to the *Table* of our Lord. If we can ſincerely pay our *Vows* at his Altar, we may confidently *take the Cup of Salvation and call upon the Name of the Lord.* And having thus chain'd up our *Luſts* by the vows of Obedience we have paid there, it will be hard for them to ſhake off ſuch mighty *Fetters*, or ever to get looſe again from ſo ſtrict a *Confinement*, eſpecially if we take care to repeat this our *Sacramental* Vow as often as conveniently we can: For the frequent *Renewal* of our holy Vows doth mightily tend to ſtrengthen and reinforce them: and therefore 'tis worth obſerving, how much Care Chriſt has taken in the very Conſtitution of his Religion, to oblige us to a conſtant

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Repetition of our Vows and good Purpoſes: For at our firſt Entrance into *Covenant* with him, we are to be *Baptiz'd*; in which Solemnity we renounce the Devil and all his Works, and religiouſly devote ourſelves to his Service. But becauſe we are apt to forget our Vow, and the Matter of it is continually to be perform'd, and more than one World depends upon it, therefore he has thought fit not to truſt to our firſt Engagement, but ſo to methodize our *Religion*, that we ſhou'd often be obliged to give him new Security: For which End he has inſtituted this other *Sacrament*; which is not, like that of *Baptiſm*, to be receiv'd by Us once for all, but is to be frequently repeated, that ſo at every return of it we might be oblig'd again to renew our old *Vows* of Obedience. And doubtleſs, wou'd we but follow this good deſign of our Saviour, we ſhou'd be far more ſucceſsful in our Religion than we are: For till we come to a confirm'd ſtate of Goodneſs, our holy Fervour will be very apt to cool, our good Purpoſes to ſlacken and unwind, and our virtuous Endeavours to languiſh and grow weary; wherefore, unleſs we revive our Religion by frequent *Reſtoratives*, in a little time it will faint and die away. To keep it alive, 'tis very neceſſary to come to our great Maſter's *Table* every time we are invited, that here we may renew our *Vows*, and reinvigorate our *Reſolutions*, and repair our *Decays* and put our ſluggiſh *Graces* into a new Fermentation. And if we wou'd thus often communicate with a due preparation of Mind, we ſhou'd doubtleſs at every Sacrament acquire new Life and Vigour, and our good Reſolutions wou'd every Day get ground of our bad Inclinations, till at laſt they had totally ſubdu'd them.

Let us further conſider the *Sacrament* of the *Lord's Supper*, as a part of Divine Worſhip, an inſtrument of Holineſs, and a Remedy againſt Temptation; and the incomparable Office of our Church has admirably expreſſed and reduced to a Method the whole Mind of the Goſpel relating to this Matter. For which we have

cauſe to bleſs God, in beholding and reverencing that primitive Plainneſs, and truly Chriſtian Spirit viſible in it.

Our Lord's Supper, conſider'd as an Act or Part of religious Worſhip, contains an humble Acknowledgement of our Sins, a devout Profeſſion of our Faith in Chriſt, that we are Diſciples of our crucify'd Saviour, and expect *Salvation* no other way than by that Sacrifice of his Body and Blood offer'd upon the *Croſs*; and alſo contains a ſolemn Oblation of moſt humble and hearty Thanks to God for his ineſtimable Benefit, by beſtowing his Son upon us to die for us; and to our Maſter and only Saviour Chriſt, for his exceeding great Love in dying for us. 'Tis further, a moſt ſolemn Oblation of ourſelves, Souls, and Bodies, to be a holy, lively, and acceptable Sacrifice to God. Thus this *Sacrament* conſiſts of a whole Conſtellation of Graces, *Repentance, Faith, Hope, Charity:* It is a nearer Approach to the preſence of God, and more ſolemn Exerciſe of the *Graces* of the *Goſpel*, which gives a very fair Account of the Reaſon of its frequent Practice. For nothing can be a more effectual inſtrument of Holineſs, were it only on account of the Preparation neceſſary as a Condition of our worthy Reception, which awakens our Souls, and refreſhes all our *Graces*, mortifies all our ſenſual *Luſts*, and draws us nearer to Heaven. The neceſſity of this Preparation, as the Church Office preſcribes, appears from hence, that *Repentance, Faith*, and *Charity*, are abſolutely neceſſary to enable a Man to exert thoſe Effects before-mention'd, which conſtitute this *Sacrament*, conſider'd as a part of Divine Worſhip; and therefore to approach that holy Table without a Soul ſo qualify'd is to affront and mock the Majeſty of Heaven.

The exerciſe of our *Graces* in *receiving*, increaſes and improves them: That act of humble Adoration, and profound Proſtration of ourſelves before God, under a ſenſe of his Bounty and Majeſty, and our Sinfulneſs

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and Meanneſs; that lively act of Faith by which our Souls profeſs a Belief of, and Dependence upon, the Death and Paſſion of our dear Lord and Saviour, for *Salvation*; that *Love* whereby the Soul offers its Praiſes, and its ſelf a ſacrifice to God, leave ſuch lively and laſting Impreſſions upon Mens Minds, as are not quickly nor eaſily effaced; and the Soul by the Delight it finds in exerting theſe *Graces*, is enkindled with a deſire of repeating the ſame Acts.

The *Sacrament* itſelf has a natural Tendency to promote Holineſs, by its ſenſible Repreſentations of a crucify'd *Saviour*. The *Symbols* themſelves being fit to bring into our Minds the Pains and Sufferings of our dear Lord and Maſter, by that inward Grace inſeparable from the worthy Reception of it, beſtow'd upon us to refreſh and ſtrengthen our Souls, to root and confirm our Faith, to inflame our Love, and perfect our Hopes; by being a Pledge and Aſſurance to us of the pardon of our Sins, thro' the Blood of Chriſt. 'Tis a new and repeated engagement of ourſelves to the ſervice of Chriſt, to an obedience to his Laws, and a renunciation of thoſe enemies of Chriſtians, the *World*, the *Fleſh*, and the *Devil*. From all which it is eaſy to infer, that it is a ſtrong Fence and Antidote againſt Temptations: For theſe freſh Impreſſions of our Saviour's Love, the new Strengths of divine Grace, the vigour of a new and ſolemn Engagement to Obedience, fill the Soul with a holy Zeal againſt Sin, and a glorious contempt of ſenſual Pleaſures.

And now, O my God! What ſhould make me ſo prodigally vent'rous of my own Safety, as to neglect the frequent uſe of this holy Sacrament? Have I not needed frequently to examine myſelf? Are not thy Graces apt to wither and decay, unleſs thus water'd and refreſh'd? Does not my Converſe with the World, and my Communication with Fleſh and Blood, render it neceſſary for me to renew my Reſolutions againſt them as often as I can? Or is there not a holy Delight in the Exerciſe of all this, that ſurpaſſes

all the Pleaſures of a ſenſual Life? Is it not a Sacrifice that my Lord and Saviour is highly pleaſed with? Is it not reaſonable, that I ſhould oblige him who dy'd for me, with this frequent Acknowledgment of his infinite Love; evidenced in his Death? Pardon me, O my God, that I have been ſo ungrateful to Thee, ſo ſenſeleſs of my own Welfare and Advantage. For the Time to come I will delight in this holy Communion: I will often offer up myſelf a Sacrifice to Thee, and profeſs my Faith in a crucify'd Saviour, and thence beg thy Aſſiſtance and Conduct thro' the difficult Paths of this preſent Life. And O my God! Accept them of my Addreſſes and Praiſes, thro' the infinite Mercies and Blood of Chriſt.

Before we cloſe our Conſiderations on this divine Subject, we muſt inquire into the Riſe and Origin of this Myſtery, and explain the Reaſon of its being eſtabliſh'd as a principal Ordinance of Chriſtianity.

Among the wonderful Works of Power and Grace, perform'd by God Almighty in favour of the Children of *Iſrael*, and in order to their Deliverance from the *Egyptian* Slavery, a moſt ſignal one was the deſtroying the Firſtborn of the *Egyptians*, and paſſing over the Houſes of the *Children* of *Iſrael*. In which God declar'd his juſt Wrath againſt their cruel Oppreſſors, depriving them in a ſudden and dreadful manner of what was neareſt and deareſt to them; and his gracious Mercy towards the *Iſraelites* in preſerving what was alike dear to them from ſo woful a Calamity. Now that the Memory of ſo remarkable a Mercy might be preſerv'd, that their Affections might be raiſed to a ſtrong Senſe of God's Goodneſs, and their Faith in him confirm'd, ſo as in the like Need to hope for the ſame favourable Help and Protection by the conſideration of ſo notable an Experiment, it pleaſed God to appoint a *Sacrament*, or myſterious Rite, to be annually celebrated, repreſenting and recalling to mind that Act of God in which his ſpecial Kindneſs was ſo eminently demonſtrated towards his People; looking forward however upon that other great

great Delivery from Sin and Hell, which God in Mercy diſcover'd to Mankind was to be attain'd by our Saviour; prefiguring, that the Souls of thoſe that ſhould be willing to forſake the ſpiritual Bondage of Sin, ſhou'd be ſav'd from the Ruin coming upon them who would abide therein: God regarding the Blood of our Saviour, that Immaculate Lamb ſacrific'd for them, ſprinkled upon the Doors of their Houſes, that is by hearty Faith and Repentance apply'd to their Conſciences. The Occaſion of celebrating which holy Rite, our Saviour we ſee did improve to the Inſtitution of this *Sacrament*; moſt agreeing with it in Deſign, as Repreſentative and Commemorative of the greateſt Bleſſing and Mercy we are capable of having vouchſafed to us. Some part of that ancient *Rite* or *Sacrifice*, which was moſt ſuitable to the ſpecial Purpoſes of this Inſtitution, and moſt conformable to the general Conſtitution of the Chriſtian Religion, by which all bloody *Sacrifices* are aboliſh'd, being retain'd in this.

The Action itſelf, or rather the whole *Rite*, conſiſting of ſeveral Actions, is plainly deſcrib'd in the Goſpels, diſtinguiſhable into theſe chief Parts; The *Benediction* and *Conſecration* (by *Prayer* and *Thankſgiving*) of *Bread* and *Wine*; the *Breaking* of *Bread*, and handling the *Cup*, the Delivery and Diſtribution of them to the Perſons preſent, the Declaration accompanying that Delivery; that thoſe Symbolical Things and Actions do repreſent our Saviour's *Body* given and broken, our Saviour's *Blood* ſhed and pour'd out for us, in Sanction of the new Covenant; the actual partaking of theſe Symbols, by eating the *Bread* and drinking the *Wine*, done by all preſent. Theſe things we find done at the firſt Inſtitution, and exemplary Practice of this holy Ceremony, which our Saviour oblig'd us to imitate, ſaying, *Do this in Remembrance of me.* There follows in St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark* preſently after the Narration concerning theſe Particulars, *And having ſung a Hymn, they went to the Mount of Olives*; which Action

was indeed in itſelf proper to conclude the Practice of this holy *Rite*; yet what Reference it has towards it, cannot thence be determined: However, with theſe the Church has always join'd ſeveral Acts of *Devotion, Confeſſion, Prayers, Praiſes, Thankſgivings, Interceſſions, Vows,* ſuitable to the Nature and Deſign of the *Sacrament*, to glorify God and edify the Faithful in the Celebration of it.

Such is the Practice itſelf inſtituted and injoin'd by our *Saviour*; the myſterious Importance of it, as we find it explain'd in holy Scripture, that only ſolid and ſure Ground upon which we can build the Explication of ſupernatural Myſteries, conſiſts chiefly in theſe Particulars.

It was intended for a *Commemorative* Repreſentation of our Saviour's *Paſſion* for us; fit to mind us of it, to move us to conſider it, to beget Affection in us ſuitable to the Memory and Conſideration of it: *To tell forth the Death of our Lord till he come*, or during his Abſence. The Suffering of our Saviour, the moſt wonderful Act of Goodneſs and Charity that ever was perform'd in the World, which produc'd Effects of higheſt Conſequence to our Benefit, ſhou'd very frequently be preſent to our Thoughts and Affections; and that it may be ſo with Advantage, ſuch a ſolemn and ſenſible Repreſentation of it is very conducible, in which we behold him crucify'd as it were in *Effigy*, his Body broken, his Blood pour'd out for us, it being in a ſort a putting us into the Circumſtances of thoſe who beheld our *Saviour* for us hanging upon the *Croſs*. Our Lord being abſent in *Body* from us, ſitting at the Right Hand of the Father in Heaven; to ſupply that Abſence, and that we ſhould not be apt to forget him, and thereby become wholly eſtrang'd from him, is pleaſed to order this Occaſion of being preſent, and converſing with us, ſuch a manner as may retain in our Memories his gra cious Performances for us, may impreſs in our Hearts a kindly Senſe of them, may raiſe us up in Affection and Mind to him.

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The Benefits conſequent upon our Saviour's *Paſſion* rightly apprehended, heartily believ'd, ſeriouſly conſider'd by us, are hereby lively repreſented, and effectually convey'd to the Suſtenance and Nouriſhment of our Spiritual Life, and the Refreſhment and Comfort of our Souls. It is a Holy Feaſt, a Spiritual Repaſt, a Divine Entertainment, to which God in kindneſs invites us, to which if we come with well-diſpoſed Minds, he there feeds us with moſt Holy and Delicious Viands, with Heavenly *Manna*, with moſt reviving and cheriſhing Liquor. *Bread is the Staff of Life*, the moſt common, moſt neceſſary, moſt wholſom, and moſt ſavoury *Meat*. *Wine* is the moſt pleaſant, moſt wholſom, moſt ſprightly and cordial *Drink*. By them therefore our Lord choſe to repreſent that *Body* and *Blood*, by the Oblation of which a Capacity of Life and Health was procur'd to Mankind; the taking in which by right Apprehenſion, taſting it by hearty Faith, digeſting it by careful Attention and Meditation, converting it to our Subſtance by devout, grateful and holy Affections, join'd with ſerious and ſteddy Reſolutions of living anſwerable thereto, will certainly ſupport and maintain our ſpiritual Life, in a vigorous health and happy growth of Grace, refreſhing our hearts with unſpeakable Comfort and Satisfaction. He *that doth thus, eats our Saviour's Fleſh, and drinks his Blood*, that is, he who, as our Saviour interprets it, *doth believe in him*; that Belief importing all other Acts of Mind and Will connected, with right Perſuaſions concerning him, *hath eternal Life and ſhall live for ever*, as himſelf declares and promiſes; which Benefits therefore are convey'd to us in the due Performance of this holy Duty.

The *Sacrament* of the *Lord's Supper* declares that Union, which good Chriſtians partaking of it, have with Chriſt; their Myſtical Inſertion into him by a cloſe Dependence upon him for ſpiritual Life, Mercy, Grace and Salvation; a conſtant adherence to him by Faith and Obedience; a near Conformity to him in

Mind and Affection; an inſeparable Conjunction with him by the ſtricteſt Bonds of Fidelity, and by the moſt endearing Relations; which Things cou'd not more fitly be ſet out, than by participating of our beſt and moſt neceſſary *Food*, which being taken in, ſoon becomes united to us, aſſimilated and converted into our Subſtance, thereby renewing our Strength, and repairing the Decays of Nature: Wherefore, *He*, ſays our Saviour, *that eateth my Fleſh, and drinketh my Blood, abideth in me and I in him.* And, ſays St. *Paul*, *The Cup of Bleſſing which we bleſs, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Chriſt? the Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Chriſt?* We in the outward Action partake of the *Symbols* repreſenting our Saviour's Body and Blood: We in the ſpiritual Intentions *communicate* of his very Perſon, being, according to the Manner inſinuated, intimately united to him.

By this *Sacrament* conſequently is ſignify'd and ſeal'd that *Union* which is among our Saviour's true Diſciples *communicating* therein; and their being together united in conſent of Mind and Unity of Faith, in mutual Goodwill and Affection, in Hope and Tendency to the ſame bleſſed End; in ſpiritual Brotherhood and Society, eſpecially upon Account of their *Communion* with Chriſt, which moſt cloſely ties them to one another. They partaking of this individual Food, become tranſlated as it were with one Body and Subſtance; *Seeing*, ſays St. *Paul*, *we being many are one Bread and one Body; for all of us do partake of one Bread.*

In the repreſenting, producing and promoting theſe things, we are taught that the *Myſtery* of this *Sacrament* conſiſts. It was deſign'd as a proper and efficacious Inſtrument to raiſe in us pious Affections towards our God and gracious *Redeemer*; to diſpoſe us to all Holy Practice; to confirm our Faith; to nouriſh our Hope; to quicken our Reſolutions of walking carefully in the Ways of Duty; to unite us more firmly to our Saviour, and to combine us in Charity one towards another. The

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accompliſhing of which Intents of it, ſuppoſes our faithful and diligent Concurrence in the Uſe of it; whence ariſe many Duties incumbent upon us in reſpect to it, ſome Antecedent, ſome Concomitant, and ſome Conſequent to this Duty.

Before we addreſs ourſelves to the partaking of this venerable *Myſtery*, we ſhould conſider whither we are going, what is the Nature and Importance of the Action we ſet ourſelves about when we are approaching to our *Lord's Table:* So the Apoſtle calls it: To come into his more eſpecial Preſence, to be entertain'd by him with the deareſt Welcome, and the beſt Cheer that can be; to receive the fulleſt Teſtimonies of his Mercy, and the ſureſt Pledges of his Favour towards us; that we are going to behold our Lord in tendereſt Love, offering up himſelf a Sacrifice to God therein, undergoing the ſoreſt Pains and fouleſt Diſgraces for our Good and Salvation; that we ought therefore to bring with us Diſpoſitions of Soul ſuitable to ſuch an Acceſs, to ſuch an Intercourſe with our gracious Lord. Had we the Honour and Favour to be invited to the *Table* of a great Prince, what eſpecial Care ſhould we have to dreſs our Bodies in a clean and decent Garb, to compoſe our Minds in order to Expreſſions of all due Reſpect to him, to bring nothing about us noiſom or ugly, that might offend his Sight or diſpleaſe his Mind? The like ſurely, and greater Care we ſhould apply, when we thus being call'd, go into God's Preſence and *Communion.* We ſhould in Preparation for it, with all our Power, endeavour to cleanſe our Souls from all Impurity of Thought and Deſire; from all Iniquity and Perverſeneſs, from all Malice, Envy, Hatred, Anger, and all ſuch Evil Diſpoſitions, which are moſt offenſive to God's all-piercing Sight, and unbecoming his glorious Preſence; we ſhould dreſs ourſelves with all thoſe comely Ornaments of Grace, with *Purity, Humility, Meekneſs* and *Charity,* which will render us acceptable and well-pleaſing to him. We ſhould compoſe

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our Minds into a Frame of reverence and awful regard of God, into a lowly, calm, and tender Diſpoſition of Heart, apt to expreſs all the Reſpect due to his Preſence, fit to admit the gracious Illapſes of his Holy Spirit, very ſuſceptive of all Holy and Heavenly Affections, which are ſuitable to ſuch a *Communion*, or may ſpring from it. We ſhould therefore renounce and abandon, not only all vicious Inclinations, and evil Purpoſes, but even all worldly Cares, Deſires and Paſſions, which may diſtract or diſcompoſe us, that may make us dull and heavy, that may cauſe us to behave ourſelves indecently or unworthily before God, or any way bereave us of the excellent Fruits of ſo bleſſed an Entertainment.

To theſe Purpoſes we ſhould, according to St. *Paul's* Advice, examine and approve ourſelves, conſidering our paſt Actions, and our preſent Inclinations. And accordingly, by ſerious Meditation, and fervent Prayer to God for his gracious Aſſiſtance therein, work our Souls into a hearty Remorſe of our paſt Miſcarriages, and a ſincere Reſolution to amend for the future; forſaking all Sin, endeavouring in all our Actions to ſerve and pleaſe God, *purging out the old Leaven of Vice and Wickedneſs*, that we may feaſt and celebrate this *Paſſover*, in which Chriſt is myſtically ſacrific'd for us in the *unleavened* Diſpoſitions of *Sincerity* and *Truth*. Such are the *Duties previous* to our partaking this *Sacrament*.

Thoſe which accompany it are, a reverent and devout Affection of Heart, with a ſuitable behaviour therein; an awful Senſe of Mind, befitting the Majeſty of that Preſence wherein we appear; anſwerable to the Greatneſs, Goodneſs and Holineſs of him with whom we converſe; becoming the Sacredneſs of thoſe Myſteries which are exhibited to us, which St. *Paul* calls a *diſcerning* or diſtinguiſhing *our Lord's Body*: A Devotion of Heart, conſiſting in hearty Contrition for our Sins, which expoſed our Saviour to the enduring ſuch Pains there

here *remember'd*; in firm Reſolution to forſake the like hereafter; as Injurious, Diſhonourable and Diſpleaſing to Him; in fervent Love of him, as full of ſuch wonderful Goodneſs and Charity towards us, in the moſt hearty Thankfulneſs for thoſe unconceivably great Expreſſions of Kindneſs towards us, in deepeſt Humility from a Senſe of our *Unworthineſs*, to receive ſuch Teſtimonies of Grace and Favour from him: *We are Unworthy to eat the Crumbs that fall from his Table*; how much more to be admitted into ſuch Degrees of honourable Communion; Familiarity of cloſe Conjunction and Union with him: Our Devotion ſhould therefore conſiſt partly in a joyful Conſideration of the excellent Privileges herein imparted, and of the bleſſed Fruits accruing to us from his gracious Performances; in a comfortable Hope of obtaining and enjoying the Benefits of his *Obedience* and *Paſſion*, by the Aſſiſtance of his Grace; in ſteady Faith and full Perſuaſion of Mind that he is (ſuppoſing our dutiful Compliance) ready to beſtow upon us all the Bleſſings then exhibited; in attentively fixing the Eyes of our Minds and all the Powers of our Souls, our Underſtanding, Will, Memory, Fancy, Affection upon him, as willingly pouring forth his Life for our Salvation; in Motions of enlarg'd Good-will and Charity towards all our Brethren for his Sake, in Obedience to his Will, and Imitation of him. Thus ſhould our Souls be dreſs'd when we preſent ourſelves at Chriſt's Table, and partake of this Holy *Sacrament*.

But when we have even thus Eaten of that Bread, and Drank of that Cup, we muſt not imagine that our Work is over; there are yet many great but comfortable Duties incumbent on us afterwards; we muſt cheriſh all pious Inclinations and Affections, and labour to make them bring forth ſtill more goodly Fruits of Obedience; we muſt thoroughly digeſt that ſpiritual Nouriſhment by becoming more firmly knit to our Saviour by higher Degrees of Faith and Love; by main-

maintaining a more lively Senſe of his ſuperabundant Goodneſs; by cheriſhing thoſe Influences of Grace which deſcend upon our Hearts in this *Communion*, and by improving them to nearer Degrees of Perfection in all Piety and Virtue; we muſt be very careful to approve ourſelves in ſome meaſure worthy of that great Honour and Favour which God has vouchſafed us, in admitting us to ſo near Approaches to himſelf; we muſt firmly adhere to thoſe Reſolutions, perform thoſe Vows, and make good thoſe Engagements which in ſo ſolemn a Manner, upon ſo great an Occaſion we made, and offered up to our God and Saviour. We muſt conſider, that by the Breach of ſuch Reſolutions, by the Violation of ſuch Engagements, our Sins receiving ſuch mighty Aggravation of vain Inconſtancy and wicked Perfidiouſneſs, our Guilt will be mightily increaſed: Our Souls relapſing into ſo grievous a Diſtemper, our Spiritual Strength will be exceedingly impair'd; conſequently hence our true Comforts will be abated, our beſt Hopes will be ſhaken, our Eternal State will be deſperately endangered.

There is one Duty concerning this *Sacrament* which we muſt not forbear touching, and that is, our gladly embracing any Opportunity preſented, for *communicating* therein; the doing ſo being not only a Duty, but a great Aid and Inſtrument of *Piety*, the neglecting it a grievous Sin, and productive of great Miſchiefs to us.

The primitive Chriſtians did very frequently uſe it, partaking therein, as it ſeems, at every Time of their Meeting for God's Service. St. *Luke* ſays of them, *They continued ſtedfaſtly in the Apoſtles Doctrine and Communion, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayer.* And *when you meet together, it is not*, as according to the Intent and Duty of Meeting it ſhould be, to *eat the Lord's Supper*, ſays St. *Paul.* And *Juſtin Martyr* in his ſecond Apology, diſcourſing of the Religious Service of God in their *Aſſemblies*, mentions it as a conſtant Part of it. *Epiphanius* reports it a Cuſtom in the Church, deriv'd

deriv'd from the Apoſtolical Inſtitution, to celebrate the *Euchariſt* thrice every Week, that is, ſo often as they met to pray and praiſe God; which Practice may well be conceiv'd a great Means of kindling and preſerving in them that Holy Fervour of Piety which they ſo illuſtriouſly expreſs'd in their Converſation, and in their gladſom Suffering for Chriſt's Sake. The remitting of that Frequency, as it is certainly a Sign and an Effect ſo in part it may be reckon'd a Cauſe of the Degeneracy of *Chriſtian* Practice, into that great Coldneſs and Slackneſs which afterwards ſeiz'd upon it, and now does apparently keep it in a languiſhing and half-dying State.

The rarer Occaſions therefore we now have of performing this Duty (the which indeed was always eſteem'd the principal Office of God's Service; and the being depriv'd of which was alſo deem'd the greateſt Puniſhment and Infelicity that could be inflicted on, or befal a *Chriſtian*) the more ready we ſhould be to embrace them. If we dread God's Diſpleaſure; if we value our Lord and his Benefits; if we tender the Life, Health and Welfare of our Souls, we ſhall not neglect it; for how can we but grievouſly offend God by ſuch extreme Rudeneſs, that when he kindly invites us to his Table, we are averſe from coming thither, or utterly refuſe? That when he calls us into his Preſence we run from him, that when he with his own Hand offers us ineſtimable Mercies and Bleſſings, we reject them? It is not only the Breach of God's Command who injoin'd us to *do this*, but a direct Contempt of his Favour and Goodneſs, moſt clearly and largely exhibited in this Office. And how can we bear any regard to our Lord, or be anywiſe ſenſible of his gracious Performances in our Behalf, if we are unwilling to join in thankful and joyful Commemorations of them? How little do we love our own Souls, if we ſuffer them to pine and ſtarve for want of that Food which God here diſpenſes for their Suſtenance and Comfort? if we bereave them for enjoying

ing ſo high a Privilege, ſo ineſtimable a Benefit, ſo incomparable Pleaſures, as are to be found and felt in this Service, or ſpring and flow from it, What reaſonable Excuſe can we frame for ſuch Neglect? Are we otherwiſe employed? What Buſineſs can there be more important than ſerving God and ſaving our own Souls? Is it Wiſdom, in purſuance of any the greateſt Affair here, to diſregard the principal Concern of our Souls? Do we think ourſelves unfit and unworthy to appear in God's Preſence? But is any Man unworthy to obey God's Commands? Is any Man unfit to implore and partake of God's Mercy, if he be not unwilling to do it? What Unworthineſs ſhould hinder us from remembring our Lord's exceſſive Charity towards us, and thanking him for it? from praying for his Grace; from reſolving to amend our Lives? Muſt we, becauſe we are unworthy, continue ſo ſtill, by ſhunning the Means of correcting and curing us? Muſt we increaſe our Unworthineſs by tranſgreſſing our Duty? If we eſteem things well, the Conſciouſneſs of our Sinfulneſs ſhould rather drive us to it as to our Medicine, than detain us from it. There is no Man indeed who muſt not conceive and confeſs himſelf unworthy, therefore muſt no Man come thither at God's Call? If we have a Senſe of our Sins, and a Mind to leave them; if we have a Senſe of God's Goodneſs, and a Heart to thank him for it, we are ſo worthy that we ſhall be kindly received there, and graciouſly rewarded. If we will not take a little Care to work theſe Diſpoſitions in ourſelves, we are indeed unworthy; but the being ſo from our own perverſe Negligence, is a bad Excuſe for the Neglect of our Duty: He, who with an honeſt Meaning, tho' with an imperfect Devotion, addreſſes himſelf to the Performance of this moſt Holy Part of God's Worſhip, is far more excuſable than he who declines it upon what Score ſoever; no ſcrupulous Shineſs can ward us from Blame. What then ſhall we ſay, if ſupine Sloth, or profane Contempt, are the Cauſes of ſuch Neglect?

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I ſhall not here meddle with a Controverſy ſtarted by ſome Caſuiſts; Whether the proſtituting this Holy *Sacrament* to any worldly Intereſts, or enforcing it upon Accounts mere political, is juſtifiable from Scripture, or the Nature of this ſacred Inſtitution. The Ladies have not been much expoſed to the Temptation of unworthy receiving the Lord's Supper, to qualify them for ſome Poſt of Honour or Profit in this tranſitory Life; and therefore I ſhall leave ſuch Inquiries to others, and content myſelf with what has been ſaid of the Importance and Neceſſity of the conſtant Exerciſe of this Duty.



ZEAL.

ZEAL.

WHAT a noble Subject is this? And yet alas! how has it lately been miſtaken and abuſed? Heroick Acts, or what is more, the Heroick *Lives* of *Saints*, *Martyrs* and *Confeſſors*, preſent themſelves to my Thoughts. Here human Nature enrich'd, adorn'd, and elevated to the utmoſt Degree, by a participation of the divine one: Here the power of God's Word; the energy of the Holy Ghoſt; the triumphs of *Faith*; and the ecſtaſies of Love might be deſcribed. Here the different excellencies of different Virtues; and the different value of good Works ſhould be ſtated and ſettled; and the various Paths in which Men purſue the height of Virtue, and the nobleſt Deſigns be examined; and ſolid Piety and true Wiſdom be refin'd from the Alloys and Mixtures of Enthuſiaſm, Superſtition, Fancy, or whatever elſe they are disfigur'd or debas'd by.

I do not exclude ſome degrees of Zeal from every period of the Chriſtian's Life. Sincerity cannot ſubſiſt wholly without it: *The Hunger and Thirſt after Righteouſneſs*, which is the ſubject of one of our Saviour's Beatitudes, muſt be more or leſs in every Child of God. But it may ſignify one thing in the *Infant*, another in the *Adult* Chriſtian: In the one, the conqueſt of *Sin*, or rather of the relicks and remains of former ſinful Habits,

Habits, and the attainment of habitual Goodneſs, is the object of this *Hunger* and *Thirſt*. In the other it imports a vehement Deſire of whatever is yet wanting to a farther accompliſhment and conſummation of Righteouſneſs already fix'd and eſtabliſh'd; the intire and ultimate Perfection of it in Heaven; and in the mean time the promoting the Divine Glory upon *Earth*, whatever it coſt him to do ſo. By a State of *Zeal* then I here mean Virtue or Holineſs, not in the *Bud* or in the *Bloſſom*, but in its full Strength and Stature, grown up and ripe, and loaded with bleſſed Fruits: That Holineſs I mean which is the reſult of *Illumination*, or clearneſs of Judgment, of the Strength and Force of holy Reſolution, and the Vigour and Energy of holy Paſſions; that ſolid, ſpiritual, and operative Religion, which may be felt and enjoy'd by us ourſelves, in the ſerenity and tranquillity of Conſcience, the longings and breathings of pious Deſires, the joys and pleaſures of a rational Aſſurance, diſcerned by the World in our Lives and Actions, in the modeſty of our Garb, in the plainneſs and humility of all Things elſe that pertain to this part of Life; in the temperance of our Meats, the purity and heavenlineſs of our Converſation, the moderation of our Deſigns and Enjoyments, the inſtruction of our Families, with a tender and indefatigable Watchfulneſs over them; the conſtancy of our Attendance upon, and the devoutneſs of our Deportment in the publick Worſhip of God; and laſtly in the activity and generoſity of our Charity; or to ſpeak my Thoughts in the Language of St. *Paul*, a State of *Zeal* is that Perfection or maturity of Holineſs which abounds *in the Works of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, in the Sight of God and our Father*. Now the end of all this is the advancing the glory of God; and therefore *Zeal* is well enough deſcrib'd or defin'd by an ardent or vehement Deſire of doing ſo, either by our Holineſs, or by the Fruit of it.

Good

Good Works. Of both which I will ſpeak a little more particularly.

Of that *Perfection* of *Holineſs* which conſtitutes this *Zeal*, two Things are to be enquired into:

Whether the *Perfect Man* muſt be poſſeſt of all the treaſures of Goodneſs: Whether he muſt be adorn'd with a Confluence and an Accumulation of all Virtue.

What height of *Virtue*, what degree of Holineſs he may be ſuppos'd to be arriv'd at.

For the *Extent* of *Righteouſneſs*; it is generally thought, Univerſality is as eſſential and neceſſary a Property of Goſpel-*Righteouſneſs* as Sincerity and Perſeverance; That there is an inſeparable Connexion and Union between all chriſtian Virtues; that he who wants any, muſt be concluded to have none. This Want being not like a Blemiſh, which diminiſhes the Beauty, or a Strain that weakens the Strength; but like a Wound, that diſſolves the Frame and Contexture of the natural Body. This Opinion is partly built upon Reaſon, which tells us that there is a native Luſtre and Beauty in all Virtues; and therefore there is no one in the whole Syſtem of *Morality* but muſt be lovely and amiable to a good Man; partly upon Scripture, in which we find the Chriſtian repreſented *Holy in all manner of Converſation, perfect in every good Work, as fill'd with all the Fulneſs of God, as fruitful in every good Work,* and exhorted in the moſt comprehenſive Terms imaginable to the practice of every Virtue. *Finally, Brethren, whatſoever Things are true, whatſoever Things are honeſt, whatſoever Things are juſt, whatſoever Things are pure, whatſoever Things are lovely, whatſoever Things are of good Report: If there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praiſe, think on theſe Things.* To which may be added the numerous Texts, importing, that *Faith* is a principle of univerſal *Righteouſneſs*; that the fear and love of God do equally oblige us to all his Commandments; and that the violation of one involves us in the guilt of

all.

all. The reſult of all which ſeems to be plainly this, that the whole chain of Graces is diſſolv'd and loſt, if there be but one Link wanting. But at this Rate, as the *Sincere* Man muſt be endow'd with all manner of Virtues, ſo muſt the Perfect excel in all. Which *Aſſertions*, if we cloſely conſider both the one and the other, ſeem to have in them inſuperable Difficulties. There is a vaſt Variety in the Nature of Men, in the States and Conditions of Life, and in the Kinds and Degrees, as well of the Sanctifying, as of the miraculous Gifts of God. St. *Paul* tells us, *Every Man has his proper Gift of God.* From whence we may naturally infer, That every Man is not capable of attaining to an Excellence and Eminence in every Virtue; Experience tells us, That there are different kinds of *Natures* as well as *Soils*; and that ſome kinds of Virtue, like ſome kinds of Seeds, will thrive better in one than in another. Nor does Grace alter the Matter much, ſince it generally accommodates itſelf to Nature. It ſeems very hard, that every Man ſhould have the Virtues of all Men, of all States and Capacities, every particular Member the Virtues of the whole *Church*. The Beauty and Strength of the *Church*, as well as of the natural Body or Commonwealth, conſiſting not in the All-ſufficiency of every Member, but in that variety of Gifts or Graces that cements and unites, enriches and ſupports the whole. To come up to the matter of Fact: I read of the *Faith* of *Abraham*, the *Meekneſs* of *Moſes*, the *Patience* of *Job*, the *Love* of *Mary Magdalene*, the *Zeal* of St. *Peter*, and the *Labours* and *Travels* of St. *Paul*; which *Firmneſs* and *Conſtancy* is too mean a Name for. Theſe Virtues ſeem therefore to have been *peculiar* Excellencies of thoſe Perſons; and to have ſhone in them with more tranſcendent Luſtre than any other: Theſe ſeem to have been the Virtues for which Nature and Grace eminently qualify'd them, and to which the Providence of God more immediately and directly call'd them. All this conſidered, ſeems it not enough to come to the *Perfection* of theſe great

great Men? May it not ſuffice to excel in theſe Virtues, which Nature, Grace, and Providence preſcrib'd? May not the *perfect* be allow'd to want what he does not need? Would one not think, that in many Reſpects it were enough for him to be free from this or that Vice, rather than to expect that he ſhould be adorn'd with this or that Virtue which he has no Uſe for? Eſpecially if by Virtue we underſtand ſtrictly ſuch a Habit as enables us to act eaſily and delightfully.

The *Perfect Man* muſt not only be ſet free from the dominion of Sin, but alſo abſtain even from a ſingle Act of preſumptuous Wickedneſs: He muſt neither criminally *omit* a Duty, nor deliberately commit any thing repugnant to it.

He muſt be endow'd with ſpiritual *Wiſdom* and *Underſtanding*, with *Faith*, *Hope*, *Charity*, with the *Graces* which are call'd *Univerſal*, becauſe Neceſſary and Indiſpenſable to all as Chriſtians, abſtracting from their particular Capacities and Relations, and that too in an eminent Degree, ſo as *to be ſtrong in the Grace which is in* Jeſus Chriſt. *This will render him holy in all manner of Converſation, and thoroughly furniſh'd to all good Works.* Theſe two things conſtitute *univerſal* Righteouſneſs, complete the *Perfect Man*, and fully ſatisfy the Texts alledg'd.

He muſt excel in thoſe *Virtues* which are moſt *natural*. Thoſe *Virtues* are call'd *Natural*, to which Grace and Nature moſt powerfully diſpoſe and incline him: For theſe he ſeems to be deſign'd by God; theſe will ſoon grow up to Maturity, and much will be their Fruit, and great their Beauty. It is not ſuppos'd all this while, that the *Perfect Man* ought not ſo far to ſubdue and rectify his Temper, as not only to overcome the Sin of his *Conſtitution*, but in ſome degree poſſeſs the Virtue that is moſt repugnant to it. But to expect him to be eminent here, is too hard and unreaſonable. For here, when he has beſtow'd much Pains and Travel,

Travel, much Care and Coſt, his Progreſs may not be ſo much as where he beſtow'd leaſt.

Let no Man miſtake contracted *Habits* for *Nature*, and then conclude that it will be impoſſible for him to attain the Perfection of this or that Virtue, through a natural Incapacity. Let no man ſatisfy and content himſelf in a weak and impotent State of that Virtue which is directly oppos'd to the Sin of his *Conſtitution*, but let him think that here, or any where, his Virtue muſt be always growing, and let him not doubt but that our Saviour's Promiſe, as far as it can be accompliſh'd upon Earth, belongs to his ſincere Endeavour here: *Bleſſed are they that hunger and thirſt after Righteouſneſs, for they ſhall be filled.*

The *Perfect Man* muſt be eminent in thoſe Virtues which are moſt *neceſſary*; ſuch are thoſe which his particular Calling and Station, or any other diſpenſation of Providence he is under, require of Him. Whatever Virtues may be more *delightful*, theſe are more *important*; others may be more *natural*; theſe have more of *Uſe*, and more of *Merit*. A Man may fall ſhort of *Perfection* in others, without either *Diſparagement* or *Guilt*; but Deficiency in theſe can hardly eſcape both. Beſides, every thing is lovely in its Place, and in its Time. There is a peculiar Grace and Luſtre that attends the Virtues of a Man's Station, that is ſcarcely to be found in any other. I would therefore have my *perfect Man* truly great in his own Buſineſs, and ſhine with a dazzling Luſtre in his own Sphere. To this purpoſe ſurely ſpeaks the Advice of St. *Paul*, *Having then Gifts differing according to the Grace that is given us, whether Propheſy, let us propheſy according to the proportion of Faith; or Miniſtry, let us wait on our miniſtring; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on Exhortation: He that giveth, let him do it with Simplicity; He that ruleth, with Diligence: He that ſheweth Mercy, with Chearfulneſs.*

As there is a different *Guilt* in *Sins*, ſo there are different *Merits* in Virtue. As amongſt miraculous, ſo amongſt ſanctifying Gifts, ſome are more excellent than others; and he is the moſt perfect Man, who is enriched with the moſt *perfect Gifts*. The three heroick Virtues of the Goſpel are, *Faith*, *Love*, and *Humility*. Nor do I preſumptuouſly, contrary to the Apoſtle, exclude Hope, but comprehend it under *Faith*. Of Faith, Humility, and Love, we have treated in the preceding Chapters, and have here conſider'd the Extent or Compaſs of the *perfect Man*'s Virtues; and the *Sum total* is, In ſome he muſt excel, becauſe natural and eaſy; in others, becauſe neceſſary: Univerſal ones he cannot want; they are eſſential to *Chriſtianity:* Others of a peculiar Nature he may, unleſs his Circumſtances exact them. Nor is this any Diminution of his Perfection. Patience, Fortitude, Moderation, and Vigilance, *&c.* are the virtues of Earth, not Heaven; and yet none think the bleſſed Inhabitants of that Place imperfect, becauſe not endowed with Habits which they do not want. Above all, he that will be *perfect* muſt abound in thoſe Graces, which are of the moſt heroick Nature, *Faith*, *Love*, and *Humility*. For theſe are they which moſt effectually exalt Man above himſelf, and above the World, which inflame him with a *Zeal* for the Honour of God, and Good of Men, and enable him to ſurmount the Difficulties he meets with, in proſecuting this glorious Deſign.

I am next to enquire to what *Height*, to what *Degrees* of Virtue the *perfect Man* may arrive. Reaſon and Scripture ſeem to preſs us on towards an endleſs Progreſs in Virtue; Yet both ſeem to propoſe to us ſuch a *State* of *Perfection* as attainable, beyond which we cannot go; that ſo the *Beginner* may not deſpair of *Perfection*, nor the *Perfect* abate any thing of their Vigilance and their Induſtry. Such a degree of Excellence, to which nothing can be added, ſuch a Height above which there is no room to *ſoar*, if apply'd to Man in this World, is ſurely but an imaginary

nary Notion, to dream of ſuch a *Perfection* were to forget our Nature, and our State. No ſagacity of Judgment, no ſtrength of Reſolution, no felicity of Circumſtances, can ever advance us to this *Height*. Such a *Perfection* as this, which is incapable of any Increaſe, belongs to God alone, and muſt certainly be deny'd in Man; In whom one would think the appetites of the Body can never be ſo entirely ſubdu'd, that there ſhould be no Place to extend his Conqueſt, or render his Victory more entire and complete: And in whom one would think the Spirit of God ſhould never reſide in that Meaſure, that there ſhould be nothing to be added to his *Fulneſs*. 'Tis hard to conceive how we ſhould ſtudy the Syſtem of divine Faith; how we ſhould daily reflect upon our Lives and Actions, without *growing* in ſpiritual Wiſdom and Underſtanding. 'Tis hard to conceive how we ſhould give God, the World, and ourſelves, repeated Proofs of our Integrity in the Day of *Trial*, without *increaſing* our Strength and Aſſurance. And Love muſt naturally *increaſe* with theſe; whence it is that St. *Paul*, acknowledging himſelf not yet *Perfect*, reſolves, *That forgetting thoſe things that are behind, and reaching forwards to thoſe things that are before, he would preſs on towards the Mark for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus.*

If we come to *Fact* and *Practice*, one would be tempted to think that the *Diſciples* of our Lord and Maſter had arrived at that State, wherein their Buſineſs was not climbing higher, but rather to make good the Ground they had gain'd; which would render St. *Paul*'s Victory over the Body more complete, who aſſures us, *I am crucify'd with Chriſt:* And again, *I am crucify'd to the World, and the World is crucify'd to me.* What could render the Authority and Dominion of his Mind more abſolute, or its Graces more conſummate and entire, who could ſay with truth, *'Tis not I who live, but Chriſt who lives in me?* What would you have *added* to that *Faith* and *Love*, which made him ready *not only to*

be bound, but to die at Jeruſalem; which made *him* long to be diſſolv'd, and to be with Chriſt? As to thoſe Words of his, *Forgetting thoſe Things that are behind, and reaching forwards*, &c. they relate to his Trials and Performances, to his Perils and Conflicts, not to his Attainments. He does not here deny himſelf to be *Perfect*, tho' that might well enough have become his Modeſty and Humility, but only that he was not to look upon himſelf as already at his Goal, a Conqueror, and crown'd; there being much yet behind to do and ſuffer, notwithſtanding all that he had paſt thro'.

If we conſult Reaſon, will it not be apt to tell us, That as every Being has its Bounds ſet it; ſo has every Perfection too? That there is a *Stature*, as of the *Natural*, ſo of the *Spiritual* Man, beyond which it cannot grow? That as to Grace, no more can be infus'd, than our Natures are capable of: Otherwiſe, like too rich a Cordial, it will not ſtrengthen but fire our Natures; or like too dazzling a Light, it will not aſſiſt but oppreſs our Faculties. And does not the Parable of our Maſter countenance this, wherein he tells us, That God gave to one Five Talents, to another Two, to another One; to every Man according to his *Ability?* By which one would think our Lord inſinuates, that the Meaſures of *Grace* are uſually diſtributed in proportion to the Capacities of Nature; and that he who improv'd his Two *Talents* into Four, arrived at his proper *Perfection*, as well as he who improv'd his Five into *Ten:* It being as abſurd to expect, that the *Perfection* of every Man ſhould be the ſame, as to expect that all Mens *Bodies* ſhould be of the ſame Height, or their Minds of the ſame Capacity. Reflecting on all this together, one cannot but be of Opinion, that ſome have actually arrived at that Strength of *Faith*, at that Ardor of *Love*, that they ſeem'd to have been uncapable of any conſiderable *Acceſſions* in this Life. But yet new Occaſions may ſtill demand new Virtues; which were indeed before contain'd and included in *Faith* and *Love*, as Fruits

and

and Trees are in their Seeds. Some degree of original Corruption may ſtill be lurking in the moſt ſanctify'd Nature, and ſome venial Defects and Imperfections or other, may ſtill leave room for the greateſt of Saints to extend his Conqueſt. Beſides, 'tis hard to determine or fix the bounds of Knowledge, and every degree of Light makes way for more. After all, nothing hinders but that the Path of the *perfect Man* may as well with reſpect to his *Righteouſneſs* as his *Fortunes*, be like *the ſhining Light, which ſhines more and more, unto the perfect* Day of a *bleſſed Eternity*.

The *Motives* to *Perfection*, the Fruit of it, the Means and Method of attaining it, having been thus diſcours'd of, we proceed to conſider *Zeal* as it conſiſts in *good Works*. And now let not any one think, that Pains have been taken to advance the illumination of a Sinner, to knock off his Chains and Fetters, to raiſe him as far as may be above the Corruption of Nature, and the Defects and Infirmities of Life, to ſcatter thoſe lazy Fogs and Miſts which hung upon his Spirits, and to enrich him with heroick Virtues: Let no Man, I ſay, fancy that we have been labouring to do all *this*, that after all my *perfect Man* may ſit down like an *Epicurean* God, and enjoy himſelf; might talk finely of ſolitary Shades and Gardens, and ſpend a precious Life fitted for the nobleſt Deſigns, in a ſluggiſh Retirement. No, no: as *Virtue* is the *Perfection* of human Life, ſo is *Action* the *Perfection* of *Virtue*; and *Zeal* is that *Principle* of *Action* which is requir'd in a *Saint* of God. Accordingly the Scripture deſcribes this great, this happy Man, as *full of the Holy Ghoſt, fervent in Spirit, zealous of good Works:* Such a one was *Moſes, mighty in Word and Deed*, as well as *learned in all the Knowledge of the Egyptians:* Such a one was St. *Stephen*, as full of divine Ardor and irreſiſtible Fervency of Spirit, as of an irreſiſtible Wiſdom: And ſuch a one was the excellent *Cornelius*, a *devout Man*, one who had tranſfus'd the fear of God from his own Boſom, throughout

his Family and Relations, and Friends too; *One that gave much Alms, and prayed to God always.* What need we multiply Inſtances? This is that which diſtinguiſhes the *perfect Man* from all others; the *Victories* of *Faith*, the *Labours* of *Charity*, the *Conſtancy* and *Patience* of *Hope*, and the Ardors of Devotion.

Need we here diſtinguiſh the *Zeal* of God, from the *Fierceneſs* of *Faction*, of which we have ſeen and felt the terrible Effects; from the cruelty of Superſtition, from the wakeful and indefatigable Activity of *Avarice* and *Ambition*; from the unruly heats of Pride and Paſſion, and from the implacable Fury of Revenge? It needs not; no fooliſh, no falſe, fantaſtick, earthly, or deviliſh Principle, can counterfeit *Divine Zeal.* 'Tis a *Perfection*, that ſhines with ſuch a peculiar Luſtre, with ſuch an heavenly Majeſty and Sweetneſs, that nothing elſe can imitate it. 'Tis always purſuing Good, the honour of God, and happineſs of Man. *It contends earneſtly for the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints:* But it contends as earneſtly too, to root out Wickedneſs, and implant the Righteouſneſs of the Goſpel in the World. It is not eager for the *Articles* of a *Sect* or *Party*, and unconcerned for Catholick ones. We have had of late ſuch diſtinguiſh'd Inſtances of falſe *Zeal*, that one can hardly now miſtake it for the true. Falſe Zeal glares with warm Words; 'tis full of Froth and Foam, but ſpends itſelf in Profeſſions, and never appears in Actions. He who makes moſt noiſe with his Zeal, if his Life be examined, will be found wanting in the eſſentials of Religion: He is in a mighty concern for the Outſides of it; but takes no Care to adorn the Doctrine he profeſſes by his good Works. True *Zeal* will ever be accompany'd with *Charity* and *Humility*, which are inſeparable from it. And whoever pretends to the one without the other, is an Impoſtor. His *Zeal* is counterfeit, his Morals will belye his Principles; and he is of the Family of him who is the Father of Falſhood, the Devil. When *true Zeal* preſſes for Reformation, it

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begins at Home, and ſets a bright *Example.* Look into the lives of our moſt furious Zealots, who are ever breathing Fire and Flame, and ſee how their Actions anſwer their Profeſſions. True Zeal is meek and gentle under its own Affronts, but warm and bold againſt thoſe which are offer'd to God. Is the Zeal of our Age of this kind? What are our Zealots moſt concern'd for; their own Power and Intereſts, or the Glory of God? Try them by that Standard, bring them to that Touchſtone, and you will ſoon know how to ſeparate the Goats from the Sheep. Though Love fills the *Sails* of a holy Zeal, divine Wiſdom and Prudence give it *Ballaſt*; and as a very learned Doctor of our Church phraſes it, *It has no Heat but what is tempered and refracted by Humility and Charity:* Virtues which are in theſe our Days never met with in the Compoſition of that *Zeal*, which carries with it all the Merit, all the Honour, and all the Reward.

Need we in the next Place fix and ſtate the various degrees of Zeal? Alas! it is not requiſite, Zeal being nothing elſe but an ardent Thirſt of promoting the divine Glory by the *beſt Works*. 'Tis plain, the more excellent the Work, and the more it coſts, the more *perfect*, the more exalted the Zeal that performs it. When like *Mary* we quit the Cumber and Diſtraction of this World, and chooſe Religion for our Portion, then do we love it in good earneſt. When with the Diſciples we can ſay, *Lord, we have forſaken all and followed Thee, or are ready to do ſo*; when we are continually bleſſing and praiſing God; when, if the neceſſities of Chriſt's Church require it, we are ready to call *nothing our own*; when we are prepar'd, if the Will of God be ſo, to *reſiſt even unto Blood*; when nothing is dear, nothing delightful to us, but God and Holineſs, then have we reached the *Height* of *Zeal.* In a word, Zeal is nothing elſe but the *Love* of God made *perfect* in us. And if we would ſee it drawn to the Life, we muſt contemplate it in the

bleſſed Jeſus, who is the perfect Pattern of heroick Love. How boundleſs was his Love when the whole World, and how tranſcendent when a world of Enemies was the object of it? How indefatigable was his Zeal? how wakeful, how meek, how humble, how firm and reſolv'd? His Labours and Travels, Self-denial, Prayers and Tears; his Silence and Patience, his Agony and Blood poured out for his Perſecutors, inſtruct us fully what divine Love, what divine Zeal is. And now even at this time Love reigns in him, as he reigns in Heaven; Love is ſtill the predominant, the darling Paſſion of his Soul. Worthy art thou, O Jeſus, to receive Honour, and Glory, and Dominion! Worthy art thou to ſit down with thy Father on his Throne! Worthy art thou to judge the World, becauſe thou haſt loved, becauſe thou haſt been *zealous* unto Death; becauſe thou haſt overcome! Some there are indeed who have followed thy bright Example, though at a great Diſtance: As the *Martyrs* and *Confeſſors:* And thoſe belov'd and admir'd Princes, who have govern'd their Kingdoms in Righteouſneſs, to whom the honour of God and the good of the World have been far dearer than Pleaſure, than Empire, than abſolute power, or that ominous Blaze, which is now call'd Glory. 'Tis the work of Angels to marſhal the field of Glory in the end of all Things.

Oh, my Lord, may I at leaſt be one to fill the train of this triumphant Proceſſion, in that bleſſed Day, when thou ſhalt crown the Zeal and Patience of thy Saints!

Having given a ſhort account of Zeal, we ſhall now endeavour to kindle it in every Breaſt, by ſome few Conſiderations, which will at once evince the Neceſſity, and declare the Truth of it.

Our own *Salvation* and *Happineſs* depend upon it. For without this we reject, or at leaſt fruſtrate the *Counſels of God againſt our own Souls.* 'Twas for this Chriſt died, that *he might purify to himſelf a peculiar People, zealous of*

good

good Works. This is the great end of our Election, *God hath choſen us in Chriſt, before the Foundation of the World, that we ſhould be Holy, and without Blame before him in Love.* Which is to be explain'd by that Paſſage, where God is ſaid to have *before ordain'd, that we ſhould walk in good Works.* And the beginning of the Texts minds us, that 'tis for this End God imparts the light of his Word, and the vigour of his Spirit; that for this End he ſanctifies and renews our Nature. *We are his Workmanſhip created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good Works.* This is that which all the great and precious Promiſes of God immediately aim at. Our *Lord* in his *Narrative* of the laſt Judgment, and elſewhere, and his Apoſtles almoſt in innumerable Places, have with great Power, and great Earneſtneſs, inculcated this Doctrine, that we ſhall be *judged according to our Works:* That Immortality and Glory is the Portion not of Wiſdom, but Patience and Charity; not of an *Orthodox* Faith and ſpecious Pretenſions, but of *Righteouſneſs* and *Zeal.* For the *incorruptible,* the *never-fading Crown,* is a Crown of *Righteouſneſs.* Or if Men will be judg'd by their Belief, which is not the Language of the Goſpel, this does not alter the Matter at all, ſince *Faith* itſelf will be judg'd by its *Works.* And as a happy Eternity depends upon our *Zeal,* ſo nothing elſe can give us any comfortable, any rational Aſſurance of it in this Life. The Reaſon is plain, becauſe 'tis *Zeal* which is the only unqueſtionable Proof of our Integrity; and *good Works* are the Fruit which alone can evidence the Life and Truth of our *Faith* and *Love; hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments, Yea, a Man may ſay, thou haſt Faith, and I have Works: ſhew me thy Faith without thy Works, and I will ſhew thee my Faith by my Works:* Doſt thou believe in God? why art thou not *Holy as he is Holy?* Doſt thou believe in Jeſus? why doſt thou not *deny thyſelf, take up thy Croſs and follow him?* why doſt thou not walk as he walked? Doſt thou believe a Judgment to come? why doſt thou not *work out thy*

Salvation with Fear and Trembling? why doſt thou not *prepare to meet thy God?* why art thou not *rich in good Works*, that thou mayſt *lay up a Foundation againſt the Time to come, and lay hold on Eternal Life?* Nor are *good Works* leſs neceſſary to prove our *Love* than *Faith*. Certainly, if we love Holineſs, if we *Hunger and Thirſt after Righteouſneſs*, we ſhall never live in a direct Contradiction to the ſtrongeſt Paſſions of our Soul. We ſhall never refuſe to gratify an Inclination which is not only fervent in us, but its Gratification will procure us eternal Rewards too. If we love God, we cannot but ſeek his Glory, we cannot but deſire to maintain Communion with him. And if ſo, do we know any Sacrifice that is more acceptable to God than *good Works?* Do we know any that he delights in more than *Zeal?* Do we love the bleſſed Jeſus? Are not good Works the very Teſt of this Love which himſelf has appointed? *If a Man love me, he will keep my Commandments. Ye are my Friends if ye do whatſoever I command you. The Love of Chriſt*, ſays the Apoſtle, *conſtrains us*; what to do? *to live not to ourſelves, but to him that died for us and roſe again.* What other Returns can we make to Jeſus? He ſits on the Right Hand of God. *All Power is given him in Heaven and in Earth.* He does himſelf not need our Miniſtry, nor want our Service and Charity; but hear what he ſays; *In as much as you did it to one of theſe my little ones, you have done it to me.*

Our *Zeal* is indiſpenſably neceſſary to the Welfare and Happineſs of others. Do we regard our Neighbour's eternal Intereſt? 'Tis *Zeal* repreſſes Sin and propagates Righteouſneſs; 'tis *Zeal* defends the Faith, and ſuppreſſes *Hereſy* and *Error*; 'tis *Zeal* converts the Unbeliever, and builds up the Believer; 'tis *Zeal* that wakens the Drowſy, quickens the Lukewarm, ſtrengthens the Weak, and inflames the Good with a holy Emulation; 'tis *Zeal* that baffles all Objections, refutes all Calumnies, and vanquiſhes all Oppoſitions raiſed againſt Religion, and oppreſſes its Enemies with

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Shame and Confuſion; 'tis, in a word, *Zeal*, and *Zeal* alone that can make Religion appear lovely and delightful, and reconcile the World to it; for this alone can *adorn the Goſpel*. It renders Virtue more conſpicuous, more taking in Life and Example, than it can be in the Precepts and Deſcriptions of Words: nor is *Zeal* leſs ſerviceable to the *Temporal* than *Eternal* Intereſt of Mankind. When God laid the Foundation of the World, he laid the Foundation of Virtue too; and when he form'd Man, he wove the neceſſity of *good Works* into his very Nature. How neceſſary is Juſtice to poor Creatures who lie ſo open to Wrongs and Injuries? How indiſpenſable is Charity or Generoſity to thoſe who are expos'd to ſo many Accidents, to ſo many Wants, to ſuch a viciſſitude of Fortune? And being all ſubject to ſo many Follies and Infirmities, to ſo many Miſtakes and Fancies; how ſtrong muſt be our Obligation to mutual *Forbearance*, *Patience*, and *Gentleneſs?* In a word, Sin and Miſery abound in the World; and if there were not Virtues and *good Works* to balance the one, and to relieve and ſupport us under the other, Life would be intolerable. Thus reveal'd and natural Religion do neceſſarily terminate and center in a *Zeal* for *good Works* as their ultimate End, and utmoſt *Perfection* in this Life; and that *Rule* of our Saviour, *Whatever you would that Men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo unto them*, is an Abſtract not only of the Law and the Prophets, but of the book of *Nature* too; and this ſingle Principle, if ſincerely purſued, will ferment and work us up to the nobleſt Heights of *Zeal*. I might here, if it were neceſſary, eaſily ſhew that *Zeal* has as happy an Influence on the *Public* as the *Private*; that this muſt animate that Juſtice and Mercy which ſupports the *Throne*; that it is the Soul of that Honour, Integrity, Generoſity, and Religion, which ſupport the States and Kingdoms of the World, and without which all politick Syſtems muſt needs tend to a Diſſolution. But by what

has been ſaid already, this is moſt evidently made appear. The next thing to be conſider'd is:

That *Zeal* miniſters moſt effectually to the glory of God. For if *Zeal* be in itſelf thus lovely, thus neceſſary; if the Fruits and Effects of it be thus ſerviceable to the temporal and eternal Intereſt of Man, what a lovely, what an agreeable notion of God ſhall we form from this one Conſideration of him, that he is the great Author of it? That he is the Origin and Fountain of that Light and Heat, of that Strength and Power, of which 'tis compounded and conſtituted? He commands and exacts it; he exacts and encourages to it by the Promiſe of an eternal Crown, and the raviſhing Fruition of Himſelf: He has planted the Seeds of it in our Nature; and he cheriſhes them by the bleſſed and vigorous Influences of his Word and Spirit. How gracious is the Divine Nature! How gracious is the Divine Government! when the Subſtance of his Laws is, that we ſhould love as Brethren; that we ſhould clothe the Naked; feed the Hungry; deliver the Captive; inſtruct the Fooliſh; comfort the Afflicted; forgive one another, if need be, Seven Times a Day, and ſuch like. If to do all this be an Argument of being *regenerate and born of God*; if this be a Proof of his Spirit ruling in us, his Nature communicated to us, and his Image ſtampt upon us; How amiable muſt God be, when we diſcern ſo much Benefit and ſo much Lovelineſs in thoſe Qualities which are but faint and imperfect Reſemblances of him! In a word, the Holineſs of his Children and Servants, is a Demonſtration of the Holineſs of God himſelf, and in this conſiſts the Luſtre of divine Glory. Holineſs is the Flower of all his Attributes; the moſt Perfect, becauſe the moſt comprehenſive of all his divine Perfections; for Holineſs includes Wiſdom, Power, and Goodneſs. As to Goodneſs, the Caſe is ſo plain, that Holineſs and Goodneſs are commonly uſed as Terms equivalent. As to Wiſdom, 'tis evident that no Action is commendable

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and lovely, whatever it be, unleſs the Principle, the Motive of it be wiſe and rational; therefore Wiſdom cannot be ſeparated from the Notion of Holineſs. Power muſt needs be compriſed in it too; for Beneficence, which is at leaſt one great Branch of Holineſs, muſt unavoidably imply Power in the Benefactor, and Impotence and Want in the Beneficiary. This is the Notion wherein Holineſs, when aſcrib'd to God in Scripture, is generally taken. *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hoſts, Heaven and Earth are full of thy Glory*, expreſſes the Greatneſs and Majeſty, as well as the Rectitude and Purity of the Divine Nature: and to ſanctify the Lord God in our Hearts, is in the Language of the Scripture, not only to love him for his Goodneſs, but revere and fear him for his Majeſty and Greatneſs. The Excellencies of the *Creatures*, their Fitneſs and Subſerviency to the great Ends of their *Creation*, is the glory of the *Creator*, juſt as the Beauty, Strength and Convenience of the Work is the Honour of the Architect. If the Sun, Moon, and Stars, the irrational and inanimate Parts of the Creation, ſhew forth the glory of God, How much more do ſpiritual and rational Beings? Virtue is the *Perfection* of *Reaſon*, and *Zeal* of *Virtue*. For this is that which directly and immediately advances thoſe great Ends that are deareſt to God, as has been abundantly made out.

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PERFECTION.

SOME ſeem to have entertain'd ſuch a notion of Religion, as if *Moderation* here were as neceſſary as any where elſe. They look upon *Zeal* as an *Exceſs* of *Righteouſneſs*, and can be well enough content to want degrees of Glory, if they can but ſave their Souls. To which End they can ſee no neceſſity of *Perfection*. Now I would beſeech ſuch ſeriouſly to lay to Heart that *Salvation* and *Damation* are things of no common Importance, and therefore it highly concerns them not to be miſtaken in the Notion they form to themſelves of *Religion*. For the nature of Things will not be alter'd by their Fancies, nor will God be mocked or impoſed on. If we deal ſincerely with ourſelves, as in this Caſe it certainly behoves us to do, we muſt frame our Idea of Religion, not from the Opinions, the Manners, or Faſhions of the World, but from the Scriptures. And we muſt not interpret theſe by our own Inclinations, but we muſt judge of the Duties they preſcribe by thoſe Deſcriptions of them, by thoſe Properties and Effects which we find there. We muſt weigh the Deſign and End of Religion, which is to promote the glory of God, and the good of Man, and to raiſe us above the World and the Body. We muſt then ſee how our platform, or model of Religion, ſuits with it; and if, after we have done this, we are not fully ſatisfy'd in the true Bounds and Limits which part Vice and Virtue, it cannot but be

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ſafeſt for us to err on the Right Hand. We ought always to remember too, that the repeated Exhortations in Scripture to Diligence, and that the moſt Earneſt and Indefatigable ones, to Vigilance, to Fear and Trembling, to Patience, to Steadfaſtneſs, and ſuch like, are utterly inconſiſtent with an Eaſy, Lazy, Gentle Religion. That the *Life* of Jeſus is the faireſt and fulleſt Comment on his *Doctrine*; and that we never are to follow the Example of a corrupt World, but of the beſt Men and the beſt Ages. This one Thing alone will convince us, what Endeavours, what Virtues are neceſſary to gain an incorruptible Crown. See with what Courage nay Joy too, they *took up their Croſs and follow'd him!* How generous were their Alms! The Riches of their *Liberality* were conſpicuous in the very *Depth* of their *Poverty*. What Plainneſs and Singleneſs of Heart? what Grace and Warmth? what Peace and Joy ſhow'd itſelf in their Converſation! What Modeſty, what Humility in their Garb, Deportment, and the whole Train of Life! How frequent, how fervent, and how long too were their Prayers and Retirements? In fine, the Spirit and Genius of a Diſciple of Chriſt diſcovered itſelf in all they ſaid and did; and the Virtues of their Lives did as evidently diſtinguiſh a *Chriſtian* from a *Jew* or *Pagan*, as their *Faith*. How lovely was Religion then? how full its Joy; how ſtrong its Confidence? Then did Chriſtians truly overcome the World. Then did they live above the Body. Then was the Croſs of Chriſt more delightful, than the Eaſe or Honour, the Pride or Pleaſure of a ſinful Life. Then did they truly, thro' the Spirit, wait for the Hope of Righteouſneſs by *Faith*. Let us now compare our Lives with theirs, and then ſit down content with poor and beggarly Attainments, if we can. Let us put our Virtues in the Scale againſt theirs; and if we have any Modeſty, the Inequality will put us out of Countenance; we ſhall bluſh at our Vanity, and ſhall not have the Confidence to expect the ſame Crown, the ſame Kingdom,

dom, with them. But as too lax a Notion of Religion is apt to beget too much Indifference and Unconcernedneſs, ſo will it be ſaid too exalted a One is apt to beget Deſpair, which is a no leſs Obſtacle of *Perfection*.

Many there are, who forming their Judgment upon the Slips and Defects of good Men, and the Corruption of human Nature, conceive *Perfection* to be a meer imaginary Notion. They believe indeed, that conſidering how apt Man is to fall ſhort of his Duty, 'tis very fit that the Rule preſcribed him ſhould be exact, and that he ſhould be frequently preſs'd and exhorted to *Perfection:* But that the thing itſelf is too difficult for mortal Man to attain in this Life. To this Objection I muſt oppoſe theſe few Things, which I believe will be ſufficient to remove it.

The *beginning of Virtue* is the moſt difficult Part of it. The nearer we approach to *Perfection*, the eaſier as well as pleaſanter is Religion: And therefore, whoever ſtartles at the Difficulties which lie in the Way to an exalted Virtue, has as much Reaſon to be ſtartled at thoſe which will encounter him upon his firſt Entrance into Religion, and yet theſe muſt be conquer'd.

The avoiding the Difficulties of Religion, does but plunge us into worſe: We are neceſſarily under this *Dilemma:* If we will attain the Peace and Tranquillity of the *Mind*, we muſt mortify and reduce the Appetites of the *Body*. If on the other hand, we propoſe to gratify the Appetites of the *Body*, and enjoy the Pleaſure of *Sin*, we cannot do ſo without offering Violence to the *Mind*. And if ſuch be the War and Oppoſition between the Soul and the *Body*, that there is no way to a true and well-ſettled Peace and Pleaſure, but by the Reduction and Mortification of the one or the other, then it will be eaſy to reſolve what we are to do. For thoſe Appeals which *Atheiſts* themſelves make to *Reaſon*, proclaim the Soul of Man to be the Ruling and Nobleſt Part of him; beſides, the Soul is the more vital, the more tender and ſenſible Part of us; and conſequently,

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the Affliction of this muſt render us far more miſerable than any Hardſhips or Difficulties Virtue can impoſe upon the *Body*. Whatever be the Difficulties of Virtue, they will ſoon vaniſh, if we often call to Mind, that Peace and Joy are the Fruits of Virtue, but Shame and Remorſe thoſe of Sin; that no Man ever yet repented of reſiſting and conquering his Luſts, but no Man ever yet did not repent of following them, unleſs he dy'd as much a Brute as he liv'd. That Heaven is a cheap Purchaſe whatever it coſts us, but the Pleaſure of Sin a very dear one, how eaſily ſoever we come by it; and that we are not our own Maſters; there is a God to whom we ſtand accountable for our Actions: And conſequently whether we will, or will not, we muſt either undergo the Hardſhip and Diſcipline of Virtue, or the eternal Plagues and Puniſhments of Sin.

The Truth is, this Opinion of the Impoſſibility of *Perfection*, has both been begot and cheriſh'd by thoſe wild Schemes of it, which have been drawn by the Hands of a flaming, indeed, but an indiſcreet *Zeal*. But we have here recommended to the World no fantaſtick or enthuſiaſtick *Perfection*. We have advanc'd no Heights of Virtue, but what many do, we hope, at this Day actually feel and experiment in themſelves: None we are ſure but what the Followers of the Bleſſed Jeſus actually attain'd and practis'd. *Be ye Followers of us*, ſays the Apoſtle, *as we are of Chriſt*. Their Lives were as bright a Rule as their Doctrine, and by their own Actions they demonſtrated the Power of the Faith they taught. They did not, like the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, *bind heavy Burdens upon others, and not move them with their Finger*. They did not, like *Plato* and *Ariſtotle*, magnify Temperance and Modeſty, at the Tabernacles and Carnivals of Princes; nor commend the Pleaſure of Wiſdom, in the Garden of *Epicurus*. But they liv'd as they taught, unſpotted by the Pleaſures, unbroken by the Troubles of the World; modeſt, ſerene, equal and heavenly-minded; in Honour or Diſhonour,

Diſhonour, in Want or Abundance, Liberty or Priſon, Life or Death. Let us then no longer object or diſpute, but with Faith and Patience be Followers of thoſe who have inherited the Promiſes.

Being encompaſſed with a Cloud of Witneſſes, let us lay aſide every Weight, and the Sin which doth ſo eaſily beſet us: and let us run with Patience the Race that is ſet before us; looking unto Jeſus the Author and Finiſher of our Faith; who for the Joy that was ſet before him, endured the Croſs, deſpiſing the Shame; and is ſet down at the Right Hand of the Throne of God. For conſider him that endured ſuch Contradiction of Sinners againſt himſelf, leſt ye be wearied and faint in your Minds.

We come now to ſpeak of thoſe, who will look upon this ſetting up the Doctrine of *Perfection*, as a Deſign againſt the Pleaſures of Mankind. What, ſays ſuch a one, ſhall I let go my preſent *Pleaſures* out of my Hands, to hunt after I know not what, and I know not where? Shall I quit Pleaſures that are every where obvious, for ſuch as have no Being, it may be but in Speculation? Or at leaſt are never to be enjoy'd by any, but ſome few rare and happy Creatures, the Favourites of God and Nature? Pleaſures that have Matter and Subſtance in them, for ſuch as I can no more graſp and reliſh, than I can Dreams and Viſions? But to this we anſwer, All this preety talk is ſtupid Ignorance and groſs Miſtake. For as to innocent and virtuous Pleaſure, no Man needs part with it. I endeavour not to deprive Man of this, but to refine and purify it. And he who prefers either ſilly or vicious Pleaſure before Religion, is wretchedly miſtaken. *Perfect Religion* is full of Pleaſure, had we but once arriv'd at true Purity of Heart. What can be ſo full of Pleaſure as the Buſineſs of Religion? What can be more delightful than bleſſing, than praiſing God, to a grateful Soul? *Hallelujahs* to a Soul ſnatch'd from the Brink of Deſtruction, into the Boſom of its Maſter? What can be

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more tranſporting than the melting Tenderneſs of a holy Contrition, made up, like *Mary Magdalene*'s, of Tears and Hopes, Sorrow and Love, Humility and Glory, Confuſion and Confidence, Shame and Joy? What can be more tranſporting than Love, the Love of a Chriſtian, when he is all Love, as God is Love; when he *deſires nothing in Heaven, nor on Earth, but God; when all Things are Dung and Droſs to him in Compariſon of Jeſus?* If the Pleaſures of the World be more tranſporting than thoſe of Religion, 'tis becauſe our Faith is weak, our Love imperfect, and our Life unſteddy. A conſtant exalted Pleaſure is, I grant it, the Fruit of Perfection alone. The Peace and Joy of the Holy Ghoſt reigns no where but where that *Zeal* and *Love*, which is an effect of the Fulneſs of the Spirit, reigns too.

That the Pleaſures of the World are more numerous or obvious than thoſe of Religion, is altogether a falſe and groundleſs Fancy. In every Place, and in every State, do the Pleaſures of Virtue wait upon the *perfect Man*. They depend not, like thoſe of the Body, on a thouſand Things that are not in our Power, but only on God and our own Integrity. Theſe Obſtacles of *Perfection* being thus remov'd, and the Mind of Man being fully convinc'd of the Happineſs that reſults from a State of Perfection, and of his Obligation to ſurmount the Difficulties which obſtruct his Way to it, there ſeems to be nothing now left to diſappoint the Succeſs of this Diſcourſe, but ſomewhat too much Fondneſs for the *World*, or ſomewhat too much Indulgence to the Body.

There is a Love of the World, which though it be not either for the Matter or Degree of it, criminal enough to deſtroy our Sincerity and our Hopes of Salvation, yet it is ſtrong enough to abate our Vigour, hinder our *Perfection*, and bereaves us of many Degrees of Pleaſure at preſent, and Glory hereafter. The Indications

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of this kind of Love of the World, are too much Concern for the Pomp and Shew of Life, too much Exactneſs in the Modes and Cuſtoms of it, too quick a Senſe of Honour and Reputation, Preeminence and Praiſe; too much Haſte, and too much Induſtry to grow rich, to *add Houſe to Houſe, Land to Land, and to clothe ourſelves with thick and heavy Clay*; too brisk a Reliſh of the Pleaſures of the World, too great a Gaiety of Mind upon the Succeſſes, too much Dejection upon the Diſaſters and Diſappointments of it; too much Care, and too much Diligence, and incumbring and imbroiling One's ſelf too far in worldly Affairs; too much Diverſion, too much Eaſe. Theſe, I ſay, are the Symptoms of a Mind tainted with a Love of the World, tho' not ſo far as to Sickneſs and Death. However, it will be enough to check the Vigour and vitiate the Reliſh of the Mind. Now the only way to overcome this Defect and to captivate the Mind intirely to the Love and Service of Religion and Virtue, is to conſider frequently and ſeriouſly the Rewards of Perfection, the Pleaſure that will attend it in another Life. Had the young Man in the Goſpel done this, had he had as lively a Notion, and as true an Eſtimate, of the Riches of Eternity, as he had of Temporal Ones, he would never *have gone away ſorrowful*, when he was adviſed to have exchanged the Treaſures of *Earth* for thoſe of *Heaven*. Had the Soul of *Martha* been as much taken up with the Thoughts of Eternity as that of *Mary*, ſhe would have made the ſame Choice as ſhe did. They who often think, how ſoon the Faſhion, the Pomp and Grandeur of this World paſs away, and how much better their *Heavenly* Country is than their *Earthly*; how much more laſting, and how much more glorious the new *Jeruſalem, that City that has Foundations, whoſe Builder and Maker is God*, than this City of ours, which may be overthrown in a Moment; will neither weep nor rejoice with too much Paſſion; neither buy nor poſſeſs with too much Application of Mind. To conclude; He who ſo often

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and devoutly thinks of that Day, wherein *Chriſt who is our Life ſhall appear, and we ſhall appear with him in Glory*, that he comes to love and long for it; ſuch a one ſhall have no great Taſte of the Honours of this World, of the Pleaſures or Intereſts of this Life; nor will he be ſlothful or remiſs, but *fervent in Spirit, ſerving the Lord*; whatever Degrees of Affection he had for any Thing of that Nature, they will all vaniſh; he will have no Emulation but for *good Works*; no Ambition but for the *Glory* which is *Eternal*. In the Purſuit of this will he lay out the Strength and Vigour of his Mind; for this he will retrench his Profit; for this he will deny his Pleaſure: for this he will be content to be Obſcure, Mean and Laborious; for if the World be once crucify'd to him, he will the more eaſily bear the being crucify'd to it.

After all, there is an Infirmity in the Fleſh; againſt which, if we do not guard ourſelves, if we do not ſtruggle heartily, we ſhall miſcarry: The *Spirit is willing*, ſaid our Saviour, *but the Fleſh is weak*. Without ample Care and much Watchfulneſs, the Vigour of our Minds will be relaxed; the Exaltation of our Spirits will flag and droop, and we ſhall ſoon loſe the Reliſh there is in Religion. The moſt effectual Remedies againſt this Frailty and Fickleneſs of our Nature, are *Godly Fear*, and *Steadfaſtneſs of Hope*.

The Purity and Preſence of God; the Strictneſs and Impartiality of a Judgment to come; the Loſs of an Eternal Crown; the Terrors of Eternal Puniſhment; the Number and Strength of Temptations; the deplorable Falls of the greateſt Saints, and the Conſcience of our own Weakneſs, will not fail to work in us this *godly Fear*. Let us then not only *begin*, but alſo *perfect Holineſs in the fear of God. Bleſſed is he that feareth always*.

The *Steadfaſtneſs of Hope*, of Hope that waits and longs for the Coming of our Lord, will invite us often to take a View of *Canaan*; will often fill the Mind with

with the Beauties and the Glories of Eternity; the Reſt and Tranſports of another World; the Love of God, and of Jeſus; incorruptible Crowns; the *Hallelujahs* of Angels; the Shouts of Victory; the Fruit of the Tree of Life; the Streams that water the Paradiſe of God; and every ſuch Object will chide us out of our Weakneſs and Cowardiſe; every ſuch Thought will upbraid us out of our Lazineſs and Negligence; we ſhall hear always ſounding in our Ears the Words of Jeſus to our Diſciples, *What, can you not watch with me one Hour*; and yet do you expect to reign with me for ever? Or thoſe to the Church of *Laodicea*; *To him that overcometh, will I grant to ſit with me upon my Throne, as I have overcome, and am ſet down with my Father on his Throne.*

The Reader will all along perceive, that when we are ſpeaking of *Perfection*, we mean it only in that Senſe which human Nature is capable of. We do not underſtand the *Perfection* of Angels and the bleſſed Saints in Heaven, who with their Duſt, ſhook off all the Frailties and Infirmities which are inſeparable from Man in this Life: But Infirmities and Frailties that may be cur'd, or that Men do not cheriſh, and are fond of, if they do labour Earneſtly to get rid of them by Watchfulneſs and Prayer, will not hinder their reaching that Degree of Perfection which will be acceptable to God, and give upon *Earth* a Taſte of Heaven. Such a Soul will be alone arm'd againſt Temptation; and as the Paths of this Life are ſlippery, if he trips ever ſo little, will ſoon recover himſelf; and even if he falls, ſhall never receive a Wound that is Mortal; Contrition and Grace will ſupply him with a healing Balm, which through the Merits of our Saviour will ſoon ſet him right again, ſo as to go on courageouſly and ſucceſsfully in the Way wherein he ought to walk.

Whenever the Reader is in the Vigour of Spirit, in the Ardours of Faith, of Love, when he is inflam'd with a holy Deſire to arrive at that State of Perfection, which is ſo pleaſing in the Sight of God, let him addreſs

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the Throne of Grace with theſe or the like Petitions; and what he asks in Faith, will ſurely be granted him.

O my God, and my Father, increaſe the Knowledge of thy Word, and the Grace of thy Spirit in me: Enable me to perfect Holineſs in thy Fear, and to hold faſt the Steadfaſtneſs of my Hope unto the End. Pardon all the Sins and Errors of my Life, and accept of my Services, through Jeſus Chriſt. And becauſe, though after all we can do we are Unprofitable Servants, thy infinite Bounty will yet certainly Recompenſe our ſincere Endeavours to promote thy Glory; Let me find my Reward from Thee, or rather do thou thyſelf vouchſafe to be my Reward. I ſhould have ever thought myſelf unworthy to have put this Petition to Thee, O thou Glorious and Incomprehenſible Majeſty, had not thy own Goodneſs, thy own Spirit kindled this Ambition in me. Behold what Manner of Love is this, that we ſhould be called the Sons of God! Theſe are the Words of thy Servant St. John. *And now therefore, my Soul can never be at Reſt till I awake at the Laſt Day after thy Likeneſs. I can never be ſatisfied till I behold thy Glory: Which vouchſafe me, I beſeech Thee, by thy Mercy and thy Faithfulneſs, by the Sufferings and Interceſſion of thy Dearly Beloved Son.* Amen.

SCRU-

SCRUPLES.

IN Matters of Religion and another World, nothing is more ordinarily obſervable, than that thoſe People are wont to have the greateſt *Fears*, who have the leaſt Reaſon for them. Tho' good Chriſtians think the beſt of others, they are generally very ſuſpicious of themſelves: They have a deep Senſe of the Danger of Sin, and a full Conviction of the fatal End of *Diſobedience*; which makes them think, that in a Matter wherein it concerns them ſo highly not to be miſtaken, they can never be over-jealous of their own Hearts, or too cautious, leſt after all, the inſupportable Puniſhments of Sin ſhould fall to be their own Portion.

This they do in an eſpecial manner, if in any material Point, upon which, as to the Sentence of Life or Death, the Goſpel lays a great Streſs, they are ignorant and erroneous: For there are no *Terrors* in the World comparable to thoſe of *Religion*; nor have any Men upon Earth ſo much Reaſon to be afraid, as they who are in danger to fall under them. If there is any thing therefore which will be of great account in the laſt Judgment, or what is all one, which they think will be ſeverely accounted for; and they either find themſelves to be guilty of it, or but fancy that they are (which is the ſame Thing in the Effect of it) they muſt needs be fearfully perplex'd, and depriv'd of all Peace and Comfort, tho' they are really in the greateſt Safety. 'Tis true indeed, that in the End they ſhall be no Loſers;

nor

nor ſhall thoſe miſtaken Fears ever be fulfill'd upon them: Becauſe at the laſt Day God will judge them according to his own Rule, which they have really perform'd, tho' they knew it not, and not according to their *Errors* and *Miſrepreſentations* of it. Their *Errors* ſhall in no wiſe pervert his *Truth*; for he ſees what they are, however they may miſtake it; and if he ſees them to be *Righteous*, his Sentence will follow his own Knowledge. He will declare their Righteouſneſs to all the World.

This is the *Security* of all *Good Men*, as it is the Eternal *Terror* and *Aſtoniſhment* of all *Hypocrites* and *Sinners*, that they ſhall be brought before an Unerring, Uncorrupt Judge, who can neither be brib'd nor deceiv'd, and who cannot miſtake them, or wrongfully condemn them, however they may miſtake, or wrongfully condemn themſelves. Thus then they are really *ſafe* in their own Goodneſs, when they moſt of all ſuſpect their own *Danger*, and are ſecure from Evil, even while they are *afraid* of falling under it.

But tho' every good Man is in this Safety, let his Underſtanding of himſelf be what it will; yet if in any of thoſe things which he takes to be a Matter of Life or Death, he judges wrong of himſelf, and thinks erroneouſly, he can enjoy no Peace and Comfort. He will go to Heaven full of *Fears* and foreboding Thoughts, and never think himſelf in the Way to Bliſs, 'till he is actually inthron'd in it: He will at laſt be happy, but he will have no Sight or Expectation of it in the Way; For all his Life long he will be tormented with *Doubts* and *Suſpicions*, *Fears* and *Jealouſies*, and be ſtill, by Turns, concluding himſelf loſt as to the next World, tho' he be only loſt in his own fickly Imagination. And this fanſy'd future Miſery will bring him under a Real one for the preſent. It will make him have ſad Thoughts, and a ſorrowful Heart: It will much abate his Joy, and diſturb his Peace, and almoſt overwhelm him in groundleſs Perplexity and Vexation.

But

But that pious Souls may not *fear* where no *Fear* is, nor torment themſelves with unreaſonable Apprehenſions, let us endeavour to remove their groundleſs *Scruples* and Miſtakes, by ſhewing what, and of what Force thoſe things are, which are wont, without any ſufficient Reaſon, to diſquiet the Minds, and to diſturb the Peace of good and ſafe, but miſtaken Chriſtians, about it.

The Cauſes of good Mens *Fears* are chiefly theſe.

They are wont to call in Queſtion their future Salvation; becauſe after all their Care againſt them, they find that ſome *Motions* of the *Fleſh*, ſome *Stirrings* of their *Luſts*, ſome *Thoughts* of Evil do ſtill ariſe in them. They feel themſelves ſubject to Delights and Fancies, and Deſires of forbidden things: They are liable to a *luſtful Thought*, a *covetous Wiſh*, and Inſurrection of *Anger*, of *Envy*, and of ſeveral other damning Sins.

'Tis true indeed, theſe *Luſts* do not reign in them, becauſe they do not conſent to their Inſtigations, nor do what they would have them. They can only inhabit and ſtir in them, but have not Strength enough to give Laws to them. For they repreſs them before they come to will and chooſe, much leſs to fulfil and practiſe what they incline to. They may perhaps have a *Thought* and *Fancy*, a *Wiſh* and *Inclination* after *unchaſte* Pleaſures; but they correct themſelves there, and never in their Hearts conſent to an *unlawful Embrace*, nor ever proceed to an *unclean Action*. In a ſudden Motion of Anger, it may be they may have ſeveral Expreſſions of Wrath, and *Inſtances* of *Revenge* occur to their Thoughts, and obtruding themſelves upon their Imaginations; but they ſtop there, and do not conſent to utter an *injurious Word*, or to commit a *ſpiteful Action*; and the ſame they experience by themſelves in other Inſtances. In all which, ſeveral forbidden things will get into their Thoughts and Deſires, and ſteal from them a Wiſh or Inclination: But when once they have done that, they can do no more, being unable either to gain their Conſent,

ſent, or to command their Practice; ſo as that they ſhould not only deſire, but alſo chooſe and fulfil them.

Now tho' they do not ſuffer *Sin* to *reign* in them, ſo as to *conſent* to it, or to *fulfil* its *Luſts*; yet they *fear* leſt their very *Thoughts* and *Inclinations* after it ſhould prove *damnable*. For *God* requires the *Obedience* of our *whole Man*, of the *Mind* and *Affections*, as well as of our *Wills* and *Actions*; and he is diſobey'd by *any*, as well as by *all* our *Faculties*. And ſeeing every *Sin* is forbidden under Pain of Death, who knows but that this Admiſſion of *it* into our *Thoughts* and *Deſires*, is a mortal Tranſgreſſion? This is one great Cauſe of *Fear*, and a Rock of Offence to a truly Honeſt and Good Man.

But to take off all *Doubt* and *Scruple* upon this Account, we muſt know, that our *Impotent Luſts* and *Ineffective Deſires* of evil Things, if they are able to get no farther than a *Thought* or *Wiſh*, tho' at preſent they are a Matter of *Exerciſe* and *Humiliation*, yet at the Day of Judgment they ſhall be no Article of *Death* or *Condemnation*. For Chriſt's Goſpel does not ſentence us ſeverely upon theſe firſt *Motions* of a *Luſt*, or *Beginnings* of a *Sin*. If they arrive no higher than Fancy or Inclination, thro' the Merits of Chriſt's Sacrifice, there is Grace enough in ſtore for them; and in the Goſpel-account they are not grown up to be a Matter of Death, nor come within the Confines of Deſtruction.

We ſhall not at the Laſt Day be condemn'd for our feeble *Luſts* and *Deſires* after *Evil*, which are unconſented to, and unfulfilled: God will never ſentence any Man otherwiſe good, for every *ſudden Deſire* and Inclination after ſinful Things. If it reſts there, and goes no farther than bare Deſire, he will pardon and paſs it by.

Theſe *Luſtings* and *Deſires* are to be conſider'd, both as to their *firſt Birth*, and as to their *indulg'd* and *allow'd Continuance*; the Firſt is never *damning*, and the Latter many times is no Article of *Condemnation*.

As for our *bodily Luſts* and Deſires of *Evil* in their firſt Birth, no Man, who is otherwiſe Virtuous and Obedient, ſhall ever be judg'd to *die* for them: If it were otherwiſe, who could poſſibly be ſav'd? For as long as we live in this World, we have all of us theſe firſt Motions of Appetite after *Evil* Things, more or leſs; and there is no avoiding of it: For the Laws of God, which are *Impoſitions* ſuperinduc'd upon our Natures by their *Prohibitions*, make ſeveral of our moſt *natural Appetites* and *Deſires* themſelves to be ſinful; the *Luſts* of the *Fleſh* making up a good Part of the Prohibitions of the Goſpel. But tho' God by his *After-prohibition* has made them ſinful, yet from that natural Neceſſity which he had laid upon us before, we cannot live entirely free from them. Our *Fleſh* will *luſt* and make Offers after ſuch things as are naturally fitted to its Liking, and we cannot help it; becauſe our Bodies, as long as they are converſant among the things of this World, from their natural Frame and Conſtitution will ſtill be excited by ſome things to *crave* and *deſire*, and provok'd by others to hate and abhor them. This is *Natural*; and while there is any Life and Senſe in our *Bodies*, the Good and Evil Things of the World muſt of neceſſity thus ſenſibly affect them; and where they are affected with *Pleaſure*, there 'tis natural for them to *deſire*; as where they feel Pain, 'tis natural for them to abhor the thing which occaſions and produces it.

Thus theſe *firſt Luſtings* and *Cravings* after forbidden Things are *natural*, and were made *neceſſary* before the Prohibition came to make them *ſinful*. And if by an After-law Men ſhall be condemn'd for being ſenſibly affected with outward things, or for having a *ſudden Luſt* and Inclination after them upon their being ſo ſenſibly affected with them; they ſhall then be condemn'd for what they could not help, and die for not performing Impoſſibilities.

But God neither can nor does make any Laws which exact things ſo rigorous; he puniſhes nothing in us but what

what proceeded from our own Will, nor exacts an Account of us for our *natural Luſts* and *Inclinations*, further than they are ſubject to our own Choice and free Diſpoſal. If a *ſudden Fear* or *unclean Deſire* ariſe up in the Heart of a *Holy Man* from the Preſence of *outward Objects* or *inward* Imaginations, and the natural Temper of his Blood and Spirits, he ſhall not be put to anſwer for it, becauſe he could not prevent it. He could no more hinder it than he can hinder the beating of his Heart, or the Motion of his Blood; ſeeing it was no Free-will of his, but a natural Effect of his Temper. And to be condemn'd for that, is to ſuffer for having *Fleſh* and *Blood*, as well as *Reaſon* and *Spirit*, and to undergo Puniſhment for being made up of *Body* as well as *Soul*; for being a *Man*, and not an *Angel*.

As for ſeveral things which follow upon the *firſt Suggeſtion* of a *prohibited Object*, and upon the *firſt Luſting* after it; they are not the Effects of *Nature*, but of our Choice. For tho' a firſt *Thought* and *Fancy* of Evil, and a *ſudden Luſting* after it, may obtrude itſelf upon us before we can obſerve it, whether we will or not, either by *Chance* or by Occaſion of a *Temptation*; yet a *continued Entertainment* of it, and a Stay upon it in our *Imaginations*, to cheriſh *Luſt* and inflame *Deſire*, cannot come upon us but by our own *Liking* and *Connivance*. For as ſoon as ever we can obſerve them, our *Thoughts* are our own to diſpoſe of, how and upon what we pleaſe. Wherefore, if we pleaſe, we may call them off from the *forbidden Objects*. They ſtarted it without our Leave, but they muſt have our Leave to ſtay upon it.

However, theſe *After thoughts* themſelves, and theſe *Inclinations* after *forbidden Things*, which come thus from the free Determination, or at leaſt from the Connivance of our own Wills, are not always an *Article* of our *Condemnation*; but then only when we conſent to do what

they ſuggeſt, or practiſe and fulfil the ſame. For if the *forbidden Thing* is only *fancy'd* in our Minds, and *crav'd* by our Appetites, but has got no Poſſeſſion of our Hearts, nor any Endeavours of our Lives and Actions, according to the gracious Terms of that Goſpel by which we muſt ſtand or fall, it is not yet come within the *Terrors* of Judgment, nor has made us liable to *Death* and *Hell.*

For the Evil and Danger of our *bodily Deſires*, is the Evil and Danger of a *Temptation*; when our *Appetites* deſire what the *Prohibition* has made *Evil*, and our Spirits on the other ſide declare what the Commandment has made good, then is the Time of Temptation or Trial, whether our Wills are reſolved to ſtick to our *Luſts*, or to our *Duty*; and whether they will prefer God or Sin; and herein lies the great Danger of our Natural Appetites; for tho' in themſelves they are not *mortal* and *damning* to any Man otherwiſe Good, yet are they Traps and Snares to *mortal* and *damning* Sins.

I have ſaid our natural Appetites are not mortal and damning to any Men who are otherwiſe good and virtuous. The *Luſting* and *Inclinations* of our *Fleſh* after *Meats* and *Drinks*, and after *Eaſe* and *Pleaſure*, and the *Luſting* of the *Eye* after *Gain* and *Riches*, are not abſolutely and directly *forbidden*, nor in themſelves, and before they have got any farther, an Article of our *Condemnation.* All the Deſires of the Fleſh are naturally neceſſary; ſome to preſerve our own Perſons, and ſome to the *Preſervation* and *Propagation* of *Mankind.* This God himſelf has made, and he allows of it. 'Tis a Sin in no Man to have a *Stomach* to his *Meat*, to have *Deſires* after *Eaſe*, and a fleſhly *Inclination* after *bodily Pleaſures*; becauſe God has ſo framed our *Bodies* that they ſhould, and therefore he cannot be angry with us, if we do deſire them.

Indeed he has not left theſe Deſires to their own Swing, but has put ſeveral Reſtraints upon them. He has

has bound them up from ſome Objects, and in ſome Degrees. We are forbid to *deſire* and *luſt* after Meat and Drink, Eaſe and Pleaſure, Riches and Plenty, when either we are injurious to other Men, in procuring that which we luſt after; or when we are exceſſive and intemperate in the Uſe of it; or for its ſake tranſgreſs any other Commandment. Our Deſires for *Meat* and *Drink*, for Inſtance, muſt not carry us on to exceſſive Meaſures in *Gluttony* and *Drunkenneſs*; our carnal Luſts muſt not draw us on to act them with undue Objects, in Fornication, Adultery, Rapes, or other prohibited *Uncleanneſs:* And our Deſire of Money muſt not betray us into Thefts or Robberies, Fraud and Circumvention, Extortion and Oppreſſion, Niggardlineſs, Uncharitableneſs, or other Sins, whether againſt Juſtice or Charity. As on the other ſide, our *Fears* and *Averſations* from Wants or Pains, or other bodily Evils, muſt not induce us to neglect a Commandment, that we may pleaſe our Fleſh, or to deny our Religion for the ſecuring of a bodily Enjoyment.

Theſe Reſtraints God has laid upon our bodily *Appetites*; having given us theſe Commands, with ſeveral others, which we are often tempted to tranſgreſs, in order to the fulfilling of them. For our bodily *Appetites* themſelves do not diſtinguiſh either of *Objects* or *Degrees*. A Man's Palate or his Stomach, when ſolicited by any delicious Meat or Drink, which yields a Pleaſure to it, does not tell him when it hath enough, nor ceaſes to deſire before it comes to *Intemperance*. Our Eyes *luſt* after Money, but they conſider not whoſe it is. If they may have it, they matter not to whom it belongs; or how they come by it. 'Tis the ſame in our *fleſhly Appetites* of other Things, the natural Pleaſure of which we luſt after; and 'tis that which moves our Bodies, and theſe luſt after them, ſo long as they are pleas'd with them. They never ſtop at a fit Meaſure, or turn away from a forbidden Object. Thoſe who are rul'd by them, are carried on to any Thing that agrees

with them, whether it be lawful or unlawful, and are thus ſure to be inſnar'd into Sin. Here God has ſet a *Reſtraint* upon them, and will puniſh them ſeverely if they go beyond it.

Then are our *Luſts* mortal to us, they are then Articles of our Condemnation, when they have damning Effects, and inſnare us into mortal and damning Sins. To any good Man, the bare Luſts and Deſires of Evil are not ſo truly a *damning Sin*, as a dangerous Temptation. They are not in themſelves an *Article of Death* to him, but they are apt to carry him on to that which is. For that which puts any Sin into a Capacity to tempt us, is our Luſt or Deſire of ſomething which is annext to it, and which we hope to obtain by it. There is always ſomething that goes along with it, which is naturally fitted to pleaſe our Fleſh, and to excite a carnal Appetite; and by this we are tempted and allured into the Practice and Commiſſion of it. Bare Sin could never tempt any Man, nor could any one in his Wits ever chooſe to diſobey for Diſobedience ſake, without any thing further; becauſe there is no good in Tranſgreſſion, nakedly conſidered, which could move any Man's Will to chooſe and embrace it: But on the contrary much Evil, that will diſſuade and fright him from it: For it deprives us of God's Favour, and ſubjects us to his Vengeance, fills us with ſad Hearts, and anxious and terrible Expectations. But that which wins us over to a liking and approbation of it, is the Appearance of ſome *Pleaſure*, *Profit*, *Honour*, or other annext Allurement, which we expect to reap by it. 'Tis one or other of theſe that overcomes all our *Fears*, and inveigles us into the Commiſſion of it; for they ſtrike in with our natural Appetites, and raiſe in us Deſires after it; and theſe prove the Baits which draw us in, and are the inſnaring *Temptation*. All the Force of which lies in this; the Satisfaction of a Luſt is join'd with the acting of a Sin, which is an Invitation to us, for the

the ſake of the one, to commit the other. The Tranſgreſſion has ſomething annext, which is agreeable to our fleſhly Natures, and raiſes in us Deſires of it, and Cravings after it. And when it has got this Hold of us, it draws us as much as we can be drawn by our Love, or our own Luſts, and the Gratifications of our *bodily Appetites*; which is indeed a great Step to our Choice and Commiſſion of it, and a ſtrong Temptation.

For this is the natural Order of our Actions; either our *Conſciences* or our Paſſions move and excite us to them, and then our Wills chooſe and intend them, and upon that Choice and Intention, our Underſtandings contrive and direct, and laſt of all our *bodily* and *executive* Powers fulfil and perform them. All our *bodily* Actions are at the Choice, and under the Command of our Wills; and all our Choice is upon the Appearance of ſome Good or other, which either our Conſciences, or our fleſhly Luſts and Appetites propoſe to us. Our Wills we muſt remember are placed in a middle State, and are beſet on both Sides. Our Luſts being urgent with us to one thing, and our Conſciences to another. And this is that Strife between the *Fleſh* and the *Spirit* which is mentioned in the Scriptures, and that Contention which St. *Paul* deſcribes between the Law of Luſt in the Members, and the Law of God in the Mind. Theſe two Principles, our Body and Spirit, or our Luſts and our Conſciences, are thoſe great Intereſts that vie and ſtruggle in us, and emulouſly contend which ſhall obtain the Conſent and Choice of the Will of Man. And whenever either of them has got that, our Actions follow in courſe. For our bodily Members move at our own Choice; and therefore if our Luſts after the Pleaſure of Sin, have once prevail'd upon our Wills to conſent to it, they have gain'd their Point; and we ſhall go on without more ado to act and commit it.

In this then lies all the Force of a Temptation, that the Sin which we are tempted to, has ſomething annexed to it, wherein our Fleſh is delighted, and which it luſts after and deſires for the ſake of that Pleaſure which it finds in it. And when by this means any Sin has got our fleſhly Love and Deſire, it has got a powerful Friend in our own Boſoms. For our Luſts are ſtrong and violent, and where they ſet upon a Thing, they will not eaſily be denied, but are urgent and importunate with our Wills to conſent to the gratification and fulfilling of them. If once any Sin has ſtruck in with them, it is able to try its Strength, and contend with the Law of God in the Mind, being furniſh'd now with a powerful Bait, and a ſtrong Temptation.

Thus are our *Luſts* and *Deſires* of forbidden *Things*, not the forbidden *Sin* itſelf, but the Temptation to it. In the bare *Luſting* or *Deſiring* of them, we do not commit the damning Sins themſelves, but are tempted only to the Commiſſion. And in this the Apoſtle St. *James* is moſt expreſs: For *then*, ſays he, *every Man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Luſts, and enticed to Evil* by them.

As for *mere Temptation* to a damning Sin, it is not mortal and damning. For our being tempted to Sin, is not a renouncing of our Lord, but an exerciſe of our Service and Obedience to him, and a Trial whether or no we will renounce him. It is the great Proof and Argument how dearly we love him, and how cloſely and faithfully our Wills adhere to him. It ſhews how Obedience is uppermoſt in our Hearts, and that we will rather deny our deareſt *Luſts* and importunate Deſires, than venture for their Sakes to offend him. Thus to be tempted is ſo far from being Criminal, that it gives a plain Proof how much we will loſe and ſuffer rather than we will diſobey. It is a Trial of us how far we will prefer God and our Duty before other Things, even thoſe that are moſt dear to us of all Things in the World

World beſides. We do not ſin damnably then in being tempted, ſo long as we conſent not to it, but manfully reſiſt and overcome the Temptation.

And this is evident from hence, becauſe thoſe very Men who had liv'd moſt free from *Sin*, have not for all that liv'd free from *Temptation*. Even *Adam* himſelf, before he knew what *Sin* was, and during his *State of Innocence*, was liable to be tempted. For the *Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil*, of which God had *forbidden* him to eat, was alluring to his Eyes, and an Incentive to his Luſt, as well as any other Tree of the *Garden*. And becauſe it was ſo, the Woman was won to eat of it, thro' the Strength of ſuch Deſire after it, notwithſtanding God had commanded her to abſtain from it. *The Woman ſaw that the Tree was good for Food, and pleaſant to the Eye; and ſhe took of the Fruit thereof and did eat.* And by the ſame Inducement ſhe drew in her Husband, and *gave it unto him, and he did eat alſo.* The ſecond *Adam*, who was moſt intirely innocent, and guilty of no ſort of Sin, was yet liable to Temptation, like as we are, *being in all Points* tempted, like as we *are, yet without Sin:* Nay, the Apoſtle ſays it was neceſſary he ſhould be tempted, that by what he felt in himſelf, he might the better know how to ſhew Mercy and have Compaſſion upon us. *In all Things*, ſays he, *it behov'd him to be made like unto his Brethren, that he might be a merciful* as well as a *faithful High-Prieſt; for in that he himſelf hath ſuffer'd being tempted, he is able to ſuccour them that are tempted.*

As for our being tempted then, or invited to any Sin by our bare *Luſt* and Inclination after it, in itſelf, and before it has got any further, it is no mortal Sin or damning Tranſgreſſion. It is the Scene of good Endeavour, the Trial of Obedience, a Teſt of our great Love and Preference of God and his Law, before all the World beſides, before even our own deareſt *Luſts*, and our own ſelves: And therefore in itſelf, bare *Luſt* and

Deſire, or being tempted and invited to Sin, cannot be damnably *ſinful.*

As for our *Luſts* and *Temptations*, 'tis true they differ in Degrees, according as our Deſires of that Evil which we are tempted to, are indulg'd, and have advanced more or leſs. For ſometimes a Luſt may ſtir, but as ſoon as it is obſerv'd, it is again extinguiſh'd. The Pleaſure of the Sin, whether by being ſeen or fancy'd, raiſes in us a ſudden *Thought* or *Deſire* after it; but the *Luſt* is expell'd, and the Fancy is turn'd away from the evil Thing as ſoon as it is diſcover'd. 'Tis not ſuffer'd to remain and dwell in us, but is preſently thrown out with Indignation. And this is a Power over our own Deſires, and a way of breaking the Strength of Temptations; which is incident only to *graver Men*, and to *perfect Chriſtians*; and that not in all Inſtances of Temptations, but only in ſuch as are not extraordinary in themſelves, and which have been often vanquiſh'd and triumph'd over. It is in ſuch Caſes, where Uſe has made the Conqueſt eaſy, and long Cuſtom of ceaſing and turning away from the inveigling *Deſire*, has ſo taken off all the Difficulty, that we are able to ſilence and ſubdue the Luſt as ſoon as we diſcern it. And as for thoſe feeble Deſires and impotent Temptations, there is no Queſtion but a good Chriſtian may be under them, and yet he is in no Danger of being condemned for them.

At other Times our *Luſts* live longer and advance higher. They grow up to high Degrees, till they are able to contend and ſtrive againſt the Mind and Conſcience; inſomuch that when at laſt they are deny'd, and our Wills chooſe to do what God commands us in ſpite of them, the Conqueſt is not gain'd without much Struggling and Oppoſition. The *Fleſh* luſteth againſt the *Spirit*, as well as the *Spirit* luſteth againſt the *Fleſh*. And tho' at laſt the *fleſhly Luſts* are overpower'd, and cannot prevail with our Wills to chooſe on their Side, yet do they ſtrive hard, and contend for it.

it. Here a *Luſt* is not preſently ſubdu'd as ſoon as it is diſcern'd, but it ſtrives and ſtruggles. It can make head againſt the Law in the Mind, tho' it cannot overcome it. It has ſome Intereſt in the Will, tho' it has not a ſufficient Intereſt: For the Will hearkens to it for ſome time, and conſiders of what it offers; notwithſtanding that at laſt it rejects its Suit, and thro' the Solicitations of a more powerful Favourite, reſolves againſt it. This Power our Luſts have in us while we are *young Converts*, and of a more *imperfect Goodneſs*. In ſome very great Temptations, ſuch as are the *Fear of Death*, and bodily Torments eſpecially, they will ſtruggle thus in thoſe, who are the moſt *perfect Chriſtians* of all.

But now when our *Luſts* are in this *degree*, when they ſtay upon our Souls for ſome time, and ſtrive againſt our Spirits for the Conſent of our Wills, before they are finally deny'd it; yet if they go no farther than bare *Luſt*, and our Wills do not, after all their Struggling, conſent to them, or chooſe the *Evil* Thing that is *crav'd* by them, they are ſtill uncondemning, and incident to an *Heir of Salvation*. This, as I take it, is clear from what St. *Paul* himſelf ſays of the truly *Regenerate*, or of thoſe who in his Words, *walk in the Spirit*. For in them he ſays plainly, that the *Fleſh luſteth againſt the Spirit*, tho' it is not able *to prevail over it*. The *Fleſh luſteth againſt the Spirit, and the Spirit againſt the Fleſh*.

Thus even in fulfilling the Will of the *Spirit*, you contradict another Will of your *Luſts*, and *cannot do*, or do not the things that you would.

Chriſt himſelf, who knew no Sin, nor ever committed any thing which could in ſtrict Juſtice be worthy of Death, was yet ſubject to ſuch a Conflict of *Fleſh* and *Spirit* as this now mention'd. His very *Death* and *Paſſion*, which were the Conſummation and *higheſt Part of his Obedience*, were not without great ſtruggling of his Fleſh, and a long and earneſt Conflict of his *bodily Deſires*

ſires againſt it. He was in a ſtrange Fear and Diſcompoſure about it. He began, ſays St. *Mark*, *to be ſore amaz'd.* And when he had recover'd himſelf a little from the *Maze* of that ſudden Fright, he prays againſt it, *O my Father, if it be poſſible, let this Cup paſs from me.* His Requeſt not being granted at firſt, he makes a freſh Addreſs, wherein he is more Importunate; *being in an Agony*, ſays St. *Luke*, *he pray'd more earneſtly*; his *Supplications he offer'd up with ſtrong Crying and Tears.* All this Strife and Oppoſition, and the Deſire of Life, and the bodily Appetite after Eaſe and Safety, together with the Senſe of God's Wrath and high Diſpleaſure, roſe in him againſt his Obedience to his Sufferings. But becauſe all this was only carnal Deſire, which tho' it laſted ſome Time, and diſcompos'd him much, was not able to gain any Thing of his Will and Conſent to the Refuſal of his Duty; therefore notwithſtanding That, he was perfectly innocent. All that can be ſaid, is, he was tempted of his *Fleſh* againſt this great and laſt Inſtance of his Obedience, but he did not yield or conſent to the Temptation.

Thus then as for the *Luſts* and *Deſires* of our *Fleſh*, whether they be ſuddenly rejected, and make no Reſiſtance, or are longer liv'd, and contend much; yet if they have got no Conſent of our Wills to the fulfilling of them, nor any Choice or Performance of the evil Thing or Action which is crav'd by them (as thoſe have not which are the Complaint and Fear of good Men) they are only a Temptation to a damning Sin; but in themſelves thus far they are not Damning.

Having ſhewn for what Luſts and Deſires of Evil we ſhall at the Laſt Day be *pardon'd*, we ſhall now ſhew for which of them we ſhall be *condemn'd*.

Our *Luſts* are then damnable, and dangerouſly Evil, when they are effectual Inſtruments and Temptations to damning Evils, and carry us on either to chooſe or practiſe them; for they are the great Favourites and

Seducers

Seducers of our Wills, and thereby the Authors of our Actions. They firſt bring us to chooſe and conſent to the deadly Sin by which they are gratify'd, and then to act it; and when they are gone on to either of theſe, they are an *Article of Condemnation.* They are uncondemning till they come ſo far; but if once they have got us to conſent to the alluring Sin, from that Conſent begins their Sting, and both it, and all that follow'd it, makes us liable to eternal Deſtruction.

To clear this Matter a little farther, I will here ſet down thoſe ſeveral Steps by which we aſcend to the Completion, and are carry'd on to the working and commiſſion of any Sin.

At the Repreſentation of the *Object* which is to tempt us to it, whether it be an *Unchaſte Embrace,* an *Unlawful Gain,* or the like, either by what we *feel* of it now, if it be before our *Senſes,* or by what we *fancy* of it, if in our Imagination, our *Fleſh* is pleas'd and delighted with it. And from this Pleaſure it naturally goes on to *Love,* and *Love* ends in *Deſire*; but when once we are come to *deſire* a Thing, our *Paſſions* have done their Part, and all that in them lies towards the *Action.*

When in the *Appetite* or animal *Soul* the Sin has gone thus far, the next Step is, that to gratify this Deſire, or *Luſt* of our *Fleſh,* our *Wills* ſhou'd conſent to it. For our *Wills* are the Diſpoſers of all that follows; and unleſs they conſent to get that which the *Fleſh* ſo much *deſires,* there can be nothing more done towards it. But if they do conſent to the *Deſire,* and intend to fulfil it, then our *Underſtanding* and Contrivance are employ'd in Deliberating and Conſulting, what Time, what Place, what Means are fitteſt to accompliſh it with the leaſt Difficulty, and the moſt Delight, and to the greateſt Advantage. And when our Minds have ſeen which to prefer and fix upon, then our *Wills* reſolve upon them, and make choice of them. When this is done, the laſt *Decree* is paſt, and all the time of Doubting

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and Deliberation is over; nothing then remains, but to apply our *Bodily Powers*, to perform our Reſolutions in the Execution and Commiſſion of that which was reſolv'd upon.

This is the natural Order of our Faculties, and the Proceſs that is obſerv'd by our principles of Action, toward their Completion, and the final Commiſſion of any Sin. The firſt beginning is in the lower Soul, for that is the inlet of all Sin, and the open door for Temptation; and there it is that Sin has all its Strength and inſnaring Powers; upon which Account 'tis call'd by St. *Paul, a Law in the Members.* And when theſe *Luſts* of our *Fleſh* have won the conſent of our Wills, they are ſecure of all our After-Contrivances for it, and of all our actual Performance and Execution. For both our *Thoughts* and our *bodily Powers* are at the command of our own *Wills.* If at the inſtigation of our *Luſts*, our Wills have once conſented to the *Sin*, they will quickly ſet our Heads at work to *contrive* for it, and our Hands and other bodily Powers to execute and fulfil it.

In this Method our principles of Action move, when we act with *full Deliberation*; and when they are all employ'd, ſometimes indeed there is no *Contrivance* at all, becauſe none is needful; as it happens when the Opportunity of the Sin is preſent with us, and juſt before us at ſuch a time as we conſent to it. Nothing more is then wanting, but only to act and fulfil it. When the Opportunity is abſent, and we are put to forecaſt and contrive for it, then is the proceſs of our Faculties in that Order which we have here deſcrib'd.

For an Inſtance and Illuſtration of this, we will take the Sin of *Drunkenneſs*, and the Proceſs will appear to be as has been mention'd. In a Man whoſe Inclination that way diſpoſes him to be tempted by it, the *Fancy* of it in himſelf, or the having it ſuggeſted to him by another, gives him a Thought of the Pleaſure which accompanies it, and from that Apprehenſion of its *Pleaſurableneſs*, he begins

begins to *love*, and from that *Love* he goes on ſtraightway to *deſire* it. His Will being now ſolicited by his *Luſt* or *bodily Deſire*, conſents to the fulfiling of it. And this *Conſent* being once gain'd, the next Thing in order is to *deliberate* and *contrive* what *Company*, what *Time*, and what *Place* are fitteſt for it. And when by comparing all Things together, he comes to make a Judgment of that, he immediately chooſes, and reſolves upon it; and that being done, there is nothing remaining further but to execute what he has reſolv'd, and go on to the Performance of it.

Now ſo long as the Evil is contain'd in a ſhort delightſom Thought, or Love, or Deſire, and reſts there, but goes no farther; it is not ſo much our *damning Sin*, as our *dangerous Temptation*. It will be conniv'd at, and at the laſt Day we ſhall not be *condemn'd* for it. Thus far the Sin is only ſoliciting our *Choice*, but has not got it; and as yet we have not committed a mortal Crime, but are only under a Trial, whether we will be drawn to the Commiſſion of it or no. If once our *Wills* conſent to it, then begins the *Sting*, and there the Danger *enters*; for the *luſting* after Evil, ſo far as to conſent to it, and much more ſo as to contrive for it, or to fulfil it, makes us liable to Death and eternal Damnation. If by means of the tempting *Luſt* any Sin has prevail'd ſo far, it is become a mortal Offence, and ſubjects us to Deſtruction. *Luſt*, ſays St. *James*, *when it is conceiv'd*, or is imperfectly conſented to, anſwering its Conception, which is an imperfect Formation, *bringeth forth Sin*; and *Sin*, *when* (by being perfectly conſented to) *it is finiſhed*, *bringeth forth Death*, which is the Wages of it.

And that our *Luſts* after any *Sin* are then damnably *ſinful*, when they are gone beyond Deſire, and are come either to our *Conſent* or *Contrivance*, or *actual Performance*, appears further from theſe Inſtances in them all *Three*.

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If we *Luſt* ſo long after any evil Thing as to conſent to the *ſinful Enjoyment of it*, we are guilty of all that Puniſhment which is threaten'd to it. *He that looks upon a Woman*, ſays our Saviour, ſo long as to *luſt after her*, or to conſent in his Heart to the Enjoyment of her, *he hath committed Adultery with her already in his Heart*. If we *luſt* ſo long as to contrive for it, which is a Degree further, we are the more guilty of the Sin, and more liable to the Puniſhment of it ſtill. The *Machinations* and *Contrivances* of *Murder* are reckon'd among thoſe things which pollute a Man, and thereby unfit him for entering into Heaven, where nothing can ever have Admittance that is unclean, as well as *Murder* itſelf is.

But if our *Luſt* after any ſinful Enjoyment carry us on, not only to *conſent* to it, or to *contrive* for it; but, what is the Perfection of all, to *work* and *fulfil* it; then has it inſnar'd us into as much Miſchief as it can, and is become *Dangerous* and *Damning* with a Witneſs. For then it has prevail'd with us to complete our Sin, and give the laſt Hand to it. It has brought us under that which is moſt of all threaten'd, for we now *fulfil the Luſts of the Fleſh*, and work *Iniquity*.

If we continue to do this, not only for once or twice, but in conſtant Returns and in a fix'd Courſe and Tenure of Action; then as our Sin is grown higher, the Acts of it being more numerous, and the Guilt more crying, ſo will our Puniſhment alſo be the more dreadfully ſevere. This is call'd walking after the *Fleſh*, and *Living after the Fleſh*: 'Tis a State of waſted Virtue, and habitual reigning Sin; it is not only thro' its *Obnoxiouſneſs* to Puniſhment a *State of Death*, but alſo thro' its Hardneſs of Cure and difficult Recovery, a State of great *Doubt* and *Danger*. The ſame *Law in the Members* which wars againg the *Law of the Mind*, ſo as thus to captivate and triumph over it, as it is the *Law* of *Sin*, ſo, as the Apoſtle ſays, 'tis the *Law of Death* too. Therefore

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all our *Luſtings* after *Evil*, when once they come to be conſented to, tho' before they were conniv'd at, are thenceforth Deadly and Damning. And whoever hopes to be ſav'd at the laſt Day from the Puniſhment of them, muſt thus far mortify and kill them; *mortify thoſe Deſires*, ſays St. *Paul*, *which are ſeated in your earthly Members*; all *Fleſhly Luſts* muſt of neceſſity be *crucify'd* in every good Chriſtian; for no Man will be reputed to belong to Chriſt till this Change is wrought in him: *They that are Chriſt's have crucify'd the Fleſh with the Affections and Luſts.* We muſt not ſo *mortify* and *crucify* them, as to have no *Fleſhly Appetites* and *Bodily Deſires* of Evil; for then muſt we have no *Deſires* at all, becauſe our Senſes, as has been obſerv'd, do not diſtinguiſh between *lawful* or *unlawful*, but are naturally mov'd by an agreeable Object, whether it be with God or againſt him; but we muſt mortify them to that degree as that they may never be able to win us over to conſent to any forbidden thing for their Gratification. They muſt never have ſo much Intereſt in our Hearts, as to make us prefer them before our Duty; and chooſe to perform what they, rather than what God requires. Some *Stirrings* and *ineffective* Motions of them, which cannot prevail againſt God, nor gain over the conſent of our Wills to any thing that he has forbidden, are diſpens'd with. They are the ſtage of Temptation, but not of Death; for God bears with them, and the mortify'd Men themſelves do daily feel and labour under them. But it is the prevailing *Strength* of our *Luſts* after evil Things, when they get our Conſent to them, and carry us to tranſgreſs God's Laws to fulfil them, is that which is to be mortify'd in every good Man, becauſe under its Empire he cannot go to Heaven.

Before a Man can become a good Chriſtian, he has ſo kill'd the reigning Power of *Luſt*, as not to be acted any longer by its Inſtigation. He feels ſome ſmall Stirrings of it afterward, but they do not win upon him, nor prevail over him: For he is always ready to deny the

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ſatisfaction of his *Luſt*, before he will diſpleaſe his God, and makes all the *Deſires* of his *Fleſh* give way to the Dictates of his Conſcience: *Ye that are Chriſt's*, ſays St. *Paul*, *have crucified the Fleſh with the Affections and Luſts*.

When once this is done, there is no great Trouble in it afterwards; for the more any Man is accuſtom'd to obey, the leſs Difficulty does he find in *Mortification* and *Self-denial*, and in reſtraining of all thoſe *Luſts* which tempt to *Diſobedience*. He is not now in every Temptation put to the Pain and Trouble of *cutting off a right Hand*, or of *plucking out a right Eye*. 'Tis true this Self-denial and Mortification went very near him at firſt; but ſince he has been us'd to it, and his Fleſh is accuſtomed to bear the Yoke, there are no ſuch Pangs and Uneaſineſs attending it. His Luſts are ſo *mortify'd*, as it is abſolutely neceſſary they ſhould be: They are crucify'd to that Degree, as to be diſabled from gaining his *Conſent* to them, his *Contrivance* for them, or his *Performance* of them. Which is as much Mortification as God will exact of him.

But yet when this is done, and our *Luſts* are *mortify'd* to this Degree, there is ſtill need of a watchful Care of them, and a continual Strife againſt them, leſt they rebel again and go further. For the objects of Senſe, and the allurements of the Fleſh, are ſtill before us, and our Bodies naturally are ſtill as capable to be delighted in them, and to *luſt* and long after them, as ever they were before. 'Tis only the overpowering Strength of the Law in the Mind or Conſcience, which maintains the reſolution of our Wills againſt them, and by that means keeps them under. Wherefore if once we begin to ſlacken our Care, and to allow them to go where and how far they pleaſe, they will quickly grow upon us, and prove too hard for us; bring us firſt to conſent to them, and after that to complete and fulfil them.

Let no Man therefore indulge to the Thoughts of unlawful Pleaſures, and by the *Delights* of his *Fancy* foment

foment and cheriſh the Deſires of his *Fleſh*, preſuming that all is ſafe, while he does not conſent to them, nor yields to fulfil them. For admitting that all things elſe are innocent and uncondemning, yet however by this means he lays a Snare for his own Soul. He throws himſelf into Temptation, and ſo cannot expect that God ſhould deliver him out of it. God has promis'd to relieve us indeed in all our Neceſſities of his own making: and if his Providence throws us upon this Trial, his Grace ſhall ſupport us under it, and make way for our Eſcape out of it. *He will not ſuffer you to be tempted above what you are able to bear*, ſays the Apoſtle; but together with the Tempation he *will make a way to eſcape, that ye may be able to bear* ſo much of it as befals you. But what is this to us, if we bring ourſelves into Snares, and prove our own *Tempters?* For there is no Reaſon at all to preſume that God, if he will deliver us from other Enemies, ſhould deliver us alſo from our own ſelves; and that he ſhould ſecure us by his Spirit from thoſe very Snares which we lay for our own Virtue. If we will entertain Serpents in our Boſoms, he has no where engag'd, nor is there any Reaſon why he ſhould, that we ſhall not be ſtung by them. On the contrary he warns us againſt them, and bids us be careful to keep off from them. So far muſt we be from bringing Temptations upon ourſelves, that, if we will obſerve his Orders, we muſt pray daily even againſt thoſe to which his Providence may expoſe us. This being one of thoſe Petitions, which, according to our Lord's Appointment, we are to put up to God, as often as we do that for our *daily Bread, that he would not lead us into Temptation*.

If therefore by indulging to delightſom Fancies, and growing Luſts of *Evil*, we throw ourſelves into a great *Temptation*, we have juſt Reaſon to fear, leſt God for our Puniſhment ſhould leave us in it, and ſuffer us to fall by it into Perdition; ſuch Indulgence is apt of itſelf to inflame our Luſts, and to weaken our Reſolutions.

God

God alſo is prone to withdraw his *Grace*, and to leave us to our own Strength upon it; and ſince at the ſame time it increaſes our Neceſſities, and withdraws our Aids, it muſt needs put us into a dangerous Condition. To ſecure our Souls then, and keep us off from damning Sins, we muſt reſiſt Temptations at the beginning, and not give way to them; we muſt not cheriſh and indulge, but timely check, and heedfully ſuppreſs them.

Thus at laſt we ſee, what is the juſt Force of this firſt Cauſe of *Fear* to honeſt Minds, their *ineffective Luſts* and *impotent Deſires* of Evil. The firſt beginnings of Luſt cannot be avoided, and the longer Entertainment of it ſhall not finally be puniſhed, if 'tis ſoon check'd by us; nay, if it ſtays longer, and contends much with us, ſo long as it does not prevail upon us to conſent to, and fulfil the *Sin* to which it is a *Temptation*. But when once it has gain'd our Conſent and Choice of that Sin to which it would engage us, then it is of a damning Strain, and all its following Effects are Mortal.

Tho' therefore thoſe *Luſtings* and Deſires which good Men complain of, may juſtly be an Employment of their *Watchfulneſs* and *Care*; yet ought they not to be a Cauſe of their *Fear* and *Scruple*, for they ſhall not bring upon them thoſe Evils they are afraid of, nor ever prove their Ruin and Deſtruction. The evil thing is entertain'd only in a Thought, or a Wiſh. They *luſt* after it, and are *tempted* by it; but that is all, for they do not conſent to the Temptation. And ſince their Luſts go no farther, they ſhall not harm them when Chriſt comes to Judgment, nor ever bring them into *Condemnation*.

Another thing which diſquiets the Minds of good and honeſt Men, and makes them needleſly to call in queſtion the *Saveableneſs* of their preſent State, is the *Coldneſs* and *Unaffectedneſs*, the *Unſettledneſs* and *Diſtractions* which they find in themſelves when they are at Prayers; and good People are wont to cry out of *Deſertions*, to think

think that God has thrown them off, and that his Spirit has forſaken them, if at any time they find a great *Diſtraction* and *Dulneſs of Spirit* in their Devotions, with a great Abatement of that *Zeal* and *Fervency*, that *Fixedneſs* and Attention which they have happily enjoy'd at other times.

But this is a great Miſtake, ariſing from Mens Ignorance of God's Laws, and of their own ſelves. God has no where told them, that he will judge them at the *laſt Day* by the Steddineſs and Fixedneſs, the *Tide* and *Fervency* of their *Devotions*, but the *Integrity* of their *Hearts*, and the *Uprightneſs* of their *Obedience*. The laſt Sentence ſhall not paſs upon Men according to the *Heat* of their *Affections*, but according to the *Goodneſs* of their *Lives*. If they have been careful to practiſe all God's *Commandments* according to their Power and Opportunities, and this of *Prayer* among the reſt, in ſuch ſort as their unavoidable Infirmities would ſuffer them, they ſhall be ſafe in that Judgment, notwithſtanding any Inequality in their *bodily Tempers*, or Unconſtancy and Abatement in their *bodily* Affections.

In the *Duty* of *Prayer*, as in all other Duties, we are bound ſo far only as comes under the Power and Choice of our own Wills. And after all our Care and Pains in fixing our Thoughts, and raiſing of our Deſires in Prayer, thro' ſome bodily Indiſpoſition or unforeſeen Accidents, which we cannot help; our Minds ſometimes will ſtill run aſtray, and our Deſires be cold and languid. And thus this *unwill'd Dulneſs* and *Diſtraction* ſhall not influence our main State, more than our other *unwill'd Failures* do; 'tis a thing which no Man can help, or is perfectly free from: Wherefore God will not be ſevere upon, but in great Mercy he will pity and connive at it.

For as for the *Attention* of our *Minds*, and the *Fixedneſs* of our *Thoughts*, either in Prayer or in any other Buſineſs; it is a Thing which is not always in our own Power,

Power, but may be hindered and interrupted by many Accidents whether we will or no. Any thing that makes our *bodily Spirits* tumultuary and reſtleſs, diſturbs and breaks our Attention. Any high Motion of our Blood, or any former Impreſſion upon our Spirits, either by our precedent *Studies*, or our croud of Buſineſs, will make great variety of Thoughts and roving Fancies to obtrude themſelves upon us; and this is our natural Frame and Conſtitution, which we muſt ſubmit to, and can never wholly remedy. We can no more prevent it than we can prevent our *Dreams*, when our Fancies are ſtruck by like Impreſſions. For from the natural Union of our Souls and Bodies, our Minds in the moſt ſpiritual Operations of *Thinking* and *Underſtanding*, go along with our *bodily Spirits*, and apprehend often their Impreſſions; and we can as well refuſe to ſee when our Eyes are open, or to taſte what is put into our Mouths, as we can refuſe to have a thought of theſe Things which are impreſt upon our bodily Fancy. The Connexion between theſe is neceſſary and natural, and there is no breaking or avoiding it. Thus let us be either at our Prayers, or at any other Exerciſe; if any *Temper* of our *Bodies*, any accidental Motion of our Blood, any former Impreſſions of foregoing Studies, or other Buſineſs ſtir in our Fancies, our *Thoughts* muſt needs be *diverted*, and our *Attention* diſturb'd by them.

We are more apt to find it thus in our Prayers, than in any other thing. For beſides that, in theſe the Adverſary is more buſy with us; Men therein often uſe *Violence*, and ſcrew up the *Fixedneſs* of their Minds, and the Fervency of their Hearts, to the higheſt Pitch. And thus their *bodily Spirits* being conſtrained, are liable not only to be diſcompos'd by outward Accidents, but alſo to give back and fall of themſelves; and when in this manner they withdraw, there is room made, till they can be recollected again, for other Thoughts to ariſe inſtead of them.

Indeed

Indeed we may, and ought to ſtrive againſt theſe *Diſtractions* as much as we can, and to compoſe our Thoughts as much as our natural Temper, or our preſent Circumſtances will ſuffer us. When they wander in our Prayers, as ſoon as we diſcern it, we may recollect them; and when other Thoughts intrude, as ſoon as they are obſerv'd we may reject them. But then is all that we can do, or that God requires we ſhould do, for we cannot *pray* perfectly and continuedly without them.

As for the *Zeal* and Fervency of our Affections, whether in our Prayers, or any thing elſe, they are various and very changeable, and do not depend ſo much upon the *Choice* of our *Wills*, as upon the *Temper* of our *Bodies*. Some upon every Occaſion are more warm and eager in their Paſſions, either of *Love* or *Hatred*, *Hope* or *Fear*, *Joy* or *Sorrow*, than other Men either are or can be. For there's a difference in *Tempers*, as well as in *Palates*, and Mens Paſſions do no more iſſue out upon the ſame Things, in the ſame *Eagerneſs*, than their *Stomachs* do after the ſame *Food* with the ſame degrees of *Appetite*; wherefore, every Man cannot work himſelf up to a great *Fervency*, and *vehement Affection*; becauſe all Tempers do not admit of it. 'Tis more a Man's Temper than his Choice; and it is not to be expected, that all People ſhould be able to raiſe themſelves up to a tranſporting Pitch therein, but only that they ſhould who are born to it.

They whoſe natural Temper fits them for a great *Fervency* and a *high Affection*, are not able to work themſelves up to it at all Times; for no Man's Temper is conſtant and unchangeable. Our *Bodies* are ſubject to a thouſand Alterations, either from things within us, or from others that are without us. If a Man's Blood is put into an irregular Ferment, either by a cold Air or inward Diſtemper, or any diſcompoſing Accident; it ſpoils not only the *Fixedneſs* of his Thoughts, but alſo the *Zeal* of his Actions; and if there be any Damp or Diſorder, any Dulneſs or Indiſ-

Indiſpoſition, either upon a Man's Blood or Spirits, the diſcompoſure of his Body is preſently felt in his Soul. His Thoughts flag, and his Paſſions run low, all his Powers are under a Cloud and ſuffer an Abatement.

This every Man finds in himſelf when he labours under a *ſickly* and *crazy* Temper, an *aking* or a *cloudy* Head, or any other bodily Indiſpoſition; for our *Paſſions* are *bodily Leavers*, and are manag'd by *bodily Inſtruments*; they live and die with them, and are ſubject to all their Coolings and their Changes: Wherefore, as long as our *bodily Diſpoſitions* vary, and by reaſon of a number of Accidents are ſtill changeable and inconſtant, the *Zeal* and Fervency of our Affections muſt needs be ſo too, which ſure we cannot help. God will not be always angry, or eternally torment us for them. His Love and Favour to us will not alter, as our unſettled Thoughts or bodily Tempers do.

We ought, according to our preſent Circumſtances and Diſpoſitions, to be as fervent and affectionate in Prayer as we can, to recal our Thoughts when we obſerve them to wander. If we do this, we need not doubt but our involuntary Diſtractions ſhall not hinder our *Devotions* being accepted by God, and the Bleſſings which we ſue for being obtain'd. If our Prayers are ſometimes leſs Intent and leſs Affectionate than at others they are, and we at all times greatly deſire they might be, yet ſhall they be heard by our Father who is in Heaven: For our *Fixedneſs* and *Fervency*, tho' they are great good Things, and ſuch as we muſt take care ſtill to be provided with when we *pray*, yet are not the only Qualifications of our *Prayers* which prevail with God and move him to hear them. Our *holy Love* and *humble Fear*, our *Truſt* and *Dependence*, *Submiſſion* and *Reſignedneſs*, and other ſpiritual Virtues and Inſtances of Obedience, are alſo Diſpoſitions which God reſpects in them; nay, which he prizes above all and principally looks at. Therefore as long as our Hearts are honeſt, and our Lives

entirely

entirely obedient, we are always furniſh'd with thoſe Qualifications which are ſufficient to bring down God's Grace and Bleſſing upon us, and which are the principal Things that make our Prayers themſelves an acceptable Offering. And if at any time a good Man's Devotions are leſs perfect than he deſires they ſhould be, that Defect will be otherwiſe ſupply'd, and he will have all that Mercy convey'd to him thro' other Means which his *Prayers* ſhould have obtain'd for him; for that which makes his *Prayers* procure God's Love and Mercy for him, will make his Obedience procure the very ſame.

Let a Man make ſure in the firſt Place of a *good Life*, and of an honeſt and entire Obedience, and then he need not fear to want thoſe Things which all good Men have need to pray for. He cannot periſh for want of thoſe Mercies for which he *prays*, tho' it be ſometimes (and will be, do what he can) with Coldneſs and Diſtraction; becauſe not only the other obedient Performance of his Prayers, however thro' ſome unchoſen Hindrances a due Fixedneſs and Fervency are wanting, but alſo the conſtant uninterrrupted Obedience of his Life is daily aſcending up, and brings them down upon him.

Let no *good Soul* then be further troubled and diſquieted on this Account, as if, becauſe after all his Care, his *Prayers* are ſometimes *dull* and *cold*, and his Thoughts therein much diſtracted, he ſhall be eternally puniſh'd for them, or at leaſt go without the Bleſſings he deſires in them. For as long as the *Spirit of Obedience* appears, both in his *Prayers* and in his Actions, the unwill'd Diſtractions of the *Mind*, and the *Dulneſs* and *Frozenneſs* of his *Affections* at ſome times, ſhall be no hindrance either to his Suit at preſent, or to his Happineſs hereafter; his Requeſt ſhall not be thrown by, nor be condemn'd for them; but ſo far as God ſees it fitting for him, it ſhall be granted, and he ſhall notwithſtanding be eternally ſaved.

A third *Scruple* which is wont cauſeleſly to diſguſt and trouble honeſt Minds, is the Words of our Saviour, *I ſay unto you, that* as concerning *every idle Word which Men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give an Account thereof at the Day of Judgment.*

This ſeems to be a ſtrict and ſevere Saying; for in all the Croud and *Variety* of Converſe, in the infinite Numbers of *Queſtions* and *Anſwers*, and other occaſions of Diſcourſe, what Man in all the World, but eſpecially thoſe who are of a *Converſation* that is *Free* and *Open*, *Courteous* and *Ingenuous*, *Chearful* and *Delightſom*, which temper the Goſpel does not only allow but approve of; Who, I ſay, of all Men, but of Men of this make eſpecially, among all the occaſions of *Speech*, can avoid a *multitude of Words?* And where much is ſaid, how can it be but that much muſt be Idle and Impertinent?

This ſometimes works very melancholy Effects, for it frights Men from all the innocent *Freedoms* of *Converſe*, and the chearful *Entertainments* of *Company*. It makes them to appear *ſtay'd* and *reſerv'd*, *ſilent* and *moroſe*, to contribute nothing to the *harmleſs Mirth* and *Chearfulneſs* of *Converſation* themſelves, and to frown upon it in others. For all *Converſe* and *Society* are manag'd by the *Tongue*, and the ordinary *Entertainment* of *Company* is *Talking* and *Diſcourſe*; but where Men think every idle and uſeleſs Word ſo dangerous a Sin, they are afraid to ſpeak. All that comes from them is ſteady and deliberate, grave and compos'd; they neither dare uſe any Freedom themſelves, nor can, without Offence, obſerve it to be us'd by others.

But this is ſo far from being enjoin'd by Chriſt, that it is diſcountenanc'd by Nature. 'Tis ſo far from being a piece of Religion, and a holy Duty, that 'tis rather a piece of Immorality and ill Manners. And as it is diſcountenanc'd by Nature, ſo it is alſo by the Laws of Chriſt. For whatever ſome Men may think of it, or how innocently ſoever they may be led into that Conceit

ceit about it, yet is it a *Temper* which Chriſt never intended to plant among us. His coming into the World was after another way, in a free Uſe of the innocent Allowances and Liberties of Mankind. The *Son of Man*, ſays St. *Matthew*, *came Eating and Drinking*, not in the ſingular Auſterities of *John* the *Baptiſt*, but in a *free way of Converſation*, ſuch as others us'd. His Religion enjoins the Virtues of *Candour* and *Benignity*, *Affability* and *Courteſy*, an open *Freedom* and *Alacrity*, and all thoſe other Ways by which our Converſation may be render'd innocently agreeable, and by which we may in any wiſe benefit, whether by profiting or pleaſing one another. *Whatſoever things*, ſays St. *Paul*, *are lovely*, or grateful to *Men*, *think on theſe things*. Love is the Epitome of our whole Duty, and all the Sweetneſſes and Endearments of Society that can be, ſo long as they are lawful and honeſt, are not only conſiſtent with it, but Parts and Expreſſions of it.

As for the grave Entertainments of Diſcourſe and religious Conference, they, without doubt, have a great Uſe, and in their Place may deſerve a great Commendation. For good Chriſtians may be much better'd and improv'd by having their *Graces* awaken'd, their pious *Affections* inflam'd, their holy Purpoſes fix'd and ſettled, their Endeavours directed and encourag'd, and every thing that is good in them quicken'd and confirm'd by religious Converſation. But then 'tis to be conſider'd, that even *good Things* themſelves muſt be taken in their *own Seaſon*, and muſt not be ſuffer'd to engroſs all Time, a great Part of which is to be ſpent upon other Things. For we have not only one Thing to do, but at ſeveral Times ſeveral Things call for us. *There is a Time*, ſays the wiſe Man, *to every Thing, and a Seaſon to every Purpoſe under Heaven. There is a Time to Weep, and a Time to Laugh; a Time to Mourn, and a Time to Dance.* There is a Time for Diverſion, as well as a Time for Buſineſs; a Time wherein to have a more liberal and free Diſcourſe, as well as a Time for grave and godly

Conference. Farther, the innocent Delights of Converſation, and pleaſurable Entertainments of Diſcourſe, are themſelves a great *Field of Virtue*, and an *Exerciſe*, and Occaſion of many Inſtances of *Obedience*. For in *that* we may every one of us exerciſe in our own Perſons, and be Examples to others of, much *Courteſy* and *Kindneſs*, *Civility* and *Condeſcenſion*, *Affability* and *Obligingneſs*.

Let no Man think then, that his Hours of common Converſation are always *loſt Hours*; and that whatever Time he ſpends upon *Offices* of *Civility*, and *Freedom* of Company, is miſplac'd and ſtol'n from God and Religion: For we are fulfilling God's Laws, while, as Occaſion requires, we keep all theſe Commandments in the pleaſurable Entertainments of common Life. They are ſuch Buſineſs as he has ſet for us, and our obedient Performance of them muſt paſs for his *Service*, as well as *Devotion*, holy Conference, and Meditation.

'Tis no prejudice or hindrance to Religion therefore, to be free and open in *Converſation*, and pleaſant and chearful in *common Life*, but rather an Inſtance and Expreſſion of it. 'Tis no part of any Man's Duty to be talking always in *Scripture-Phraſe* and *Sanctify'd Expreſſion*, or elſe to be wholly ſilent, and ſeverely moroſe, and not to talk at all. For an innocent Chearfulneſs and Freedom of Diſcourſe, is not the good Man's Sin, but the Exerciſe of his Virtue and Obedience.

But as for that Opinion, that every idle and impertinent Word ſhall be ſeverely accounted for at the Day of Judgment, which is the great ſourer of Converſation, and the occaſion of this Conceit, it is a great Miſtake: For 'tis not every *idle* and *unprofitable*, but every *falſe*, *ſlanderous*, or otherwiſe *ſinful* and *unlawful Word*, of which our Saviour ſpeaks. As for the *Word* which is tranſlated *Idle*, it may ſignify *falſe* and *deceitful*, as thoſe *Words* are which *belye* our *Works*, when our Actions do not anſwer them. And this is agreeable to the uſe

of

of the Word *Vain*, which ſometimes ſignifies the ſame as *Falſe* and *Lying*. 'Tis us'd in the latter Senſe in the *Third Commandment*, where we are bid not to take the Name of God in vain; that is, in *Perjury* and *Falſhood*. For this is the Senſe our Saviour gives it in his Repetiton of the *Commandment*; *It hath been ſaid to them of Old*, ſaith He, *i. e.* in the Third Commandment, *Thou ſhalt not forſwear thyſelf, or ſwear falſly*.

But if nothing more than *uſeleſs* and *unprofitable* were noted by the Word itſelf, which we tranſlate *Idle*; yet it is no unuſual Thing in the Scriptures, by ſeveral Words to mean and intend more than in their literal Senſe they do expreſs. Thus are the *abominable Works of Darkneſs* call'd *Unfruitful Works*, where the Meaning ſurely is, not only that they bring in no Profit or Advantage, but alſo that they are moſt deadly and miſchievous; and the *Unfaithful Wicked Servant*, ſpoken of by St. *Matthew*, is call'd the *Unprofitable Servant*. After the ſame uſe of Speech, our Words, which do not only tend to none, but to very ill Fruit, may be call'd *Idle* or *Unprofitable Words*; and ſo they are in this Place. For the *Idle Words* of which our Saviour ſpeaks, are ſuch Words as are not only Idle and Unprofitable, but poſitively *Wicked* and *Evil*, being indeed *falſe*, *ſlanderous*, and *reviling* Words; ſuch as are a Sign not only of a *trifling*, but of an *evil* Heart. *How can ye*, ſays Chriſt, *being Evil, ſpeak good Things; for out of the abundance of the Heart the Mouth ſpeaketh*. Thus *as a good Man, out of the good Treaſure of his Heart bringeth forth*, or ſpeaketh *good Things, an evil Man likewiſe out of the evil Treaſure of his Heart bringeth forth evil Things:* And being the fruits of an *evil Heart*, they are the ſign not of an *Impertinent*, but of an *Evil Man*. The *Tree is corrupt, if the Fruit be corrupt; for the Tree is known by its Fruit*. And ſince they are ſuch Words as are thus ſinful in themſelves, and an argument of ſo much Sin in us, in the laſt Judgment they

ſhall be charg'd upon us to condemn us. *For by thy Words*, ſays our Saviour, as well as Actions, *ſhalt thou be juſtified*; and *by thy Words*, if they be ſuch idle Words as I mean, *ſhalt thou be condemned.* Words of this black Die, and of theſe miſchievous Effects, are not every *idle* and *impertinent*, but falſe, ſlanderous, railing, or otherwiſe *ſinful* and *forbidden* Words. But falſe and ſlanderous Words are eſpecially ſtruck at in this Place; ſuch as were thoſe lying and contumelious ones that occaſion'd all this Diſcourſe, when the *Jews* moſt reproachfully charg'd Chriſt's *Miracles* upon the Devil; telling him, *he caſt out Devils thro' Beelzebub the Prince of the Devils.* Upon occaſion of which black Calumny, he warns them againſt ſuch *blaſphemous Speeches*; demonſtrating clearly the *Unreaſonableneſs* of them, the *Sinfulneſs* of them, and the *miſchievous Effects* of them. Such reproachful Words as theſe, let me tell you, ſays he, you ſhall be call'd to an Account for, as well as for your Works and Actions. *I ſay unto you*, that *every idle*, or ſlanderous and reproachful Word (ſuch as now you have ſpoken againſt me) *that Men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give an Account thereof in the Day of Judgment.* For when that Day comes, think you of it as you pleaſe, all Mens Words, as well as their Actions, ſhall be call'd to an Account: *By thy Words thou ſhalt be juſtified*; and (if they have been ſuch as yours now are) *by thy Words thou ſhalt be condemned.*

Another cauſeleſs ground of Fear which diſquiets the Minds, and affrights the hearts of good chriſtian People, is the Sin againſt the *Holy Ghoſt*; they hear very dreadful Things ſpoken of it: For our Saviour Chriſt who knew it beſt, and who at the laſt Day is to judge of it, has told us plainly beforehand, That *he who blaſphemeth the Holy Ghoſt, ſhall never be forgiven; neither in this World nor in the World to come.* In St. *Mark* it is, *he ſhall never have Forgiveneſs, but is liable to eternal Damnation.* This is a fearful Sentence upon a deſperate Sin; and ſeeing they

are

are in Darkneſs about, they know not but what they themſelves may be guilty of it; nay, ſome of a timorous Temper and weak Spirit go farther, and think they really are.

But to cure their *Fears*, and quiet their *Minds* in this Matter, there needs nothing more be done, than to give them right Apprehenſions and a clear Explication of this *Sin*. For if they once know what it is, they would be at eaſe from ſuch tormenting Suſpicions and unreaſonable *Fears* about it.

To explain this, I will conſider what is meant in Scripture by the *Holy Ghoſt*, or *Holy Spirit*. And according to an unuſual *Metonymy* of the Giver for the Gift, or of the Cauſe for the Effect, by the *Holy Spirit* or *Holy Ghoſt*, is very often meant *the Gift or Effects of the Holy Spirit*; whether they be ſuch as he *ordinarily* produces in us, or ſuch as are *Extraordinary* and *Miraculous*.

Sometimes it ſignifies ſuch *Gifts* and *Diſpoſitions*, whether of Mind or Temper, as the *Holy Ghoſt* or *Spirit* of *God* is wont ordinarily to produce in Men. It notes the good Qualifications of our *Minds* or *Underſtandings*, which as well as all other good Gifts are wrought in us by the Spirit, and deriv'd to us from God. Thus a Man endu'd with Wiſdom and Diſcretion, ſuch as *Joſeph* advis'd *Pharaoh* to *ſet over all the Land of* Egypt, is call'd a Man *in whom the Spirit of God* is. And *the Spirit of the Lord*, mention'd in *Iſaiah*, Chap. 11. is in the very next Words, explain'd by the *Spirit of Wiſdom, the Spirit of Underſtanding, the Spirit of Counſel, the Spirit of Knowledge, and the Spirit of quick Underſtanding*. It ſignifies alſo the *Virtuous Tempers* and *good Qualifications* of our Hearts, which, like as the former were, are given us of God. Thus that *good* and *charitable* Temper, which is ſo *exemplary* in God, and which is wrought in our Souls by him, is call'd the *Spirit* of God. *If we love one another, God dwells in us*. Again, *Hereby know we, that we dwell in him, and He in us, becauſe he hath given us* that loving Temper of *his Spirit*; the

Temper which was ſo obſervable in *Chriſt*, is call'd the *Spirit of Chriſt*; the *Temper of* Elias, is call'd the *Spirit of* Elias; the Spirit of the Lord is explain'd by the *Spirit of the fear* of the Lord; and that *Spirit which God hath given us*, ſays St. *Paul, is not the Spirit of Fear, but the Spirit of Power, of Love, and of a ſound Mind.* Thus does the Spirit of God ſignify many times in Scripture thoſe ordinary Gifts and Graces which are the good Effects of the Spirit.

But beſides theſe Effects of it in the good Endowments and Perfections of our natural Faculties, whether of *Mind* or *Temper*, which are *common* and *ordinary*; it ſometimes ſignifies more eſpecially thoſe *Gifts* which are *Extraordinary* and *Miraculous*. Of which ſort are the Gifts of *Tongues*, of *Propheſy*, of healing Diſeaſes without natural Means, and performing other *miraculous Operations*, ſo famous in the firſt Times of the Goſpel. Thus for Example, that Saying, *I will pour out in thoſe Days of my Spirit*, is interpreted by this in the next Words, *And they ſhall propheſy*. And the *double Share* of the *prophetick Power of* Elias, is call'd a *double* Portion of his Spirit. And the *Corinthians* zealous Purſuit of the *miraculous* and *extraordinary* Gifts of *Propheſy, ſpeaking with Tongues, healing Diſeaſes*, and *working Miracles*, is call'd by the Apoſtle, their being *zealous of Spirits*, or of *ſpiritual Gifts*.

Now as for theſe extraordinary Gifts, they are all wrought in us by the ſame Cauſe, and proceed from the ſame Principle, the *Holy Spirit* of God, or the *Holy Ghoſt*. There are in the *Church*, now in our Times, ſays the Apoſtle, *Diverſities of Gifts, but* yet *one and the ſame Spirit* is the *Giver* of them all. *For to one is given by the Spirit the Word of Wiſdom*, or of Goſpel-Truths and Revelation; *to another the Word of Knowledge*, or prophetical Predictions, and diſcerning of remote Things, *by the ſame Spirit*. To another miraculous *Gifts* of *healing Diſeaſes*, without uſe of Means, *by the ſame Spirit*. To another *the working of Miracles*, or the utmoſt

utmoſt Activity and Energy of Powers in the higheſt Inſtances and Effects of them; of which ſort are raiſing the Dead, caſting out Devils, inflicting bodily Torments on contumacious Sinners, &c. And *to another Propheſy* or *Expoſition* of *Scripture*, and inſpired Hymns. *To another diſcerning of Spirits*, both in ſeeing into Mens ſpiritual Thoughts and Intentions; and alſo in diſcerning who wrought true *Miracles*, and who ſatanical Deluſions, who were divinely inſpir'd, and who were mere Pretenders. *To another, the* ecſtatick *Gift of* ſpeaking *divers kinds of Tongues* in ſuch rapturous Tranſports, as permitted them not to ſtay to interpret what they ſaid, and made them afterwards forget it; *To another the Gift of interpreting thoſe ſtrange Tongues* into the vulgar Language of any of the *Congregation*. But all theſe *Diverſities* of *Gifts worketh that one and the ſelf-ſame Spirit*, dividing all theſe different Gifts *to every Man ſeverally as he will.*

And ſeeing it is the ſame *Spirit* or *Holy Ghoſt* which is the *Author* and *Giver* of them all, therefore are they all indifferently call'd by either Name; for ſometimes all theſe extraordinary Gifts, both the Power of Miracles and the Gift of *Tongues* and *Propheſy*, are *called the Spirit.* Thus when the Apoſtles began to *ſpeak with Tongues*, and to *Propheſy*, as well as to *work Miracles*, and *heal Diſeaſes*, it is ſaid that *the Spirit was poured out upon them.* And all thoſe varieties of Gifts of one ſort or other, which are reckon'd up by St. *Paul* in the twelfth Chapter to the *Corinthians*, are attributed to the *Spirit*, and ſaid to be *wrought by it.* The Apoſtles being fill'd with the *Holy Ghoſt* and *ſpeaking with Tongues*, is call'd their *ſpeaking by the Spirit. They were all fill'd with the Holy Ghoſt*, ſays St. *Luke*, *and began to ſpeak as the Spirit gave them utterance.* At other Times, all the ſame Powers, whether of *Underſtanding* or *Action*, of *Tongues* or *Miracles*, are called the *Holy Ghoſt.* Thus the *Gifts* of *Signs* and *Wonders* and *divers Miracles*, are

reckon'd among the *Gifts* of the *Holy Ghoſt*. *God*, ſays St. *Paul*, *bearing the Apoſtles witneſs with Signs and Wonders, and divers Miracles, and other Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt*. And the *Signs* and *Wonders* which were done by the *Hands of the Apoſtles*, particularly that of *healing the lame Man*, ſo much taken notice of, is ſaid to be the *Witneſs of the Holy Ghoſt*.

Thus by reaſon that all theſe extraordinary Gifts, whether relating to our Minds in *Knowledge* and *ſpeaking with Tongues*, or to our *executive Power* in *healing Diſeaſes* and *working Miracles*, proceeded all from the ſelf-ſame *Holy Ghoſt* or *Holy Spirit*; the Gifts of either Sort are call'd indifferently by either Name, ſometimes the *Spirit* and ſometimes the *Holy Ghoſt*.

But tho' for this Reaſon the words *Spirit* and *Holy Ghoſt* are ſometimes us'd promiſcuouſly, to ſignify all or any of theſe *extraordinary Gifts* indifferently, yet (which is very material to our Purpoſe) ſometimes, nay very frequently, they are *diſtinguiſhed*. And then by the *Holy Ghoſt* is meant not all *extraordinary Gifts indifferently*, but particularly thoſe which reſpect *our Underſtandings*, not *executive Powers*, conſiſting rather in Illumination than in Power and Action; of which ſort are the *Gift of Tongues*, of *Propheſy*, of *diſcerning Spirits*, of *Knowledge*, of *Revelation*, and ſuch like: Thus the *Lying* againſt *that Part* of the Gift of diſcerning Spirits is called *Lying to the Holy Ghoſt*: For St. *Peter*, who was endow'd with this Gift, tells *Ananias* when he would have impos'd upon him, *Why hath Satan filled thine Heart to lye to the Holy Ghoſt*. And St. *Stephen* being call'd with an extraordinary Revelation of Chriſt's ſitting at God's Right Hand in Heaven, is call'd his *being fill'd* with the Holy Ghoſt; but more eſpecially the Gift of *Tongues* and of *Propheſy* are dignify'd with that Name. When the *Gentiles*, in *Cornelius*'s Houſe began to ſpeak with *Tongues*, upon St. *Peter*'s Preaching, 'tis ſaid, that *the Holy Ghoſt fell on all them that heard*

the

the Word, and that *on the Gentiles* was *poured out the Gift of the Holy Ghoſt*.

The Diſciples at *Epheſus*, who being baptized into the *Baptiſm* of *John*, cannot be ſuppoſed ignorant of the many miraculous Cures ſo much talk'd of among the *Jews*, and of the ſtrange Effects of the Spirit in Jeſus, whom *John* preach'd, did yet tell *Paul* that *they had not ſo much as heard of the Holy Ghoſt*, which might very well be, becauſe the *Holy Ghoſt* or *Gifts* of *Tongues* and *Propheſy* were not given till after Jeſus was *glorify'd*, but upon the preaching of St. *Paul* they were made Partakers of it; *for when Paul laid his Hands on them, the Holy Ghoſt came upon them, and they ſpake with Tongues and propheſy'd.*

Thus is the *Holy Ghoſt* ſometimes put to denote, not all the *miraculous* and *extraordinary Gifts* of the Spirit promiſcuouſly, but particularly thoſe which reſpect the *Mind* or *Underſtanding*, ſuch as the *Gift* of *Tongues*, of *Propheſy*, of *deep Knowledge*, and the like.

The word *Spirit* is ſometimes put to expreſs not all *extraordinary Gifts* and *Effects* of the *Spirit in general*, but thoſe by Name which reſpect our *Executive*, not *knowing Powers*, and which conſiſt not in *Illumination* but in *Action*; of which ſome are the *Gifts* of *healing Diſeaſes*, of *caſting out Devils*, of *raiſing the Dead*, and other *miraculous Operations*. Thus the miraculous *Courage* and *Valour* which was given to *Othoniel*, is call'd *the Spirit of the Lord*; as is that likewiſe which was given to *Gideon*; and the *miraculous Strength* of *Sampſon* is call'd the *Spirit of the Lord upon Sampſon*; and upon Chriſt's working the *miraculous Cure* on the Man with the *wither'd Hand*, St. *Matthew* applies to him the Saying of the Prophet, *the Spirit of the Lord came upon him*. Chriſt himſelf attributes his *caſting out Devils* to the *Spirit of God*: *I*, ſays he, *by the Spirit of God caſt out Devils*.

As by the *Holy Ghoſt* therefore are meant particularly, the *Gifts* of *Illumination* in *Tongues* and *Propheſy*; ſo by the

the *Spirit* are ſignify'd the *Gifts* of *Power* in *healing Diſeaſes*, *caſting out Devils*, and doing *mighty* and *miraculous Works*.

Both theſe together take up the full Compaſs of the *extraordinary Gifts* of the *Spirit*, and are both diſtinctly expreſt by St. *Peter*, when he ſaid that Jeſus was anointed with the *Holy Ghoſt* and with *Power*. Theſe then are the ſeveral meanings of the Words *Holy Ghoſt* and *Holy Spirit*; they denote, as the *third Perſon* in the *Trinity* the *Holy Ghoſt* himſelf, ſo alſo the *Effects* which proceed from him. And thus having ſhewn what is meant by the *Words*, we are in the next Place to ſhew,

What is meant by ſinning againſt the *Holy Ghoſt*, and which of all thoſe *Sins* that are committed againſt it is the *unpardonable Sin*.

The only way by which Men are capable of ſinning againſt God, is by *Affront* and *Diſhonour*. God is out of our Reach for any other ſort of Injury, and we cannot otherwiſe hurt him than by ſhewing our Contempt and Diſreſpect of him.

Now in regard that the *Holy Ghoſt*, as our *Church* teaches us, is *very* and *eſſential God*, this muſt needs be the only way by which we can ſin againſt Him alſo: We cannot injure him in his *Nature*, but only in his *Honour*; but then we ſin againſt him when we *walk croſs to him* and *oppoſe him*, or any way *ſlight* and *contemn*, undervalue or reproach him, or any of thoſe excellent and divine Gifts which proceed from him.

We do this more or leſs in every *Sin*. For this Spirit of God is an univerſal *Inſtrument* of *Faith* and *good Life*. It has taken the utmoſt Care by *Miracles*, and other its convictive Evidences, to evince the *Truth* of Chriſt's Doctrine; and does now ſtill by his *daily Suggeſtions* and *Solicitations*, excite Men to the obſervance of it. The *Spirit of God* has ſhewn itſelf ſo much concern'd for our *Faith* and *Obedience*, that every Act of *Unbelief* and *Diſobedience* is a direct Oppoſition to it, and Reproach of it, and therefore is a *Sin* againſt it.

But

But every *Sin* is not the *unpardonable Fault* here mention'd: For our *wilful Sins* themſelves are not deſperate under Chriſt's Religion: The *Goſpel* is a *Covenant* that does not damn Men upon all *voluntary Sin*, but encourages their Repentance with the Promiſe of Pardon. Thus, tho' all our Sins are againſt God and his Spirit, they are not *irremiſſible*, but will be forgiven to every Man who repents of them.

The *unpardonable Sin* is a Sin by itſelf. It hath ſomething peculiar in it from all other *Sins*, which by ſhutting us out from all poſſibility of *Repentance*, excludes us from all Hopes of being *forgiven*.

This Sin is taken to be plainly this; *A Sinning againſt the Holy Ghoſt, by railing and blaſpheming the Power of Miracles, the Gift of Tongues, and other Illuminations of the Holy Spirit which came down upon the Apoſtles at Pentecoſt.* This and none other is taken to be the Sin here mention'd. For the clearer diſcerning of which we will conſider the *Sins* againſt the *Holy Ghoſt* in all Acceptations; and in all of them, except the laſt, we ſhall find room for *Pardon* and *Remiſſion*.

To *Sin* againſt the *Holy Ghoſt*, as it ſignifies the *Ordinary Endowments* and *Virtuous Tempers* of our Minds and Wills, is not the *unpardonable Sin* here ſpoken of; for every *Sin* againſt any particular *Virtue*, is a Sin againſt the *Holy Ghoſt*, in that Senſe; every Act of *Drunkenneſs*, for inſtance, is againſt the *Gift* of *Sobriety*; and every Act of *Uncleanneſs* is againſt the *Gift* of *Continence*; and ſo it is in the ſeveral Actions of all other Sorts of *Sin*. But now as for all theſe, the great Offer and Invitation of the *Goſpel* is, that Men would accept of *Mercy* upon *Repentance*. The *Inceſtuous Corinthian* ſinn'd deeply againſt the *Grace* of *Chaſtity*, and he *repented* and was *forgiven*; St. *Peter deny'd his Lord*, and upon his *Repentance* he was alſo *pardon'd*; and the ſame Grace has been allow'd to all other wilful *Sinners*.

Nay,

Nay, in this ſort of Sinning againſt the *Holy Ghoſt* there is *Mercy* to very great *Degrees*; for ſometimes we do not hearken to his *holy Motions*, but fall into more ordinary Sins, and offenſive Indecencies, notwithſtanding all his virtuous Suggeſtions and Endeavours to the contrary. He is then troubled and griev'd at us; and at other times we venture upon more hainous Crimes, and after much Conflict too within ourſelves, which almoſt quite lays waſte the Conſcience, and undoes all the virtuous Temper and Reſolution of our Souls. We lie long in our *Impenitence*, as *David* did in the Matter of *Uriah*, and are almoſt harden'd in our wicked Way, before we are able again to recover out of it. The *Spirit* has been ſo much affronted in theſe Offences, and his importunate Suggeſtions ſo frequently thrown out, that he is almoſt ready to forſake us, and to leave us to ourſelves. Thus it may be call'd a *quenching of him*: But tho' the laſt of theſe eſpecially be very dangerous, yet is neither of them deſperate. After we have been guilty of them, God continues ſtill to make Offers and Invitations, and by his Long-ſufferance, and gracious Providence, by the repeated Calls of his Word and Miniſters, he ſtill endeavours to recover us to Pardon by recalling us to *Repentance*; therefore, the *Sinning* againſt the *Holy Ghoſt*, as it ſignifies the ordinary *Gifts* and *Graces* of the *Holy Spirit*, is far from being the *unpardonable Sin*: Nor is a Sin againſt the *extraordinary Gifts* of *caſting out Devils*, *healing Diſeaſes*, *working Miracles*, that *unpardonable Sin*, which is here intended.

'Tis true, to *blaſpheme* the *Spirit* comes very near it; and when Men are once gone ſo far, God is very nigh giving them up, and uſing no more Means about them to bring them either to *Faith* or *Repentance*, which are the only way to *Pardon* and *Forgiveneſs*. But tho' this Pitch of Sin be extreme dangerous, yet in great likelihood it is not wholly deſperate. *For after all the Dirt that Men had thrown upon this Evidence, in the miraculous Operations wrought by Chriſt while he continued*

upon

upon Earth, God was ſtill pleas'd to uſe ſome Means further to bring them to *believe* and *repent*, which is the way to be *pardon'd*, and that was the *Evidence* of the *Holy Ghoſt*, which came down to complete all after *Jeſus* was *glorified*. This great Proof was pour'd out upon the Diſciples at *Pentecoſt*, and upon other Chriſtians at the Impoſition of their Hands, for a good while after, and might effect that wherein the other had fail'd, and be acknowledg'd by thoſe very Men who had *blaſphemed* the former. Their Caſe therefore, notwithſtanding it was gone ſo far, was not for all this quite hopeleſs, becauſe one Remedy ſtill remained, which God reſolv'd he would uſe to reclaim them from their *Infidelity*, tho' after that he would try no more.

Of this I think we have a clear Proof, even in thoſe *blaſphemous Phariſees*, whoſe *reviling of the Spirit* was the occaſion of this Diſcourſe: For as for the *Spirit*, they blaſphem'd it in that very Paſſage, when upon occaſion of the *miraculous Cure of the Man with the withered Hand*, and of Chriſt's *caſting out of Devils* (both which were ſo manifeſtly wrought before their Eyes that none of them durſt queſtion or deny the working of them) they go blaſphemouſly to charge theſe evident Effects of the *Spirit* upon the Power of *Magick*, and to ſay that theſe Works of God were perform'd by the Devil. For when theſe mighty Effects of the Spirit were urg'd to them in behalf of Jeſus, they anſwer'd and ſaid, *This Fellow doth not caſt out Devils but by Beelzebub the Prince of the Devils.* Here is a Reproach to theſe miraculous Gifts of the Spirit, as great as can be invented; for 'tis nothing leſs than an attributing them to the moſt foul and loathſom Fiends in Nature, even to the very *Devils themſelves*; but yet this *Blaſphemy*, as dangerous as it was, is not utterly excluſive of *Faith* and *Repentance*, and thereby *Unpardonable* and *Hopeleſs*. For our Lord himſelf, in this very Chapter, ſpeaks ſtill of ſeeking their *Repentance*, and gives

gives them a Promiſe that ſome further Means ſhould be ſtill us'd to cure their Infidelity after they had blaſphem'd thus, telling theſe very Men, that the Sign of his *Death* and *Reſurrection*, with the other Evidences of the *Holy Ghoſt* which were to enſue upon it, ſhould be a further Argument to ſatisfy them in what they inquir'd after, *his being the Meſſiah or the Son of God.* For when *certain of the Phariſees*, preſently upon finiſhing this Diſcourſe of their blaſpheming of the Holy Spirit, made anſwer to him, ſaying, *Maſter, we would ſee a Sign from thee*, to confirm to us the Truth of that Pretenſion: He anſwered, *An Evil and Adulterous Generation ſeeketh a Sign, and there ſhall no further Sign be given to it, but only the Sign of the Prophet Jonas*, and that indeed ſhall: *For as Jonas was three Days and three Nights in the Whale's Belly*, and was afterwards deliver'd out of it to go and Preach to the *Ninevites*, *ſo ſhall the Son of Man be three Days and three Nights in the Heart of the Earth*, and after that riſe again to preach by his Apoſtles to you and all the World, ſending to you for a further Evidence ſtill, the *Holy Ghoſt*.

And this *Unpardonableneſs* of *blaſpheming the Spirit*, our Saviour farther intimates in that very Place, by a wary Change of the Phraſe when he comes to ſpeak of the *unpardonableneſs of it*, calling the *unpardonable Blaſphemy* not a *Blaſphemy againſt the Spirit*, who was the *Spirit* which was indeed *blaſphemed*, and of which he had juſt made mention, but a *Blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt*, which being as St. *John* ſays *not yet given*, could not yet be blaſphem'd.

The *deſperate* and *unpardonable Sin* is a Sin againſt the laſt and greateſt Evidence of all, *the Gift of Tongu's, of Propheſy*, and of other Things, called the *Holy Ghoſt*. After all the other Evidence that came before, to win Men to a Belief of Chriſt's Religion, which is the only Means of Pardon to the World, God had ſtill a Reſerve, and reſolv'd upon ſome further Courſe if they prov'd ineffec-

ineffectual. If the *Teſtimony of John Baptiſt to Chriſt's being the Lamb of God*; If the *Meſſage of an Angel at his Conception*; *the Star at his Birth*; *and the Choir of Angels at his Entrance into the World:* If the *Innocency of his Life*; *Wiſdom of his Words*; and the *Mightineſs of his Wonders*; in *commanding the Winds and Seas*; in *curing Diſeaſes*; in *caſting out Devils*; in *reſtoring the Weak to Strength* and the *Dead to Life:* If all theſe prove unſucceſsful, and unable to perſuade an *Infidel* and *perverſe Generation*, yet ſtill God reſolves to try one means more, which before that Time the World never ſaw nor heard of, and that is the ample and moſt full Effuſion of the *Holy Ghoſt* upon the Apoſtles at *Pentecoſt*, and upon others at the Impoſition of their Hands for a long time after.

But when once God had given this Proof, he had done all he deſign'd: For this is the laſt Remedy which he had decreed to make uſe of to cure the Infidelity of an Unbelieving Age. If therefore Men ſhall uſe it, as they have done all that went before it; if inſtead of being perſuaded by it, they ſhall proceed not only to *ſlight* and *deſpiſe*, but what is more, to *revile* and *blaſpheme* it; then is the irreverſible Decree gone out againſt them, and God is unalterably reſolved to ſtrive no more with them, but to let them die in their Unbelief. If they ſhould be won by it indeed, and believe upon it, be their former Offences what they will (no leſs than a *blaſpheming of the Spirit*) yet may they juſtly expect to be *pardon'd*. For the Offer of Grace is univerſal: *Whoſoever believes and is baptiz'd ſhall be ſav'd:* And again, *Nothing is impoſſible to him that believeth.* But when once Men have gone ſo far as to be guilty of this, their Sin is *unpardonable*, becauſe their *Faith* is *impoſſible*; for they have rejected all the Evidence which any Man can urge for their Conviction, ſeeing they have deſpiſed all that which God has offer'd. Their *Infidelity* is ſtronger than can be cured by any Argument that Chriſt either has or will afford to prevail

over

over it; wherefore they muſt die in their Sin, and there is no hope for them.

Indeed, if God pleaſe, there is no Queſtion, but after they have once *blaſphem'd* it, he can ſtill ſo melt and ſoften, faſhion and prepare their Minds, that afterwards they ſhall hearken to the incomparable Evidence of the *Spirit* and the *Holy Ghoſt*, which to an honeſt Mind is irreſiſtible. But this Sin is of ſo provoking a Nature, that when once they are guilty of it, he will not; he has paſt an irreverſible Decree upon them, never more to meddle with them: Thus they never will be pardoned, becauſe as Things ſtand, they never will be reclaim'd. This is the very Reaſon which the Apoſtle gives of the deſperate State of *Apoſtate Chriſtians*; for by renouncing of that Faith, which upon the Evidence both of the *Spirit* and the *Holy Ghoſt* they had been before confirmed in, *they deſpiſe*, ſays he, the *Spirit of Grace*, as it implies both the *Spirit* and *Holy Ghoſt* too; therefore, as for them, it is impoſſible to *renew them again unto Repentance*, that being ſuch a Sin as God will never give Repentance to.

The ſinning againſt the *Holy Ghoſt* in this Senſe then, as it denotes the *Gift of Tongues*, of *Propheſy*, &c. which is the laſt Evidence that God is reſolved to make uſe of for the Converſion of an unbelieving World, is that unpardonable Sin which ſhall never be forgiven.

And yet even here in this limited and contracted Senſe of the Word *Holy Ghoſt*, we muſt ſtill proceed with ſome Caution. For 'tis not every *Affront* and *Diſhonour* that is put upon theſe *Gifts*, which is the Sin here ſaid to be irremiſſible. *Simon Magus* caſt a very high Indignity and Reproach upon them in his Actions; for he went about to purchaſe the *Gift of Tongues*, and other ſacred *Illuminations*, call'd the *Holy Ghoſt*, which fell upon Men at the Impoſition of the Apoſtles Hands, as if they had been only a Trick to get Money, or a fit thing to drive a Trade with, and make a gainful Merchandiſe. *When* Simon *ſaw that through the laying*

on

on of the Hands of the Apoſtles, the Holy Ghoſt was given, he offered them Money, ſaying, *Give me all this Power, that on whomſoever I lay Hands, he may receive the Holy Ghoſt.* This was a very great Abuſe, and a moſt unworthy comparing of the heavenly and holy *Spirit of God* to a mercenary Ware, and a vendible Commodity, thinking it fit to ſerve any Ends, and to miniſter to the baſeſt Purpoſes of a filthy Lucre and Covetouſneſs. But yet this Sin againſt the *Holy Ghoſt* in its ſtricteſt Acceptation, was not the unpardonable *Sin.* It came very near it indeed, and 'twou'd hardly be remitted; yet ſtill in all likelihood it was remiſſible. And therefore St. *Peter,* tho' he be very ſevere upon this ſordid Man for the High Affront, does not pronounce an irreverſible Doom of Damnation upon him, but on the contrary, exhorts him to repent, that *the Sin of his Heart may be forgiven. Repent,* ſays he, *of this thy Wickedneſs, and pray to God, if perhaps the Thought of thine Heart may be forgiven.*

That which is the *deſperately damning Sin* againſt the *Holy Ghoſt,* which ſhall never be forgiven below in this World, or that which is to come, is the *ſinning* againſt it not by *Interpretations* only in our *Actions,* but *directly in our Words and Expreſſions.* It is our ſpeaking reproachfully and ſlanderouſly of it, as the *Phariſees* did *of the Spirit,* when they attributed it to *Beelzebub. Whoſoever ſpeaketh blaſphemouſly againſt the Holy Ghoſt ſhall never be forgiven, neither in this World, nor in the World to come.* The great Weight lies in that, *they ſaid he hath an unclean Spirit,* which brought down this heavy Doom upon them.

Thus at length we ſee what that Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt is, whoſe Doom is ſo dreadful, and whoſe Caſe is ſo deſperate under the Goſpel. It is nothing leſs than a *ſlandering* and *reviling,* inſtead of owning and *aſſenting to that laſt Evidence which God has given us of the Truth of the Goſpel, in the Gift of Tongues, Propheſy,*

and

and other extraordinary Illuminations, called the Holy Ghoſt. No Man therefore who owns Chriſt's Religion, and thinks he was no *Impoſtor:* who believes that theſe miraculous Gifts of the *Holy Ghoſt* were no magical Shews, or diabolical Deluſion, can ever be guilty of it. Before he arrives to that, he muſt not only be an Infidel to the Faith, but alſo a *Blaſphemer* of it. He muſt not only disbelieve this laſt and great Evidence, but diſparage and rail at it. If then there be any Man who owns Chriſt's Authority, and obeys his Laws, and believes his Goſpel, and hopes in its Promiſes, and fears its Threatnings, and expects that every Word of that Covenant, which was confirmed to us by the infallible Evidence of the *Spirit* and the *Holy Ghoſt*, ſhall come to paſs, he is not more guiltleſs of any Sin than of this againſt the *Holy Ghoſt*; for he does not ſo much as ſlight and diſparage, but owns and ſubmits to it.

If good Men therefore are afraid, by Reaſon of the Irremiſſibleneſs of the Sin againſt the *Holy Ghoſt*, they fear where they need not, and their *Scruple* is utterly unreaſonable and groundleſs. For let it be as *unpardonable* as it will, it ſhall never hurt them. They can never ſuffer by it, ſince while they continue ſuch as now they are, they cannot poſſibly be guilty of it, or of any Thing that comes near it.

Beſides theſe *Scruples* already mentioned, ſome good Minds may be put in Fear and Doubt of the Safety of their preſent State, becauſe St. *John* ſays, that *whoſoever is born of God, ſinneth not.* Being no longer a *Child of God*, if he do the Sin here ſpoken of, which is defin'd by St. *John* himſelf to be not every *Deviation*, or *going beſide the Law*, but a *wilful Tranſgreſſion*, and *rejecting of the Law itſelf.* This indeed is inconſiſtent with a *regenerate State*, and puts us out of God's Favour, making us liable to eternal Damnation. But then the Caſe of theſe *Sins* is not *deſperate*, ſeeing if

once

once we forſake them, we are as ſafe again as ever we were before we committed them. For our *Repentance* will ſet us ſtraight; and if we tranſgreſs not wilfully again, we are without the *Reach* of *Condemnation*.

Others doubt whether when once they have wilfully ſinn'd, they ever can repent, or ſhall afterwards be pardon'd, becauſe they read of *Eſau*, that after he had ſold his *Birth-right*, with the Bleſſing that attended it; *when he would have inherited it afterwards, he was rejected, and found no Place* of a Change of Mind, or *Repentance, though he ſought it carefully with Tears.*

In Anſwer to this, it will be ſufficient to obſerve, that this Change of Mind or Repentance which *Eſau* ſought, but could not find, was not in himſelf, but in his Father *Iſaac*.

He found a Place for *Repentance* in himſelf, being really full of it. He was heartily ſorry for his former Folly, in parting with his *Birth-right*, and for his preſent Unhappineſs, in being cozen'd of his Father *Iſaac*'s *Bleſſing*. He ſought to have the Sentence revers'd with bitter Cries and importunate Deſires, which clearly ſhews that *Eſau*'s own Mind was chang'd abundantly.

But that *Repentance* or *Change of Mind* which was neceſſary to the reverſing of the Bleſſing, for which he labour'd hard, tho' without Effect, was to be wrought in his Father *Iſaac*. The good old Man had already pronounced the Bleſſing upon *Jacob*; and when *Eſau* moſt earneſtly intreated him to reverſe it, he told him flatly he would not. *I have bleſſed him*, ſays he, *and he ſhall be bleſſed.* The Story, as it is there recited, being plainly this.

When *Iſaac* bid his Son *Eſau* provide him ſome Veniſon, that he might eat of it, and bleſs him before he dy'd; *Jacob*, by the Aſſiſtance of his Mother *Rebecca*, counterfeited both the Perſon and the Veniſon of *Eſau*; and going in with it to his Father before *Eſau* return'd, craftily

craftily ſtole away the *Bleſſing* from him. *Eſau* coming in afterwards to receive the *Bleſſing*, which *Iſaac* his Father had promis'd him, he tells him, that *Jacob* his Brother had come with Subtlety before him, and under a crafty Diſguiſe had taken it away from him. *For I have made him thy Lord*, ſays he, *and all his Brethren have I given to him for Servants.* Tho' *Eſau* intreated his Father to reverſe it, and *cried*, as 'tis there ſaid, *with an exceeding bitter Cry*, yet *Iſaac* wou'd not change his Mind, or alter what he had pronounced. This Reverſion of the Bleſſing, and Repentance or Change of Mind in his Father *Iſaac*, was that which *Eſau* endeavour'd after, and which, as St. *Paul* ſays, *he ſought carefully with Tears.* But as he obſerves out of this Story, all was in vain, for it would not be granted him. When he *ſought to inherit the Bleſſing*, his Suit was not granted but *rejected*; for *Iſaac*'s Decree was paſt, and he *found no Place of Repentance*, or Way to make him change his Mind, though he ſought that Change carefully with Tears.

The Apoſtle ſpeaking of this Thing, does not at all ſay, that it was *impoſſible for* Eſau *to repent of his Sins againſt God*; or that *God would not forgive him upon his Repentance*; *but only that* Iſaac *would not repent of his Decree*, or reverſe that Bleſſing which he had pronounced upon *Jacob*. Which Inflexibleneſs of *Iſaac* he does indeed make uſe of in theſe Verſes, to illuſtrate God's Inexorableneſs towards ſome Sinners; but then thoſe are not all *wilful Sinners* indifferently, but only *Apoſtates*; who have wilfully renounced their Chriſtianity, which, as we have ſeen before, is a Sin that God will afford no more *Grace* or Place of *Repentance* to. Which appears plainly from the foregoing Verſes, *Take care*, ſays St. *Paul*, *leſt that which is lame*, or the weak Chriſtian, *be turned out of the way* of his Chriſtian Profeſſion through Fears of Perſecution. *Look diligently leſt any Man fail* or fall from the Grace or Goſpel of God.

This

This he exhorted them the more earneſtly to do, becauſe if any Man rejects all thoſe Goſpel-bleſſings and Privileges, which in that Religion they had received, were then offered to him, and apoſtatiz'd from them, God would never afford him the tender of them again, but would be as unalterable in his Decree againſt him, as *Iſaac* was in his againſt *Eſau*. Who, as was ſhewn by his Story, after he had once miſs'd of the Bleſſing, *found no Place of Repentance, though he ſought it carefully with Tears.*

Others again are troubled in Mind, and are afraid leſt their Souls are ſtill in Danger, becauſe they do not perceive themſelves to grow in Grace, and to be increas'd in Goodneſs. They complain that their ſpiritual Life is at a ſtand, and that they are not more devout and piouſly affected, more virtuous and better Chriſtians than they were for ſome conſiderable Time before. This makes them jealous leſt they ſhould paſs for idle Servants, who have not us'd and improv'd their *Talents*, and who ſhall be dealt with at the *laſt Day*, as if they had abus'd them.

To grow in Grace, we muſt obſerve, is the ſame thing as to grow in Virtue and Goodneſs, or to go on to higher Meaſures of Life and Perfection in any, or in all the Inſtances of Duty and Obedience. For an Obedient Life, as I have largely ſhewn, is the ſole Inſtance and Proof of Grace, which can render any of us acceptable in God's Sight, and upon which the Goſpel encourages us to hope for Pardon and a happy Sentence at the laſt Judgment. Now, if any Man's Life is more perfect than it was; If he grows in knowing and doing Good, and keeping back from Evil; If he begins to have a greater Honour for God, to be more careful to pleaſe, and more afraid to offend him; If he is more forward to depend upon his Providence, to truſt in his Promiſes, to reſign himſelf up to his Will, to ſubmit to his Pleaſure, to praiſe him for all his Excellencies, and to perform all his Precepts; If he

he is more Humble and Heavenly-minded, Chaſte, Temperate, Juſt and Charitable; If he is more Meek and Gentle, Courteous and Affable, Quiet and Peaceable; more ready to repair Wrongs, and forgive Injuries than formerly: If he thus advances to *higher Meaſures*, to *greater Eaſe*, or to *more Conſtancy* and *Evenneſs* of *Obedience* in any or in all Inſtances of Duty towards God and Men; and that in all Relations, his Virtue is in its Spring; He is ſtill going on, and *growing in Grace*; for which God will accordingly reward him.

One particular Virtue there is, which good Chriſtians are wont to look at more eſpecially in this Matter, and that is *Prayer*. They meaſure their Growth in Grace by their Improvement in this, and think their *Spiritual Life* is then *moſt perfect* when their *Devotions are moſt enlarg'd*. This they conclude they are not, when they are put up with the greateſt *Humility and Reverence, Truſt and Dependence, Submiſſion and Reſignedneſs to God Almighty*, or with any other of thoſe *obedient Tempers* imply'd in Prayer that are apt to influence our whole Lives; but when they are accompany'd with the moſt *ſenſible Joys*, raviſhing Tranſports, and unuſual Height of Fervency and Affection. If then at any Time they can pray more paſſionately, and put forth more intenſe Deſires; If they can work themſelves up to more Heavenly Raptures, than ordinarily they have been able to attain to, they fancy they do indeed grow in Grace, and are become higher in God's Favour and Acceptance. But if ever this Service happens to be more irkſom to them, and they diſcharge it with much Backwardneſs and Wearineſs, Dulneſs and Indifference, they think God frowns upon them, and has deſerted them; that their Grace is in a declining State, and ſinking down to nothing.

But this is a very uncertain and dangerous Mark for any Man in this Caſe to judge by, and will very often deceive him that builds upon it. For theſe fervent Heats,

Heats, and delightſom Tranſports of Devotion are not ſo much a *Duty* as a *Privilege*, which all Tempers cannot attain to, but thoſe only that are naturally diſpoſed for it: A *Growth* in them is therefore not a *Growth* in *ſaving Grace*, but rather in ſenſible Joy and Happineſs, and renders us not ſo truly *gracious* in God's Eyes as *happy* in our own.

Beſides, as an Improvement in theſe religious and pleaſing Raptures is not a Growth in Grace itſelf, ſo neither is it always join'd with it, and conſequently no ſure Argument can be deduced from it; for 'tis eaſily obſervable, that ſeveral Perſons of *devotional Tempers*, who are uſually rais'd up to a high Pitch, and raviſh'd with moſt delightſom Tranſports in their *Prayers*, are yet very *dangerouſly defective in many Inſtances of neceſſary Duty*, and a holy Life. They *fall* often, even while they enjoy their bliſsful *Heats* and *Heavenly Raptures of Devotion*, into damning Acts of *Fraud* and *Injuſtice*, *Anger* and *Malice*, *Strife* and *Variance*, *Fierceneſs* and *Revenge*. They live in them, and are habitually inſlav'd to them, and yet for all that, they find no want of this *Delight* in *Prayer*, nor any Abatement of their devout Intenſeneſs of Mind and earneſt Fervour of Affection. However, theſe Men being ſo maim'd and partial in their Senſe, and having no intire Obedience to confide in, they have not Grace enough, as manifeſtly appears from what has been ſaid upon that Point, to bear them out, nor ſo much Virtue as God has indiſpenſably requir'd to ſave them.

As for theſe Qualifications of our *Prayers*, thoſe *ſenſible Joys* and *paſſionate Tranſports* which accompany them, they are no Inſtances of *Obedience* and *ſaving Grace* themſelves, nor any certain Argument that thoſe Perſons are endow'd with it, who are allowed to enjoy them. They are frequently found in ill Men, who ſo long as they reſt there and grow no better, cannot reaſonably expect to go to Heaven.

But for the other more acceptable and obedient Tempers of our Prayers, ſuch as humble Reverence, Truſt and Dependence, Submiſſion and Reſignedneſs, &c. which the Men of ſober Devotion moſt juſtly prefer before the former, as uſually moſt others do when once their *religious Heats* are over, tho' a Growth in them is truly a Growth in Grace, yet a Growth in them alone is not enough to ſave us: They indeed in themſelves are ſo many particular Inſtances of *Obedience*; and beſides that, they are alſo great Means and proper Inſtruments to produce others. Thus our Growth in them is a Growth in ſome particular Graces, and a very likely way to grow in others alſo: But we muſt ſtill remember, that they are but one Part of *Saving Grace*, and by no means the whole; therefore, till we are grown in others too, we cannot hope to be ſaved by them; for this is the indiſpenſable Condition of the Chriſtian Religion; and this is the perfect Man and *juſt Stature* in the Chriſtian Faith, that we be grown up to an intire Obedience in all our voluntary and choſen Actions, not only to ſome few but to all the Parts of Duty, and the Laws of God.

But if we would ſingle out ſome one or ſome few Virtues from our Growth and Improvement, whereby we may juſtly preſume that we have attain'd to ſaving Degrees in all the reſt; St. *James* directs us to the Duties of the Tongue, in abſtaining from Backbiting, Cenſuring, and Evil-ſpeaking, which under all the Invitations of Converſation, and the Temptation of common Life, is uſually the laſt Point that good Men gain, and that in which they, who ſcarce ever ſin wilfully at all, or very rarely, are wont moſt frequently, thro' Indeliberateneſs and Unadviſedneſs, to miſcarry. *If any Man*, ſays he, *offend not in Word*, but has attain'd to an innocent and obedient Guidance of his Tongue, that ſame Man need not be defective in other Duties, *he is a perfect Man, and able alſo to bridle the whole Body.*

Thus

Thus is Mens Growth in *ſaving Grace* not only in ſome one or in ſome few Virtues, but in an univerſal and entire Obedience; and then they grow in it when they come to perform the ſame with more Eaſe and Pleaſure, Conſtancy and Evenneſs; with leſs Mixture of *voluntary Sins*, which need particular Repentance, and with a greater Freedom from innocent and unwilled Infirmities. And this Growth every Chriſtian is bound inceſſantly to endeavour after. The longer he lives, the higher Improvement he ought to make, and to attain every Virtue in a larger meaſure, in greater Firmneſs and Perfection than he had before. *Grow in Grace*, ſays St. *Peter*, and *in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt. Forgetting thoſe Things which are behind me*, and already attained, ſays St. *Paul*, and *reaching out after thoſe Things which are* ſtill *before me, I preſs on forward towards the Mark*, that I may acquire a more complete Growth than I yet have; and let *as many* among you as *be perfect, be thus minded.*

But then the Obligation to this Growth in this *intire Obedience*, is not laid upon them under the Forfeiture of Heaven, but only of ſome *higher Rewards* and greater Degrees of Happineſs, which are to be enjoy'd there. For there are different Degrees of Happineſs, anſwerable to the different Meaſures of Growth. In this intire Obedience they that perform it moſt perfectly, ſhall be rewarded higheſt; and the more fix'd and perfect they are in it, the leſs Danger are they under of falling back from it. They who perform it, altho' they miſs of that Acceſſion of Reward, which by the Grace of the Goſpel is due to an eminent Height of obedient Endeavours, ſhall yet obtain the Pardon of their Sins, and a State of Joy and Bleſſedneſs in Heaven, as well as they who have endeavoured and performed more.

For our entire Obedience in all choſen Actions, and a particular Repentance and Amendment of all thoſe Sins, in which at any time we have wilfully diſobey'd God, is ſufficient to ſecure the Bleſſedneſs of the next

Life. And therefore, if any Perſon has us'd God's Grace, and improv'd his Talents to this Meaſure, he has not been unprofitable and uſeleſs, but has profited ſo far as is neceſſary to his Happineſs. While we are yet in the more imperfect Meaſures of it, and only thirſt after a more perfect Obedience, that we may ſtill be more acceptable to God, and have Right to a more noble and excellent Reward, we are in a ſafe State, and have no need to diſquiet our Souls with Fears and Jealouſies leſt they ſhould eternally miſcarry.

Several other *Scruples* there are which are wont to diſquiet and perplex the Mind of good and honeſt People, who are ſafe in God's Account, tho' their Caſe ſeems never ſo hazardous in their own. Of this ſort are their Fear, that their Obedience is inſincere, becauſe they have an eye at their own Good, and a Reſpect to their own Safety; ſince they ſerve God in hopes to be better by him, and out of Fear, ſhould they diſobey, of ſuffering evil from him. They are afraid alſo that it is defective in a main Point, for they cannot love and ſerve him in that comprehenſive Latitude which the Commandment requires; *With all their Heart, with all their Soul, and with all their Mind.* They doubt they are paſt Grace and Pardon, becauſe they have ſinned after they have been enlightned, and that wilfully; and the Apoſtle affirms, that *for ſuch there remains no more Sacrifice for Sins.* Theſe *Doubts* are ſtill apt to diſturb their Peace and make ſad their Hearts, as are alſo ſome others of the like Nature.

But we have ſeen, when an honeſt and intire Obedience is taken care for in the firſt Place, how plainly *groundleſs* thoſe *Fears* are which are wont to perplex the Thoughts of the good and ſafe, yet ignorant and miſguided People, about their State of Happineſs and Salvation.

Upon the whole Matter, the Sum of all amounts to this: When Chriſt ſhall come to ſit in Judgment at the laſt Day, and to paſs Sentence of Life or Death upon every Man according to the Direction of his Goſpel, he will

pro-

pronounce upon every Man *according to his Works.* If he has honeſtly and intirely obey'd the whole Will of God in all the particular Laws before-mentioned; never wilfully and deliberately offending in any Inſtance, nor indulging himſelf in the practice of any thing which he knows to be a Sin, he is ſafe in the Accounts of the laſt Judgment, and ſhall never come into Condemnation: Nay, if he has been a damnable *Offender*, and has wilfully tranſgreſs'd, either in one Inſtance or in many, in frequent Repetitions of his Sin, or in few; yet if he repent of it before Death ſeize him, and amend it ere he is hal'd away to Judgment, he is ſafe ſtill; for he ſhall be Judg'd according as his Works then are, when God comes to enquire of them. Wherefore, if ever he be found in an honeſt Obedience, obſerving every thing which he ſees to be his Duty, and wilfully venturing upon nothing which his Conſcience tells him is ſinful, he is found in the State of Grace and Pardon; and if he die in it, he ſhall be ſav'd; all his unwilled Ignorances, and innocent Unadviſedneſſes, upon his Prayers for Pardon, and his Mercifulneſs and Forgiveneſs of other Men, ſhall be abated; all his other Cauſes of *Fear* and *Scruple* ſhall be *overlooked.* They ſhall not be brought againſt him to his Condemnation, but in the honeſt and intire Obedience which he has perform'd, he ſhall live.

If then we have an honeſt Heart, and walk ſo as our own Conſcience has no wilful Sin yet unrepented of to accuſe us of, we may meet Death with a good Courage, and go out of the World with comfortable Expectations. For if we have an honeſt and tender Heart, whenever we ſin wilfully, and againſt our Conſciences, our own Souls will be our Remembrancers. They will be a witneſs againſt us, both while we are in this World, and after we are taken out of it, and brought to Judgment. *Mens Conſciences,* ſays St. *Paul, ſhall accuſe or excuſe them in the Day when God ſhall judge the Secrets of Men according to my Goſpel.*

Indeed if Men have harden'd their Hearts in Wickedneſs, and ſinn'd themſelves out of the belief of their Duty, have come to call *Evil Good*, and *Good Evil*; their Conſcience having no farther ſenſe of Sin, will have no Accuſations upon it. But if they really believe the Goſpel, and ſtudy to know their Duty; if they deſire to obſerve it, and are afraid of offending in any thing which they ſee is ſinful; while thus their Heart is ſoft, and their Conſcience tender, they cannot venture upon any Sin with open eyes, but their own Hearts will both check them before, and ſmite them afterwards. They will have a Witneſs againſt them in their own Boſoms, which will ſo ſcourge and awaken them, that they cannot approach Death without a ſenſe of their Sin, or go out of the World without diſerning themſelves to be guilty.

If our Conſcience then cannot accuſe us of the wilful and preſumptuous Breach of any of God's *Commandments*, and we know of none but what we have repented of; we have juſt reaſon to take a good Heart to ourſelves, and to wait for Death in hopeful Expectations. *If our own Hearts condemn us not*, ſays St. *John*, *then have we Confidence towards God.* There is no Sin that will damn us but a wilful one; and when we ſin wilfully, if our Heart is ſoft and honeſt, we ſin wittingly, and againſt our Conſcience. Our own Heart ſees and obſerves it before, and will keep us in mind of it, after we have committed it. Therefore if any Man has a virtuous and tender Heart, a Heart that is truly deſirous to obey God, and afraid in any thing to offend him; when his Conſcience is ſilent, he may juſtly conclude that his Condition is ſafe; for if it does not condemn him, God never will.

An honeſt Man's Heart muſt condemn him, before he has ſufficient Reaſon to condemn himſelf; and that too not for every idle Word, or every fruitleſs Luſt, or every voluntary Dulneſs of Spirit, and Diſtraction in Prayer, and Coldneſs in Devotion, or ſuch other miſ-

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taken Marks by which too many are wont to judge of their Title to Salvation. *Heaven* and *Hell* are not made to depend upon theſe Things; but tho' a Man be guilty of them, he may notwithſtanding be eternally happy. But that accuſation of his Conſcience, which may give an honeſt Man juſt Reaſon to condemn himſelf, muſt be an accuſation for a wilful Breach or deliberate Tranſgreſſion of ſome particular Law of Sobriety, Piety, Juſtice, Charity, Peaceableneſs. It muſt accuſe him of an unrepented Breach of ſome of thoſe Laws abovemention'd, which God has plainly made terms of Life, and the condition of Salvation.

And the Accuſation for the breach of theſe Laws muſt be *particular* and *expreſs*, not *general* and roving. For ſome are of ſo ſuſpicious and timorous a Temper, that they are ſtill ſuſpecting and condemning of themſelves when they know not for what Reaſon. They will indict themſelves as men who have ſinned greatly, but they cannot ſhew in what. They judge of themſelves, not from any Reaſon or Experience, but at a Venture and by Chance. They ſpeak not ſo truly their *Opinions* as their *Fears*, nor what their Underſtandings ſee and diſcern, but what their Melancholy ſuggeſts to them. For ask them as to any one particular of the Law of God, and run them all over, and their Conſciences cannot charge them with any *wilful* and *unrepented* Tranſgreſſion of it. But let them overlook all Particulars, and paſs a Judgment of themſelves only in General, when they do not judge from particular Inſtances, which are true Evidence, but only from groundleſs and ſmall Preſumptions, and then they paſs a hard Sentence upon themſelves, concluding their Sins are very great, and their Conditions very dangerous.

However, no Man ſhall be ſentenc'd at the laſt Day for Notions and Generalities; but they are our particular Sins which muſt then condemn us. For God's Laws bind us all in ſingle Actions; and if our own Conſciences cannot condemn us for any one wilful and

unrepented Action, God will not condemn us for them all together.

If our own Heart therefore does not accuſe us for the particular, wilful, and unrepented Breaches of ſome or other of theſe Laws above-mention'd, which God has made the rule of our Life, and our Obſervation of which he hath made the indiſpenſable condition of our Acceptance, we are ſecure as to the next World, and may comfortably hope to be acquitted in the laſt Judgment. Being conſcious of no wilful Sin, but what we have repented of, and begging Pardon thro' Chriſt for our involuntary Sins, we ſhall have nothing that will be heavy upon us at the laſt Day, but may go out of the World with eaſe, and die in comfort. Our Departure hence may be in Peace, becauſe our Appearance at God's Tribunal ſhall be in Safety; for we ſhall have nothing worſe charg'd upon us there, than we are able here to charge upon ourſelves. But leaving this World with a good Conſcience, we ſhall be ſentenc'd in the next to a glorious Reward, and bid to enter into our Maſter's Joy, there to live with our Lord for ever and ever.



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