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Reformation necessary to prevent Our Ruine:

A
SERMON

Preached to the

SOCIETIES

F O R

Reformation of Manners,

A T

St. Mary-le-Bow,

O N

Wednesday, *January* 10th, 1727.

By the Right Reverend Father in GOD,

RICHARD, Lord Bishop of *St. David's*.

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PSALM CVI. 30, 31.

*Then stood up Phinebas, and executed Judgment: and so the Plague was stayed.
And that was counted unto him for Righteousness, unto all Generations for evermore.*



IN order to understand these Words aright, it is necessary to recollect the Historical Occasion of them. When the *Israelites*, in their Passage to *Canaan*, continued for Numb. xxv. 1, &c. some time in the Borders of *Moab*, they began to be corrupted with the Lewdness and Idolatry of the Women of that Countrey. And these are Vices that have been frequently observed to be nearly allied to one another. In a just Sense of the Heinousness of these Sins, *Moses* and the Body of the *Israelites*, who firmly adhered to the true God, thought it their Duty to humble themselves before him, and lament the Disobedience of their Brethren *at the Door of the Tabernacle*. In Defiance of this publick Humiliation, and even in the Sight of *Moses* and all *Israel*, that most impudent Act of Lewdness was committed by an *Israelite* with a Woman of *Midian*, (a Countrey adjoining to *Moab*, and confederate with that People against *Israel*) which is recorded at large in the xxvth

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Chapter of *Numbers*, whither I refer you for Particulars. Upon this astonishing Sight, the holy Zeal of *Phinebas*, the Grandson of *Aaron*, was so strongly excited, that he immediately *arose from amongst the Congregation*, and executed speedy Justice upon those Criminals, by killing them both together with his own Hand. For *Moses*, by the express Command of God,

whose *Anger was kindled against Israel*,
ibid. ver. 4. had given Orders to the Judges, that

5. *they should slay those Men that had joyned themselves unto Baal-Peor*; that is, by partaking of the Feasts on the Sacrifices offered to that most impure Idol, and practising the same Prostrations before it. In Consequence, therefore, of this Injunction of *Moses*, his Superiour, *Phinebas* seems to have exerted his pious Zeal, as an Assistant of the Judges of *Israel*, if he were not a Judge himself, as he may well be supposed to have been, the Priests being commonly part of the *Sanhedrim*, and Executors of Civil Justice among that People. But however that be, the nice Conjunction of the Affairs of *Israel* at that Time made the Expiation of so flagrant a Sin by the Death of the Offenders the more necessary. And the deep Sense that *Phinebas* had of the injured Honour of God, and the Destruction of his People by the Plague, in Consequence of their Revolt from him, very justly inflamed his Heroical Zeal, and render'd his Sacrifice of

ibid. ver. 8. the two daring Criminals so satisfactory, that *the Plague was stayed* immediately.

There have indeed been different Opinions among Interpreters about the Word we here translate *the Plague*; namely, whether it is to be peculiarly understood of that Disease, consider'd as judicially inflicted by God, or whether it signifies that Destruction of the

idolatrous *Israelites*, which God and *Moses* had commanded. But since the same Word is allowed to signify elsewhere a contagious Distemper, judicially sent by Heaven, it may very properly be here understood in the strict Sense of it: Tho' indeed there is no Inconsistency in supposing that those that died of the Plague, and likewise those that were put to Death by the Judges, made up the great Sum of Twenty four Thousand Persons, that are said to have died on that Occasion.

2 Sam. xxiv.
xxv.

Numb. xxv. 9.

Having given this previous Account of the Context, I shall, from the Words now read to you,

- I. Enquire, how far the Pattern of *Phinebas* is imitable by us. *Then stood up Phinebas, and executed Judgment.*
- II. I shall shew, that such is the present State of the Moral World among us, that nothing but a zealous Reformation of Manners can prevent our Ruine, and divert the impending Judgments of God from falling upon us. *And so the Plague was stayed.*
- And, III. I shall evince from the whole, that a Degree of Honour, proportionable to that of *Phinebas*, cannot but attend the excellent Labours of the *Societies for Reformation of Manners* among us. *And that was counted unto him for Righteousness, unto all Generations for evermore.*

Agreeably to the Method proposed, I am,

I. To enquire, how far the Pattern of *Phinebas* is imitable by us.

Now

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Now the distinguishing Character of *Phinebas*, as assigned by God himself, is, that he was
Numb. xxv. 11, 13. *zealous for his God, and made an Atonement*
for his People, by the Execution of speedy Justice on two lewd and idolatrous Criminals, and accordingly *turned away God's Wrath from the Children of Israel*; the Particulars of which have been already explained. It must be then allow'd in general, that we are capable of imitating the Zeal of *Phinebas*, for the Honour of God, and in the Cause of Virtue and Religion. We may not only in our private Capacity exprefs our just Resentments and pious Indignation against those that are Wicked and Profane among us; as they are Enemies of the Honour of God, and the Good of the Publick, and contribute to the Ruine of their Country, both by the natural Consequences of their Vices, and by provoking God to send down his Judgments on a sinful Nation; but in a publick Capacity, and when commissioned by lawful Authority, we may exert our selves, and indeed are obliged so to do, as Magistrates and *Ministers of God*, in
Rom. xiii. 3. being *a Terrour to evil Works*. And since Magistrates of the best Intentions and Abilities cannot of themselves act vigorously against the most enormous Offenders, without the Concurrence and Assistance of other good Men, it becomes the Duty of private Persons to act subordinately to the Magistrates, and to render them capable of doing Justice effectually in the Way of Information and Testimony, as well as by assisting them in apprehending and conducting to due Punishment all guilty Persons, in the lower Offices of executing Justice. But tho' the Zeal of *Phinebas* in executing Judgment may be thus imitated in general by us; yet when we more minutely examine the Circumstances

stances of his Zeal, it must be acknowledged, that some Distinction is to be made between the Case of the Zeal of *Phinebas*, and what becomes Us in the Execution of Justice on great and notorious Offenders. For there is something peculiar in the Instance of his Zeal that we are now concerned with, which is not to be imitated by Us: I mean, that he was transported with a sort of Divine Impulse in his Execution of Judgment. For tho' *Moses* had commanded that the Idolatrous *Israelites* should be slain, yet *Phinebas's* Act of Zeal seems to have had somewhat extraordinary in it, and to have even exceeded what was so commanded, when he sacrificed not only *Zimri*, the lewd and idolatrous *Israelitish* Man, but likewise *Cozbi*, the lewd and idolatrous *Midianitish* Woman; for taking away the Life of the latter of whom, he does not seem to have had any outward Divine Precept, tho' no doubt he had an inward Divine Direction and immediate Inspiration by God, in Vindication of whose Honour he acted. The Zeal of *Phinebas* for the true Worship of God, and for turning away his Wrath, Numb. xxv. 11, 13. that he might not consume the *Israelites* in his Jealousy; (as God himself was pleased to speak of Idolatry, as a Spiritual sort of Adultery, in a Figure taken from among Men) this holy Ardour, I say, of *Phinebas*, supplied the Want of a Divine Precept, for taking away the Lives of those that enticed others to Idolatry. For from the Silence of Scripture on this Occasion, it may be doubted whether such an express Precept was given to the *Israelites* before this Act of *Phinebas*; tho' it is certain it was given them immediately before their passing over *Jordan*, to take Possession of *Canaan*, as we find it first recorded Ver. 8, 9, &c. in the *xiiith* Chapter of *Deuteronomy*;

before

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before which Command of God, to kill the *Seducer* to Idolatry, the Affair of *Baal-Peor* is mentioned in the *ivth* Chapter of the same Book, as a Thing past and done. *Your Eyes*, says *Moses* there, *have*
Ver. 3. *seen what the Lord did because of Baal-Peor.* But however that be, the Reason of the Zeal of *Phinehas* was so just and weighty, namely, that a Capital Punishment was due to a *Seducer* from the Worship of the true God to Idolatry; and particularly that an Enemy, who by her wicked Arts had contributed to the Destruction of the *Israelites*, by bringing down the Plague, as a Judgment of God upon them for their Idolatry, might her self be destroy'd and put to Death, as one of the accursed Instruments of *Balaam* in corrupting them; this, I say, was a Proceeding so well founded, as well as great and noble, that the Zeal of *Phinehas* was approved and rewarded by God himself. And indeed we are assured not only of its being acceptable to God, by his Confirmation of the Perpetuity
Numb. xxv. 13. of the Priesthood in *Phinehas* and his Race, that is, till it should be superseded by that of the great High-Priest the *Messiah*; but that it was succeeded by an express Command of God,
Ibid. 17, 18. to *Vex the Midianites, and slay them*, on account of their *Wiles* and Artifices, in Seducing his People to the Worship of *Baal-Peor*, in the Affair of *Cozbi* the *Midianitish* Strumpet. And this Command, we find, was soon after put in Execution by the *Israelites* under the Conduct of *Phinehas* himself, who attended with the Trumpets and other
Numb. xxxi. 3, 7, 8, 16, &c. holy Instruments, in order to *avenge the Lord of Midian*. In which exterminating Act, as all the Males of *Midian* were slain, so all their *Women that had known Man* were order'd

ordered by *Moses* to be killed, *because* (as is expressly mentioned) *these had caused the Children of Israel, thro' the Counsel of Balaam, to commit Trespasses against the Lord in the matter of Peor.* And accordingly we are farther acquainted, that their evil Counsellor, *Balaam*, who probably elated with the Success of his Counsel to corrupt the *Israelites* by Lewdness to Idolatry, and with their Loss of twenty four Thousand Persons as a Consequence of it, was returned to *Midian* for his *Wages of Unrighteousness*; he himself, I say, *was slain with the Sword* in this Ex- 2 Pet. ii. 15. cision of *Midian*.

It being then highly probable from this Deduction, that *Phinehas* did not sacrifice the Life of the *seducing Midianitish* Woman (for the Sacrifice of the *Israelite* is otherwise accounted for) in Consequence of any Divine Precept given antecedently to that Act, but as transported by a fervent Zeal for the Honour of God and the Good of his People, for which he made a proper tho' extraordinary Atonement; this, I say, being taken for granted to be the Case, his Zeal, as then unauthorized by the Law of *Moses*, though vindicated by the Supposition of a Divine Impulse, the Reason of the Thing, and God's subsequent Approbation, cannot be proposed as a Pattern to us for our Imitation, without making some Distinction between the Circumstances of *Phinehas*, considered jointly with those of the *Israelites*, and our Own. As the *Israelites* were then under a Theocracy, and immediately governed by God, an Act of Zeal for the Honour of God, upon a Divine Impulse, was very suitable to that Dispensation. But We, who are left by the general Course of Providence to be determined by the particular Laws of our Civil Constitution of Government, are obliged to *Execute*

Judgment upon immoral and profane Persons, agreeably to known and stated Laws, as the fixed Rules of Justice among us; and are not to wait for, or pretend to act upon, any Divine Impulses for the Punishment of Vice, but must exert our Zeal against all Immorality, in a manner suitable to the established Laws. For otherwise, whilst we punish the Iniquities of others, we our selves shall become Transgressors of the Laws of our Country, the Honour of which it is our confessed Duty to preserve inviolable, and to conform to them our selves, as well as oblige others to do so on all Occasions, as our common Political Standard of Justice and Government. But as all Pretences to be wiser than the Laws in Civil Affairs are Enthusiastical things, and ought to be discarded by all sober Persons; so the Execution of the Laws among us ought to be animated by a Zeal like that of *Phinebas*, vigorous and fervent for promoting the Honour of God and the Publick Good, but regulated by the known Boundaries of Law and Justice, and exercised by none but the proper Officers of both.

But I proceed to shew,

Illy, That such is the present State of the Moral World among us, that nothing but a zealous Reformation of Manners can prevent our Ruine, and divert the impending Judgments of God from falling upon us. *And so the Plague was stayed.*

Without pretending to draw a Parallel between the State of the *Israelites* in the Days of *Phinebas* and Our present Circumstances, I shall only observe in a previous manner, that as their obstinate Disobedience of the Divine Laws, and repeated Revolts from their Federal God, brought down from time to time his
Judg-

Judgments upon them, and particularly that of the *Plague*, which is represented in Scripture as *the Sword of the Lord*, as the peculiar Instrument of his Vengeance, and as his own immediate Operation; (inſomuch that thoſe that died of it are ſaid to have done ſo by *the Hand of God*, as diſtinguiſhed from the Judgment of the Sword, which is ſtyled *the Hand of Man*;) as, I ſay, their provoking Iniquities, and particularly their Idolatry, brought the *Plague* among them, which in the Caſe of *Peor*, now in our immediate View, made ſuch terrible Havock; ſo it was ſtayed in the miſt of its Career, by the Atonement made by *Phinebas* in the Sacrifice of the two Criminals; as being of greater Efficacy to appeaſe the Wrath of that God, who is infinitely jealous of his Honour, than the Sacrifice of ſuch a Multitude of Idolaters by the *Plague* and the Judges concurring in their Deſtruction.

1 Chron. xxi.
12.

1 Chron. xiii.
12, 13, 14.

It muſt be acknowledged, that we of this Nation cannot, with any Propriety, be charged with one of the Sins for which a publick Sacrifice was made both by God's Command, and *Phinebas's* zealous Hand, namely, with *Idolatry*, from which we have been ſo happily Reformed. But then it is equally evident, that we are fallen into another Extream, that is, into an Indifference for all Religion by the Generality, or rather an open Contempt and Deſiance of it by too great Numbers among us. Indeed from too free and exceſſive a Ridicule of Superſtition, we are arrived at a Burleſque of every thing that is Serious and Important, and even of *Prophecy* and *Miracles* themſelves, and particularly thoſe of our Bleſſed Lord, though they are the great ſtanding Proofs of the Chriſtian Religion. And I am

forry I am obliged to observe, in a Christian Country, that our common Christianity was never more profanely abused and reviled, both in the grave and the buffoon sorts of Ridicule, than it is at present. But surely this Licentiousness used in Reviling the Establish'd Religion of our Country, that is equally profess'd by the Higher Powers and all Subjects whatsoever, is without Precedent any where, and is not to be paralleled in any other Nation in the World. Whatever Liberty may be pleaded for in a free Country, in Favour of a sedate and calm Way of Reasoning upon any Religious Subject, and even of proposing Doubts and Objections with a just Decency, in order to receive serious Answers and farther Satisfaction, yet it is absurd to assert that the Liberties of any Nation will allow, with Impunity, a Set of distinguish'd Infidels to insult and treat with the greatest Contempt and Scorn the most sacred and important Truths, that are openly profess'd by the whole Body of the People, of whatever Denomination. But certainly we are far from imitating the Zeal of *Phinehas*, when we can so tamely bear this Reviling treatment of the Religion we all profess; and are rather sunk into a spiritual Lethargy, when we can hear with Patience the shocking Blasphemies of the Tribe of Infidels, and see with Impunity the frequent Indignities and Affronts put on the Veracity and Honour of that Divine Person, whom we Nationally worship as our God and Saviour, and thro' whom alone we declare we expect Everlasting Happiness.

Of this Indecent treatment of the Christian Religion we have too notorious an Instance, in some late *Discourses on the Miracles of our Saviour*: The blasphemous Author of which is so far possess'd with the Spirit

Spirit of Ridicule, (if not with that worse Spirit, of which he writes so ludicrously in the Account he gives of the *Demoniacs* in the Gospel) as to divert himself and his Readers with the most virulent Scoffs on the Miracles of our Blessed Lord, when consider'd (as they ought to be) as Matters of Fact, and in their plain literal Sense. Instead of the well-known and certain meaning of our Saviour's Miracles, as so many Appeals to the Senses of Mankind, this Writer has thought fit to substitute some obscure, remote, and mystical Operations of *Jesus Christ*; as if his Design were to convert the Gospel into a mere Figure, in order to evacuate and undermine it; and that very probably, in Subserviency to the *Allegorical* Scheme of another more artful Writer among us in Favour of Infidelity. However, this Attempt is no more than a wretched Revival of the very worst Part of *Quakerism*; that, namely, which rejects the Literal Sense and plain History of the Gospel, and resolves the several Facts that relate to our Lord into some figurative, precarious, and unintelligible Performances of him on the Minds of Men. But whatever Shelter the Fondness of some Antient Writers for *Allegorical* Interpretations and the sublimer Senses of Scripture, may be said by this daring Author to afford him, it is certain that they among the Antients that fell into an Excess that Way, did so out of a mistaken *Reverence* for the Scriptures, and not in order to undermine their Authority, or expose them to Contempt, as is the Case at present. It is clear too, that the greater Part of, if not all, those *Allegorical* Interpreters assigned such mystical meanings of the sacred Text, as were not inconsistent with or exclusive of the literal Sense; as indeed appears even from this Author's own Quotations of them.

But

But one who has so highly abused the Blessed Spirit by which our Saviour acted; may well be supposed to abuse the Interpreters of what was dictated by it: since he must have known, that though some of the antient Expositors were transported with an immoderate Love of *Allegorical* Interpretations, yet there were not wanting others of great Reputation, and more particularly the *Greek* Commentators, who adhered more strictly to the Literal Sense of the Holy Scriptures. But these are passed by with Neglect, as those of the other Sort are misrepresented on this Occasion; it being the Design of them both to establish and illustrate the Christian Religion, perhaps by different, but not contradictory Methods: the Divine Authority of which this impious Writer has not only endeavoured to weaken, but to expose to the Contempt and Derision of Infidels. But nothing is more certain from Reason and Experience, than that wherever the Spirit of Ridicule has prevailed, they that labour under it are incompetent Judges of all that is serious as well as Sacred.

Indeed a Distinction has been lately insinuated by a well-known Champion of Infidelity, and his Associates in that desperate Cause, between the Liberties that may be used against *Revealed* Religion, and those which are not to be used against *Natural* Religion. But this is a vain and ill-grounded Subterfuge. For if the Peace of Society (to which almost all Morality is at present reduced) is concerned in suppressing licentious Writings against *Natural* Religion, (as is consequentially acknowledged by that Author) certainly the Peace both of Church and State, which are one great united Society in a Christian Country constituted as

our own is, is very highly affected by licentious Writings against those Arguments that chiefly support the Truth of the *Christian* Religion. For nothing is more evident than that an avow'd Immorality is the natural Consequence of shocking the Faith of unlearned, weak, and incompetent Judges of profane and impious Writings. And that this is a poor Evasion, is very clear, when we recollect that the foresaid reputed Writer (if not all his Brethren in this Cause) is universally considered as a profess'd *Fatalist*, and consequently as one that can no more be affected by Zeal for Natural Religion, than by that which is Revealed; since neither of them can in themselves, or their Consequences, be of any Obligation or Authority on any Person that professes the Principle of *Fatality*. Consistently with the Pretensions of such a Person, consider'd as Unaccountable hereafter, there can be no Immorality but the Disturbance of the Peace of Society; which surely is affected equally by Licentious Writings in a Christian and an Heathen Country. But as Unaccountable Beings as some Persons so industriously labour to persuade themselves and others they are, upon their own Concession they are accountable to the Magistrate, for their Disturbance of Society, that of Church and State, by those profane and licentious Writings, that have a natural Tendency to introduce Confusion in the State, and Popery in the Church, in the last Issue and Result of Things. And therefore it is by no means foreign to the Design of our present Assembly, to remind the Magistrates, in the several Societies of Reformation, of their Obligations to consider how far such licentious Writers shall under their legal Cognizance, either in a direct or consequential Manner, as they are notorious Disturbers

of the Peace both of Ecclesiastical and Civil Society. And this Address is here offered to them, not out of any Distrust of the Strength of those excellent Arguments that have formerly been, or now are, used in Vindication of the Christian Religion; and which antiently triumphed over at least as malicious and learned Adversaries as are now to be found among us; but out of a real Regard for the Honour of God, the Preservation of the Peace of the Society of which we are Members, and the preventing of the publick Ruine.

But as the Transition is natural from impious Principles to immoral Practices, so when Religion falls under Contempt, and the great Author of it is not treated with that Veneration which is due to his holy Name, no wonder that the most profane Oaths and horrid Imprecations do every where wound the Ears of all sober and serious Persons, and that *the Language of the Fiends* (as this Dialect was stiled by an illustrious Penitent of this Nation) does so prevail, as to constitute not only the Expletive but the Ornamental Part of Discourse of the Vulgar among us, and that in the open Streets of this City. And it is to be feared, that Persons of low and Servile condition have on this Occasion too exactly copied after the Pattern of their Masters and Superiours, whose Breeding and Quality should have taught them to shew greater Reverence to that God, whose good Providence has distinguished them from the Vulgar Uneducated part of the World. Indeed the Persons most guilty of this shocking Vice are so little apprehensive of their Provocation of the Wrath of God, that we find by sad Experience they readily call for his most terrible Judgments, and labour to pull down his Damnation on them-

themselves and all they converse with. Such Persons therefore very properly fall under the Execution of Justice by the legal as well as pious Zeal of the Magistrate, both in the Vindication of the Honour of an affronted God, from whom he ultimately derives his Authority, and likewise for the Preservation of the Publick from those Judgments that are so profusely imprecated, and are indeed the Consequences of so profane an Irreverence, and so bold a Defiance of the Divine Majesty and all that is Sacred.

Again, The natural Product of such an Indifference for Religion in some, and declared Contempt of it in others, is that Want of Probity and Integrity in the Commerce of the World, and the common Affairs of Life, that is so visible to all, and is so much complained of by those that are greatly concerned in Business, or are engaged in Variety of Conversation. Indeed it is very obvious from every Day's Experience, that the Arts of Knavery have of late had uncommon Refinements; and that Dissimulation and Falshood, Fraud and Rapaciousness, are too generally cultivated; that Plain-dealing and Sincerity are unfashionable Virtues, in a Nation formerly distinguished by them; and that those few that are of too generous a temper to practise the prevailing Methods of Deceit and Trick- ing, are in fact not only Ridiculed as Weak men, but too often fall a Prey to the Artifices of those who are not under the same Restraints of Honour and Conscience. In short, they that know the World best, represent the Corruption of it to be spread so widely among all Ranks of men among us, upon Applications suitable to their Passions, Circumstances, and Stations, that there is Reason to fear there is scarce Honesty enough left to save the Nation from Ruine;

that (in the Psalmist's Style) *Men of low Degree are Vanity, and Men of high Degree are a Lye*; and that as the former are too often ignorant of their Duty, or are tempted by Poverty to *steal and take the Name of their God in vain*; so the latter have too generally, tho' I hope not *altogether, broken the Yoke,*

and burst the Bonds, in the Propheticke
Jer. ix. 4, 8, 9. Language; that every Brother will utterly
supplant; and one speaketh peaceably to
his Neighbour with his Mouth, but in his Heart he
layeth his wait. When the Faithful are thus minished
from among the Children of Men, it is by no means
surprizing that the Prophet subjoyns; Shall I not visit
them for these things? saith the Lord: and shall not
my Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this?

But to go on; as an immoderate Love of irregular Pleasure is a distinguishing Character of the present Age, so the Zeal of *Phinebas*, which was particularly exerted against *Lewdness*, ought to animate us to an Imitation of his Example, notwithstanding the Variation of some Circumstances in the Cases proposed. However, one Coincidence is very remarkable; namely, that as that Sin was openly committed, and the *Midianitish* Woman was brought by the offending *Israélite* to his Brethren, and in the Sight of *Moses* and the whole Congregation; so the Profession of Lewdness at present is undissembled, and even a *Vindication of Publick Stews* has appear'd in the World, together with several other Treatises of the like Nature, that are peculiarly calculated for serving the Cause of Impurity, for banishing all Remains of our native Modesty and ancient Decency, and *making Men ten times more the Children of Hell than they were before*. And as if the Destruction of the Publick were deliberately aimed

at by the Devil's Agents, as well as that of the Souls and Bodies of private Profelytes to Vice, an universal Luxury and Corruption of Manners has not long since been gravely recommended to the World, under the Notion of *Publick Benefits*; as if all Shame among Men were lost, and a Paradox could be maintained that is not only contrary to the Nature and Reason of all Virtue and Vice with regard to Society, but to the Experience of all Ages and Nations, which assures us in the most Authentick Histories of the World, that the greatest Empires and States, as well as that of the *Jews*, have flourished chiefly by Religion and Virtue, and have proportionably decay'd, and finally have been sunk and ruined, by a general Luxury and Dissolution of Manners. And none but Unbelievers of all Profane as well as Sacred History can doubt of so well-supported a Truth.

But, as if the Practise of mere Fornication were not prejudicial enough to the Publick Interest, as well as plainly inconsistent with the Laws of God, some of the Men of Pleasure among us have extended their Views farther, and have dared to pursue a forbidden Scent of sensual polluted Joys in the open Violation of their Marriage-Vows. And this in a manner so undisguised, as well as unpractised by other Civilized Nations, that upon the Falshood of one Side and Retaliation of the other, there has been (in the general Opinion of the World) such an implicit sort of Composition between each of the married Parties to live in a State of *Adultery*, as seems to have been designed for an Excuse for indulging unlawful Liberties on both Sides, and for annulling as it were by a Connivance, arising from mutual Guilt, the strict Obligations of the

Marriage-Contract. As if what is absolutely unlawful in it self, could be render'd capable of the least Apology by the wicked Resolution of each Party, to persist in the known Breach of a solemn Vow, and tacitly to tolerate it in one another; and that not without some Appearance of Civility and outward Decency in other Affairs. But how inconsistent such a Palliation of Adultery is with a true Social Life, with a Matrimonial Friendship, with the natural Love of a genuine and unsuspected Offspring, with the Publick Interest, and above all with the Profession of Christianity, is sufficiently clear not only from those numerous Inconveniencies that usually attend those that are engaged in this false Scheme of Pleasure, but from the just Sense they themselves sometimes have of their real Misery in the Agonies of a penitent Sorrow, whenever they are awaken'd by unfortunate Incidents to a Sight of the Heinousness of their Crime. For in their thoughtful Minutes they cannot but acknowledge, that the Christian Religion does absolutely and in the strongest Terms exclude all *Adulterers* from the Favour of God, and all Hopes of Heaven hereafter. But since the Threatnings of God, however terrible they be, have generally but little Influence on those that are so highly infatuated by *the Corruption that is in the World through Lust*, few of whom can be induced by Perswasion and Argument to *return, and take hold again of the Paths of Life*; and since Persons of that Character are usually more affected with Temporal Troubles and Secular Punishments, than with those of a Spiritual Nature; it is a Duty the more incumbent on the Magistrate, to turn the keenest Edge of the Laws against those that notoriously live in a State of Adultery, both in order to rouze them by the Smart of the

Incon-

Inconveniencies they incur, out of their stupified Condition to a better Sense of things, and to deter others by their Sufferings from so pernicious a Crime. It must be confessed indeed, that this Part of our Civil Constitution is defective, and that our Laws are not so severe as those of most other Nations, that punish Adultery with Death; as likewise did God's own Law given to the *Jews*: but till the said Deficiency shall be thought proper to be supplied by the Legislative Power, the Sword of Justice is however to be brandished, if not farther employ'd; and Pecuniary Mulcts, corresponding both to the nature of the Crime, and the outward Circumstances of some that commit it, and publick Penances of Shame in others, ought more strictly and impartially to be inflicted; for the Reformation of a Vice so destructive to the Publick, in all its fruitful Consequences of Quarrels, Duels, and Murders; but more especially in Provoking the Wrath of Almighty God, that is so fully revealed against it as to punish it, when it becomes the publick crying Sin of a Nation, in a Publick Capacity, and a National manner.

Once more; since that most detestable and unnatural Sin of *Sodomy*, which but rarely appears in our Histories, and that among Monsters and Prodigies, has been of late transplanted from the hotter Climates to our more temperate Country, and has dared to shew its hideous Face among a People that formerly had it in the utmost Abhorrence; it is now become the indispensable Duty of the Magistrate to attack this horrible Monster in Morality, by a vigorous Execution of those good Laws, that have justly made that vile Sin a Capital Crime. There are some Sins indeed, of which this leads the Train, that have that shameful Turpitude

tude in them, and are so foul a Disgrace to human Nature, that they can scarce be decently treated of, though it be in order to their Confutation and Punishment. For, as the Apostle observes, *Ephes. v. 12.* *It is a Shame among Christians even to speak of those things that are done in secret, by such Dishonourers of their own Bodies.* However, for the Sake of the Dignity of our Nature, and the Honour of the Reformed Christian Religion, our most zealous Efforts ought to be exerted against this abominable Sin, of what Rank soever any Persons may be that are guilty of it. It is certain, that no Sin can be a greater Contradiction to the declared Intention of the Author of Nature, in continuing the Race of Mankind by the Female Sex created for that End, to the Divine Institution of Marriage in Paradise it self, and to the Command of God to *encrease and multiply* Mankind. But as the Good of Society is the particular Care of the Magistrate, whatever has a direct Tendency to lessen the Number of Subjects, and to weaken or dishonour the Government, or bring it to Confusion, falls under his immediate Cognizance. And therefore not only in our own Constitution, but in all Civilized Nations, the Laws have severely punished this execrable Crime. And accordingly we find it recorded, that *Josiah*, *2 Kings xxiii.* when he effectually reformed the *Jews*,
 7. *brake down and destroy'd the Houses of the Sodomites.* And, God be thanked, we need not go abroad to illustrate this matter; since for the Honour of our Present Government it ought to be here mentioned, that the Prosecution of those most impure Wretches, that are guilty of this flagrant Crime, has been order'd to be carried on at the Expence

pence of the Crown. And surely all subordinate Magistrates cannot but be induced to imitate with Zeal the glorious Example of Him, by whom they are immediately invested with Authority to punish so odious and filthy a Crime. But above all, this scandalous Abuse of human Nature is a Sin that bears so direct an Opposition to the Laws of God, and is so highly Provoking to him, that if it be not soon extinguished, but shall gain ground among us, we cannot but be apprehensive of the Judgments of an angry God coming down upon so wicked a Nation; and that after all our Professions of Reformation and repeated Deliverances, we shall be at last abandoned to Ruine. *Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the Cities about them, in like manner giving themselves over to Fornication, and going after strange Flesh, are set forth for an Example, suffering the Vengeance of eternal Fire; that is, of that Fire from Heaven, whose Effects still remain, and will always do so, and which was Emblematical of that Eternal Fire, which waits for all such hardened and impenitent Sinners.*

Lastly, Since it cannot but be expected on this Occasion, and indeed the Exigency of the Case requires it, that due Notice should be taken of the growing Vice of Drinking some Cheap sorts of Spirituous Liquors to great Excess, by the generality of the common People, and especially in this City and round about it; I do by no means think it unbecoming the Dignity of the Pulpit, to consider a little the Consequences of this Melancholy matter of Fact, and then to propose some proper Remedies for putting a Stop to so destructive a Practice as prevails at present. The Consequences are as numerous as they are plain
and

and evident. That Spirituous Liquors, however disguised, inflame the Blood and Animal Spirits to an high Degree, and afterwards sink them in Proportion to their unnatural Exaltation; that they prey on the whole Nervous System, and gradually extinguish the Vital Flame, appears too clearly from constant Experience to be contested. Indeed, the Body of the People will be so Enfeebled by this Abuse of spirituous Liquors, without some speedy Reformation, that our National Courage must inevitably be affected by it in no long Period of Time; and our Fleets and Armies, as consisting chiefly of the Populace, however Victorious they have been over our Enemies abroad, will now be previously subdued at home by the Disorders and Weakness introduced by this sort of Excess. And I hope such a *private Vice* will not be considered by any Lover of his Country as a *publick Benefit*. But even in Times of Peace, how highly does the Publick suffer by this single Irregularity? When the Passions are fired by such spirituous Liquors, the natural Product, in the furious Way, is profane Cursing and Swearing, Fighting, Robbery, and Murder; and in the lewd Way, not merely common Lust is gratified, but Adulterous Intrigues are carried on, and even Rapes and Sodomy are perpetrated. And that these gross Immoralities are very much owing to the immoderate Use of such hot intoxicating Liquors, as are now more generally drunk by those of the lower Rank among us than formerly, is highly probable, when we consider that some of those Vices have prevail'd more of late Years in this Nation, than they were formerly observed to do. But tho' it be more easy to reflect warmly on the fatal Consequences of this Sort of Excess, than to give an effectual Check to so great an Evil; yet some

Remedies

Remedies may with Decency be suggested on this solemn Occasion, which may not be thought unseasonable at this Juncture, nor unworthy of the Consideration and farther Improvement both of the Magistracy and the Legislature. The good Magistrate, inspired with a true Publick Spirit, may in some measure contribute to the Reformation of this kind of Excess, by a strict Execution of the Laws now in being against Drunkenness, and more particularly by a legal Suppression of some of the more scandalous Shops, said to be Magazines of all sorts of Wickedness, where those spirituous Liquors are retailed and abused. And perhaps it may deserve the Thoughts of the Legislature, whether the vast Number of mischievous Shops of that kind in and about this City, ought not to be reduced and restrained: as likewise, since those Liquors are so much abused by the lower Rank of People, chiefly on account of their Cheapness, whether for the Good of the Community, (which is the great End of the Legislature in all things) a severer Tax laid on those strong spirituous Liquors, and especially on that particular palatable Sort which is most generally abused, as being procurable every where, and upon very easy Terms, may not contribute very much to the Reformation of this pernicious Vice among the Vulgar; upon whom the very Expence of Drinking to Excess will be more apt to have some Influence, than better Arguments of a Moral Nature.

Having thus specified some of the most considerable Vices that abound among us, and have a direct Tendency to pull down the Judgments of Heaven upon us, agreeably to the several Menaces recorded in Scripture for our Admonition, as well as to the Reason of the thing it self; the Necessity of contributing to a National

tional Reformation by all proper Methods, and particularly by a zealous Execution of the Laws against Profaneness and Immorality; as likewise the Power and Efficacy of such Punishment of Vice, and Encouragement of Virtue, to avert the impending Judgments of God, are very natural Inferences from what has been said on this Head of Discourse. And as we are assured of the former by our own Moral Circumstances, when compared with the State of those Churches that have had *their Candlestick removed*, and with those Nations that have lost their Civil Liberties, by the like enormous Immoralities; so the latter is very evident from the History of the Text of this Discourse. It is sufficient then to observe, that as the *Plague*, that cut off so great a Number of *Israelites*, was stay'd from making a further Progress towards their Ruine, by the zealous Execution of Judgment on the greatest Delinquents; so the like Execution of legal Justice for the Punishment of Vice, and promoting a Reformation of Manners among us, is the most likely Method to disarm the Vengeance of God, and arrest those Judgments that our crying Sins most highly deserve. Such an effectual Reformation of the Lives of those that have hitherto been reformed in nothing but their Doctrine, would even yet revoke the Order that seems to be given to the destroying Angel, alter the conditional Decree of Heaven, and sheath both the Sword of the Lord and that of Man. If a Zeal for God and Religion, like that of *Phinebas*, were exerted in a Publick manner, we need not doubt but the Plague, or any other Judgment of God, would be *stay'd*, or rather prevented. When God (in the Prophetick Style)

Hosea iv. 1,
2, &c.

seems to have a *Controversy with the Inhabitants of this Land, because there is*

no Truth, nor Mercy, nor practical Knowledge of God in the Land; but by Swearing and Lying, and Killing, and Stealing, and committing Adultery, they break out, and Blood toucheth Blood; therefore the Land shall mourn; unless some active Phinebas, and interceding Moses, arise to stand before him in the Breach, and turn away his wrathful Indignation, lest he should destroy us. They therefore are the best Patriots, and the truest Lovers of their Country, who joyn an hearty Zeal for the Honour of God, the Interests of Religion, and a real Reformation of Manners among us, to their own political Schemes; the very best of which, independently of that Union, are too imperfect and weak to screen us from the Divine Judgments, or *stay the Plague*, either of the Natural or Political kind; or (in other Words) to hinder the Return of Popery and Arbitrary Power, two of the greatest Plagues that can be inflicted by Heaven on this Nation for their Sins, whenever the measures of them shall be filled up, and we shall be thought ripe for Ruine. But I willingly turn my Eyes to a more agreeable Prospect, and shall shew,

III *dly*, and *lastly*, That a Degree of Honour, proportionable to that of *Phinebas*, cannot but attend the excellent Labours of the Societies for Reformation of Manners among us.

It is said in the Text, that the *Execution of Judgment* by *Phinebas*, which was attended with so glorious an Effect, *was counted unto him for Righteousness unto all Generations for evermore.* That is, the Ardour and Zeal of *Phinebas*, for the Honour of God and the Good of his People, was not only applauded and considered as highly meritorious by that Generation

of Men in which he lived; but his Memory has been honoured ever since, and will be celebrated in all future Ages of the World. And the Reason is very obvious; for nothing can be more excellent in it self, than the promoting the Glory of God with a sincere Zeal, and doing much Good to Men. And that *Phinebas* performed something eminently good and acceptable to God at a critical Juncture, which will be a standing Memorial of him, appears very clearly from the infallible Judgment of God himself, who highly approved of his Service and rewarded him for it.

If then, my Brethren of the Societies for Reformation, the same great and good Ends, the advancing the Glory of God, and the Preservation of the Publick from Ruine, by the retrieving a Sense of Virtue and Religion in the more profligate Sort of Persons, and giving a Check to the Infolence of Vice, that has too widely diffused its Contagion, be vigorously pursued, in a due Subserviency to and Assitance of the professed Work of the Ministers of the Gospel, by the prudent just and legal Methods of your Magistrates and their Assitants, nothing can be more evident than that your Work is good and acceptable to God, and that it greatly conduces to the publick Interest, both from the Nature of the thing, and that express Approbation of God himself which was given in the like Case of *Phinebas*. And if the great Design of your Societies has been approved of by the Supream Judge of all, they that are engaged in promoting it will know how to neglect and despise the Calumnies of those incompetent Judges, that are engaged in a Combination to carry on the rival Scheme of making Profelytes to Infidelity and ill Morals among us. As their wicked Cause has received some
Signal

Signal Defeats by your Religious Confederacies, so the Interest of the Instruments of *Satan* requires that all possible Defamations should be spread, to weaken the Hands and Hearts of those active Magistrates that *bear not the Sword in vain*. Neither is it to be imagined, that the zealous Assistants of the Magistracy should escape the Aspersions of ill Men; since they cannot but be apprized, that no Magistrate can act against them without legal Information, or on a personal View, the latter of which very rarely happens. If therefore Informations are Necessary things, those good Men that assist the Zeal of the Magistrates, by laying Informations of vicious Persons before them, and confine themselves to a legal manner of doing so, may very well bear that Opprobrious Language that is too often thrown out upon them; as remembering that they are said to be *Happy*, who are *Reproached for the Name of Christ*; and that they are pronounced *Blessed, that are Reviled and treated despitefully for Righteousness sake*, that is, for the Cause of Virtue and Religion: as likewise, that *they who Confess Christ before men, shall be Confessed and Owned by him before the Angels of God*. And if any thing may be added to this, such Persons ought to recollect, that even at present the Applauses and Prayers of all sober and serious Men among us are on their Side; and indeed that the Censures of their most malicious Adversaries are the truest Panegyricks on them, and the most certain Acknowledgments of the Goodness of their Cause.

1 Pet. iv. 14.

Matth. v. 10,
11.

Luke xii. 8.

On this Occasion therefore I think it my Duty to Congratulate those among us, that have the Courage to bear the Odium of a Virtuous Singularity in a degenerate

rate Age, to appear *on the Lord's side*,
Exod. xxxii. 26. (as *Moses* expresses it) and to join the
Sons of Levi in supporting the Cause of
 Religion, upon their late good Successes in this spiri-
 tual Warfare. It is no doubt a very pleasing Re-
 flection at present, and will be an unspeakable Con-
 solation in the last Moments of Life, of all good and
 active Magistrates, that they have used their Autho-
 rity in suppressing several lewd Houses, and infamous
 Nurseries of Debauchery; or in contributing to clear
 the Streets of their greatest Nufances, the *soliciting*
Night-walking Strumpets, those shameless Scandals of
 their Sex and Country. And that those abominable
 Wretches, that are guilty of the *Unnatural Vice*, have
 been frequently detected and brought to condign Ju-
 stice, is very much owing to the laudable Diligence
 of the Societies for Reformation. It has been likewise
 an eminent Service to the Publick, that they have
 effectually reduced several notorious GAMING-HOUSES;
 those Places of Resort, that are equally prejudicial to
 the Spiritual and Temporal Fortunes of great Num-
 bers of Men. And that the LORD'S-DAY, which
 is the most powerful Instrument of keeping up some
 Sense of Religion in the World, has been of late ob-
 served with greater Decency at least than formerly in
 this City, and indeed in remoter Places under the Influence
 of its Example, Our grateful Acknowledgments are
 due to the Members of the Reforming Societies, and
 especially to the Magistrates among them, for their
 zealous Execution of those Penal Laws, that have been
 so justly enacted, for reinforcing the Reverence that
 peculiarly belongs to that Distinguished Day.

Indeed there is nothing that can more reasonably
 induce us to hope, that notwithstanding the many
 hor-

horrible Provocations of the Divine Majesty, by the Sins that have been already specified, and likewise by a Multitude of others here omitted, God will not give us up in a Judicial manner to the Rage of our implacable Enemies, than the Consideration of the many good Designs that are now carrying on in this City and Nation, by great Numbers of Persons of all Ranks and Orders among us. The Design of the Society for *Promoting Christian Knowledge*, by the free Distribution of good Practical Books to the poorer sort of People throughout the Kingdom, deserves here to be mentioned with Honour, as having an immediate Connexion with the Societies for Reformation of Manners. To which, as more especially conversant about Adult Persons, we may properly subjoin the most useful Institution of *Charity-Schools*, for forming the Minds of the rising Generation to a true sense of Religion; which have been so happily spread both throughout this City and Nation. And to what is done in this City ought to be added the generous Design of erecting several *New Churches*, wherever they are wanting, either in it, or round about it. And surely We should recollect with Joy the gradual *Augmentation* of the many *Poor Livings* in this Kingdom, both by the Royal and Private Bounty; as likewise the restoring *Impropriations*, for the better and more becoming Maintenance of the Ministers of God, by no small Number of pious and publick-spirited Benefactors: to which the Support of their *Widows and Children*, by a Corporation erected on that account, is a most Charitable Appendix. And after this advantageous View at Home, we may justly turn our Thoughts to the excellent Schemes that are prosecuted for *Propagating the Gospel* Abroad, both by the Corporation for that end that extends its Views to the remotest

most *West*, and likewise by the New Attempt to preserve and cultivate the Christian Religion in those *Eastern* Parts, from which we our selves received it so very Early, by a Noble Present of the *New Testament* to the poor Remains of distressed Christians there in their Own Language. A Design truly Apostolical, and which cannot but fill our Hearts with a sensible Pleasure, when we reflect that this is a Work that very much resembles the Benefaction of the Christians of *Macedonia* and *Achaia*, in the first and better times, who are recorded

in Scripture for making a generous *Con-*
Rom. xv. 16. *tribution for the poor Saints that were at*
Jerusalem. When therefore we thus Balance our Moral National Accounts with Heaven, we cannot but entertain some Hopes that God, who would have *spared Sodom* it self, *if ten righteous Persons had been found in it*, will in the midst of all our Provocations remember Mercy, and for the Sake of these truly Christian Schemes, and of those faithful Servants of his that are labouring to Reform a wicked Age, by their Authority and their own bright Examples; we cannot, I say, but flatter our selves, that he will not give up our Religious and Civil Liberties a Sacrifice to the Resentments and Bigottry of our *Romish* Adversaries, and of those that favour their Pretensions; who seem to be meditating, in an uncommon manner, the Subversion of the Reformed Religion and all that is dear and valuable to us.

And as these excellent Designs, by which we are labouring to Convert, Reform, and Support others, give us some Comfortable Thoughts of our being still under the Protection of that good God, who has in many critical Junctures vouchsafed us suitable Deliverances; so I beseech you, my Brethren, to *suffer a Word of Exhortation*,

to persevere with a prudent Zeal in your pious and useful Undertakings. Survey your Triumphs over the Impudence of publick Vice with a conscious Satisfaction; but pursue with fresh Vigour those mortal Enemies of the publick Interest that rally again, and give them a total Defeat. Particularly at this Crisis both of the Political and Moral World, it is earnestly desir'd by the true Friends of both, that you will keep a watchful Eye on the Clubs, newly erected near the very Heart of this City, that are said to be formed for promoting Infidelity, the Ridicule of the Scriptures, and Blasphemy it self. It is necessary then that these Seminaries of Profaneness and Vice should be stifled in their very Infancy, that the Wrath of God may not break out upon us for such horrid Impieties, and he may not *suffer his whole Displeasure to arise*. And to animate you the more to aspire after greater Measures of Perfection in the Reformation of the Age, you ought to recollect on this Occasion, that your Adversaries are such as either live and die like *the Beasts that perish*, or that desire to do so upon wicked but weak Principles. Now these are such mean and narrow Views, that all that understand the Nature of true Religion, and at the same time consult their own Interest as well as that of the Publick, cannot but despise the Promoters of them as a wretchedly Injudicious sort of persons, that sink their Happiness below the Dignity of human Nature, think themselves *unworthy of everlasting Life*, and madly reject a Saviour, whom of all Men living they most stand in need of. Whereas the genuine Principles of Virtue and Christianity, give noble Thoughts and exalted Views to the sincere Professors of them, that render them happy in themselves, and eminent Benefactors to the Publick. But above all, they gratify the highest Ambition our Nature is capable of by the

well-grounded Hopes of a glorious Immortality. You therefore that have raised your Thoughts above the low and trifling Pleasures of the Animal Life to the Pursuit of these great Schemes, can be *in nothing terrified by your Adversaries; those Scoffers that walk after their own Lusts; and whilst they promise Liberty, are themselves the Servants of Corruption:* for whom (besides the miserable but precarious Hopes of Annihilation) *there remaineth nothing but a fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Adversaries,* that is, of God and Religion. In the mean time may *God arise, and let his Enemies be scatter'd;* and may he defend his own Cause against the foolish Man that blasphemeth him daily. And as you have the Honour to be Fellow-Workers with God, and to be the Instruments of his Providence in doing much Good, may he crown your future Labours with Success, in defeating the wild Designs of the Ungodly that are in this Land, and rooting out all wicked Doers from this City of the Lord! And whilst you thus stand up and execute Judgment like Phinebas, may the Plague and every other Judgment of Heaven be prevented, or stayed in its destructive Progress! And as his Zeal was counted unto him for Righteousness unto all Generations; so may you, after you have faithfully and wisely served your Generation, according to the Will of God, and the Stations assign'd you by his Providence, be distinguished not merely by the Praises of mortal Men, but be finally Rewarded as good Servants by your great Master! May you hereafter shine, with the Glory of your Benefactions to the Publick, as the Brightness of the Firmament; and by turning many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever!

Which may God grant for Jesus Christ his Sake, &c.



The Three and Thirtieth
A C C O U N T
 O F T H E

PROGRESS made in the
Cities of *London* and *Westminster*,

And Places adjacent,

By the *Societies* for Promoting
 a *Reformation of Manners* ;

By Furthering the Execution of the LAWS
 against Prophaneness and Immorality, and
 by other Christian Methods.



THE Reasonableness of Uniting in Societies,
 for the more effectual carrying on a Work of
 this Nature, need not be farther proved, after
 what has been said with so much Advantage
 upon that Subject in the *Annual Reformation Sermons* ;
 as also by the Excellent Author of the *Whole Duty of*
Man, who, in his Treatise of the *Causes of the Decay of*

Christian Piety, hath this remarkable Passage: *The Scandal*, saith he, *brought upon Religion*, as it was not contracted by the *Irregularities of one or two Persons*, but by *associated and common Crimes*; so neither will it be removed by a few *single and private Reformatiōns*. There must be *Combinations and publick Confederacies in Virtue*, to ballance and counterpoise those of *Vice*, or she will never recover that Honour which she acquired by the *general Piety of her Professors*.

THANKS be to GOD, many such Combinations and publick Confederacies are now in Being, who make it a great Part of their Business to oppose associated as well as particular Offenders.

THE Societies for Reformation of Manners are eminently of that Number: And the Usefulness of such Confederacies is visible from what has been actually brought about by means of the said Societies, far beyond what could have been hoped for from any private Endeavours. Multitudes, for more than *Thirty Years* last past, have been prosecuted, and punished according to Law, for lewd and scandalous Practices. Great Numbers of Bawdy-Houses, and other disorderly Houses, have been suppressed and shut up, and the Streets very much purged from the wretched Tribe of *Night-walking Prostitutes*, and most detestable *Sodomites*. Many young Men, taken with lewd Women, have, by their being brought to timely Shame and Punishment, been discouraged, and turned (as we have Reason to hope) from following such sinful Courses, which often cause them to defraud their Parents, Masters, &c. and bring themselves to utter Ruin. Moreover, many Thousands of *good Books* have been dispersed by these Societies throughout the Kingdom, and put into
the

the Hands of lewd and profane Persons, to awaken them to a Sense of their Sins. By these various Methods, many Persons have, by the Blessing of GOD, been brought to a Sense of their Sin and Danger; and tho' they have at first been exasperated against the Instruments of awakening them out of their dreadful Lethargy, and stopping them in their sinful Courses; yet have they afterwards blessed God for their Recovery, and been heartily thankful to those, who have been serviceable to them therein.

THIS Undertaking, begun by a very few Persons, has mightily spread it self, not only in *Great Britain*, but in Foreign Parts. And the great Good which, by GOD'S Blessing, has been done by the said Societies, has very much animated their Endeavours. They have likewise been encouraged by several Royal Proclamations, Orders of Sessions, Presentments of Grand-Juries in many Counties in *England*; by the Lord-Mayors and Court of Aldermen of the City of *London*; by many Sermons of the Right Reverend the Bishops, and other eminent Divines, preached to the Societies, and published throughout the Kingdom; and by the Writings of other learned Men; as also by the solemn Approbation of a considerable Number of Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and the Honourable Judges of *England* and *Ireland*, and the Commissioners of several Protestant Churches.

It must be confessed, That Profaneness and Debauchery do very much abound, for Want of a more general and hearty Concurrence in this Work of Persons of all Orders amongst us, in Proportion to the Greatness of the Concern.

THE said Societies have prosecuted, and been assisting in Prosecuting, from the *First of December 1726*, to the *First of December 1727*, divers Sorts of Offenders; *viz.* For *Lewd and disorderly Practices, Common Gaming-Houses, and other Disorderly Houses, Common Gamesters, Profane Swearing and Cursing, Exercising their Trades or Ordinary Callings on the Lord's-Day, and for Drunkenness*;

In all ---- 1363.

THE Total Number of Persons prosecuted by the Societies, in or near *London* only, for *Debauchery and Prophaneness*, for 36 Years last past, are calculated at about 94322.

THE said Societies have also been assistant in bringing to Punishment several *Sodomitical Houses*, as well as divers Persons for *Sodomy, and Sodomitical Practices*, who have been prosecuted by the Direction, and at the Charge of the Government.

IF Impiety and Debauchery had gone on spreading and increasing among us for the last *Thirty Years*, at that prodigious rate as they did for many Years before, we had assuredly been one of the most profligate Nations in the World, which must probably have reduced us to a very miserable Condition long before now; but by the Blessing of GOD upon the various Endeavours of our Religious Societies of several Sorts, a great Check hath been given to the Prevalency of the most scandalous Vices, and in many Instances, a visible Reformation has ensued.

THOSE therefore that have a just Zeal for the Honour of GOD and Religion; who desire to prevent the spreading

ing of the Leprosy of Sin ; who are unwilling to have their Children, and other Relations, or their Friends and Servants, corrupted by ill Examples and wicked Allurements : Those that sincerely wish well to those excellent and hopeful Nurseries of Piety and good Manners, the CHARITY-SCHOOLS ; and would be heartily grieved to see the Christian Instruction and pious Education that Children receive therein miscarry, through prevailing open Temptations to Wickedness, and a general Contempt of Religion : Those, lastly, who have any due Love to their Country, and would prevent a National Guilt, and thereby keep off National Judgments, cannot possibly, one would think, but heartily approve and assist this Useful Design for Suppressing Prophaneness and Immorality.

Now, Whereas some have most maliciously insinuated, That it is not *Reformation* which is intended, but the getting of Money from the Delinquents ; and by such base and vile Reports have imposed on some very well-meaning People : It is hereby declared to the World, That such a Charge upon these Societies is absolutely false. It is allowed that there have been some base and wicked Persons, (not engag'd, or in the least concerned in the Societies for Reformation of Manners) who have extorted Money from Offenders, and sometimes from honest Men. But all such Practices are utterly detested by these Societies, (who, it is well known, have strictly enquired after such Persons, and when discovered, have brought them to Punishment) nor do they know or believe, that any engaged in these Societies are chargeable therewith. And to prevent, as much as is possible, all Suspicion of a mercenary Design or Principle in any that act in the Business of *Reformation*, the

GENTLEMEN concerned have all along recommended it, and indeed insisted upon it with those of the Societies, who have given Informations against *Vice* or *Prophaneness*, that they should never receive that Part of the Penalty which the Law allows the Informer; and it has not come to their Knowledge, that any one Person of those Societies hath acted otherwise. However, if at any time hereafter it should happen, that any Person or Persons, concerned in any of the Societies for promoting a *Reformation of Manners*, should be chargeable with any of the evil Practices before-mentioned, or even with taking the Reward which the Law allows them, it is humbly requested of all that are heartily concerned for the Interest of Religion, that they will give them Notice thereof.

N. B. The Persons concerned in these Societies, confine their Prosecutions to the Offences mentioned in this Account.

AND for the further Preventing any Objections from those who are too much disposed to raise them, against this necessary Work; that there is more Regard had to the Punishment, than to the Conversion of prophan and vicious Persons; it may not be improper to acquaint the World; That in Conjunction with the the other pious and proper Methods of Instruction, Admonition, and Reproof, which are used by the Societies, to awaken Men to a Sense of their Sins, and Concern for their Souls, the Number of large Books, and lesser Discourses, that have been wrote by some of their own Members, or which they have procured to be wrote and published by others, and have given away at their own Charge, in this and other Kingdoms, for the Furthering of the Reformation of this, and other Nations, and the particular Conversion of such Offenders as they have brought to Punishment for their crying Enormities, are calculated at above Four Hundred and Fifteen Thousand.

The Number of Books given }
away by the Societies — } 415, 000

