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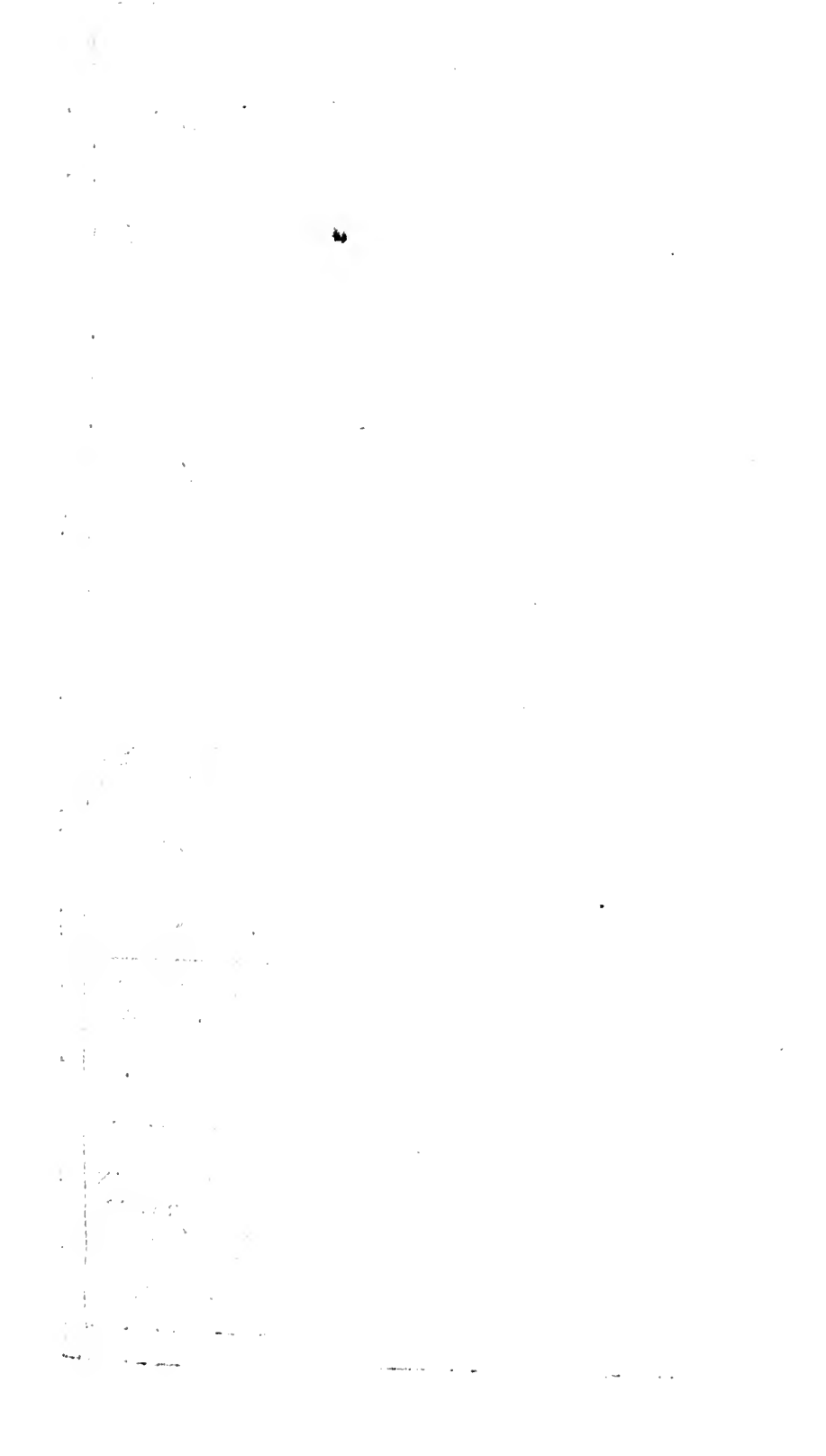
To which are added, TWO
SERMONS
PREACH'D before the
University of OXFORD:
In the Years 1708, and 1709.

By RICHARD THEED, M. A.

Adjuvari se Exemplis exoptat humana infirmitas, quò faciliùs
ipsa nunc faciat, quæ alios fecisse antè cognoscat. *Salv.*
———*Whatsoever things were written afore time, were writ-*
ten for our Learning; that we thro' Patience and Comfort of
the Scriptures might have Hope. Rom. xv. 4.

L O N D O N :

Printed by W. BOWYER, and sold by DANIEL BROWN
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HENRY CLEMENTS at the *Half-Moon* in *St. Paul's Church-*
yard, and CHARLES KING, in *Westminster-hall.* 1712.



THE
P R E F A C E.

WHEN I first set out in Preaching, a worthy Person gave me this Advice to proceed by, that for the most part I wou'd make choice of Historical Subjects, as being the most instructive and affecting, and consequently the most practical. I readily took the Hint, and some of these Discourses were the First-Fruits of it. Whether all or any of them answer those Ends, others must determine. I wish they may, and truly I thought they might in some measure, or I had not publish'd them. If they do not, they will serve however to testify to the World

• The PREFACE.

how I stand inclin'd to do God Service in the Ministry which I have receiv'd of the Lord Jesus. I offer'd my self to it with that Inclination, God knoweth! And by the Grace of God I will retain the same to my Live's end, maugre all the Neglects, Hardships, Discouragements, familiar to the best of Functions. But my Sphere of Action has been hitherto short by the Appointment of Providence; which foresaw, perhaps, I should not be sufficient for a wider. I must write or stand all the Day idle, which I would not do one Moment, could I employ it usefully for any of those for whom Christ dyed. If a Reason therefore be demanded of my Appearance in Print, here is One; and were I to strain my Invention for more, I could hardly assign a better. I content my self however with this, and so I hope will my Candid Reader.

*The Subjects I have chosen are all of them seasonable, and such as every
Capacity*

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Capacity or Circumstance of Life may be the better for upon Reflection. Whether we are married or single, Joseph obliges us with a Pattern of inviolable Chastity. Whether afflicted or prosperous, Joseph recommends Temper or Indifference, as a Method of Management he found most proper under each Condition. If a Case of Competition happens between a great temporal Interest and Duty, Moses determines for us on that side of the Question which is more honest than profitable. If the World bids high for our Service in doing Mischief, the Providential Restraints on Balaam show the Vanity of fighting against God. If our Lot falleth in an Age of Lewdness and Debauchery, Elijah exemplifies Zeal, under some Defects and Abatements which his History forbids in the Imitation. If we are advanc'd to Posts of Eminence and Power, the Fate of Haman may serve as a kind of Sea-mark to deter us from steering the

same

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same mad Course. If we are not pass'd the Years of Minority, the holy Child Jesus has drawn us a Sample of Obedience to Parents. If a resolute Maintenance of our Principles in Publick upon Occasion, entangles us in Difficulties, the great Apostle invites us to form our Apologies by his.

But that I may draw up the whole into one View; to befriend the Interest and Relations of Society, to excite a vertuous Emulation in Persons of all Characters and Stations, to answer the Intent of Nathan's Parable, and prevail with Men to abhor in their own Deportment what they see detestable in another's: This is, in short, the business of the following Sheets. And now that I have been so free as to mention their Use, I will be so honest withal as to own in general their Defects. Several I cou'd point to my self; and the Critical may lay their Fingers on many more, without doing any Injury to me or them: But for Pity-sake to an
Infants

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Infant-Pen, I wou'd beg them not to make what they do not find, lest it be discourag'd.

A Reflection or two I must here anticipate.

If in the first Discourse the Language seems too open, let it be remembered that the Practice which occasion'd it is much more so. A Poison shou'd be shown sometimes, whose Effects are so frequently felt. The sight thereof may prove one good Antidote against it. If in others there are thought to be unfriendly Allusions, I can assure the Censorious, no Personal Character is attempted; but should any one notwithstanding, fancy himself concern'd in the Application, or that I have copied after his particular ill Features, I'd advise him to spoil the Picture by mending the Original. If Tedioufness be objected to all, I have this to say, that it lyeth in making the most of my Text (or the respective History) not in leaving it, to make a Flourish of
Words

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Words and mere Invention. My Thoughts and Meditations I please my self with reflecting, are mostly confin'd to the Word of God, or rather (and that unconstrainedly too) fetch'd from it.

I shall close with one Request more to my good Reader, that he wou'd be pleas'd to believe, my Heart goes along with my Pen in every Instance of Morality recommended by me; for it really does; and unless he judges so, he will not profit much by my Instructions.

Joseph's

Joseph's Contineny.

GEN. xxxix. 9.

How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

THE Words, even to a common Reader, must appear full of Emphasis and full of Transport. Here Zeal was uttered in the highest Key, and the liveliest Stroaks of holy Passion are express'd in *little*. Confirm'd *Seraphins*, that are about God's Throne, when sollicit'd by *Lucifer* into the grand Revolt from their common *Maker*, hardly spoke out their Resentment in nobler Strains of Piety and Devotion.

As to their Occasion: They are a part of *Joseph's* conscientious Reply to the ungodly Motion of the Wife of *Potiphar*, and so lead me to consider two things: 1. The *Greatness* of the *Wickedness* to which he was tempted. 2. The *Height* of his *Vertue* in resisting the Temptation.

To know what it was that urged him to, we must go back to the seventh Verse, where we read that *his Master's Wife cast her Eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie*
B *with*

JOSEPH'S Continency.

with me. A strange Address indeed as to all its Circumstances! Sure she thought one impure Flame would find no Difficulty in kindling another, that the lustful Passion might be as readily propagated as it was conceiv'd, or she would never have come upon him so uncerimoniously, so abruptly. So natural it is to all Men to believe their own Wishes; so common with great Sinners to esteem others altogether such as themselves. There was no ground, certainly, for the Conceit in respect of *Joseph*; for *his Master saw that the Lord was with him*, the righteous Lord who loveth Righteousness and nothing else, *and that he made all that he did to prosper in his Hand*: And so might his Mistress have done too, if she had pleas'd; but, it seems, she look'd another way, or to a very different Purpose. She had been too familiar with *her Eyes*, and that made her impudent with her *Tongue*; she lets the former range abroad and fetch in Matter for irregular Desires, and then the latter must have a Loose too, and beg the Gratification of those Desires. Sense represented him to her, as the Text does to us, *a goodly Person, and well favour'd*; whereupon she allowed a Scope to Fancy, threw out many a lascivious Glance, and to be sure often gave broad Signs of a vicious inclination. At last, when she saw he did not or would

not

not understand he was ill used, she uses him still worse, and *out of the abundance of a naughty Heart the Mouth speaketh*, what were not fit to be spoken again, but only to shew the Vileness and Malignity of the Speech. *Lye with me*, says the hardned Wretch, lost to every scrupulous Thought of Honour and Conscience; and when she had said so, 'tis like, with *Solomon's Strumpet*, she wip'd her foul Mouth as demurely as if she had done or attempted no Wickedness. But whatever her Sentiments were of the Matter, that had dropt the nice Point of Reputation and her Reason together, sure we are, who have nothing to bias us in our Judgment, it was highly criminal and impious. The Proposal carried with it the Assurance of a *Man*, and the Filthiness of a *Beast*: She must have serv'd a long Apprenticeship to Satan, before she could become so thorow-pac'd in the Trade of Iniquity; she must have undergone a tedious Course of Reluctances and Self-denials, of Agonies and Convulsions, before she could arrive at so perfect a Metamorphosis. That one of that shy Sex whose Minds are naturally tender, delicate, to outward Appearance almost incapable of Temptation, should yet offer one her self of the grossest kind, that a Tender of Impurity and Pollution should come from the very Seat of Modesty and Innocence,

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cence, this must be a surprizing Scene to Devils themselves, by whose Instigation it was brought about: An Affrightment to the very Heavens! She is, in truth, the Object not so much of our Thoughts as our Amazement, that could thus throw herself as it were out of her kind, and act Contradictions to Nature and Probability.

How dangerous a thing then is it, to slight that Bashfulness which the wise Author of our Frame has set as a Centinel over Female Vertue, to throw up those Reserves which Education has superadded for its Protection. The Fence being pulled down, the Ground lies common of course. When once the Bounds of Strictness and Severity are past, no body knows where corrupt Nature will stop in its Freedoms and Indecencies. The Liberties taken by this Woman were such as the whole Sex may well blush for in secret, the whole Creation groan, in Abhorrence of what so much reflected upon both. She could not bear a Restraint, tho' but from Shame and Infamy! And that she might have enough of that, her black Character remains upon the sacred Records, to be read and spit upon by all Posterity.

But as wild and monstrous as her Suggestions must appear to a sober Imagination, a Compliance with them would have rais'd no less dismal Ideas, and added much
to

to the Horror of the Story. For *if Sinners entice thee, consent thou not*, is the Law both of Nature and of Scripture; and as for *Adultery*, the Matter of the Enticement, what has a more uncouth Harshness in the very Sound than that? what sooner puts the Ear into a tingling and the Soul into Confusion. *Adultery* in every Age, and under every Dispensation, had the ill Luck to be frown'd upon and exploded. *Paganism* itself gave it no Countenance, *Revelation* no Quarter; with *some* of the barbarous Nations it was made a Forfeiture of Life, with *others* an Incapacity for publick Characters, with *All* an Occasion of Smart and Disgrace. And how roughly the Scripture treats it, none of us can well be ignorant. The *Law* had a standing Miracle, Numb. 5. *the Waters of Jealousy* for its Discovery, and the Severity of *Death* for its Punish-Lev. 20. 10. ment. The *Gospel* ranges together the blackest Vices to bear it Company to the Place of Torment, and provides the heaviest Damnation to make it full Amends. Prov. 6. 33. *Solomon* calleth it a *Reproach that cannot be wip'd away*, and *Job* brands it for a staring Crime, *an Iniquity that should be punished by the Judges*. When *David* had committed it *secretly*, we see, God rewarded it *openly*, by a bitter Series of Afflictions. And when the hypocritical Pharisees were importunate with our Saviour for Sentence against a

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Creature taken in the very act of it, tho' the Sinner found some Grains of Compassion from Him who came not with a judicial Power to destroy, but with a mediatorial to save, yet an awakening Caution withal, to sin no more, lest a worse thing than the legal Infliction of Stoning should come unto her, the infinitely more terrible Sentence of Death at the final Day of Judgment.

Nor is it any wonder at all, it should be thus severely dealt with by the Oracles of God; for what can be a greater Breach of the Marriage Institution? 'Twas a divine and awful Establishment, that Two should become one Flesh by Promise, by Bargain, and by Vow. But how do we keep holy what the Almighty made so? How is the matrimonial Unity preserv'd, the most formal Engagements fulfill'd, if one of the Parties is alienated to another.

For this reason Joseph held the Person of his Mistress sacred and inaccessible. He declares her excepted out of the Number of the Goods that were left at his Disposal, and makes the Marriage-Covenant the Ground of that Exception. Behold my Master wotteth not what is with me in the House, and he hath committed all that he hath to my Hand; there is none greater in this House than I, neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because
thou

thou art his Wife. That Relation binds up both thee and me, and suffers you not to have power over your own Body. *How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* Being thus shut out of all possibility of Interest in you, how can I come near you, without defiling my self, and rebelling against Heaven, where all Nuptial Contracts are register'd in a Book of Remembrance?

Again, what can be a sorer Nufance and Injury to Mankind? It makes a whole Family the Observation of the Town, and the Finger-but of the Neighbourhood. *Enemies* hence take occasion to insult, and *Friends* can but pity. The *Uncharitable* find something to ground a Talk of *Judgments* on, and the *Envious* are tempted into *Hopes* of a future Level in point of Circumstances. It robs the neglected Consort of a friendly Converse, of a good Name, of a composed Temper. Hence Rencounters of Passion come in the place of Caresses and Abhorrence of Endearments. The one considering what the other is going about, always *parts* with Uneasiness; and yet remembering what the other has done, never *meets* with Pleasure. If it be the Man that is thus aggriev'd, he has all the Proverbs of Reproach and Appellatives of Scorn cast at him; that is, the severe World does not think him miserable enough, unless he be

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upbraided too for being so. If the Woman, she passes for an *indiscreet* Wife at the best, that has so *bad* an Husband. Neither Party can be a Sufferer, without being pronounc'd a Fool ; and busy Censure, which makes Faults as well as finds 'em, always charges Vice *Abroad* upon Misconduct at *Home*. And such Reflections easily conjure up the evil Spirit of Melancholy to haunt and torment the *Innocent*.

The very *Tidings* too of a Rival are killing; but the *Consequences* of the bold Invasion, when mus'd upon, give such a gash to the Heart, as is dolorous beyond Expression. No Soul can conceive the Pains of wounded Honour, but that which feels them : They are so acute, so intolerable, that *some* have bemoan'd themselves into the Grave to get far enough from them, and *others* gone madly into a resembling Scandal, merely to revenge them.

It deprives the *guiltless* Babes of their Substance, if not of their Reputation. Hence sometimes a *Bastard* Brood are brought into the Inheritance of a *lawful* Issue ; and sometimes a lawful Issue, into a suspicion of Bastardy. A *jealous* Husband has been known to cashier and abdicate his own Offspring, for the Uncertainty of their Original : And a *perfidious* Husband to starve and undo them, in complement to his vagrant and expensive Lusts. When the In-

closures

clofures of Marriage, which were appointed to preserve an holy Seed, are broke up, the Blood runs in a filthy Chanel, and a new Race starts up into Being, separate in Interest and Affection from the former, for want of the Ties of Consanguinity. But this is not the utmost of *domestick* Inconvenience.

It too often founds Hereditary Diseases, and what is sadder yet, Hereditary Transgressions. A leud Father generally begets an unhealthful Son, and not seldom, an unchast one. There is a Descent of corrupt bodily Humours by the course of Nature; a Descent of corrupt Principles and Practices by Constitution, Education, and Example. The Children then, that are as their own Bowels, have a blessed Portion bequeath'd to them by the Licentious, namely, the short Leavings of their Wantonness, with an Incapacity of enjoying them truly, and with many ways of spending them unprofitably!

Publick Society too, as well as *Private*, suffers by this Vice. Industry, which is the support of the one, is inconsistent with the other; and the disorder of *Families* consequent thereupon, must more or less affect *Kingdoms*. If respect be had to the Judgments of God, a Sin so resembling *Sodom's* and *Gomorrha's* Guilts, is of weight enough, if much practis'd, to sink a Nation, and render

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render it like unto *Gomorrha* in the Effects of Vengeance. So that every time Men are entring upon the important business of Concupiscence, one would imagine, Nature should make a stand, and their Hearts should fail them.

Lastly, what can be a more manifest Prejudice and Mischief to the Persons themselves that commit it.

Hence comes Aversion to Home, and cold Receptions; a constant fear of Detection, and bitter shame upon the Discovery; gripping Remorse and straiten'd Circumstances; dimness of Understanding, and rottenness of Bones; a languishing Life, and a piecemeal Death; infamous Epithets, and a perishing Memory. There is trouble and disquietude in the pursuit of forbidden Pleasures; there is danger and apprehension in the Enjoyment; there is irksomeness and loathing afterwards. The short minute of Fruition, is succeeded by a long Day of Repentance; and what gratifies Sense for an instant, offendeth Conscience for ever.

Hof. 2. 6. In short, *the way of the Adulterer is hedg'd about with Thorns; and it leadeth down to the Chambers of Death.* Of this David is a lively and emphatical Instance. How many unprincely Arts and Stratagems did *the Matter of Bathsheba* cost him in its Contrivance and Conduct? how much sorrow, in respect both of its Guilt and of its Punishments?

nishments? what an heavy chain of Misfortunes did it draw after it? Not to mention that it was the cause of the beloved Infant's 2 Sam. 12. Death, to whom it had given Life; a Daughter 14. is ravish'd, a Son murder'd, and both Chap. 13. the Ravishment and the Murder committed Ver. 14, 29. by his own Children; his Wives are de- Chap. 15. fil'd, and that publickly by *Abfalom*; he 22. himself is forc'd to fly before him, and that Chap. 15. in such an abject manner, as drew Tears Chap. 16. from some of his Subjects, and Affronts v. 5. from others. So great *Evil* was *rais'd* to him *out of his own House*, in recompence of the Evil done *in* it. What a check too did it give to his Prophetick Spirit, and his Intercourses with Heaven? What a dark shade did it cast on his many Vertues? What an odious mark of Distinction hath it left upon 1 Kings 15. his Character? All his other Rainnesses, 5. whether in Speech or Action, all his Oversight and Infirmities have a friendly Mantle thrown over them in *Scripture*: Only this *great Offence* is set up for a Monument of Shame, and for a warning to After-times. Pardon it self could not blot it out of *his* Memory, nor Repentance out of *God's*!

Thus *Adultery* is a most comprehensive Evil, a World of Iniquity. Too much would not be said *against* it, did we summon in all the Amplifications of Rhetorick and Virulency of Satyr: And yet as if the strongest Arguments could be urg'd *for* it,

it

JOSEPH'S Contineny.

it every where prevails and triumphs. That Complaint may now be as just against us, as it was formerly against *Israel*: *How is the faithful City become an Harlot! It was full of Judgment; Righteousness lodged in it, but now Adulterers!* How often is the Hand pull'd back in *Scorn*, that was given lovingly in Marriage, and the Bond cancell'd that was seal'd with such devout Solemnity on the Bridal-day? How are Vertuous, Beautiful, Honourable Ladies, that left their Father's House, and their Mother's Bosom, to be treated as kindly and respectfully in those of others, and to know no Separation but what should be made by the bitterness of Death; on the contrary snubb'd and brow-beaten, cast off and abandon'd, for the sake of base, Dunghil Prostitutes, whose Beauty lies only in their Paint, and Merit in their Filthiness! How are Ceremony and Regard every day transferr'd! How do Figure and Equipage attend on Impudence! To speak more freely still, and not to flatter the state of the World, Who almost, especially among those of *soft Cloathing*, and that *are in King's Palaces*, is true to his Bed and Honour? The Youth of *Quality* is but half a Gentleman, without the modish Vice which renders him quite a Beast; and the *Aged Noble* does no credit to his Years, unless he can boast of his continuance in it! The very thought of being

ing confin'd sets both a ranging; and the lamentable Quarrel that lies to their Wives, is only this, that they are so. Nay, the Men of this Generation do not only practise Lewdness, but justify it upon Principles: They quote upon you the Liberties of their *Forefathers*, and the Allowances of the *Old Testament*. They will tell you, they have *Solomon* for their Precedent, who, tho' the wisest of Men, was yet so addicted unto Women, that the House wherein he kept 'em exceeded the grand *Seraglio*, and that therefore themselves surely may be held excus'd, if they give a little into the same Practice.

But these Reasonings are not more carnal than they are fallacious. 'Tis true, the having several Wives or Concubines obtain'd under the *Mosaick* OEconomy; but then as that Law doth not perhaps expressly *condemn*, so neither doth it expressly *tolerate* it. And if it were tolerated, we can look upon it only as an occasional, political, temporary Indulgence. The *Patriarchs*, it is like, might be permitted for the peopling of an Infant-world, and the *Jews* conniv'd at, *for the hardness of their Hearts*, to prevent a greater Evil by the sufferance of a less. The Divine Wisdom having to do with a rude, and not a reform'd Nation, seem'd to regard, in the scheme of Laws given them, rather what they could bear, than

than what it approv'd of. And such a Condescension to the Infirmities of that People will be less a wonder, if we consider the resembling every Day's Practice of Governours in reference to the *Body Politick*, and of Physicians as to the *Natural*. The *Morals* of the one, and the *Distempers* of the other are reduc'd by Discipline or Prescription respectively, to what they *can* be, when they cannot to what they *should* be. However as to this particular, 'tis certain, from *the beginning it was not so*, and our last Lawgiver declares it shall be so no more for ever. The Matter stood determin'd virtually by the very manner of the Creation. One *Male* was made, and one *Female*, to dwell together according to Knowledge, and therefore it is Sacrilege to receive a Stranger into our Embraces. But the Inference is stronger yet from the Declaration of our Saviour, that *whosoever shall put away his Wife, one Case excepted, and shall marry another, committeth Adultery*; for if a Man that marries a second Wife, upon an unlawful Divorce from his first, sinneth in so doing, much more when there is no Divorce at all; neither could that Sin amount unto Adultery, but upon this Ground, that double Marriages were unlawful. If others then alledge an old Custom for *Polygamy* and *Concubinage*, we can an ancients Law *against* 'em. If others plead a Permission,

and that from *Moses*, we may too a Counter-Precept, and that from *Christ*. Besides, the Permission by *Moses* was an Exemption from Penalty only, not from Guilt, as is probable from *Lev. 18. 18.* as is evident from *Malachi 2.* and consequently is not a Foundation that may be built upon under the Gospel-State: No, the Apology from the Latitudes of *Judaism* must go for nothing, or rather can be construed no better than defending a bad Picture by a bad Original.

Nor let the Wanton please himself with easier Thoughts of simple Fornication; for tho' this is no Violation of conjugal Honour, yet it is of Virgin Chastity. There is no maintaining it, to be sure, without going off from *Revelation*; Christianity will not bear it. *The Body*, says *St. Paul*, is not for Fornication any more than for Adultery; Holy Writ forbids both, and that in the same Place, and under the same Penalties. The Gates of Heaven have this Inscription on them, Here no unclean thing can enter: *Whoremongers*, that is, Fornicators properly so called, and *Adulterers*, we are told, *God will judge*; and Hell will receive as its proper Portion.

See Grot. in
Locum.
Heb. 13.
Rev. 21.

Having considered the *Greatness* of the Sin to which *Joseph* was tempted, let us now proceed to examine the Height of his Vertue in resisting the Temptation.

That

That the Temptation was well-baited, appears at first view. For first, the Tempter was his *Mistress*, and that Superiority made the Request look like a gracious Stoop, an obliging Condescension. She might seem to do him a Favour in asking one of him, and a sense of Gratitude, Ingenuity, and Honour, as some would conceit, invited him to grant it.

Again, *Joseph* was a *Youth*, and that Season rendred him the more capable of unhappy Impressions. Then Sense is forward to take the Chair, and Reason almost too weak to maintain it. Then Heat of Blood, and Corruption of Nature, put in for Bosom Counsellors, and perswade a Preference of sprightly Vice to dull Morality. Then Experience is a Contradiction to our Years, and for want of it, we are apt to play our Appetites with an over-vehemence, and let fly at every Satisfaction that comes within our reach.

Again, the forward Petitioner, 'tis like, had her share of native *Charms* and acquired Gayeties, a fair Outside, and a divertive Tongue. 'Tis not necessary to suppose her as to external Form one of the more studied and perfecter Pieces of Divine Workmanship. Doubtless whatever God and Nature made her, she appear'd to Advantage; she understood all the nice Rules of enamouring, all the winning Allurements of
Dress,

Dress, Gate, and Posture: Doubtless she was not without her false Blushes, affected Softnesses, and artful Languishings. She set her self off like a painted *Jezabel*, and met him in the Attire of an *Harlot*. In a word, she negotiated for Lust, and omitted nothing that might serve to call his Eyes to her and start *Concupiscence*.

Again, it seems, like a wise manager, she struck the critical Minute, and rightly *tim'd* her wanton Solicitations. Solitude and Privacy are the Devil's ground of Advantage, and the proper Seat of Infection: There, there is nothing to disengage the Fancy from the Object, and divert the Application. Whatsoever offers it self, has an undisturbed Notice, and full Attention: For this reason, when *Joseph went into the House to do his business*, that is, Family-Concerns, and there was none of the Men of the House there within, this industrious Agent of Satan set about her Business too, and went to work with her abominable Entreaties. Seeing him alone, she was for keeping him company, and would fain have made a bad use of the silent Hours.

Again his Refusal was so far from daimping or discouraging her Addresses, that it did but animate and redouble them: Well knowing the Inconveniencies of a faint and dasterly Spirit, she therefore would not fall back upon the first check or the second;

but as if deaf to a repulse, *she spake to him day by day*, still went on begging, solliciting, praying. And truly after she had had the Impudence to begin the Assault, it might seem her Prudence to pursue it ; for nothing is so likely to prevail as repeated Instances. Resolution sometimes has yielded to Importunity : And tho' one Onset does but alarm an Enemy into Self-defence, yet a fresh Invasion may bring him to Terms.

Once again, her smooth Persuasions were back'd with another Experiment, that of *violence* and roughness. To get possession of his Heart, *she caught him by his Garment* ; and 'tis highly probable, at the same time rung a peal of Menaces in his Ears, threatening that if he would not be woo'd into (what she call'd) Happiness by courteous behaviour, he should by a contriv'd Accusation be reduc'd to the lowest Ebb of Misery. “ Here, says she, you are but a De-
 “ pendent, and your Subsistence is preca-
 “ rious: You boast indeed of your Autho-
 “ rity and Jurisdiction, that there is none
 “ greater in this House than your self; but
 “ know 'tis in my power (as much as you
 “ overlook it) to render thee as little and
 “ contemptible as I please. Although the
 “ Inspection of Household-matters belongs to
 “ you, yet Arbitrariness and ill Humour
 “ should not : The Servants are at your
 “ beck,

“beck, but you ought to be wholly at the
 “Devotion of your *Mistress*. This is ex-
 “pected from you ; and if you will not
 “answer my Expectations, my Lord shall
 “take from you the Stewardship ; and what
 “will you do, when you must be no lon-
 “ger Steward ? Dig you cannot, and to
 “beg you’ll be aſham’d.

With theſe Forces the Maſculine Crea-
 ture laid cloſe Siege to the Man of God ;
 with theſe Advantages ſhe ſet upon youth-
 ful Innocence ; but all in vain : His ſtiff re-
 ſolute Vertue was an over-match for her ;
 and, like an impregnable Fort, held out brave-
 ly againſt all the Batteries of Inſinuation and
 Addreſs, of Favour and Terror.

Her *Quality* was ſo far from being a re-
 commendation of her Suit, that it did but
 give it a more offensive Air, as being the
 ſtrongeſt motive to Religion, the moſt
 heightning circumſtance of Impiety.

His own *Age* was ſo far from being a
 Snare to his Integrity, that it inclin’d him
 the more to hold it faſt, as being a luſtre
 to the Beauty of Holineſs.

Her *Perſon*, how beauteous or amiable
 ſoever, either perfectly diſgusted him, as
 betraying the Vanity of the Mind ; or if it
 did take with him, it was only as it diſ-
 play’d the Skill of the Contriver.

All her elaborate *Deckings* and methodi-
 cal Embellishments were quite thrown a-

JOSEPH'S *Continency.*

way upon him. She valued her self upon the glaring Splendor; but he despis'd her for it, at least, notwithstanding it.

The Opportunities of *Secresy* and Retirement, as great furtherances as they commonly are to Intrigue and Mischief, had here no influence at all: As earnestly as she watch'd for them, he avoided them. For so says the Text, *that he bearkned not unto her to lie by her, or to be with her.* 'Twas his Resolve not to know what Danger was but in *Idea* only, not to parly with Temptation and encourage its Approaches. He therefore declin'd Interviews as much as possible; and when he could not, he stood on his guard, not trusting himself a moment but in God's and his own keeping. When *David* walk'd alone upon the Terrass of his Palace, he stumbled and fell. His Soul being out of the Protection of honest

^a Sam. II. Cares, *Bathsheba* committed a Rape upon it. Lust had leave to step in, and dally with the Imagination; and when the unclean Object had been dandled a while in Thought, nothing would serve him but he must embrace it in Fact too, and so make himself like one of *the Fools in Israel.*

But *Joseph's* Solitude was employ'd to better Purposes; and tho' *the Wife of Potiphar* found him out, yet not at leisure to attend to her vile Suggestions.

The *Frequency* of the Proposal too signified as little : It was no oftner made than rejected. The lustful Satyr reinforc'd her Enticements by a supply of still more urgent and pressing Applications. But he could not be talk'd out of his Constancy, nor wearied into a Consent.

Lastly, Frowns and *Menaces* work'd no more upon his Fear, than Smiles and Beseechings had done upon his good Nature. When she chang'd her Passion from Love to Aversion, she shifted the Guilt too from herself to the Object of that Aversion. *See, he hath brought in an Hebrew to mock us!* And this was no more than might have been look'd for from a furious Lust disappointed, perhaps no more than was threatened by her before the Disappointment. And what might be expected to follow upon the Execution of such a Threatning but Rage, Jealousy, and Resentment? What might have been expected from the Apprehension of a loving *Master's* Confidence abus'd, but an immediate dismissal from Service, if not Imprisonment withal, which did ensue? And in case such a severe Exercise of Power should follow, where could so mean a Person, in so strange a place, think of going for Redress or Patronage, for a favourable Intercession, or an equal Examination of his Cause?

JOSEPH'S Contineny.

But as many Difficulties and Rubs as were sure to attend a stubborn Incompliance, he pertinaciously maintain'd his Post, and would not surrender upon Summons.

This was the Conduct and Management of serious *Joseph*; and (which serves to render it the more admirable and glorious) he acted thus merely upon Principles of Conscience.

The Hazards indeed of an adulterous Practice could be no Secret to him, no more than the Dangers of the refusal. But still the former were not; and if put in the balance against the latter, could not be so checking a restraint upon him, as Duty. 'Twas Gratitude towards his *Master*, and Piety towards his *God* that would not suffer the least Uncleaness, the working of it so much as in Thought or Imagination.

“ My Obligations to *Potiphar*, says he, are
 “ very considerable. Of a Stranger, he
 “ made me a Friend; of a Slave, an Over-
 “ seer of his Household. All his Concerns
 “ are committed to my manage, all his Pos-
 “ sessions intrusted in my Hands, save the
 “ Wife of his Bosom, which could not be
 “ given out of it. How then can I, ha-
 “ ving receiv'd so much good from him,
 “ do him the least mischief; whereas the
 “ coveting, the meddling with that sacred
 “ Reserve, would be the greatest possible.
 “ He did not surely advance me in his
 “ Family,

“ Family, that I might step into his Bed ;
 “ nor would such a Presumption be the
 “ way to clear Accounts with my Bene-
 “ factor.

“ My Obligations to *the Almighty* are
 “ much greater. 'Twas his over-ruling
 “ Providence that procur'd for me such
 “ exuberant Kindness in a Foreign Land,
 “ chang'd the Condition of Servitude in-
 “ to that of Dignity and Honour. *How*
 “ *then can I do this great Wickedness, and*
 “ *sin against God!* He does not cry, my
 Fate hangs upon the Pleasure of *Potiphar* ;
 and therefore I'm undone, if I am caught
 in your Embraces: But stands off in Reve-
 rence to the Divine Prohibition. Religion
 was at the bottom of the Denial ; and
 all his expostulatory Dialogues came from
 an Heart that was throughly affected with
 it.

I have done with the Particulars pro-
 pos'd to be insisted on. It only remains
 that I make some practical Deductions from
 them.

And first, if *Whoredom* and *Adultery* are
 such damnable Sins, so reproachful in their
 Nature, and so pernicious in their Effects,
 let the Practisers and Advocates of them
 tremble.

Oh! *Adulterers* and *Adulteresses*, sit down,
 I beseech you, and *consider* Consequences,
 how you are purchasing Tears of Bitter-

JOSEPH'S *Continency.*

ness to your loving Consorts, and all the melancholy Fruits of Beggary to your beloved Heirs, and to your selves Loathsomeness, Shame, and Vengeance: What *Occasion you give to the Enemies of the Lord to blaspheme*, and to those about you to transgress.

If you have not the patience to contemplate the Beauties of a vertuous Affection, and the Joys that follow it; yet *consider* the extreme coarseness of your Vices, how unsuitable they are to your boasted Refinements, how much fitter for Goats and Swine, to whom they liken you, how obstructive withal of the Publick Welfare.

Consider too the mighty Terrors of Futurity, that your Provisions for the Flesh do but breed *the Worm that never dies*, do but kindle *the Flames that never shall be quenched*. The Son of Sirach says, *Children begotten of unlawful Beds shall be Witnesses of Wickedness against their Parents in their Trial*; and methinks this should strike a cold Damp on their Concupiscence, and lay it dead at their Feet. For who in his Senses would be willing, *the Fruit of his Body* should be reckon'd to him as *the Sin of his Soul*, before that bright Theatre of Saints and Angels, the Assessors with God in Judgment, and afterwards prove *the Destruction both of Soul and Body in Hell*. Eternal Fire is indeed a chilling Doctrine, but

but it can have no Effect on the Careless and Unthinking; and I am afraid I have to do with such. Alas! *Consideration* is their Aversion and their Dread; that *Candle of the Lord* is carefully put out, that all may be Night about them, when they enter on their Works of Darkness; they prepare themselves for the brutish Scene by the intoxicating Fumes of sprightly Wine, and when it is over they have recourse to the same jolly Remedy to arm against the Uneasiness of Self-reflection. And see the wise Result of their stupifying Methods! Faith and Constancy pass with them now for idle Tales, which the Designing suggest, and the Jealous spread. They say much of the Gallantry of being wicked, and undertake to answer all the Scruples and Coyness of our Consciences.

However, a Time will come, when the Light shall flash full in their guilty Faces that can so little bear it; when they shall wish they had went untainted to their Graves, and bless those few Families whose Blood has run for many Generations in the pure Chanel of un sullied Honour; for There, there is present flourishing, and Peace at the last. Lonely Shades perhaps, melancholly Mortality, to be sure, brings soberer Thoughts along with it, and such devout Breathings as this, O that I had lived

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ved the Life of righteous *Joseph*, O that my latter End were to be like his!

2. The young Man's Carriage in the Text is a standing Reproof to such as complain of Impotence in themselves, and impracticable Heights in God's Commandments. *Human Frailty* is the common Theme for Satyr and Declamation; almost every body is full of this melancholy Subject; some charge their Sloth upon it, others their Licentiousness. Poor innocent *Nature* is strangely cry'd down, and bears the Blame of all our Miscarriages; but God be thanked! there is something still to take her part; Experience that will not be contradicted. The Days of Briskness and Vigour, if any, seem to call for Liberty and Indulgence; and yet, we see, *Joseph* in his warmest Season, did not at all desire or expect them. Temptations to the Sin of Uncleanness press'd hard upon him, but were far from getting the better of him in the Encounter. What the Profligate represent as a Practice, which, because of fleshly Propensities they cannot forego, the pious Soul remonstrates against as a thing *he could not do*, upon the Account of its being so *great a wickedness against God*. Divine Grace bore him up, whilst the Waves arose, and the Winds blew; and the same *holy Spirit* is still ready for Support

port and Succour upon all Occasions. It is the adding therefore of one Sin to another, to make sinning the Result of a complexional Necessity. Corruption indeed hangs about our Nature, but the time we spend in whining out the sorrowful Story, would be better taken up in applying to God for Strength against it.

3. From *Joseph's* Expostulation we learn of what Consequence it is to Virtue, to live under a constant Sense of the divine Presence. *David*, in a time of Persecution, says, *I have set God always before me*; and so *Joseph* did in the critical Moment of Temptation; and from the same Expedient, both received a very great Benefit, suitable to their respective States and Circumstances; the one was comforted, and the other embolden'd; the one was thereby assur'd the Calamities, how cutting soever for the present, work'd for his future Good thro' the divine Influence and Appointment, and the other thereby guarded against the fiery Darts of the *wicked One*: Now their Practice deserves an Imitation, and their Success encourages it. In truth, if we do but *remember* God's Presence, we cannot *forget* our Duty. For *walk before God and be perfect*, is one Aphorism of Holy Scripture, and *stand in awe and sin not*, another.

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4. Neither are human Preservatives to be neglected, such as Wariness, Circumspection and Reserve.

Prudence as well as Piety is legible in *Joseph's* Conduct; considering the ill Effects of a Familiarity with tempting Objects, tho' his Vertue might seem impregnable, he would not trust it in so bad a Neighbourhood. The Presence of the *Wife of Potiphar* was as dreadful to him as her Requests were odious. And upon the same Account there lies a just Exception against the Use of immodest Pictures, Books, Company and Places. These are dangerous Things, and they may prove fatal. We have much ado to keep our Feet upon dry Ground, and why then should we venture our selves where it is so slippery? A considerate Pilot never puts to Sea in suspected Weather, when the Face of Heaven is troubled, and a Storm gathering. Nor will any but a Fool chuse his standing on the Verge of a Precipice, where he must shake if he does not stumble.

5. And lastly, We observe in the Life of *Joseph*, the blessed Returns of a vertuous Education. His Piety, no doubt, grew partly upon the Advantage of *good Nurture*, and partly on the Stock of an excellent Disposition. If he had been destitute of either, the fierce Attack probably would have tript up his Resolution. But of the

two Restraints, the former could have least been spared. Was his Reason naturally strong? That confirm'd it. Was his Will originally well inclin'd? That doubled the Biass on the side of Vertue.

A careful Discipline is of the last Importance. It founds Principles; it begets Habits; it furnishes Arguments for Religion: and where such a Foundation has been laid, the Superstructure must needs be beautiful and glorious. It is a known Story, that when a great Pretender to the Talent of reading Men's Tempers in their Faces pronounc'd of *Socrates*, that he was intemperate and wild, the good Man fav'd the Credit of the Physiognomist, by assuring the Company he was *such* by Nature; only Philosophy had made a *new* one in him. And but for a like painful Application, Flesh and Blood would be very untoward and perverse. It is a rank Soil; and if neglected, the Superfluities of Naughtiness spring up in it.

Not but that Institution it self has been born down by Nature in some, and by Temptations in others. Men, very promising in their tutour'd Minority, that gave wonderful Proof of present Proficiency, and strong Expectations of an after-holy Life, when left to themselves and their own Inclinations, have surprizingly struck out into Inequality of Behaviour *at first*, and Excesses

cesses of Vice *afterwards*. Like some Plants which are observ'd to thrive by the Nutri- ment which the Body of the Seed affordeth them, but when they come to depend on the Strength of the Ground only, wither and die away. But this ought to be no damp to good Instructions, is no Argument against their general Influence. Nay, tho' there is no hope of an Herb, if it be dead, that it will sprout again, yet there is of an abortive Education, that it will revive into a great Degree of Fruitfulness and Excel- lency. Affliction finds a Conscience to work upon in the well-nurtur'd, and sound practical Reasoning, a Judgment. And accordingly, when the Impressions of Disci- pline have not secur'd *Innocence*, they do *Repentance*. *Joseph and his Brethren* were educated together into right Apprehensions of Things, and the Effects thereof were good in both, tho' not equally in point of Degree or Time. *He* held on an even uni- form Course of Vertue, without halting; *They* set out wrong, with Cruelty towards him, and Impositions on their aged Father; but were brought back again upon the kind converting Calls of a severe Providence. He and they met at last at the same Point of Sincerity and Goodness. Hence *care- ful* Parents may receive Encouragement, and the *Disappointed* Consolation. *In the Morning* they must sow the good Seed of

wholsome Advice, and in the Evening withhold not their Hand: For they know not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be a-like good. What if the Harvest cometh not in according to Expectation? It is but suspended. What if an unlucky Blast has limited the lovely Fruit just upon its Maturity? The same Soil may be grateful to a second Cultivation, the same Person be recovered into the Interests of Vertue by renewed Applications. *Let them not be weary in well-doing, for they shall reap if they faint not.*

Joseph's Good Use of the Divine Providences.

GEN. I. 20.

*As for you, ye thought evil against me,
but God meant it unto Good, to
bring to pass, as it is this day, to
save much people alive.*

THese Words, being a Judgment past upon Matter of Fact, naturally direct us to the foregoing, to let us into the occasion of them, where we have presented to our View, the much lamented *Death* of old *Jacob*, and the anxious *Jealousies* of his *Guilty* Family consequent thereupon. Having perform'd their last Offices, according to the Will of the Deceas'd, in the Land of *Canaan*, and paid down the Tribute they ow'd his Memory in Tears, the afflicted *Children* return back into *Egypt*, with the solemn Train of *Egyptian* Mourners.

But now that which was before a Place of Comfort and Refreshment, becomes their
Suspicion

Suspicion and their Dread. The beloved *Israel*, they reflected with Horror, should be seen in it no more for ever, and all their Pretensions to Compassion and Favour were buried with him. The hated *Joseph*, they remembred with Anguish, had receiv'd from them, what, we say, is sometime the *younger Brother's Portion*, Extremity of Hardship, and a Day of bitter Reckoning was at Hand in their distrustful Apprehensions. *Peradventure Joseph will hate us, and certainly will requite us all the Evil that we did unto him.* 'Twas a tender Affection to their Father and his, they supposed, that hitherto skreen'd them from the Demerit of their Actions, and the Effects of his Displeasure; now they expected nothing else but to see the old Quarrel ript up, and long-conceal'd Resentments break forth with the greatest Violence. Now, there being no powerful winning Family-Advocate to appear for them, they concluded, *the Lord of the Country* would make good his humbling *Dream* in the severest Sense, and require such *Obeisance* from their lofty *Sheaves* as came not short of Servitude it self. Gen. 50. 15.

However, being fully sensible of their *past* Offences, and not perfectly despairing of his *future* Clemency, they make the most acknowledging and submissive Addresses to him, as *Offenders* ought to do, and succeed accordingly as *Penitents* should. He, as if satisfied

tified of their present Sincerity, returns 'em a most gracious and condescensive Answer; first assures 'em of his Protection, telling them whom they should *fear*, not himself but the omnipotent *Jehovah*, to whom alone Vengeance belongeth; and then, lest the grating Sense of their Barbarity towards *him* should punish 'em above Measure, he diverts their Minds to a more comfortable Theme, the exceeding Mercy of God towards *them*, in directing even *that* to their Benefit and Advantage. *As for you, ye thought Evil against me, but God meant it unto Good, to bring to pass as it is this Day, to save much People alive.*

In discoursing on which Words, I shall

1st. Endeavour to evince a *Providence* in general. And,

2^{dly}. Illustrate by the particular Case the *Text* remarks upon, that eminent Act of it which consists in bringing *good* out of *evil*, or over-ruling wicked Purposes to excellent Ends.

As for the First, the Existence of a *Providence* in general, it is what the great *Master* of the Heathen World thought fitter to be defended by a Scourge than an Argument against such as were so unreasonable and brutish as to oppose it. And surely no one can deny but that objections deserve as severe a Reply under the Sunshine of Christianity. Nay, I'm persuaded, there would

would be none found to object, were it every one's Interest to believe it. Scepticism begins always at the Affections, and thence passeth to the Head. Those who say with their Mouths, first *said in their Hearts*, *there is no Providence*, that is, wish'd there might not be Any, because they could not sin quietly for't, and then set their Wits to vote on the side of their Wishes.

And in truth, when Men resolve to be *wicked* they take the right way to be *easy*. This in some Measure accommodates the Difference betwixt their clamorous Consciences and their commanding Lusts, and makes for the more peaceable Enjoyment of the Latter. The Disbelief of a Providence, if attainable, must needs render them *secure*, and if it could be well-grounded, *safe*. Could we be ascertain'd *God* regarded not what we did, there could be no Reason why *we* should; present Negligence in *the Judge* promising future Impunity to *the Criminal*. But to suppose the *Almighty* so neglectful of human Affairs is a Charge in the wrong Place. For shall *the God of Israel* be no better than the *Gods of the Gentiles*, that *have Eyes and see not, Ears and hear not*? Can *Elijah's* Sarcastic concerning *Baal* be applicable to the *Master* whom *Elijah* served, that *he is talking, pursuing, in a Journey, or peradventure in a Sleep*, lolling, like a lazy Monarch

narch in his Throne of Glory, when he should attend to the Services of his Votaries? A slumbering *Deity* is a Contradiction. He could as soon cease to *be* as to be idle. *Cheerubins*, that approach nearest to him in Perfection, are represented in Scripture as ministering Spirits, always ready to receive and execute his high Commissions. And when secular *Potentates* are stild God's Vicegerents, yea *Gods* themselves, 'tis not upon the Account of insignificant State or voluptuous Repose, but in Reference to their civil *Ubiquity* or *Omnipresence*, by which, like *Gods*, they supervise the Earth, and with the Heads and Hands of subordinate Officers do infinite things at once for the publick Welfare. What then can be our Notion of *the most High*, but that He is all Spirit, and Life, and Energy, that He holds the Rudder of this floating *Universe*, and, as *absolute Pilot*, steers its Course according to his Pleasure?

'Tis true, the Reverse-Sentiments of *Epicurus* agreed well enough with his Doctrine concerning *the Origin* of the World. For when he had once swallowed the monstrous Absurdity of this beautiful Fabrick's taking its Rise from some lucky Hit of blundering *Chance*, from an happy Jumble or Rendezvous of busy but undesigning *Atoms*, 'twas easy for him to excuse God the supposedly heavy trouble of looking after it,

when

when produc'd; it being presumable, that if a blind *Fortune* could range things into such a delicate Order, she could want no Assistance to uphold them in it. But that an *intelligent* Being should create the Work of *Nature*, but shut it out of His Hand as soon as He created it, and having once set the Wheels of Action a going, take his final Leave, and abandon it for ever to the giddy Sport of Chance and Contingency, is a thing incredible and extravagant beyond Imagination.

What would become of all the *divine* Attributes and Perfections, were it as true as it is incredible? What first of *infinite Wisdom*? For could it be consistent *therewith* to throw aside such a noble *Production*, to call it into Existence, and yet lay out no more thought upon it, than as if it existed not at all; to render it capable of many excellent Ends, and yet propound none by it, as if it had no such Capacity. Every ordinary Agent works always for some Cause, and in Prosecution of some Design; and doubtless the supreme Artist does so too.

What of *infinite Goodness*? For can *that* be backward in imparting *good*, that is, it self? It is the *Wiseman's* Observation, that *He would never have made any thing if He had hated it*; and it may be ours, that He could not love what He has made if He

left it to shift for it self. 'Twas Benignity and Love that inspir'd that sweet Genius into Creatures, whereby the old Ones are dispos'd to cherish the young; and does not the same Benignity constrain Him to cast a gracious Eye on his own Offspring? Can He, to whom we owe our most melting Passions, the Father his tender Heart, and the Mother her yearning Bowels, be so ill a Parent Himself as to forget us; and because unspeakably blessed in Himself, ungenerously wrap Himself up in the Enjoyment of His own Blessedness? What of *infinite Majesty*? For is Omnipotence any thing without Exercise, Sovereignty without Dominion? *Practice* alone sets out *human* Abilities to Advantage, and can a *Disuse* suit the *Divine*? His Power can do whatever His Pleasure can *will*, and is it likely it should be His Pleasure to do just nothing?

What lastly of *infinite Justice*? For does not *that* imply an oversight of Actions, and a Disposer of Events? Does not *that* bear a necessary Relation to Rewards and Punishments? *To behold Iniquity* with Approbation, and *bear the Sword in vain*, is a Solécism which giddy Mortals may be guilty of, but God cannot. *Are not my ways equal, saith the Lord*; but how could this be said of Him and by Him, if He regarded not the Inequality of *ours*.

Thus

Thus the Nature of *God* infers a Providence, so likewise doth the Nature of *Man*. 'Tis well known, we carry a secret *Monitor* in our Bosom, which faithfully whispers to us what we *should* do, and as it were judicially examines what we *have* done. Upon a Temptation to Vice, it give us a *Caution*, upon the Commission of it, a *Rebuke*; upon an Opportunity of Vertue it gives us an *Encouragement*, upon the Exercise of it a *Commendation*.

Now how shall we account for these inward *Apprehensions* concerning the Difference of *Good* and *Evil*? What is it that occasions them? Not *Education*, because they are universal and indelible. The most *Unciviliz'd* entertain, the most *Profligate* can't wholly get rid of them; whereas if they were the mere Impressions of Discipline or Nurture, a maturer Judgment, and a freer Converse, might in time dismiss them. Not *positive Law*, because they extend to Matters never considered, to Actions secret, and so no way cognizable by any. They are therefore nothing else but the Language of Reason, and the Voice of Heaven, plainly intimating that He who is above All, ruleth over All. *Conscience*, as a divine Deputy, excuses or accuses, acquits or condemns. And her *particular* Judgment may go for an Antedate of that which will be *general*.

Again if there ever hath been any such thing as a verified *Prophecy* or a real *Miracle*, there is, there must be an uncontrollable Providence: It being manifestly beyond human Sagacity to define the precise Time, Place, Persons, and other contingent Circumstances answering to the accomplishment of the *one*; beyond human Activity, as much to put natural Causes out of course, for the working of the *other*, as to establish that course at first. And neither of these extraordinary Occurrences can be doubted of, without discarding the Credit of all History.

But we need not trust to the reality of supernatural Events. The harmonious Oeconomy of the Universe is a sufficient Proof in the Case.

The Lilies of the Field that have every Spring a Beauty exceeding *Solomon in all his Glory*, must have one *Greater* than he to help them to it. And the *Fowls of the Air* that sing so cheerfully, even when they know not where to pick up the next Meal, do thereby at once express their Gratitude for the last, and their Dependence on an invisible *Proveditore* for their Food in due Season. But to take a larger View, how do the *great Lamps of Heaven*, notwithstanding their venerable Age, still rejoice as Giants to run their daily Course, and dance about the Firmament; and the *Elements*, in spite of their

their contrary Qualities, all live sweetly together like Brethren in Unity? How do the *Brute Creation*, notwithstanding their Stupidity, still act up to the original Laws of their respective Frames; and *Mankind*, in spite of their Passions, still maintain a comfortable Society with one another? And what are all these Regularities but standing Monuments of a *Divine Superintendency*? Did not the *Lord Jehovah* vouchsafe as a Nursing Father to carry feeble *Nature* in his Bosom, she, poor helpless Thing, would soon droop, hang the Head, and faint quite away under the rude struggles of turbulent Matter. The upper Regions would be again without Light and gloomy, and *the Earth without Form and void.*

'Tis He that continues to all *Individuals* the Succours of Life, and to all *kinds* the prolifick Word, *Increase and multiply.* 'Tis He that *says* with effect to the proud *Waves* that are ambitious of rambling, and to the prouder *Politicians* that are given to change; *Hitherto shall ye go, and no farther.*

In short, there is not a Being that has broke its rank, not a Wheel that has mov'd out of its tract since the Creation. And what but a God of Harmony could keep every thing true to the first *Plan*, amidst such Antipathies and Emulations as are discernible

ble amongst the Creatures? How can we think but that the great *Machine* is daily wound up by its Builder and Maker, *God*? Nay the World of *Fancy* too, as well as *Nature*, begs a support from the Hands of Heaven. For what is unassisted Art but bungling, what human Contrivance unseconded but a Scheme of Vanity? *We* build, but *the Almighty* upholds. Our boasted Works, which we call Palaces, are made of Dust; and let any one tell me if he can, that Supposition aside, why they do not immediately moulder into it?

If this Consideration with the former ones can't satisfy the Followers of *Epicurus*, I hope the Invalidity of their own *Objections* will. They pretend 'tis vastly beneath the Great and *Lofty one that inhabiteth Eternity*, to meddle with *Temporal Concernments*, and take cognizance of every little Passage here below. His transcendent *Dignity* would suffer by such a stoop, his supreme *Happiness* would be allay'd by such a Condescension: and therefore they give him his *Quietus est*, and draw the Curtains about him, that he may not be disturbed. But what a gross Impropriety is this, to draw disparaging Inferences in regard of the Essence of God, which is ineffably perfect, from the Defects and Imperfections of Man? 'Tis by reason of them, that we never operate but we toil too; 'tis because

our Faculties are feeble and our Understandings short, that a little Employment presently untunes the one, and various Objects overpress the other. And will they force that Weariness and Distraction upon the *Deity* which we lament in *our selves*! Could not Infiniteness of Power and Infiniteness of Knowledge exempt him from both, tho' the number of things to be attended to was infinite likewise? *That* implies an irresistible Influence over, *This* a present view of, whatever is possible, And could not two such Attributes in conjunction prove an over-match for the Affairs of a thousand Worlds, so as to fence off Drudgery and Fatigue in the management of them? All things are not foreseen by us before they happen, nor well order'd, when they do: Their Natures are stubborn and make resistance, when we go to alter and act upon them; and consequently our Counsels are oft attended with reproachful *Mistake*, our Designs with afflictive *Disappointment*. But so are not his, to whom nothing is a Secret or a Difficulty.

And as such an universal Inspection can be no bar to his *Ease*, so neither is it any blemish to his *Glory*. The larger the *Sphere* we move in is, 'tis held so much the more creditable; and nothing serves more to recommend the *Divine* Majesty to our Admiration and Reverence, than the full Assurance

rance that his Arm is without measure and his Eye every where.

Besides how can those things be unworthy of his *Care*, that were not of his *Workmanship*? As mean as they may be thought, they are what he made them; and were they much meaner than they are, the doing good to them would be an Act of Grandeur rather than a lessening to it. *Earthly State and Quality* we are sure looks the bigger for Condescensions; and the *Sun* shineth upon Dunghills, without being sullied at all by them.

These pretty *Reasoners* then may take back the *Complement* they make him of a listless *Inactivity*. God's Honour, I doubt not, will be safe enough without it. They own him an *Excellent Being*; and He is not a whit the less so, for being a *Beneficent* one too.

It is farther alledged by them, that the outward State of the *Moral World*, at least, is not beholden to the Conduct of a wise and impartial *Deity*. For if it were, there would surely be a constant and visible Distinction made as to secular Occurrences in favour of Piety and Vertue: Whereas we see to our surprize, the Righteous are often expos'd to Nakedness and Disgrace, to Dangers and Persecutions.

This is the main Engine whereby they endeavour to batter down the great Doctrine

Principle of *Providence*; but yet it stands as firm and immoveable as the *Rock of Ages*. Several Arguments might be brought to break the Force of the doubtful Exception, and ruin the Conceit of a sedentary *Retreat* in the Heavens; as particularly, that God's Sufferance of Disorder is but necessary to exercise the natural Freedom of human Will, to gratify the *Wicked* for their little Services, to cut out Work for a future *Judgment*.

But to give the most satisfactory Account I can, and such as may afford immediate relief to afflicted Vertue, I hasten to my second general Head, *viz.* to illustrate, by the particular Case *the Text* remarks upon, that Divine Act of bringing *Good* out of *Evil*, or over-ruling unrighteous Purposes to blessed Ends.

As 'tis the first Point of *Wisdom* to stave off Evils, so it is the second and more excellent to render them beneficial. Accordingly the Instance of *Joseph* humbled by his *Brethren*, and exalted by mere *Strangers*, does not more reflect upon the former, than it magnifies *Providence*.

When they observ'd how large and di-^{Gen. 37.}
 stinguishing a share he had in their *Father's* ^{3, 4.}
 Affection, and what big Prophetical Accounts he gave of his future Grandeur, the stately *Sirs* were in an heavy Combustion, and laid much to heart the seeming Infringement

fringement of their Right of *Primogeniture*. The comparative Disadvantage by him threatned sat very uneasy on their haughty Minds, and it troubled them infinitely to reflect that he who was *the least* among them should think of becoming *the greatest*. This inward Displeasure increas'd with the occasion. It often had a vent, and they long'd for an opportunity of removing the grounds of it. This they reckon'd upon, that *Jacob's* Love would be shifted, if the beloved Object was but dispos'd of, and that his Dream would pass away like one, if they could but get rid of the vexatious *Dreamer*. The friendly Visit he made them in the *Field of Shechem*, put them upon revengeful Projects; and as he was advancing towards them with an Heart full of Love, Simplicity and Innocence, some were for striking home and mortally; as if the barbarous Massacre formerly there committed by *Simeon and Levi* had sanctified Murder, and made the Place a proper Stage for such bloody Tragedies! And tho' the others as earnestly rejected as they started the terrible Proposal, yet all went a prodigious step towards his Destruction. They left him at first to the hazard of *Death*; and when that Severity was retracted, to a probability of perpetual *Servitude*, which was but little better.

Having

Gen. 37.
18, 20.

v. 21.

v. 24.

v. 28.

Having proceeded thus far in wreaking their Malice, they hugg'd themselves and their own Measures, thought they had acted a *wise* Part, and agreed to act an *Hypocritical* one before their Father. They return confident of Success from the Field of Slaughter; and by feign'd Probabilities V. 31. &c. scruple not to lead the bereaved *Jacob* into a Belief that a *wild Beast* (very different from those he was thus worried by) had *devoured* his fondling *Joseph*.

And what a melancholly Entertainment is all this to a lively Imagination? How like a neglect or oversight in a Deity that had forgot to be gracious unto his Servant! And truly were it not a Prologue to a Subject more agreeable, it would be a Theme altogether unfit for the contemplative Man to be trusted with, as tempting him to think every thing run at random, and every Man in scuffling for himself might do whatever seem'd good in his own Eyes.

But the next thing we hear of this abused *Innocent*, is, his Reception in *the House of Potiphar*, and Advancement over it. And tho' Infelicities take not yet their final leave of him, yet their farther Attendance on him was only to make way for his farther Promotion. Gen. 39. 1.

The Misrepresentation of his lustful *Mis-* V. 20.
stresses drew on him the Displeasure of his indulgent Master, and that, a tedious Con-

Gen. 40.

finement with the worst of Criminals. In that time of Restraint, a Fellow-sufferer receiv'd Comfort from him by a Dream, which he construed expressive of an immediate Enlargement; and what more probable than that, the Event verifying the Interpretation, and so enabling him for a Requital, *Joseph* should immediately partake of the Blessing which he foretold. Yet like a dead Man out of mind he languish'd on in the uncomfortable Durance. The Cup-bearer's Office, it seems, had an Opiate strong enough to lay asleep the good Impression! But the happy Talent of expounding significant Dreams, when wanted, was acknowledg'd.

Gen. 41.
14.

The Service he *alone* could do *that way* brought him at length into the Knowledge of *Pharaoh*, and the Service he did do, by an immediate step, to the Height of Power.

v. 48, &c.

Thus from a Bond-servant he commenc'd Governour of a great *Family*, and from a Prisoner, the Ruler of a mighty *Kingdom*!

Nor was this Investiture of Dominion less beneficial in its Consequences, than creditable in it self. *Canaan* and *Egypt* were sensibly the better for't. A fore *Famine* falling upon both, his excellent Husbandry of former Plenty prov'd a Preservative against the dismal Effects of it. The *People of the Land* ow'd their full Granary to his Manage-

Management, and the *Church of God*, then compriz'd within the narrow Limits of his own Kindred, their Deliverance to his Bounty.

And now could *Fiction* it self invent any thing more surprizing in its Procedure, and yet more *beautiful in its Season*? Does not the intire History set out a well-order'd *Drama*, in which all the cross Accidents and amusing Difficulties clear up at last, and receive a fair Issue? Is not the Close thereof as satisfactory as the introductory Scenes were frightful? Can we look upon the whole otherwise than as the wise Contrivance of an *over-ruling Providence*?

'Tis certainly worth reviewing in every Particular.

To be thrown into a desolate Pit, sold into a grievous Bondage, hurried into a strange Country; and when there, aspers'd with a foul Imputation, and cast into a loathsom Dungeon; these are such an ungrateful variety of Conditions, as *Nature* starts back and recoils at the very thoughts of. Nay *Grace* it self is almost stagger'd, upon contemplating the ground and occasion of them, namely, their being undeserv'd by the Party that went through them. But the Event makes full amends, and reconciles 'em to second Thoughts, even to the Apprehensions of Flesh and Blood.

A State of Subjection at *Home* is ex-
E chang'd

chang'd for a State of Government *Abroad*; the Patronage of an indulgent Father, for the Character of a Father of his Country; and *the party-colour'd Coat*, which was a mark of paternal Endearment, for a *Scarlet Robe*, an Ensign of Royal Favour. His *Rise*, it seems, depended on his *Fall*; and having observ'd the one, we wonder not at the other. So that tho' *Joseph* could not but cast a wishful Look after his native Dwelling, and drop many a bitter Tear under such unexpected Disasters; yet could he have open'd the dark Pages, the secret *Foldings* of the *Divine* Counsel, and seen to the end of that *Book* of Providences in which all his Concerns were *written*, he would doubtless have made the hard Lesson his express choice, he would have pronounc'd it *good for him that he was thus afflicted*, because otherwise he had not been brought to *so great Honour, and comforted on every side*.

Again, to be depriv'd of a Favourite-Child, begotten in old Age, and not yet past the sweet Years of Innocency! to be depriv'd of him too of a sudden, without the Solemnity of a parting Kiss, or the warning of a fatal Sickness! This is a very trying Calamity; and accordingly *Jacob*, upon feeling it, broke out into the most violent strains of Grief and Sorrow. The *suppos'd* Death of his Son made Life a *real* Burden to himself; and nothing would
serve

serve him in the first Transports of his Passion, but he must go down mourning to the Grave after him.

But afterwards when he could say with the Man in the Parable, *This my Son was dead in my Apprehension, but is alive again, was lost and is found*: He had infinite Reason to make merry, and be glad at such unlook'd-for Tidings. Since the Circumstances in which he was found, were far different from those of the returning Prodigal, as different as Dignity is from Shame, Affluence from Nakedness, 'tis no wonder, that *his Spirit reviv'd*, that his Soul did magnify the Lord who had done so great Things for him. Gen. 48.
27.

Farther, to be made to do Homage to one that was formerly trod upon and despis'd, is a most just Judgment, an equitable Reprizal. And this befel the *unnatural Brethren* we are speaking of. They looking upon *Joseph's* magnificent Presages as Romantic Hopes, grounded on their Father's Fondness; as the wanton Issue of a teeming Fancy, the airy Suppositions of an aspiring Temper, were resolv'd to mortify, if it were possible, the *Youngster's* Vanity. The best Remedy they could devise for his growing Ambition, was to remove him far enough off from those discriminating Caresses, and exercise all his suffering Capacities. This severe course they took with him,

and then sported themselves with his Misery and triumph'd in his Disappointment. But how wofully were they out in their adored *Politicks*? In selling him to the *Egyptians*, they purchas'd their own Shame; and whilst they fought his utmost Debasement, they unwittingly lifted him up to what they made so much a Jest of, his *predicted* Superiority over them!

Gen. 42. A strange turn of things throws them into the Hands of him whom they had treated so despitefully with theirs. He receives them in a posture of *Majesty*, and with the Submission of the Knee from them. He personates an angry Man during the Interview, and is as rough in *Appearance* as they had been in *Reality*. He pretends to take them for *Spies* of his *Land*, as they had took him for an *Invader* of their Privileges. He *threatens* what they had *inflicted*, and with a kind of arbitrary Air heaps the heaviest Commands upon them, as if he was their *Sovereign* rather than their *Brother*.

Gen. 42. And behold the goodly Effects of this Lordly Deportment and rigorous Usage so unwillingly practis'd! *Conscience* which is the best Expositor of afflictive Visitations pointed out to them the meritorious Cause; and the smart of their Punishment led 'em to a Conviction of their Guilt. *We are verily guilty*, say they, *of the Blood of our Brother — and therefore is this distress come upon*

upon us. Tho' a long Interval had pass'd between their Cruelties, and the feign'd Severity of *the Man the Governour of the Land*; yet being distress'd by the one, they can lament the other, and remember Mercy in the midst of a Judgment that reveng'd their want of it.

Lastly to promote the *publick* Welfare by a *private* Inconvenience, is a very reasonable Dispensation. And therefore since *the Afflictions of Joseph* tended to the Preservation of Multitudes, the Prospect of them in that Light strips 'em of all their Horror.

The Sufferer *himself*, we see, when he found they render'd him in the Upshot a general Benefactor, could speak very kind things of them; and smil'd upon *the Evil that was thought or intended against him*, when it appear'd that Heaven design'd 'em for Good, so great a Good, as the saving of his *Father's House*.

There are innumerable Instances of the like nature in Holy Scripture and Ecclesiastical Story. But Neither perhaps can help us to a better than our own History, our own Experience.

Christian *Hearts*, like afflicted *Eli's*, have in Times past been oft *trembling for the Ark of God*. They saw Men wounding it thro' the sides of its Votaries, and expected every Moment to see it deliver'd up unto *De-*

gen, by the *worst* of *Philistines*, its *pretended Guardians*; when on a sudden the Fortune of the Day wheel'd about to the Amazement of the wondring World, and the deep *Projectors* were turn'd backward, to make Mirth for *Drolls*. All their long-dated, well-concerted *Schemes* of Mischief and Destruction, at the very point of Accomplishment came short; and that very *Thing* which they conceited would give them a firmer footing still in Wealth and Power, was unto them *an occasion of falling*.

There cannot then be any sense or weight in the common peevish arguing against a Divine Administration. It proceeds from an absolute Unacquaintance with *Scripture*, *imperfect Views* of Things, or a worse *Principle*.

And thus I have, I hope, perform'd the two things I promis'd from the Text, the Proof of a *Providence*, and the Confirmation of one particular kind of it, which consists in over-ruling harsh and severe Accidents to wise and gracious Purposes.

And now for the Use that may be made of this Discourse.

First, since so much may be said in behalf of God's *Government* of the World, let us all stand by and maintain it with Constancy and Resolution.

This is a Point we must expect to hear oppos'd and flurted at in a lewd and profligate

gate Age. As long as *Immorality* prevails, *Error* will so too; and therefore 'tis, I suppose, that *St. Paul* reckons *Heresies* among *Gal. 5. 19* the *Works of the Flesh*. Debauch'd Livers in their own Defence are apt enough to give out, that there is too much of doe and bustle made about Conscience and Religion; and so it is no wonder, if they strive with all their Engines of Wit and Drollery to break up the Ground and Foundation of them. But let no *Epicurean* Cavil, no *Sceptical* Surmise, no giddy Scoff have the Ear of *Christians*, much less get the better of our *Belief*. If some are such Fools as to wrest the *Scepter* out of such good Hands, for the setting up a rigid *Fatality* or a capricious *Fortune*, there is no reason others should run mad for company. *We know whom we have believ'd*; and the occasional *awakening* Notices of the Divine Presence are a Pledge and Earnest that he will be present with his People *always, even to the end of the World*.

Secondly, If 'tis the Property of God to bring *Good* out of *Evil*, here is then abundant Matter of Satisfaction and *Acquiescence* in the *worst* of Times.

To see Uproars and Revolutions abroad in the World, Religion bleeding, Laws insulted, and Government distress'd, is a very mortifying Spectacle; and insupportable too without the *Aids* of Religion. Upon

such a shocking View, our first Thoughts are all over Horror and Distraction, and our first Wish is to be instantly dismiss'd out of Being. But when we look up to Heaven, and contemplate the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of the *Majesty* that dwelleth there, that *He* is at the Helm and governs; that tho' the *Storms are mighty, and the Waves rage horribly*, yet he is *migh-tier*, and *can* lay 'em asleep at pleasure, and in his own good time *will* conduct the whole Tumult and Hurry of Affairs to his own Glory and our Welfare; our Passions are sweetly hush'd, our troubled Minds set at rest, and there follows a Calm within, soft and pleasing beyond Expression.

This composing Consideration doubtless was the *loyal* Sufferers best Cordial in the gloomy *Midnight* of Confusion, when the *Sun was turn'd into blood, and the Stars into darkness*. This made them a kind of *Goshen* to themselves, while *Egypt* was covered with Clouds, and rais'd up glimmerings of Light in Obscurity.

When they saw the hungry *Viper* of Ufurpation *fasten'd to the best* of National *Constitutions*, they were chearful, as hoping to live to see it *shaken off*. When prevailing Treason insulted on Majesty, Liberty and Justice, they were comforted, as *remembering the Afflictions of Joseph, the Patience of the Saints, and the End of the*
 Lord,

Lord, that he is very pitiful, and of great Mercy.

And the same Reflection cannot be renew'd too often with the Occasion. Upon a Delay of Deliverance, the Wise and Good will not throw up their Expectations, nor anticipate it by any indirect Courses. When *Joseph* had the Keys of the Prison in his keeping, 'tis like he might have made use Gen. 39. 21, &c. of them to let himself out of Bondage; but then he had went before Preferment was ready for him. This had been to take the Matter out of God's Hand, in which it would succeed best, and run before him with a fruitless Forwardness. He therefore would not be hasty, or press on Providence. And what came of his submissive Carriage? He was deliver'd with Advantage, and found the Passage easy from Captivity to Glory. The Mercies of God are leisurely, but yet certain; they are suspended to try our Resignation, our Trust, our Constancy, and then granted, to reward them.

3. Are seeming *Difficulties* no Obstructions at all in the way of Providence? How ought we then to rely upon it for every thing, even the most distant and unfeasible, where God has given any Word or Promise? The exalted State *Joseph* was admonish'd of in a nightly Visitation, had no appearing Foundation in the present Course of things; and accordingly his *Dreams* were reckon'd

JOSEPH's good Use

reckon'd no other than idle Images of waking thoughts. *Jacob* chid him for reciting them, and the *Patriarchs* insulted him with a *Behold this Dreamer cometh!* Their superior *Sheaves*, whose Humiliation was prefigur'd, were in their Opinion too stiff to bend to his. *The Sun, Moon and Stars*, whom he was one Day to exceed in Glory, had no other Notices of their Diminution; and therefore the pretended Revelations went with them for *delusory* and suspicious. But this Man of God, knowing them to be *real*, depended on them, tho' wonderful, and therefore publish'd them. His Conscience bore him Witness, he coveted not *Dominion* over his Brethren, much less over the Loins that begat, and the Womb that bore him. But seeing plain Characters of Divinity in the Suggestion concerning it, he could not but conclude Dominion would obtrude it self upon him in God's good time, and in a way at present imperceptible. Amidst all the hard things that bore upon his *Faith*, there was nothing appear'd so incredible to him, as that God should deceive or be deceiv'd. And according to his Faith, things were strangely ranged, surprizingly managed for the making good the Prediction. Such Causes accidentally met, such favourable Occasions were at length offer'd, such Advantages happily drawn out of them, as rather wing'd than
led

led him up to Greatness, and set him almost on a level with the Throne. And when they came in Time and Course of Providence to need the Corn of *Egypt*, over which he now presided, *then his Brethren could bow themselves before him, with their Faces to the Earth.* Gen. 42. 6.

And what does this infer, but an Obligation of absolute Dependence upon Heaven's good Promises. Trust in Man may, nay must, govern it self by Probabilities; but when it has the Almighty for its Object, it should wave all Consideration of visible Likelihoods. The honest Servants of God being well assur'd that such is indeed the Promise, such the Will of their Great Master, stagger not thro' Unbelief at the one, or Disobedience at the other; make no Difference betwixt probable and improbable, difficult and easy.

Is a *Child* decreed unto *old Age*? Natural *Incapacity* is no bar to such a Prospect. God promised, and *Abraham* believ'd. Is *every one* to be *born again*, in a spiritual Sense, that *will enter the heavenly Kingdom*? The *true Israelite* asketh not the Question, *How can this be*? Is it declar'd that all that are in their Graves shall arise out of them unto Judgment? The Objections of carnal Reason weigh nothing with a *Christian*. In such Cases, perfect *Truth*, and perfect *Knowledge*, back'd with *Power* infinite likewise, are

are an Anchor of the Soul both sure and stedfast. The Means and Methods may lie out of sight, but *Hope* receiveth no Damp thence; for that is properly the Conviction of things not seen. The Event may be wrapt up in the darkeſt Fogs of human Uncertainty, but Faith bids Deſiance to the Diſcouragement; for where there is no Encounter there can be no Triumph.

4. Since *Sufferings*, thro' the divine Bleſſing, may prove Advantages in the Iſſue, it behoves us upon that Account to be mild and eaſy towards the Inſtruments and Abettors of our Troubles. For why ſhould I make that a *Quarrel* which was deſign'd for an *Obligation*? 'Tis true, the immediate Inſlicter has hardly ſo kind a Meaning; but what then? Is it not enough that *Providence* hath? *Second Cauſes*, being under the Subordination of the *Fiſt*, cannot move but by its Permiſſion. And why ſhould not this cool our Reſentment of their Effects?

Could any thing be more rigorous and unmerciful than their former Treatment of *helpleſs Innocence*? And yet when *Joſeph* had once *made himſelf known unto his Brethren*, (which he had done much ſooner but for the Reſtraints of Providence, that oblig'd him to conſult its wiſe Ends firſt, and his brotherly Affections afterwards) his Procedure towards them was nothing but a continued Act of Grace and Favour. And which

which is stranger yet, he makes the unintended Consequences of their Cruelty and Unmercifulness the ground of this extraordinary Kindness.

At the time of Discovery, they are forbid to *grieve or be angry with themselves, that they sold him into Egypt, because God did send him thither to preserve a Posterity in the Earth.* And after the Burial of *Jacob*, they are admonish'd not to fear his Anger, or distrust his Friendship, for the same Reason, *viz.* Because tho' they thought Evil against him, yet God meant it unto Good, to save much People alive. Gen. 45. 5.

There were two Accounts to be given of the Fact, in respect of *Them* one, in respect of *Heaven* another; and therefore he takes things by the kindest Handle, views them in a good Light which he might have beheld in a very bad one.

Guilt render'd them very suspicious, so as to imagine that all the brotherly Regard and Tendernefs hitherto shewn was purely owing to a filial Awe and Reverence, and that therefore now an old Grudge, like a Fire for some time smother'd, would vent it self in revengeful Actions. But like a *Brother born for Adversity*, the Reconciliation he pretended, he made good to the utmost, and was so far from harbouring any vindictive Intentions, that in the foregoing Verse he gives the strongest Reason in
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the World why he should not. *And Joseph said unto them, Fear not, for am I in the place of God?* “ He has made me Lord indeed to your Disgust; but has he made me a Judge over you too, for your Destruction? If I do the Work of him that sent me, I shall nurse up and cherish you. Vengeance is no part of my Commission.

And can there be a more affecting Pattern of Deportment under Injuries? Should we not like Him alter their Nature as much as we can, and put a quite different Construction on them from what they properly bear? Ought not the Prospect of great Benefit from them, spiritual at least, to outweigh in our Account, the Impression of a little Smart for the present?

Did he receive those churlish *Nabals lovingly* into his Embraces, shedding Tears of Tenderness over them, that can hardly be read of without a Tear, and *pity 'em as a Father doth his Children*, when he might have shov'd 'em from him, *scornfully*, with a *Stand ye there* at an awful Distance, or *Sit here under my Footstool*? And can we have the Heart to vaunt it over our Brethren, tho' our Adversaries withal, upon an Inversion of the Wheel of Providence, that pulleth down one and setteth up another? Is not a divine Command sufficient to tie up our Hands from rendering *Evil for*

for *Evil*, his Command sufficient to tie up our Wills from desiring to retaliate, who by a blessed kind of Improvement is ready to extract *Good* out of that *Evil*, Happiness out of Misery?

In a Word, let *the Sons of Jacob* be never so froward and malicious, *Joseph's* Conduct is a practicable Lesson; and if we will be wise for our selves, we shall quietly put up the Folly and Indignities of others.

Lastly, I would add a Word of Advice for *elder* Brothers, suggested by this History, that they would not, because a little *taller* forsooth in Fortune, *overlook* the younger Branches with too much Scorn and Indignity. Did the latter take the Courage to address them with an — *Have we not all one Father?* there would be weight in the Expostulation. But that Argument is *too speculative* for Men born to the Privilege of not thinking, and *industriously* bred up to a forgetfulness of *Relation*. I would rather therefore try *Another* from the Topicks of Interest and common Prudence.

They cannot but be acquainted with Revolutions in *Families*, as well as *States*. There have been such in others, and there may be in theirs. And I hope they have Sense *enough* to make this Inference for themselves, that they must not leave any Impressions of Unkindness on those, from

whom they would be loath to experience it in case of a Vicissitude.

Had *Jacob's* Children credited *Joseph's* Dream, they would, no doubt, have entertain'd him with Respect instead of Irony, upon his revealing it, and prepar'd him for future Pities by present Obligations. They little thought *Providence* would ever lay them at the Mercy of his Vertue, and so they made the most of their Eldership and Power to his Sorrow. And let me tell you, ye proud Heirs, you have but little Reason to vaunt with *David*, *I shall never be moved, the Lord of his Goodness has made my Hill so strong.* Ye are not firm to any thing your selves, and how then can ye expect any thing should be so to you? For all your *seemingly* establish'd Grandeur, you may tumble into Littleness; and this Event would be the greatest Instance of Divine Goodness as well to you as others, if ye can make no better use of your Prosperity. It concerns you to *walk humbly with God* and Man on Ground that is so slippery. Otherwise, should ye fall, ye will scarce find a *Joseph* in a Brother to help you up again. Even that generous Heaven's Favourite could deal out some Severities at first to his Oppressors, and make them *stoop* before he *raised* them. But there is no Reckoning upon a like moderate Procedure in a like Case.

The common Measure of Mankind falleth much heavier. However good Usage, certainly, is as cheap as Insolence, and a great deal safer; and the way to be the better for *Relation*, is to be beforehand with others in answering the kind Intendment of it.

F

MOSES

MOSES His Self-Denial.

HEBR. XI. 24.

By Faith Moses, when he was come to Years, refus'd to be call'd the Son of Pharaoh's Daughter.

THE chief Scope and Intendment of this Chapter is to set forth the Nature and the Power of *Faith*; and this it does with such a Sublimity of Style, such a *nobl^e* of Expression, that it is hard to determine which soar highest, and affect most, the *Words* or the *Things* represented by them.

With the Former it begins, describing it to be *the Substance* or well-grounded Expectation of *things hoped for*, *the Evidence* or Conviction of *things not seen*; such as the *framing* of this *World* by the *Word of God*, and the Existence of a better.

With the Latter it goes on, exemplifying it, by a noble Catalogue of *Patriarchs* and other *Old Testament* Worthies, that in the Strength of this Grace achiev'd the most heroick Actions, and underwent the
most

most exalted Sufferings, overcame the World, *subdued Kingdoms and wrought Righteousness*, maugre the greatest Opposition and most discouraging Difficulties.

Here Enterprizes and *Triumphs* of Faith make up the Characters of *Enoch*, of *Noah*, of *Abraham*, of *Isaac*, of *Jacob*, and of *Joseph*. And here too, the great *Teacher* of *Israel* bears as illustrious a Figure as any of his Predecessors.

His Story indeed consists of *Humiliations*, but Those, because voluntary, are glorious. *By Faith Moses, when he was come to Years, refus'd to be call'd the Son of Pharaoh's Daughter, chusing rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God, than to enjoy the Pleasures of Sin for a Season; esteeming the Reproach of Christ greater Riches than the Treasures in Egypt; for he had Respect to the Recompence of Reward.*

In my following Discourse I shall consider three Things:

1st. The Inconsistency of that Character of the *Son of Pharaoh's Daughter*, with his Duty. 2^{dly}, The recommending Circumstances that attended the *Refusal* of it. And lastly, The *Principle* upon which he refused it, *Faith*. From all which Particulars there will be something worth the remarking for the Direction of our Practice.

And 1st, Tho' a Man may commence Great and yet continue Innocent; *Moses* could

could not have retain'd his *Grandeur* without parting with his *Integrity*. For by doing this, he would have shut out *others* of better Pretensions, and near Claims from *sovereign* Dignity, and so done the greatest of Wrongs to his Neighbour. By doing this he would have excommunicated *himself* from the visible *Church*, and so forfeited his Interest in the Covenant which his Ancestors made with God. Upon this Account he must have walk'd in a Vizard, and lived in a Disguise. To conceal his Extraction, a Course of Artifice and Dissimulation must have been taken up. To fence off Jealousy, many *Extempore*-Shifts and Evasions used. And how could he be a *true Israelite in whom there was no Guile*, and yet pretend to be *none* at all? Upon this Account he must have took part with the *Egyptians* in the ill Treatment of his *Brethren*, or connived at it. To secure himself in their Esteem and Favour, their Inclinations and Aversions must have been studied, and their Measures taken. Now Persecution of the *Hebrews* was their Practice, and the Interest of Popularity and Reason of State would have made it *his*. At least, when they were for laying heavy Burthens upon their Shoulders, such as themselves would not touch with one of their Fingers, he must not have interpos'd with a softning Sentence, nor offer'd to take them off again.

And

And what had been more barbarous and unnatural, than thus to overlook his own Flesh? What more brutish and inhuman than not to redress the Grievances of the Miserable?

In short, the passing for the *Son of Pharaoh's Daughter* had been a complicated Evil, nothing but Imposition and Cheat, Mischief and Inconvenience. *Moses* therefore, resolving that his Heart should not reproach him so long as he lived, nor his God abandon him at the Hour of Death, chearfully refus'd the *dignifying* Character. And that we may enter a little into the Merits of that *Refusal*, let us examine *2dly*, the Circumstances of it.

First there was the most encouraging Prospect of a Succession to the Crown of *Egypt*, at least, of the greatest Preferments in it. Had his Interest been declining at Court, and the Spring-tide of Royal Favour followed with as low an Ebb; had he had any gloomy Apprehensions of an approaching Storm, it had been but Prudence to make to Port, to withdraw into Obscurity for a Shelter. For a *voluntary* Stoop is better than a *forced* one, and 'tis a much easier Descent to step than be thrown down the Hill. But as we read not of the least Repulse, Disappointment, or Neglect, so neither that he dreaded Any. As some write, He was actually design'd for

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the Throne upon the next Vacancy. And we know, such things providentially fell out as promis'd an Advancement to it. Tho' he came not into the World by the beautiful Gate of a *princely* Parentage, yet a lucky hit of Fortune supply'd that Defect with an *equivalent* Advantage. *The King's Daughter* having never been blest'd with Children, according to *Philo*, tho' long married, adopted him for her *Son*, to make Amends for Nature's Unkindness; and truly acted a Mother's Part towards him. To take away her *Reproach* among Men, in Respect of Barenness, he was honoured greatly, and all the Marks and Ensigns of Quality were allotted him. His *Name* was distinguishing, and his *Education* Royal. The ablest *Tutors* and *Governors* paid Attendance as if he was to be *Lord of All*; and such Studies were pitch'd upon, as might enable him to perform all the *Devoirs* of a Prince, and sway the Scepter with *Understanding*. The whole Circle of genteel Accomplishments was to be gone through, and infinite Care taken that he might be *learned in all the Wisdom of the Egyptians*, and mighty in *Words and in Deeds*.

All this gave him an Air of *Majesty*, and the People an Expectation of great things from him. The under-world beheld him with Awe and Reverence, and *Pharaoh* took

took him into Intimacy and Endearment. And growing up in such Pomp and Ceremony, what could he look for but Rule and Empire? And yet when he was grown to Years, he quitted the high Station. His firm footing could not prevail with him to keep it, while his *Conscience* told him he should not.

Again, the Importance of worldly Greatness could be no Secret to *Moses*. Had he been bred as he was born in an homely Cottage, he could not easily have avoided the narrow Notions that spring up there, and might be suppos'd to despise Dignities and Honours, for want of knowing the relish of them. For total *Ignorance* is no less apt to *breed Contempt*, than an overgrown *Familiarity*. But the *Court* it self was the Air he breath'd in from his Infancy; and 'tis a wonder the Impressions he received were not answerable to its Temper. For many Years he was an Eye-witness of a world of Deference and Respect, of Homage and Obeifance. He saw the State and Magnificence of *Pharaoh*, how he was *admir'd* by some, and *fear'd* by others; how he could *crush* his Enemies, and *oblige* his Friends; how *Nature* pour'd in its Rarities upon him, and *Art* refin'd 'em for his Service; how his Palate was regal'd, and his Will accomplish'd to a tittle; and could foresee too that himself might *hereafter* be

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the Subject of what he was *now* only a Spectator, and have as many Eyes, Ears, and Feet at his Devotion. Nevertheless he abdicated himself, and would not stand upon rising Ground. The Sweets of *Dominion* did not affect his Fancy, whilst he consider'd they would prove but *the Pleasures of Sin.*

Again the *Time* of this Self-denial was not an Age of *Stupidity* and Indifference. Had his Soul been retiring from a crazy Mansion, and so become uninterested in carnal Satisfactions, it would not seem so very strange that he bid adieu to the great *Scene* of Solace and Diversion. But tho' 'tis probable from the 7th of the *Acts* he had somewhat outrun *Youth*, yet 'tis certain he was not then got beyond the middle Period of human Life. When God had by imperceptible Suggestion put him upon relinquishing the Court in order to *visit his Brethren the Children of Israel*, we hear no such Complaint as *Barzillai* made to *David* to excuse his farther Attendance on it. *Can I taste what I eat or drink, or can I hear any more the Voice of Singers?* The *Grinders* did not *cease*, nor *desire fail*. On the contrary, the vital Flame was in full Perfection, and his sensitive Faculties in the utmost Vigour: And no doubt *Flesh and Blood* press'd hard for a longer stay amidst Affluence and Plenty. Notwithstanding,
he

he obeyed the *higher* Call, and to the fore Rebuke of Appetite, followed his Maker not knowing whither he went. *Nature* could not stop him, when *Grace* founded a Retreat from Earthly *Vanities*.

Again, his Desertion of Court-Dignities and Splendors had no Eye to the Ends of *Ease* and *Self-enjoyment*.

Princes and *Grandees* as much as they are gaz'd at for their Pageantry and Show, are really to be pitied for their Hardships and Infelicities. The most opposite Satisfactions are as distant from them as from themselves, and (which is wonderful) 'tis *Height* of Condition that places Happiness *out* of reach. They can be neither familiar nor retired. *State* will not suffer the one, nor *Business* admit of the other. One while a *Visit* is offered, another an *Audience* is expected. And as this brings with it *Impertinence*, so that *Thoughtfulness*, and both a deal of *Formality* and *Punctilio*. In the disengag'd Intervals Attendants, as so many Spies of their Actions, hang about them ; and when they have no *Cringers* by their sides, they have yet *Clogs* at their Heels. In short, they can neither sit down without Care, nor walk abroad without Ceremony ; and no Slave is less Master of his Time, or more confin'd in his Desires. Upon which account some have parted with their Grandeur as cheerfully as the tired Labourer,

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Labourer doth with his Burden, and fled to a *Village* as to a Seat of Rest. *Dioclesian*, for Instance, exchange'd an *Imperial Crown* for a *private Life*; and *Tiberius*, tho' he had no mind to quit his hold in Power, withdrew from the Croud to *Caprea* for Air and Breathing. We read too of *Heraclitus*, that when the *Ephesians* pressed him to accept the Government of their City, he convey'd himself away from their Importunities to *play* with Children; intimating thereby, that any Engagement, tho' it look'd never so little, was a good Excuse for turning his back upon splendid Troubles.

Laert. de
vitâ Philos.
l. 8.

And had *Moses* receded from his elevated Station with the same selfish View, that is, in order to get clear of Noise and Bustle, we might have applauded his *Wisdom*, but could say nothing of his *Vertue*. But so far was he from proposing Ease and Content by the remove, that he knew all his *suffering* Capacities would now be filled up. The Change took not in the Blessings of *Privacy* and Retirement, much less of *Freedom* and Security. An ambulatory Life came in the room of *Pleasure*, and *Reproach* of Honour. And all this, the *Text* says, was his *Choice*, because it was first his *Duty*.

Once again, his quitting of Court-Interest and honourable Reversions was not the Effect of *Timerousness* or Diffidence. There
have

have been Instances of Persons that had Hearts as well as Heads too *weak* for Rule and Dominion, and which would have rather chose to wield a Flail than a Scepter. Thus when the *People of Israel* were assembled for a fight of the *King* whom the Lord chose for them, *Saul* the Person nominated I Sam. 10. *bid himself* from the Preferment. If Merit ^{22.} had went by Stature, being *higher* in that respect already *than any of the People*, he Chap. 9. 2. had naturally the best Pretensions to the Crown; but he either did, or had a mind to seem distrustful of himself and his Qualifications for it, and that the Purple Robe would never fit one that was a *Benjamite*; whose *Tribe* was *the smallest* v. 21. *of the Tribes of Israel*, and his *Family* the *least of all the Families of the Tribe of Benjamin*.

And *Otho* when elected Emperor by the Echard's Rom. Hist. Vol. 2. p. 163, &c. *Spanish Legions*, instead of resolving not to *bear the Sword in vain*, dispatch'd himself with it, out of a sence, 'tis like, of his Inability to bear it. Tendernefs of Blood was his *pretended* Reason for doing so; but a fruitless shedding it in his Service against a prosperous Competitor was the *true* one. He sunk under the Toils of Empire, and so Death was call'd to his Relief, to help him off with a Burden, by the Impression whereof Life it self was made *one*.

But

But did any such cowardly Apprehensions start up in the mind of *Moses*? No, his *Courage* was equal to his *Meekness*; and as he was far from over-rating his *Sufficiency*, so likewise from taking too scanty a measure of it. Indeed upon God's investing him with the high Commission of delivering his People, he said, *Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and bring forth the Children of Israel out of Egypt!* But it is not written, that at the instant of renouncing that Royal Relation, he said, who am I that I should go for the Son of *Pharaoh's* Daughter, and so stand entitled to the greatest Kingdom in the World! When that expostulating Speech dropp'd from him, he was at the Age of *Eighty*, that is, of Declension, and so might be apt at first glance to judge himself not vigorous enough for business and fatiguing. Besides he remembered his Brethren had rejected him formerly when a *Courtier*, or just upon his Retreat from a full Tide of Prosperity and Power; and he did not know but they would renew the scornful Question, *Who made thee a Judge and a Ruler over us?* Now that he had been for some time a *Shepherd*, in a state of *Littleness* and *Insignificancy*.

But there were no such Bars and Obstructions in the former Case. His Blood was then warm and his Pulse high, both in a condition to admit of Industry and Application;

Exod. 3.
11.

Acts 7. 23.
30.

cation; and his Experience of Trouble not so great, but that he might look the Difficulties of Empire in the Face. Indeed a forwardness to encounter them might have been expected from him, considering the Advantages of his Education, and how he was train'd up in the Arts of Government. And yet he turn'd away from the richest Expectations, and would not be mounted aloft in Glory. The Necessity of renouncing either *God* or *Mammon*, his Religion, or his Preferments, arrested his Thoughts, and thereupon he could not be easy, till he had delivered up his Interest in the latter, in Fidelity and Honour to the former.

3. The Self-denying Conduct then was owing to nothing else but the Energy of *Faith*, as the Text witnesseth. And nothing doubtless could more speak or proclaim its Energy. For it is not every body that can be persuaded to act the *Philosopher*, or that will set up for a *Mendicant*, when secular Enjoyments are ready to thrust themselves upon him. No, most of us, I believe, are in a posture of readiness to meet 'em half way, or rather to go in quest of them, and that thro' Briars and Thorns, thro' all sorts of Difficulties and Hardships, so there be but the least glimpse of Hope and Encouragement. Those *Few* that have been observ'd to draw back upon the Approaches

proaches of worldly Grandeur had not been so much taken notice of, had they not been very few indeed. Tho' *Charles the Fifth of Spain* step'd out of a Throne into a Cloyster, yet it was the *hard Chapter* of Disappointment that made that go down with him. And as for *Sigebert*, King of the *East-Angles*, that did the same, his withdrawing was upon Reasons of Religion, to give himself more leisure for *Contemplation* and pious Exercises. The human Passions, without Art and Force us'd upon them, do own a quick taste for the World, with which they have been so long acquainted, and sometimes under the best Management. An Appetite of Superiority discovers it self even before there is ground for distinction. It may be descried budding forth in the Cradle, and it seems to bear proportion with strength and stature. The little Angers of *Children* among themselves, what are they but Competitions as it were about Prerogative and Honour? And what are all the busy Ploddings and Applications of *Men*, but a constant Scramble for Interest and Figure? *Disciples* themselves will be asking the proud Question, *who should be the greatest* amongst them, have the principal Place next to the Canopy of State; and nothing less would serve the *Sons of Zebedee*, than to sit the one on the Right hand and the other on the Left in the *Messiah's*

siab's Kingdom. Nay the aspiring Conceit was so deeply rivetted, that the most humbling Discourses of a lowly Master were not able to dispossess it. They were so drunk and light-headed with the feverish Imagination of being *Agrippa's* and *Mæcenase's*, that 'twas out of the Power of Contradiction and Argument to bring them to their Senses.

It is surprizing therefore that *Moses* should on the contrary forego the charming Prospects that were set before him of Dignity and Pre-eminence, whenas the rest of Mankind cannot bear to be without them. Was he not a Man of like *Passions* with us? Yes certainly; but of greater *Faith* withal, which serv'd to keep them under Awe and Discipline. *By Faith he refus'd to be call'd the Son of Pharaok's Daughter.* The Name, as being above every Name among *Egyptian* Subjects, could not, absolutely taken, sound harsh or grating in his Ears. But Faith by minding him of another, *written in Heaven*, begot in him an Indifference to that, and the glaring Things imported by it.

The mighty Disadvantages which the Objects of Faith lay under, were without Impression. A light present Interest often carries it in human Choice against a very weighty Reversion, which being to come seems doubtful whether it will come or no. It more powerfully commands our Notice,
and

and more warmly strikes our Affections. Just as the Heat of a neighbouring Lamp out-does that of the distant Sun.

Now *Moses* stood actually possess'd of this World's Glitter, and but one Remove from its Top-felicity. The *Accommodations* of a Royal Palace were perfectly at his Service, and the Palace itself expected his Advancement over it. *But none of these things mov'd him*, or stagger'd his Integrity. It was requisite he should take his Farewel of them, and the most distant Retribution (upon his reflecting that what was distant would be present when the Work was done that challeng'd it) reconcil'd him to a Parting.

Farther, nothing is so influential and affecting as an Application to *Sence*. Hence it was that *when the Woman saw the Tree was good for Food, and pleasant to the Eye, she took thereof and did eat, altho' she knew that God had said, in the Day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*

The specious Fruit being befriended by the kind Reports of *Sence*, soon call'd out the Affections after it, and the Hand to reach it. The Prohibition was express, and the Penalty terrible; but yet the Impression prov'd too hard for both.

And hence it was, that when the Devil had a Design on the Son of God, *he took him up into an high Mountain, to shew*

shew him all the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory of them. The other Efforts which he made upon our Saviour's Constancy were not at all depended on by him; but this *visionary* Landskip of soveraign Crowns and Dominions was a Reserve in which he placed his last, his strongest Confidence. Having set them in so good a Light, he made a Tender of them, and scrupled not to clog the Gift with the most frightful Condition of *falling down and worshipping him.* As if he thought the Temptation so baited was irresistible, and Homage would follow of Course.

Now *Moses* had all the Enjoyments within view that attack'd his Vertue. He convers'd with, he felt, he tasted them. And yet the cœlestial Glory which stood behind the Veil, and so wanted a sensible Lustre and Endearment, found a Preference with him. The Circumstances of Remoteness and Obscurity render'd his Faith more valuable and glorious, not less operative and practical.

He and the other *Fathers* of the Old Testament had an insight into Futurity, but it was *thro' a Glass* exceeding *darkly.* The other World was wrap'd up in a Cloud before the Appearance of the Gospel-Sunshine. The natural Notions indeed of an impartial Justice represented God as a kind *Rewarder of those that diligently sought him,*

and the short Glimmerings of divine Revelation improv'd probable Reasonings about eternal Happiness into a certain Expectation of it. But the Manner and Nature thereof were still *a Mystery*; nay, *it doth not yet appear what we shall be*, when we cease to be what we are at present. But as he troubled not himself with such nice Enquiries, so being well assur'd that there was such a thing as a *Reward for the Righteous* in Another Life, he cast aside the Satisfactions of This, in Obedience to Him who is the Author of Both.

Nor was this the whole of the shifted Scene. The Dereliction of the Court of *Egypt* was follow'd with an uncomfortable Durance in the Desert of *Midian*, and the throwing up his present Enjoyments, together with his future Hopes, drew on him heavy Lashes from the Scourge of Tongues. He became outwardly as miserable as the World could make him; and what is the Perfection of Sorrow, no body pityed him in his Misery which himself had chosen. His old Fellow-Courtiers made themselves merry, we may be sure, with the seemingly wild Adventure; and the wondering Vulgar were for taking Advantage of his wilful Fall, to trample him under Foot.

But *none even of these things moved him*, or made his Patience give way. Faith set his
his

his Notions right, and enabled him to find *Riches* in *Affliction*, and *Treasure* in the *Reproach of Christ*. He was carrying on a different Interest from that of others, and so was not at all troubled to find that they entertain'd different Sentiments from him. He apply'd his Ambition to its proper Use, from which those had wrested that enterprizing Passion, that is, to the pursuit of Heaven and Immortality, and so was prepar'd for their Railleries and Censures. The World said of him and to him, Thou Fool, as *accounting his Life Madness*, but like a wise Man he regarded them not, as knowing that *his End* would not *be without Honour*.

His Unconcernedness was great, because his Resolution was *deliberate*. It is plain from the *Context*, He compar'd things together as to their Worth and Value, and then came to a Conclusion. He considered *the Pleasures of Sin* were but for a *Season*, and the Fruits of Religion for Eternity; and from the Difference of Duration arose a Difference of Regard. One *Verse* therefore makes that an Act of *Esteem* Heb. II. 26 which another mentions as an Act of *Choice*; — 25. intimating thereby that where the Will was engaged, the Understanding led. Having satisfied himself as to the Reasonableness of his Course, he pursued it towards *the better Country*, with a *Pilgrim's Earnestness*, and with a *Pilgrim's Negligence*.

too overlook'd the Derisions of those he pass'd by. The Smoothness of a flourishing Condition could not flatter him out of more substantial Joys, nor the wearisom Stages of temporal Infelicity bring him back in Wish to the glorious Trifles he left behind.

And now having done with the Particulars of the History, let us enquire what practical Improvement may be made of them.

And *first*, If an Acquiescence under the Character of the Son of *Pharaob's* Daughter had carried a Repugnancy to Religion, it follows that Posts of *Figure* and Advantage are the *Trials*, as well as the Gifts of Providence.

No indirect Measures, but a strange Emergency made *Moses* Honourable. The great Princess upon an unaccountable liking took him as it were into her Veins, and render'd him by *Adoption* what he was not by *Nature*, Heir apparent of an Imperial Diadem. But as innocently as he came by that Title, he could not innocently have held it. His *real* Relation to the Church of *Israel* oblig'd him to drop his *supposed* one to the Crown of *Egypt*; and he had not been the Son of *God* had he continued the Grandson of *Pharaob*.

Now tho' his Case was particular, and out of the way, yet still 'tis an Instance of
what

what is commonly asserted concerning the Ends and Drift of a flowing Fortune. The Almighty sends it as well as Calamities upon the Errand of founding and putting our Fidelity to the Proof. And truly there cannot be a more violent *Tempter* than a State of Affluence. Even *Moses*, who so bravely weathered it out himself, was in Pain for the *Israelites* that were to grapple with it in *the Land of Promise*, and therefore heap'd pathetic Exhortations, and solemn Cautions upon them, as so many Shelters and Preservatives. And accordingly wary *Agur* would not be trusted with Riches, *lest being full he should deny the Giver, and say who is the Lord?*

Deut. 6. and
8. chap.

We had need learn *how to abound*, as well as *how to be abased*; and have never more Reason to dread a *Forgetfulness* of God, than when there is the most Reason for *remembering* him.

But *2dly*, As dangerous a Snare as Prosperity appears to be, the Success of the generous *Hero* before us undeniably demonstrates that it is not *invincible*. For is it possible it should ever take any one at greater Advantage than it did him? Notwithstanding he was of Strength sufficient for the Conflict. A mighty Torrent of it came rolling towards him, and set his Head in a soaring Posture. Yet a little while and he had touch'd the Stars, and shone with the

highest Splendours of Wealth and Grandeur, if he had but brought himself off from the Sway of Conscience. On the other side, a punctual Observance of the Divine Pleasure promis'd nothing in Hand, but the smarting Circumstances of Poverty and Diffettlement, of Reproach and Infamy. Besides, he was of a suitable Age for the soft Indulgences of Desire, for the inviting Chase of carnal Pleasures. But yet, we see, he could tread firmly in spite of stumbling Blocks, nor were his Feet nigh slipping, even when he was commanded to descend the illustrious Precipice of Honour into a Vale of Tears. And the very same Courage and Steadiness we may have to boast of, if we please. It is our Love of Sin that represents Vertue as impracticable. It is our want of *Will* to resist Temptations that suggests a want of *Power* to overcome them.

3. The *Season* of this Abdication bespeaks the intrinsic Vanity, the comparative Littleness of *secular* Felicities. If a Child throws away a Jewel, he is said to do as a Child, and Men infer from his Indifference, not that the Price thereof is inconsiderable, but only that he has not Sense enough to understand it. But if *Multitude of Days* passeth Verdicts upon things, Attention is given to them as to the Words of *Wisdom*. And where a maturer Judgment charges

charges a Flaw, it is presumed to have really found one. The Conduct of *Moses* then, in Reference to Temporals, may be a proper Standard whereby to measure the Worth and Value of them. For 'twas when he came to *Years*, that he *refus'd to be call'd* what the World accounts Great and Happy. He had bestow'd many Days at Court, but those were Days of Nonage and *Inconsideration*. Now his Mind is more Discerning and Dispassionate. The more violent Heats of Youth are over, and sedate Thinking cometh in their room, and he makes a practical Use of it. He reviews the Notions taken upon Trust before, and corrects the Errors of Education. And had not this been one of those Errors, that the *greatest Good lay in Wealth and Honour*, he would not now have *esteem'd the Reproach of Christ*, that is, on the Score of Faith in the promised Seed, *greater Riches than the Treasures of Egypt*. Riches, no doubt, are empty Nothings at the bottom, and if Men do not think them so, this must be put to the Account of Levity and Ignorance. And the Reproach we suffer for despising them, is an inestimable Treasure in the Balance of the Sanctuary. Whatever Comforts the *former* may be at present, they will be none to us hereafter, when we shall have the greatest need of Comfort, *at the Hour of Death and the Day of Judgment*. The ex-

Whitby's
Annot. in
Locum.

piring Miser leaves them all behind in this World ; and it would be well for him, if he could the Remembrance too of the guilty Ways of getting them. But the latter accompanies us into the other, and will be our Badge of Honour, when we stand before the Throne of God.

4. His noble Ends in the Abrenunciation of Earthly Glories recommend Publick-spiritedness and general Benevolence. Such a Narrowness of Soul prevails in the World, that *many* cannot spare one friendly Action, hardly a kind Wish, from themselves. The Views they go upon in consulting and enterprizing *Abroad* always point *Homewards* ; and whenever there happens an interfering betwixt the Advantage of Society and their own, the latter taketh place without scruple.

But what have they to say for their scanty Principles, and appropriating Endeavours? God being himself most sollicitous for the publick Good, no doubt expects that we should be so too. At least his best Servants have always interpreted his Nature and his Word to this sence. The Heart of *Moses* sure, to wave other Instances, was far from being peevishly selfish, or pent up in it self, when *it came into it to visit his Brethren*, and take part in their Afflictions ! His Grandeur in the *Court of Pharaoh*, humanly

manly speaking, was sufficiently guarded, and no Materials could be wanting There towards personal Satisfaction. And were not these very engaging Circumstances? Not so engaging as to hinder him from setting out upon Charity! His Country-men were pinch'd with straits, whilst he abounded; and the Sence of that, and of the Deliverance afterwards to be wrought out by him, struck his Soul too forcibly to leave any relish for soft Delights and *solitary* Fruitions. He therefore went about doing good, like *Christ* the Antitype; and when the Fulness of Time was come, hazarded himself to serve and to save them from their Enemies. And now can our separate Interests and grasping Fancies stand before an Example of so great Generosity? Does it not bespeak a like generous Expansion or Enlargement of our Spirits towards Fellow-Christians? *Great* Men indeed may be so still, notwithstanding this Incitement to Compassions; but they cannot be excus'd from a Concern for their Country's Welfare. They may keep their honourable Posts with his good leave that quitted his; but they are expected to make a kind use of them to the maintenance of Truth, and the relief of Indigence. I may add too that whenever it seemeth good to their Prince to remove them from him, they should quietly retire, and reckon the Advantage he means
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the Publick by their private Loss, a sufficient Compensation for it. This is to come up to the Zeal of *Moses*; as far as difference of Circumstances will admit; This is to act like Men that do not think the World was made only for them to take their Pastime therein.

5. The Efficacy of *Moses* his *Faith*, should be a strong Inducement with us to deliver our selves up to the Influence and Conduct of that *Principle*.

The World, of which he had so plentiful a share, in regard of Sense had a gay and winning Aspect. But Faith setting *Impartiality* to draw its Picture, the Paint and Varnish presently disappeared, and the Courtier grew cold and neglectful of it, upon a sight of its false Colours and underneath Deformities. Faith presenting him with nobler Objects, he was all on fire to get at them, neither did he grudge to pass thro' the most rugged Paths of Obedience that tended to the Fruition of them. His Parade was flung off, and his Magnificence abandon'd, in complement to the adored Felicities of Paradise.

In short, there was no difficulty in turning Sin by, notwithstanding the common Boast of Pleasure in the Commission, whilst he recollected that much greater was prepar'd for him if he did not commit it, more solid and more lasting. And who then
would

would not learn to *walk by Faith* during the Pilgrimage of Mortality? Being Strangers and Foreigners *upon Earth* we infinitely need a *Guide*; and where can we find a better than that which *led Patriarchs, Prophets and Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors and Saints* in the *way Everlasting*. *All Things are possible to him that believeth*; our Forefathers have shewn by their incredible Achievements. And it is worth our while surely to try the promising Experiment. All things valuable may be quitted with Chearfulness, even the *Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory of them*: All things bitter may be submitted to with Patience, the severest *Afflictions* of *God's People*, and the *Reproach of Christ*, by such as *believe verily to see the Goodness of the Lord in the Land of the Living*. Such a Belief doth Wonders in Religion, when reduc'd out of Habit into the actual Contemplation of the Joys above. We must see that it abide upon our Minds, and then we need not doubt but it will regulate our Practice.

6. Was it an Hope full of Immortality that wrought in *Moses* the Self-denying Choice, how grossly mistaken then are those who would exclude *This* from being a *Motive* of Obedience?

It is usual with some *Entkusiasts* to fix upon it the name of *Mercenary*. God and Goodness, say they, are Objects amiable enough

enough of themselves to draw and engage our Hearts; and he that makes Heaven his *Reason* for embracing them, shall never be admitted a Partaker of it. But where has this Conceit any Countenance from Scripture? Doctrine and Example lye against it. Celestial Glories are propounded every where as *Encouragements*, and must we then turn our backs upon them, when they becken to us, as if *beneath* our notice. The *strictest* of Saints scrupled not to give more than a glance at them as they pass'd along the heavy Road of Life, and were greatly refresh'd by them. And can a weaker Piety spare the Support that they would give it?

It is said indeed a lower Dispensation was in being, when *Moses had respect unto the Recompence of Reward*; and that *the Adoption of Sons* calleth for a more *filial*, disinterested Affection. But if so, how came the *only begotten of the Father*, full of Grace and Love, to *endure the Cross, and despise the Shame for the Joy that was set before him*? Sure the Author of the *Second Covenant* served God *purely* enough, if the Mediator of *the First* did not; and yet, it seems, the Consideration of God's *Promises* went along with the performance of God's *Commands*. The *Mystical Divinity* then is one thing, and *Christianity* another. The loving God for his own Sake and Excellen-

cy,

cy, considered separately from the Love of his Rewards, if there be any such Attainment in Religion, is no common one; and what is suppos'd a *Perfection* in some must not be exacted as a *Law* from all. The Almighty is pleas'd to work upon our Spirits by our Passions; and let us not quarrel with a Method that is so natural. No spur to Duty should be held superfluous. *The Pleasures of Sin* being present and certain, have a great advantage in point of Impression above distant Glories. *Those* we lye naked and open to when they would affect us, but it requires some labour to bring us and *these* together even in Contemplation; and therefore if we can readily give up the former in zeal to the latter, and contentedly undergo the Hardships of Vertue, we are no such *Mercenary* Votaries; our Obedience is sincere, and our Self-denial great. How meanly soever the *over-righteous* may think of him, I'm sure *the Holy Ghost* takes notice of it as an extraordinary thing in *Moses*, that he could so rightly calculate his Interest as to postpone an Earthly Inheritance to an Heavenly. And when we have made as great advances in Vertue as he did, it will be time enough for us to *think of greater*.

Lastly, I would add a word or two on the wise *Ends* of Providence in his *Education*. Some have been glanc'd upon already, such as the *Trial* of his Faith, and Constancy,

stancy, and other Vertues ; but the *chief* is yet to be mention'd, the *training him up* for the Conduct and Government of *Israel*. At first blush, the Procedure of Heaven towards him is surprizing, and his Promotion considered with the humbling Consequences carries this untoward Aspect, as if he had been lifted up on high on purpose to be made miserable by a Fall. At least the Advantages of good Breeding seem to have drop'd with his shifting Fortunes. But a more perfect View of his Case will oblige us to think quite otherwise. He was singled out by the Divine Decree to be a Leader and a Deliverer of God's People; and so momentous a Capacity ask'd more than ordinary Abilities and Qualifications. But how should he come by them in the *persecuted* Condition of a poor *Israelite* ? It is therefore so order'd from *Above*, that he should be taken in *Son* of the Crown, and so instructed in all the Learning of *Egypt*. And when he had lived long enough in *Pharaoh's* Court for that purpose, and Experience given a finishing to his Accomplishments, God calls him away by a Train of Accidents into better Company, and a severer Life, to prepare him still more for the mighty Undertaking. Being thus form'd to Wisdom, he sets out afterwards upon it with great Advantage.

Advantage. *Boldness* in Danger, *Address* in Business, *Prudence* in Council, and a peculiar *Art* in knowing Men: All these *Princely* Vertues are his; and how does God serve himself of them, in rescuing a Captive Nation out of the House of Bondage?

Thus his *Institution* was a well-laid Scene, and every, the most minute, Circumstance, sets out the *Beauty* of the *Divine Providence*. His Preservation from the Waters, and after-Protection, would have been Mercies great enough for him as a private Person; but something more was due to him as the Redeemer of *Israel*. He must be nurs'd up by his own *Mother*, that he might know the God of his Fathers: He must be nurs'd up for the Royal *Princess*, that he might know all the *Egyptian* Policies; and he must fly from *Egypt* as a Criminal, that he might return thither *a God* unto *Pharaoh*.

Exod. 4.
16.

All these different Stages had a Connection and Dependence; and whilst Heaven winded about in so large a Circuit, it acted with as much *Wisdom* as *Obscurity*.

Let us then learn hence not to prejudge God's Intentions towards us in *Secular* Occurrences.

MOSES *His Self-Denial.*

If he sets one Affair backward, he thereby does but set another forward of greater Consequence; and tho' a Talent may seem lost for the present to our selves thro' a personal Disappointment, yet for ought we know a Time may come, when it shall be call'd out with Honour to the Service both of our Selves and Brethren.

BALAM'S

BALAM'S Ejaculation.

NUMB. xxiii. 10. the latter parr of
the Verse.

— *Let me die the Death of the
Righteous, and let my last End be
like his.*

THESE Words are the *pious* Result of a
wicked Man's Reflection on God's
Dealings with the *Jews* in their Travels
from *Egypt* unto *Canaan*.

Considered by themselves, they look like
a Sinner's *Penitential* Recantation; and ta-
ken with the *Context*, they speak perhaps
the devoutest Sence of a *Divine Providence*
guarding and standing by his People in all
emergent Difficulties and Trials.

And truly his whole *Story*, tho' of a
mix'd kind, and for the most part infamous
enough, is instructive to the same purpose,
I mean, a standing *Memorial* of Heaven's
Care and Tendernefs over Religion and its
faithful Votaries.

Balaam seems to have been a *Sorcerer* by Profession, and accordingly was applied to as such a one by the *King of Moab*. The *Israelites* had an especial Caution, not to meddle with that Prince in their March to the Land which God had given them, because he was the Seed of righteous *Lot*. Yet this Man, seeing how it went with his Neighbours, *Sibon* and *Og*, that refus'd them passage through their Territories, apprehended that he might likewise become a Prey unto them. However, amidst his Agony of Jealousy and Misgiving, he casts about for Methods of Prevention; and the most promising he could think of, was, the sending to a *Magician* of Reputation in those Parts for a Curse upon this numerous People; as if he took it for granted, that if he could be got to curse them, the Dæmon or Divinity that inspired him, would forthwith espouse his Cause to their Destruction. We are sure, this idolizing Address went along with the Rewards of Divination. *I wot that those whom thou blessest are blessed, and those whom thou cursest are cursed.* And the Message was as heartily receiv'd by him as depended on by the other. For *Balaam* dearly loved the *Wages of Unrighteousness*; and he show'd he did so, by endeavouring to answer that wicked Motion which he should have at first rejected. 'Tis like, some Attempts of

this

this kind had prov'd successful, that by his Curses and Imprecations he had formerly afflicted some Person or People *judicially* delivered up by God for their Iniquities; otherwise he would never have expected a Revelation upon the Point from his Oracle.

But there was no Commission to be had for cursing *Israel*. We find he cannot obtain leave at first to go after *Balak*; and afterwards when he did, that was not his Errand. No, his Thoughts and his Words have such a wonderful Turn given them, that, instead of bewitching the hated People, he magnifies 'em. The golden Overtures, and the Prospect of *great Honour*, when they becken'd to him, were such inviting things in his Eyes as could not be resisted. He follows readily, where the pleasing Bait was held out; but yet, in a manner quite contrary to his own covetous and malicious Bias, and to the Design that *Balak* had in sending for him. The Devil's Prophet becometh God's, and pronounces the Success, which he was hired to blast, in all the Beauties of heavenly Eloquence! A lofty Preface *indeed* is made of *Israel's* Glory. Their Settlement in *Canaan*, their great Increase in Numbers, their Stability and Happiness, he first harangues upon; and then, to show this was not a mere fally of Passion, or giddy flight of Fancy, he wishes himself upon the same Terms of

BALAAM'S Ejaculation.

Advantage with them as to both Worlds: *Let me die the Death of the Righteous, and let my latter end be like his.* But as if all this was mere Rant and empty Flourish, the Effect of an over-kind Prepossession, or a delusive Melancholy, *Balak* still looks upon the Decree of Blessing as reversible.

The *Heathens* us'd to lay a mighty stress on the multitude of Oblations, and the luckiness of Times and Places; *Balak* therefore gives him three different Prospects of the *Israelites*, and at each of them, makes a mighty adoe with the Sacrifices of Rams and Bullocks; hoping that such Solemnities, and the shifting the Scene often, would prevail to the working a Change in their Estate and Destiny. But still nothing comes of all his studied Projects but reiterated Blessings. The God, that struck a trembling into *Balak*, had a Hook for *Balaam*.

Numb. 24. The Spirits of the one fail, and the Tongue of the other is over-rul'd again in favour of the Jewish Nation; of their Successes, and their Interest in the *Messiah* that was to come.

Notwithstanding the Intrigue of Mischief goes on, and fresh Expedients are devis'd to keep it up. The latter indeed acts the *Wizard* no longer; but he does a part equally Satanical, and endeavours that now by corrupt Advice which he could not effect with Charms. *He teaches Balak to cast*

cast a *Stumbling-block* before the People of *Israel*, that is, a *Temptation to commit Fornication with the Daughters of Moab*, and to eat things offered to *Idols*. The debauching them first in their *Morals*, and then in their *Religion*, might prove, he thought, a *Forfeiture of the Divine Favour*, which was *Conditional*, and it really did so. But still not so far as to bring about their *Ruin and Excision*. A *Plague* indeed was sent among them to destroy some, and the *Hand* Numb. 25. of *Civil Justice* lifted up against others, by ⁴ way of *exemplary Terror*. But yet God would not deliver 'em up unto their *Enemies*. Nay the *Plague* it self was stay'd by the *Zeal of Phineas*, as the *Progress* of that *Defection* had been by *that*, and the *Course* of *God's Wrath* turn'd upon their *Enemies*, particularly on *Balaam*, the *base Contriver* Numb. 31. of that *Defection*. ^{8.}

The *Text* then and the adjoining *History* furnish out several important *Hints* or *Instructions*, that may be worthy of our notice, and perhaps too influential not a little on our *Practice*.

And 1st. this *Remark* offers, that the *Divine Favour* is the best and most infallible *Security*. An *Interest* in *That* many slight, none sufficiently value. *Carnal Weapons* and *Defensatives* are the usual *Resort* of giddy *Mortals*. They are *Creatures* of *Sence*, and so will not look beyond it.

BALAAM'S Ejaculation.

If a Foreign Enemy is to be engag'd, the *People* must be *numbred*; the Host and the Steel have the main strefs of their Thoughts and Confidence. If a bodily Disorder threatens, the Sons of *Art* are absolutely depended on for a Remedy, as in the Case of *Asa* King of *Judab*. If an Evil be feared, Charms or Spells, or Amulets must avert it for them. If the Instrument of some past Loss, the Event of some important Affair, the Duration of some present Trouble, are Secrets we would be let into, diligent Enquiry is presently made, especially by the inferiour Croud, of the next *Cunning-man* about them. As *Saul* consulted the *Witch of Endor*, touching the Fortune of a Battel: Or as *Abaziah* did the Devil of *Ekron*, concerning his Recovery of a Disease. In short, where Hundreds make the *Balaams* of the Age their Refuge. their Almightyes, hardly one *goeth into the Sanctuary of God*, taking Affiance along with him. But can a more wretched Account be given of Christians than this, that they mimick the very worst of Jews and Heathens, and advise with Hell about the Counsels of Heaven and Secrets of Futurity? To say the best of this Conduct, is to own it bad, that is, to lay it at the door of Ignorance and Stupidity. They do *err* doubtless for want of *knowing* or considering *the Scriptures and the Power of God*; the Scriptures which not
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only brand with a Curse the Practice of *trusting in Man, and making Flesh our Arm,* Jer. 17. 5. and especially of *turning after such as deal* Lev. 20. 6. *with familiar Spirits*; but here also set out the Folly of that Practice in a shining Instance: and the Power of God which as far exceeds that of Flesh, as the strong Current of the Ocean does the Stream of a gliding Rivulet.

Alas! what is Man that we should be so mindful of him, or the Son of Man that we should so regard him in Straits and Exigencies? His Breath is in his Nostrils; but no longer than God pleases that at first inspir'd it. And if he falleth, so must they that rest upon him.

Nor will the *Magick Circle* do such Wonders as are expected from it. *The Prince of the Air* indeed, to serve his vile Turns upon human Weakness, will ever keep up great Expectations; but he has but little Power whereby to answer them. Some strange Discoveries he may help his Correspondents to; some surprizing Feats he may enable them for. Hitherto he can go, but no farther. The determining Men's Fortunes, and the giving a lift to a sinking Cause, these things, if ever, might have been look'd for in the Days of old, when he was left more at large and unrestrain'd. But even then as to human Destiny or Allotments, the turning of the Balance was

not from him. *Balak* bid high enough for all the rich Effects of Divination ; and *Balaam* in his Heart agreed to the goodly Price set upon them. Indeed the Terms struck him so very sensibly, that he hoped God himself would consider his Interest, to the dropping of his own Word or Order ; and therefore, neglecting that, he tries again for an Answer more indulgent to it. Nay his Feet, tho' tied up by a second, at least presumptive Prohibition, were impatient to go on Mischiefs. The bare allowance of his Journey he interprets a *Patent* to that purpose ; and accordingly he sets out for the Ends of Ruin and Excision. But yet *Destruction and Unhappiness were not in his ways*. An *Angel of the Lord* came forth to stop him in his wild Career ; and the stupid *Ass*, that never before offered other than dumb Praises to its Maker, and mechanick Service to its earthly Matter, had articulate Words given it whereby to rebuke the Madness of the Prophet. Afterwards, being suffer'd to proceed, he carries with him as strong an Inclination to undo *Israel* with his *Enchantments*, as he had by and by to corrupt them with his *Counsels*. But his Malice is still hamper'd, that it cannot proceed to Execution.

Thus the Devil and his Votary together were but Impotence and Vanity. And this very Miscarriage speaks the Importance of
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Numb. 22.

19.

Ver. 20.

the Divine Blessing; but we may also hear the same in Terms full and emphatical, even from unwilling Witnessess. The Wretch himself confesseth it. *The Lord will not suffer me to go*, says he, at one time; and at another, *I have receiv'd Commandment to bless, and he has blessed, and I cannot reverse it.* The King, that set him on Work, upbraideth him with it: *I thought indeed to promote thee to great Honour, but lo, the Lord hath kept thee back from Honour.* But Moses improves upon the Testimony, pointing to the Ground thereof as a thing worth Israel's Notice. *The Lord thy God would not hearken unto Balaam, but the Lord thy God turned the Curse into a Blessing, because the Lord thy God loved thee.*

And to be sure, where his Love is the same, his Protection is so too. *He frustrateth the Tokens of the Liars, and maketh Diviners mad; he turneth wise Men backward, and maketh their Knowledge foolish.* His perfect Knowledge of the Natures and Powers of his Creatures forbids a Mistake in the Use and Application of them to any of his Purposes. His All-sufficiency fences off the Bars and Obstructions that often lie in the way of human Efforts and Endeavours. Therefore *his Counsel shall stand, and he will do all his Pleasure.* So that if he takes us under his Wing, and the
Light

Light of his Countenance, our Dwelling is made a *Goshen*; all Conditions, all Circumstances, Prosperity and Adversity, the Light and the Darkness, to us are both alike, equally safe and comfortable.

And we may observe,

2. That nothing so much entitles to this *Light of his Countenance*, as the Relation of *Church-membership*, attended with an *holy Practice*. The whole Tenour of Scripture makes the *Church* the Darling of Providence and the Care of Heaven. Particularly the 46th Psalm, where *His Presence* and *Her Security* are sweetly celebrated in a Song of Triumph and Defiance; and this is the *Burthen* of the lofty Boast, *The Lord of Hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our Refuge*. As also the 54th of *Esay*, where 'tis promis'd that *no Weapon form'd against her shall prosper, and every Tongue that shall rise against her, in Judgment, shall be condemn'd to utter Silence*. Elsewhere she pleads her *Relation to God* as an Argument for Mercy, and a Distinction from her Enemies. *We are thine, thou never bearest Rule over them, they are not called by thy Name*.

Not but that any *particular Church*, much more, any *particular Member* thereof, may forfeit the *Divine Grace* by coming short in the Conditions of *Purity and Holiness* which God requires. For so he threa-

threatens the favourite and *espoused* Nation, *you only have I known of all the Families of the Earth, therefore I will punish you for all your Iniquities.* But where a peculiar People is zealous of good Works, neither the Gates of Hell, nor the Powers of the World, shall ever prevail against them. *King of Saints* is the Character wherein he glories, and the *Prosperity of his Servants* the Dispensation in which his Soul *delighteth.* He has labouring Bowels for them, and will not let 'em be Losers by their Allegiance.

We have *Fact* for the Proof of this, as well as *Prophecy.* Blessing kept Pace with Obedience in the several Stages of the *Israelites* Condition. Nay, it could not tell how to leave them even upon a Suspension of the other. It was *Balak's* great Desire, and *Balaam's* godly Endeavour, they might be swallow'd up of Ruin; and like the wise Agents of Darkness, they set their *own* Transgressions upon them. But still the former had this angry Remark to make, *He hath not beheld Iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen Perverseness in Israel. The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them.* He speaks grudgingly of their Happiness, and with envious Wonder. *God brought them out of Egypt, he hath as it were the Strength of an Unicorn.* He talks in a strain of Dejection,
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in a sad Note like that of a baffled World weeping over their destructive Projects and broken Measures. *Surely there is no Enchantment against Jacob, neither any Divination against Israel. According to or from this time, it shall be said of Jacob, and of Israel, what hath God wrought.* So impregnable is the Hedge of Security, that Omnipotence sets about the Sheep of his Pasture. So jealous is kind Heaven of the least Touch, the least Breath that comes near to hurt 'em. Stratagems do not their part on them; Strength is but Weakness in Opposition to them.

3. 'Tis worth observing how *Religion*, one time or other, extorts a Respect and *Homage*, even from its very worst Enemies. It is their usual way to draw her Picture to Disadvantage, and clap Features on her in the *Representation*, that do not belong to her in the *Life*. At the Instant of Lewdness and Debauchery, Passion possesses even Judgment it self against her; and after the sinful Commission, Point of Honour obliges them to hold up a Conformity between Tongue and Conduct, and condemn with their Mouths what they have already by their Actions. Nevertheless *Wisdom is*, occasionally, unawares, *justified* not only of her *Children*, but of them too. Their Thoughts are *mostly*, their Discourses *sometimes*, as our Thoughts and Discourses, tho' their

their Ways may be *never*, as our Ways; which must be resolved into secret Impressions of Nature in behalf of Vertue, and imperceptible Influences of Providence. Who was ever more unlikely than *Balaam* to speak worthy, honourable things of the true God, the great *Jehovah*? His profess'd Business, his standing Disposition, his outward Circumstances, all looked the other way. As a *Sorcerer*, he was list'd into the Service of a very different Master, that is, the Devil, and the falling down to worship him promis'd no future Adorations of the Deity. As he was a fond Lover of *filthy Lucre*, he lay expos'd to all manner of Evil, and to the vilest Impressions. And if we consider his *Proceedings*, when he was tempted by the *high and mighty Ones* of the Earth, to reproach Heaven, and bid Defiance to the Name and to the Church of God, how he relish'd the Promise of being *promoted to great Honour*, and of having done for him whatsoever he should desire, how forward to close with the Demands of the *King and Princes of Midian*, how earnest to fulfil them; there seem'd to be no Earnest given of After-Speeches in behalf of the God and the People of *Israel*. And yet *such* were uttered by the very Lips which were bribed to blaspheme! They expected a Curse, and behold a Blessing. As if the Man had took his Leave of *Magick*,
shook

shook Hands with *Avarice*, and despis'd as well the *Resentments* of the King and Princes as the *Riches* which they had offered and he coveted; in the Presence and to the Confusion of them all, he *takes up his bold Parable*, and says, *Balak hath brought me from Aram, out of the Mountain of the East, saying, Curse me Jacob, and come defy Israel. How shall I curse whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy whom God hath not defied? For from the top of the Rocks I see him, who can count the Dust of Jacob, and the Number of the fourth part of Israel. Let me die the Death of the Righteous, &c.* That is, “ These Men have the true Religion, “ and the true God on their Side, and 'tis “ beyond the Power of Men or Devils to “ harm them, whilst they are Followers “ of that which is good. As much as his Heart was set upon the *Wages of Unrighteousness*, we see, *before*, he durst not go with those that brought 'em, 'till the Lord said, Go, no, not for *an House full of Gold and Silver*. And as *perverse* as his ways were *before the Lord*, when he did go, his Expressions were honest. To wish himself in the Circumstances of the Rich and Noble, that he might live and die like them, would have been a complimentary Strain before those that were so, but *Balaam* did not drop it upon the inviting Occasion, being too much *a Divine* at that time to be *a Courtier*.

Courtier. *The Righteous, the Righteous,* they are the only Happy, both living and dying, in his Account, upon second Thoughts, and a true estimate of Things and Persons.

And the same have been the *Confessions* of the most Extravagant, when *Solitude* has compos'd them into Seriousness and Reflection; when *Affliction* has rectified their Sight which before was dazled by earthly Splendours; when *Sickness* by its cold Damps has allay'd and appal'd the flush of Spirits, the Gayety of their Tempers; when approaching *Death*, by its gloomy Shadows, has drawn an humbling Veil over the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory of them. In these undeceiving Circumstances Reason appears like it self, open to Conviction, no longer clog'd with Prejudice and Unfincerity; and the Comforts of Religion, when wanted, are acknowledged. They can feel the Finger of God in their Wounds, and see his Strength in their Weakness. They can whine for their Follies, when summon'd to give an Account of them, and admonish their surviving Friends of taking wiser Measures, of making it the main Study of their Lives, how to live and how to die.

Thus *Vice* it self, if we wait a while, shall be heard loud enough on the side of *Virtue*; and there is a Season, when we
may

may meet with Self-denials *out* of Religion as well as *in* it.

4. Another Observation we may gather immediately from the Text is, that there is a State of *Rewards* after Death reserv'd for all *righteous and blameless Souls*. This is a familiar Doctrine of the *New Testament*, and, I think, an express one of the *Old*, at least deducible from it. According to *the Articles of our Church*, *They are not to be heard, who feign that the Antient Fathers looked only for temporary Promises*. It is evident, they look'd farther, even to a *better Country* than *Canaan* it self, from that single Argument of our Saviour wherewith he encountred *the Sadduces*, and on which *the Author to the Hebrews* so largely insisted after him, namely, *God's not imparting any extraordinary Benefits to the Patriarchs in this Life*, after repeated Assurances of the greatest Favour towards them. For since he is faithful who promised, and yet did not perform *Here* what he had promis'd, it follows, he adjourn'd the Performance of it to *Hereafter*: And this, no doubt, their *Faith* had for its Object, which is describ'd *the Substance of Things hoped for, the Evidence of things not seen*.

For Confirmation hereof I might refer you to *Abraham's Conference with ~~him~~^{Plures}*, and to *St. Paul's Apology*; of whom the latter

latter grounds *his Hope of the Promise* upon the *Antient Scriptures*, and the former, the Luk. 16. no-necessity of farther Advertisement touching *the Place of Torment*. And let me add, that had not the *Sanctions* of God's Covenant with his People took in the Recompences of the *Future World*, there would be no accounting for a *Pharisee's* Acts 23. 8. Creed, wherein those made an Article. Their Eyes had no larger Proportions of *Grace* to enlighten them than other Men's, and yet they were strong enough to see into *Eternity*. And what enabled them for this, but the *Law* it self, the legible Characters of Eternity in its Promises and Threatnings?

Balaam seems to have been preaching the same Doctrine to the *Heathen*, that *Moses* and the other *Prophets* did to the *Jews*. Some learned Men indeed on the one hand Grot. in suppose, he referr'd to the *temporal Blessings* Loc. of the *Jewish Dispensation*; imagining that 'twas their *observ'd Deliverance* from *violent* and *untimely Deaths* that prompted him to such a Rapture, such a Desire of partaking with them in their appointed Portion. *Others* on the contrary would make out of the *Text* an early Authority for the Point of a *Resurrection*; presuming Numb. 24. that while he prophesied of *Christ* and his 19. *Dominion*, he could not here mention the *last End* of the *Righteous*, without having his Eye upon the Glories of the rising Body,

which the first Exercise of his Dominion made way for, by triumphing over Hell and the Grave. But both sorts of *Interpreters* allow the Words to carry in them the Prospect of *eternal* Blessedness. To be sure, in their higher Drift and Intendment, they mean not any thing short of *Immortality*. To die the death of the *Righteous* must by natural Construction signify to die in the same Circumstances of Advantage with him; and one of those Circumstances is *an Hope full of Immortality*. The other Expression of having our *last End like his*, is equivalent to and exegetical of the former, and respects the same Lot or Portion hereafter. However nothing makes this *last End*, considered in the *first* Sense, truly *desirable* but the attending Conviction of being for ever happy.

How he came by the Persuasion, as to a *future* State, need not be long a Question. The *irregular* State of *this* World, a little reflected on in conjunction with the *Divine* Justice, would have help'd him to conclude for the Being of *another*, wherein these Irregularities shall be made up. But the good Thought may well be put to the Account of the *Divine* Inspiration he was then under.

Fifthly and lastly, we may observe in *Balaam* an early instance of *human Frailty*, consisting in lazy Reflections on the better part, and a *verbal* Piety.

Let me be embark'd in *Israel's* bottom, was his Wish, but hardly to be call'd a good one, because if it came from the Heart, it made no Impression on it. What appear'd so desirable, he could not but desire; but then it was after such a manner, as if he expected the thing desired should obtrude it self upon him. For at the very time that he was for dying like the *Righteous*, he was actually living as the *Wicked* do. *Mammon* had his Affections, and *Balak* his Conscience; and tho' on every renewal of Temptation he had recourse to God, yet he did so more out of hopes of bringing the Divine Will over to his own, than out of a Proposal to consult it and act accordingly.

This was the *Error* and Folly of *Balaam*; and alas how many run after it with greediness! How often do Men entertain a faint breathing after Vertue and Happiness, and perhaps draw it out to a cold Prayer that God would make 'em better now, in order to be happy hereafter, without advancing one step themselves toward the means of Grace that would make them both? But what an absurdity is this, to commit Sin with a Wish in our Mouths that we did not commit it; to neglect our Duty, and at the same time wish we were a performing of it! Such strange Conduct I can compare to nothing so properly as to

the humour of a Man that wants to be at such or such a place, and yet never moves after it by his *Imagination*. The naked Estimation of *eternal Life* is mere Necessity. Nature without Grace carries out the Soul thus far. The virtuous Choice lies in the active part, in asking what shall I do to be saved. 'Tis said of the *Israelites*, they despis'd the pleasant Land of *Canaan*, and why, but because they were contented with it in *Idea*? For absolutely speaking, they could not despise what was *the Glory of all Lands*, or the *World's Paradise*: They only acted as if they did, whilst they hung back in Suspence and Scruple, complaining of the distance, of the *Wilderness* that was to be pass'd thro', of the *Enemies* that were to be encounter'd, before they could enter into *God's Rest* and their own. And accordingly our Affection for Heaven must be measur'd by our striving for admission into it. If valued and respected as it ought, it will excite and direct our Endeavours in that order, and that measure which is proportionable to its Excellency, and the difficulties of obtaining it.

These are the Reflections that naturally arise from this instructive History. It is now time to apply them for the Improvement of *Life and Manners*.

And first, is the greatest Safety to be had under the *Divine Protection*? Let us then
take

take Sanctuary there, upon all Occasions. Such is the Insufficiency and Deceitfulness of all human Supports, that if we lean too much upon them, instead of a Staff in the Hand, they will prove a Splinter in the Elbow. *False Hearts* and *broken Vows* are every Day's Complaint; and where Pretensions are answer'd, Vicissitude and Mortality come in to our Disappointment. But if God be made our Friend, he approves himself such to all the Intents and Purposes of that Relation. *He is not a Man that he should lie*, or raise Hopes which he never means to satisfy. He is a present Help in Trouble. He *can* arrest the giddy Wheel of Fortune by the strong Hand of his Omnipotence, and he *will* make Persons, Seasons, Circumstances, every thing, smile upon all our Labours.

And now where there is a *natural* Dependence, there ought to be a *moral* one; a Dependence of *Mind* sure should follow that of *Circumstances*.

2. Is the *Profession* of the true Religion seconded with an answerable *Practice*, the best Title to the Divine *Protection*? Let us then bless Providence for calling us to the one, and see that we abound in the other. The *Church* of God is as much Heaven's *Beloved* now as it was ever. The holy *Angels*, those Tutelar Ministers of Salvation, with much Concern pitch their Tents round

about it ; and the *Lord Christ*, the *Author and Finisher of our Faith*, is with it always even to the end of the World. The *Balaam's* and *Balaks* therefore of the Times may club their wicked Devices, and put in Practice all the Methods of undermining against the Children of *Sion* ; nay they may interest Hell in their vile Cause, and call upon the Powers of Darknes for Assistance. But they shall have no great Comfort in their Projects. None of their strain'd Inventions can be effectual against *Jacob*, none of their Arts of Ruin influential upon *Israel*, as long as these hold fast their Integrity and the Divine Favour with it. Sin alone will provoke the Almighty from his safe-guarding Post, and cause him to say,

Amos 6. 8. I abhor the Excellency of Jacob, and hate his Palaces.

And how should these Considerations at once work upon our Gratitude, and alarm up our Circumspection? What a Blessing is it to be born and bred within the Pale of *Christianity*, whereon the *Light of God's Countenance* rests? And how can we enough love and magnify, and adore, who are happy Partakers of it? If our Iniquities are the only dangerous things amongst us, who would not cast them from him, and rid his bosom of what might otherwise sting him to death?

3. Is *Religion* sooner or later the Object of every Man's *Esteem* and Praise? How should this be matter of rejoicing to such as have embrac'd it *early*, and often met with slighting and disparagement for doing so? No one that has lived abroad in the World, can need to be told of the Contempt and Indignities that the Vertuous ordinarily receive from it. Whatever other Portion of their Master's *Cross* they may boast an Exemption from, that part of it they must bear and carry after him. But then they have a Cordial to take along with them, and to make the Road of Life tolerable, notwithstanding all the Dirt that Scorn throws in the face of Piety, namely this Consideration, that they go thro' *good Report* as well as *bad*, *Honour* as well as *Dis honour*, and that the bad Report comes only from the Bad, from such as do not think, from such as will afford a good one, whenever they shall come to themselves, and to a sober fence of things. Even the *wicked* Varlet *Balaam* was not without his *relenting* mood, his *interval* of wise Reflection; and then the *Righteous* was with him *more excellent than his Neighbour*; then nothing would content him but the *Righteous Man's Death*, the *Righteous Man's Reward*. Then who was so great a God as the God of *Jacob*? What Key of Adoration too high for the Holy One of *Israel*?

BALAAM'S Ejaculation.

And could the *Israelites*, the true *Israelites*, in whom there was no Guile, hear of this without a Rapture? Must it not give them Joy unspeakable to find themselves applauded by a very *Stranger to the Covenant of Promise*, for performing the Terms and Conditions of it; to see *Idolatry* bending to *Religion*, and an Emissary of Darknes seiz'd with a Pang of Devotion for the Lord of Glory? And, sure, like Instances of Religion's Triumphs will be ever attended with Impressions of this kind.

The good Expressions, occasionally dropping from the Mouth of Libertines, and the standing Declarations of Penitents in favour of that Faith which once they revild, cannot but be consolatory to all the Faithful, some amends for the bitter Cup that is so often filled for them.

When *Atheism* shrinks and gives back, it bids every thing be smooth and smiling about *them*. And every time an *awaken'd* Sinner has the Justice to scorn himself for the *Folly* of his own Choice, he invites them to bless God and themselves for the *Wisdom* of *Theirs*.

In short, there is a deal of Musick in this Reflection to pious Hearts, that how unwilling soever Men may be to *live* by the strict Rules of the Gospel, they are much more so to *die* in Arms against it.

And

And yet these Refreshments in Hand are nothing to the comfortable Prospect of the the last Day, that *Day of the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God*, when the *Righteous shall stand in great boldness before the Face of such as have afflicted them, and made no Account of them or their Labours*; when the *Wicked repenting and groaning for Anguish*, shall say within themselves, *These are they whom we had sometime in Derision, and a Proverb of Reproach; we Fools accounted their Life Madness, and their End to be without Honour. How are they number'd with the Children of God, and their Lot is among the Saints!*

4. Was a *supernatural Illumination* vouchsaf'd to a Person most unworthy of it? Let us not then value our selves too much upon a more than ordinary Reach of *Knowledge and Understanding*. Did a *Superiority in Gifts* indeed suppose a *Preeminence likewise in Graces*, *Self-complacency* would be too much a thing of Course to be a Sin, too much a piece of Justice to be Pride. But alas! there is no such necessary *Connexion* betwixt *Perfections intellectual and moral*. So unregenerate a Man as *Balaam* had his *Ecstasies and his Visions*, and breath'd forth a *Prophecy*, and that of as large a *Compass* as any we find in *Scripture*. Those high *Admirations of Israel* were not the mere *Impressions of Sense*, but respect-
ed

Numb. 24.

6.

ed rather their spiritual Estate as they were *a Church*, than their military Order and Discipline as *a Camp*. So unholy and vile a Wretch too as *Caiäphas*, spake as he was mov'd by the Holy Ghost. And as the *prophetic* Impulses were given with an undistinguishing Hand, so are *natural* Endowments. If the Spirit comes upon *Saul*, he must *prophecy*. If a Truth opens and displays itself, the Mind cannot but entertain it. There are Flashes of Light, even as to heavenly Things, often darted into the Mind, when the Heart is frozen and benumm'd in its Affections towards them. And where then is boasting? The *Wise* and *Knowing*, if thus dispos'd, have not half so much Reason to glory in their Wisdom as to sigh over the *Infirmities* that attend it in them. But if better inclin'd, they have something much more valuable to take Delight in, because their Knowledge sets 'em but upon a Level with *fallen* Angels; their Virtue ranks them with Heaven's Favourites here, with Heaven's Inhabitants hereafter.

Notions, whether Philosophical or Divine, are good in *themselves*, as Notions, and so not to be despis'd; but they are no farther good to us, than as they make us better Men or Christians, and so our reasonable Satisfaction in *Them* bears Proportion to their practical Influence upon *Us*. In short, he that *holds the Truth in*

Unrighteousness is no more to be admir'd for his bright Speculations, or deep Insight into Gospel-Myſteries, than *Jet*, which retains its Hue and Blackneſs ſtill, is for *ſhining*, when the Light falls upon it.

5. Were there ill Men among the *Prophets of God*? How ſhould this abate our Wonder, whenever we find one among the *Minifters of Chriſt*, and our Scruples too, as to *Edification* from him? The Diſcovery, I confeſs, is ſad enough; for every Weed looketh worſt in *ballowed* Ground. But then the Impreſſion it ought to make is only that of Pity. His Impieties *cannot* hurt us, who are not to answer for them, our Complaints *may*.

Did the *Doctrine* neceſſarily receive a Tincture from the *Practice*, or the *Vertue* of the miniſterial Powers depend upon the *Holineſs* of the Perſon miniſtring, the living under ſuch a Teacher would be the moſt terrible of Judgments. But what ſays *St. Auguſtine* in Oppoſition to the *Donatiſts*? *A foul Hand may ſow good Seed*. What our *Saviour*, by way of Precept to his Diſciples? *The Pharifees ſit in Moſes's Chair; all therefore they bid you obſerve, that obſerve and do*. And if any thing can enforce ſuch Authorities, 'tis a Remark on the Perſon in the Text, who would not or could not falſify the Divine Dictates impreſſed upon the Mind, how inconſiſtent ſoever

with his Interest, his Reputation and his Conduct. He sacrific'd indeed from one Place to another, to try whether Heaven might not by those religious Performances be brib'd into a Compliance; but still this was his Language, and he kept to it invariably at the very Altars of *Baal*, *The word that God putteth into my Mouth, that will I speak.* And when the *Beast* he rode upon rebuked him, we know it was for his *Practice*, not his *Doctrine*. *Personal Defects* then do not prejudice an Act of *Office*, nor does a *Corrupt Behaviour* bring after it of *Course Instructions* like it self. If the *Commission* be *good*, the *Execution* of it is so too, *to the Use of edifying*, so as to *administer Grace unto the Hearers*.

6. Is the *Death of the Righteous* an inlet into *eternal Blessedness*? Let it then become our *constant Meditation*, as it was *Balaam's upon Occasion*. I know no Subject more impressivè and affecting, if made familiar and habitual. He no sooner took it up but laid it down; it was too serious and devout a Theme for his worldly Spirit to dwell on; otherwise it might have won him over a Convert to the true Religion, and put him into a Capacity of dying like the Righteous, and living with them for ever. If we would but bend and oblige our Thoughts to the Contemplation of it, the Relish of earthly Things would soon grow
dull

dull upon our Hands, and our Affections mount above groveling Mortality, to the Place where God dwelleth in Glory. For Heaven is our Treasure, and we want only to consider that it is so, in Order to an hastening after it. For where *our true Treasure is known to be, there will our Hearts be also.*

7. And lastly, Is there no Account to be found in a lazy *wishing* for *the death and latter End*, the Lot and Portion of the *Righteous*? Let us then proceed from Desires to Endeavours, and *work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling.* Balaam himself, tho' not as a *Devotionist*, yet as a *Worldling*, has set us a Precedent of Industry and Application. He laid himself out on his base Designs, and tried all Ways and Means, that had the least seeming Tendency to accomplish them. And shall not we do as much or more for the *eternal Riches*? Shall *the Children of this World* ever have it in their Power to upbraid our dull Delays and cold Indifferency, by their warm Pursuits after sinful *Pleasures that are but for a Season*, and *the Meat that perisheth in the using*? O let us draw out all our active Powers for the Christian Warfare, *fight a good Fight, and keep the Faith*; so shall we *dye indeed the Death of the Righteous, and our latter End be like his.*

ELIJAH'S Supplication.

I KINGS xix. 4.

And he requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is enough ; Now, O Lord, take away my Life, for I am not better than my Fathers.

A Melancholy Request indeed, and such as it is not every body that would put up at the Throne of Grace ! For *Light is sweet*, by the Confession of one that pronounc'd *All* besides *Vanity* and *Vexation* ; and a pleasant thing it is to behold the Sun, even to the mortified Eye that is not delighted with beholding any thing else. *Youth* triumphs because of its *probable* Distance from, and *Age* hates it self upon the Account of its *certain* Neighbourhood to, the Grave. *They that are at rest in their Possessions* have nothing to trouble them but the Remembrance of *Death*, and the *Daughters of Affliction* find nothing so troublesome, at least so natural, as the *Fear* of it.

Not

Eccles.
11. 7.

Eccles.
41. 1.

Not but that some have in a great Measure overcome this Aversion and Fear, and fain would die, but then it is not for dying sake ; and that which enabled 'em for the Conquest must be either their Affliction, or the same Principle whereby they *overcome the World*, to wit, their *Faith*. And hence we might have accounted for *Elijah's* Prayer, tho' we knew nothing of his History, concluding that he found but wretched Quarter in *this* World, or else he had never solicited a Remove into *another*.

This in truth was his Case. Being a faithful Champion of *the true* Religion, he met with all the Menaces and Struggles, Difficulties and Opposition that powerful Impiety could offer. Four hundred and fifty Prophets of *Baal* encounter'd him with their wicked Superstitions, the Court went into the corrupt Interest, and the People followed. *Abab* by his Idolatry had troubled *Israel*, drawing a sore Famine and other vindictive Judgments upon that Nation, yet had he the Heart and the Face to shift off the blame of those Events from *guilty* Self, and charge them on the great Asser- tor of Piety : *Art thou he that troubleth Is- rael* ! 1 Kings 8. The foul Slur *Elijah* endeavour'd to 17. wipe off by interesting Omnipotence in his Vindication. The Testimony of *Fire* from Heaven serv'd at once to confound the Prophets and convince the People, that *the*
Lord

Lord he was God, the Lord he was God. The sudden Destruction of them was an exemplary Terror to awe Men out of their Idolatry; and the mighty Rain he fetch'd from the Clouds for their Refreshment, a Paternal Blessing to win them into the Worship of the Great *Jehovah*. But none of these astonishing Things, when the Surprise went off, left any religious Impression, where the Influence should have begun in order to a general Reformation. As *Abab* had before reproach'd, so *Jezabel* now threatned. Miracle was answer'd with Bravado's, and all his Divine Errands of Vengeance and of Mercy drew back no other Message than this, *So let the Gods do to me and more also, if I make not thy Life as the Life of one of them by to morrow at this time.* So true it is, the most timorous are generally the most savage; and that nothing is so forward to apply to Rigour and Severity in a Case of Danger as Female Weakness. Hereupon taking it for granted his living any longer would be of no Service to Religion, *he requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is enough, now, O Lord, take away my Life, for I am not better than my Fathers.*

This Conduct in the *Text*, tho' of a mix'd Nature, and not imitable in the whole, yet is very instructive, and Matter for *Caution*, where it is not a Rule for *Practice*.

His

His *Calls* for Death doubtless were too eager and *importunate*. The Occasion, tho' sad enough of all Conscience, could not excuse, nor his former Righteousness cover the Guilt of them. There was not sufficient Consideration had of the awefulness of *Death* on the one Hand, nor of the value of *Life* on the other. The Former, as it is an Evil not to be anxiously dreaded, so neither is it an Object to be passionately sought for. Tho' made nothing of in ordinary Discourse, yet, believe me, 'tis a solemn thing under every Aspect, and deserves a serious Thought, as it is *often* a Stage of tedious Pain and Agony, as it is *always* the Penalty of Sin, as it is a Passage into that *mysterious* Quarter, Eternity; as it denotes a temporary Divorce of Soul and Body, which are so intimately united, and as it implies a lasting Change of Companies, Conditions, Worlds. Where there is so much Significance included, there cannot be too much Regard paid. And what are the Laws of Self-preservation, and Instincts of Nature, but secret Warnings not to fall in love with Mortality? What is the untryed Condition of Separation, but an Argument to keep us off from courting it? And as for *Life*, what can be more precious and desirable? Doth not Providence make it Its Care, and the Scripture Its Reward? Is not a long one promis'd to Godliness, and a short one

threatned to Disobedience? Is it not the Foundation of all the *temporal* Comforts we enjoy, and used as an Emblem of all the *endless* Blessings we hope for? Is it not a blessed Opportunity for Vertue, and an excellent Preparative to Glory? Hence it was that the *Psalmist* made this, *take me not away in the midst of mine Age*, the Subject-Matter of his Petition; and our *Saviour* this, that *the Cup of his Passion, if it were possible, might pass from him*. Hence it was that *Hezekiah* could not bear the Sound of *Set thy House in order, &c.* And *Jesus* would not pray his Father to take the *Disciples out of the World*, altho' persecuted and hated in it. Hence it was that *St. Paul* made it but his Desire, not his Prayer, *to be dissolv'd*, tho' it was in Order *to be with Christ*; and when *Simeon* breathed out *Lord now lettest thou thy Servant depart in Peace, for mine Eyes have seen thy Salvation*, he took Care to add, *according to thy Word*, grounding all his Confidence upon the Divine Revelation touching the time of his Departure hence.

This supplicating for Death was a Singularity in *Elijah*, and by no means a Vertue. He should have went no farther than a Wish, nor troubled Heaven with his Importunities. But still he is to be commended for that he went no farther than he did, and because he only *requested for himself*
that

that he might die. With the antient Romans, *Self-Murder* look'd a little plausible in the Theory, and was somewhat familiar too in the Practick. The *Stoicks*, a wise Sect, but yet over-run with Sullenness, reason'd for't; declaring it to be an universal Remedy that Nature had put into their Hands, whereby to spight and be even with a froward Destiny. And 'twas not a few that had recourse to the Prescription, upon great, or even slight Occasions: To say nothing of the unhappy *Lucretia* of old, that with a kind of modest haste run upon this desperate Expedient for the clearing up the Credit of her injur'd Innocence; *Zeno*, the Founder of that Sect, exemplify'd his own Doctrine, and that upon a most unmanly Score, to pacify the Pain of a broken Finger. With more Deliberation *Cato* acted up to his Philosophy; and *Seneca* had done so too, he tells us in one of his *Epistles*, but for the Regard he bore to his aged Father and other Relations, that might not have so well digested the untimely Farewel. Even *Brutus*, that had been once as loud in his Censures of *Cato*, as the latter was in his Commendations, yet falling into the same Circumstances he ventur'd on the same Liberty in order to get clear of them.

Laert. l. 7.

Plut. Life of Brutus.

Nay *Scripture-Story* has Instances, as well as *Pagan*. *Saul* and his Armour-bearer

1 Sam. 31. 5. rer flew into the Embraces of Death, that they might not fall into the Hands of the
 2 Kings 16. 18. *Philistines*. The Rebel *Zimri* made the Flames his Resort from the Vengeance of
 Judg. 16. 29. victorious *Loyalty*; and holy *Sampson* the Ruin of an House his Sanctuary from the Sport of wanton Cruelty.

But *Elijah* was of another Spirit, and could not be induc'd by the most tragical Prospects to shut up the Scene of Life with his own Hands. He had as lively an Idea of idolatrous Bigotry and hostile Malice as other Men, and was as loath to fall under the Power of either. But both together seem'd more tolerable than the Shame and Guilt of an hasty Escape from them by stealing out of Being. Even the little Worm, that does but crawl over the Stage of Life, has a busy part to act on it, and she must not offer to depart, leaving it unfinished. Much less may Man, the somewhat bigger Worm of the two, force his *Exit* in an Humour. No, we are list'd, as *Pythagoras* long since observ'd, under the great *General* God, and so all *Discharges* must come from the Court of his Providence. And 'till they do, it is our Post to meet and sustain the awful Looks of a coming Danger, like Men of Battle, not to start and fly from them like Cowards.

This Servant of God therefore, as *glad* as he would have been if he had *found the Grave,*

Grave, would not seek a resting Place there without a Warrant.

The *Heathen* might well bid the World good night abruptly, whenever it had offended them, having but small Grounds, the Uncertainty of a *Peradventure*, to expect another, where they should meet with a cold Reception in requital. But with other *Jewish* Worthies he foresaw, tho' afar off, a *Judgment to come*, and a State of Immortality; and this Belief kept him to his good Behaviour, making him wait Nature's Call and the Almighty's Leisure for his Dismission out of This. He had no Thoughts of deserting his Colours, or flinching from his Duty; but only tried the Force of *Prayer* to the utmost, and like a disabled Soldier beg'd a Release with Tears in his Eyes eloquent and moving beyond Expression.

Indeed I cannot find any Colour for an Argument in behalf of *Self-murder*, either from *Scripture* or Nature, whatever *Lipsius* Lips. nud. Ma. Phil. Stoi might do that blushes not to favour it. I'm 1. 3. persuaded he better conn'd *Stoicism* than *Revelation*; and when a *Doctor* of our own bestow'd his Pains in recommending a more hopeful Judgment than is usually pass'd on those who lay violent Hands upon themselves, his Charity was only too strong for his Reason. The Examples thereof in *Scripture*, we are sure, are of such Persons

as either had been before abandon'd by the Spirit of God, or acted by virtue of an *immediate* Commission from him. *Saul* and *Judas* fall under the first Character. And as for *Sampson*, most Writers, with *St. Augustin* at the head of them, ascribe what he did to a particular Divine Impulse; a thing sometimes vouchsafed under the Jewish Dispensation, and no doubt at that time, because otherwise a miraculous Power had hardly seconded him in it. And therefore *Christians* must beware of building too much on Fact. Till they can plead a *Divine Impression* for repeating it, or promise themselves a quiet Annihilation after it, I would beg them for the sake of their poor Souls to let Providence have its course, and not hurry them out of those Bodies they are so unfit to leave. *Seneca* is for driving out that troublesome Inhabitant within us, when it makes us too sensible of our Unhappiness; but he had used it more courteously, had he known how much more troublesome it would be after its remove. But to proceed.

Again, his Request, if allowable in it self, was yet too *absolute* and unreserved. It seem'd not to carry with it Deference enough and Retignation to the Divine Pleasure. Nothing would serve him but he must die by the Hand of him that form'd him into Life. He spoke not in the Stile of Modesty

deſty [If it ſeemeth good unto thee] but with the Aſſurance of common Beggars that cry with an unceremonious Roughneſs, give me this or that. He aſk'd God's Leave indeed, but took him not into his Counſels. In our *Saviour* we have a moſt perfect Pattern of Submiſſion under the harſheſt and moſt difficult Circumſtances. *Father, if thou be willing, remove this Cup from me: nevertheless not my Will but thine be done.* The Words do not more ſpeak him a Man of like Paſſions with us than an obedient Servant of Providence. *Nature* recoiling at the Apprehenſion of the approaching Agony would fain have been excus'd, and ſo put him upon a Deprecation; but then *Grace* dictated it, and he ſupplicated upon his bended Knees that his Father would not liſten to the innocent Language of his natural Fears and Deſires, to the Diſappointment of the Divine Intentions. *Elijah* on the contrary addreſſes with a kind of rude and familiar Peremptorineſs, ſaying, *O Lord, take away my Life*; as if Heaven had no Negative in the Caſe. He affected to be Maſter of his own Perſon, and would not refer himſelf to the Wiſdom of God, whether or no he ſaw his Choice convenient for him and the Ends of Government. But his Application, altho' unmannerly in its Circumſtances, was generous in its Principle. It proceeded from a Zeal for God's

Glory rather than from a Concern for Personal Ease.

When a Man turns his back upon Life, Pride, Discontent and Cowardise, one or all of these, are generally the Reasons. If he be a Statesman, 'tis because he has not been suffered to swagger in the Head of Men and of Affairs, has not been gratified to the utmost Lengths of his towering Ambition, has felt invidious Competitions and mortal Disappointments. He can't away with a dependent Acting, nor truckle under the Directions of others, and therefore quits the Stage out of Pet and Disgust. If he be an inferiour Person, 'tis upon the account of some strange Rub in point of Fortune, or sensible Blow upon Reputation. Either he could never get above Obscurity, or he has been remarkable both in his Rise and in his Falls from Greatness; or he has been irreparably wounded in the most tender Interest, that of his good Name and Honour. And so reflecting upon his own sad and miserable Case in all its real and imaginary Horror, he can bear up no longer, but sinks with Anguish, and in the Bitterness of his Soul puts an end to his Days that he may to Reflection too. Such spiritless Wretches were the Self-murderers above-mention'd. The Stream of the Times run against them, and for fear of being overwhelmed, they hastily got on Shore into the
Land

Land of Forgetfulness. And what cast *Jonah* into dying Resolutions but the Loss of his dearly beloved *Gourd*? What *Job* into bitter Execrations upon the Day of his Birth, but the Pungency of those Miseries that besel him afterwards. What provok'd *Achitophel* to throw up his Existence in so foolish and ridiculous a manner, but the publick Disparagement of his *Wisdom*? He that had been once allowed to *speak as the Oracle of God*, could not out-live the Disgrace of being out-top'd at the Cabinet. When he saw the destructive Flattery of a new Courtier had got *Absalom's* Ear, so as to defeat the safe Advice of an old Counsellor, Home was his first Refuge, and an Halter the next from Shame and Infamy.

2 Sam. 17.
23.

But so far was *Elijah* from offering to fence off Trouble and Uneasiness by any Act of Violence committed on himself, that he requested to die only out of Despair of doing good in his Life. *Self* may justly be an under-motive in any Case, and Charity must conclude, it had no more than a remote Interest in the present Ejaculation. *It is enough*, was the Enforcement of it, and the Import of that Phrase can be no other than this: " I have exerted my self to the
 " full in the dear Cause of Religion, and
 " would exert my self still, but that I am
 " satisfied my Preaching would be vain and
 " my Labour lost upon such a Nation as
 " this,

“ this, so wicked and incorrigible. I have
 “ been a long while striking at Idolatry,
 “ and yet the stubborn Root of Bitterness
 “ thrives and flourishes, and it cannot but
 “ do so, so long as it has the Smiles and
 “ Sun-shine of the Court to nurse and che-
 “ rish it. What then can I do more for my
 “ God or the Honour of his Name? I can
 “ say, I have fought a good Fight; and
 “ since the Battel is not to the Active, nor
 “ Success to the Diligent, I wish I might
 “ say, I have finished my Course. It is e-
 “ nough, it is high time to lay down my
 “ Arms and give over, when I bear ’em
 “ but in vain.

Such Reasoning seems to be couch’d under the Speech in *Little*, and other Passages in the History make it presumable it was

1 King. 18. *his.* The *shewing himself unto Akab*, as the
 15. Lord commanded him, argued his *Jealousy*
for the Lord of Hosts, and that he could
 confront Power and look Perils in the Face:

Ch. 19. 9. The withdrawing into a *Cave*, when he
 should have proceeded in his Journey for
 the Conversion of *Israel*, implied his De-
 spondency, and that he look’d upon it as
 unfeasible. His Defence too of that

v. 10. Retreat, in these Words, *The Children*
of Israel have forsaken thy Covenant,
thrown down thy Altars, and slain thy
Prophets with the Sword, and I even I
only am left, and they seek my Life to
take

take it away, looketh the same way, and contains a strong Presumption of future Miscarriage and Disappointment. Whence it follows undeniably, 'twas his Trouble, to see the true Worship under Frown and Discountenance that begot in him this vehement Desire of shutting his Eyes for ever, not any want of Courage and Bravery to espouse and appear for it. Whereas too many stand more in awe of the World than of their own Consciences, and prefer the Charge of Sin to the Censure of Singularity: He as solitary as he thought himself in the Warfare against *Baal* and his potent Votaries, manfully stood his Ground, and would not yield to Menaces and Terrors. But yet *the filthy Conversation of the Wicked vexing his righteous Soul from day to day*, He could not forbear crying out with Earnestness, *O that it had Wings like a Dove, that it might fly away and be at rest! O that it might return to God that gave it!*

The same Mind was even in the great Apostle: He had a doubt upon him which to chuse, Life or Death; but his Desire was rather fix'd upon the Last. After some Contention within himself, indeed he did chuse the Former in Duty to God whose Glory would be promoted, and in Kindness to the *Philippians* whose Faith would be furthered by his Abode in the Flesh. And had *Elijah* had the same encouraging Prospect

Phil. i.

23.

spect before him in reference to the *Israelites*, there is no doubt but for the Good of Souls he would have been a willing Prisoner much longer in the same incommodious Earthly Tabernacle. When *St. Paul* acknowledges that Desire, he does not mention the uneasy Confinement of his Bonds, and the continual Hardships of his Condition, as the Ground of it, but the expected Fruition of Christ's Presence. And we may be assur'd that tho' *Elijah* could not be over-fond of his Distresses, yet he had nobler Ends in view, when he press'd for a Dissolution, than a Deliverance from them; even the blessed *Euge* of *Well done good and faithful Servant*, and an immediate Admission into the *Joy of his Lord*.

Again, the Request was too strict and confining in point of *Time*. The very next Minute is greedily seiz'd on as proper for its Accomplishment. *Now, O Lord, take away my Life*, says the forward Supplicant, as if the Times and the Seasons were absolutely in his own Power. What! Did he not know that this was a Right which belong'd unto God, who first set the Wheels of Time a-going, by a kind of sacred Inclosure, and that he will not give to another? Was it not enough to ask a Favour, but he must point out, when it should be done? When we make our Court to Men like our selves, we are more resigning.

We

We should be glad of a present Obligation, and are prepar'd to give it a thousand Welcomes; but we do not insist upon it. And yet here Delays are dangerous, and often frustrate a kind Intention. Whereas the Divine Purposes must and will stand, are liable to no Uncertainty, nor capable of a Defeat. *Now* and *Hereafter* to God are both alike, and no Design can slip through the Hands of Omnipotence. It ill became *Elijah* thus to limit his Maker, and straiten him up in fulfilling a Petition.

But however there is room for Pleas and Extenuations to come in. Great would have been the ill Consequences of dying by the Sword of *Jezabel*, and these, 'tis like, were then under Reflection. Had this dire Event happen'd; How would the Adversaries have triumph'd; how would they among the Heathen have flurted at *Elijah's* God, and made a Jest of his Divinity? What insulting Speeches and ridiculous Taunts would have been vented every where? " With
 " all his loud Pretensions to a Spirit of Pro-
 " phesy, this Enthusiastick Fellow could
 " not foresee his own Destruction, much less
 " guard against it. With all his proud Boasts
 " of Miracles, this pitiful Wonder-worker
 " could not save himself, that would have
 " been thought to save others. The God
 " whom he served, was not able to deli-
 " ver him out of our Hands, or not at lei-
 " sure

ELIJAH'S *Supplication.*

“ sure to look to his own Votary. The
 “ Zealot should have *cryed aloud*, for per-
 “ *adventure he slept*, and should be *wa-*
 “ *ked* out of his dull Repose; or made
 “ nearer Approaches, for peradventure he
 “ was *talking*, *pursuing* or *travelling*, and
 “ should have been whisper'd in the Ear,
 “ in order to draw off his Attention from
 “ Affairs of lesser Moment. And how
 would such satyrical Invectives, in Conjun-
 ction with the surprizing Accident, have
 strengthen'd the Interest of *Baal*, and help'd
 to establish it by a Law? No one, after
 this, would have open'd his Mouth in a
 Scoff, or set at nought his Priests; but in
 a little time, his *Magnificence* had been as
 sacred as that of *the Great Goddess Diana*,
whom all Asia and the World worshipped.
 All this, to be sure, run a-cross the Pro-
 phet's Thoughts, and disquieted him above
 Measure, when he spake so unadvisedly
 with his Lips. His Heart was hot with-
 in him, and the Fervour of his Zeal broke
 out into an intemperate Fit of Devotion.
 “ Now do thou, O Lord, take away my
 “ Life, lest if thou be, as tho' thou hea-
 “ rest not, I be suddenly cut off by thy E-
 “ nemies and mine, and so commence in
 “ *Character* as well as *Person*, a Subject of
 “ Reproach and Laughter to all that are
 “ round about me.

Nor was Piety only at the bottom, but *Humility* too: Otherwise he had not made so Self-disparaging a Comparison, and urg'd it as an Argument in the Case. *For I am not better than my Fathers.* The Meaning is, "The other Prophets that stood up for thy Great Name with Gallantry and Resolution, fell a Sacrifice notwithstanding to Rage and Fury; and what am I that I should have the Credit of surviving in spite of them? They were worthier to live, and as capable of serving thee, no doubt, and yet those chosen Vessels were broken to pieces by the Hands of Violence. To what purpose then should I be reserved? Can I supply the Room of such glorious Sages and heroick Champions? Can my single Example stem the Tide of spreading Iniquity; my unseconded Discourse bring that way of Worship which is every where spoken against into vogue and fashion? Thy Religion lieth gasping in the Land, and it is next to impossible, my most vigorous Efforts should give it a Revival. O that I could overcome Evil with Good, and set on Foot a general Reformation! But since I cannot, Lord, now let thy Servant depart in Peace, and be gathered to his Fathers.

This Dispute, as such, I confess, is faulty, but yet humble withal. Indeed it was not at all his Business to argue, but to obey.

Being

Being sent on a Divine Errand, he should not have pronounc'd it ineffectual, because humanly unpromising. The successless Attempts of others should have been no damping to his Endeavours. God who for wise Reasons, known only to himself, denied Efficacy to the former, might, for ought he knew to the contrary, have as good for granting it to the latter. And therefore he was to blame for giving way to fearful Apprehensions, and inferring a future Miscarriage from former ones. Notwithstanding, something may be said that will a little relieve his Credit in this Particular. His Apprehensions sprang from a poor Opinion of himself; his Eye was fixt upon personal Defects, and he could not mean to set Bounds to the Power of God.

Thus I have illustrated *Elijah's* Carriage in the Text, and the Consideration of it will suggest to us several useful Inferences.

As first, It teacheth us that *absolute* Perfection in Holiness and Vertue is not, never was, an *human* Attainment. For as in other parts of Scripture we find Hatred join'd with Devotion in *David*, Hastiness with Meekness in *Moses*, Peevishness with Patience in *Job*, Diffidence with Sincerity in the Disciples, and a great Alloy of Infirmities with excellent Graces in *St. Paul*. So here we see that tho' *Elijah* was an Instance of extraordinary

traordinary Vertues, he was a Man too of like Passions with other Mortals.

Could any thing be more generous and noble, I had almost said, meritorious, than his faithful Adherence to God's Service, in a time of barefac'd Idolatry and prevailing Wickedness? Princes did sit and speak against him, the Multitude *laid wait for the Righteous, because he was not for their Turn, and clean contrary to their Doings.* His Presence and Example offended the Vicious, as the Noon-day-Sun does distemper'd Eyes, and fain would they have put out the *Light* which troubled them. But for all this, he was bluff and resolute, and would not bend or warp at all from his Integrity, to meet or strike in with popular Humour and Practice. He still *objected to their Infamy the transgressings of their Education,* and their Spight to *his Life* could not take him off from leading it unsuitably to *theirs.* And now is it possible any *Weaknesses* should find a Place in him that was the *Strength of Israel,* and Bulwark of Religion? Alas! Even this mighty Hero had his Errors and his Frailties. He rashly pronounces himself singular in the Worship of the *Lord Jehovab,* whenas there were left seven thousand that had not bowed their Knees unto *Baal* in *Israel* it self; besides the whole Church of *Judab,* which served God according to the Prescript of

his holy Law, under the Government of good *Jehosaphat*. And in Consequence of that uncharitable Conceit insisted upon't, that Heaven should instantly take him, Its suppos'd only Votary, from off the Earth!

The Supposition was *bad*, and the Use he made of it *worse*. For had the Ungodly been so exceedingly numerous, a good Man could the less be spared, who alone had it in his Power to season human Converse, and refresh the languid Notions of Good and Evil. And could it become such a one, when the World so much needed him, by way of Antidote against the Poison, to get out of it if he could. A Retreat at such a time might be Nature's Choice, but not a great Soul's, which delights in hard Services for a sinking Church, and will either bear it up or fall with it.

Precedents then are never to be trusted; and before we make them our *Rule*, we must compare them with *another*, the Word of God, or else we shall walk neither uprightly nor surely.

2. Hence we learn the great Necessity of a *constant* Guard and *Watchfulness* over our frail Natures. Many are Man's Infirmities, and this is one of them, that he is apt to trust too much to a present good Disposition, and to conclude himself in no Danger of acting against his Duty, because he is now resolv'd to stand by it under all Circumstances

cumstances of Temptation. Alas! such Self-Confidence is very unpromising and suspicious; and if Vertue has no better Armour about it than this, she is in a most pitiable Case. Were general good Purposes to be relyed upon, as sufficient to bear us up against all Temptations, there would be no accounting for the many Failures and Imperfections that stick to the Characters of the greatest Saints that ever lived. *Elijah*, no doubt, when he set out on the *Prophetick* Charge, carried with him a sincere Intention of performing it without demur or scruple. Indeed his first Addresses look'd like an Earnest of this, and seem'd to bespeak an Heart equal to the Undertaking. For how did he confront the wicked *Abab* upon his own Ground, and answer *Falshoods* with *Truths* as bold as those were impudent; that is, being upbraided with *Israel's Troubles*, attribute them to *him and his Father's House* that were the guilty Cause of them? And yet when Danger came more in view, he was almost stagger'd by it. He falls to questioning his Strength and Abilities for his Post, tho' sure to be seconded by Power infinite. He lets Fancy bring in an unproportionate Account of impending Difficulties, and then Flesh and Blood press for an Exemption from the Conflict.

1 King. 18.
17, 18.

We have a like Instance of human Fickleness in no less a Person than *St. Peter*, but with this Difference, that whereas the former only stumbled, he fell. How ready was the Apostle in promising, protesting, and resolving that he would adhere to *Christ*, even to the Death? And to do him right, his Honesty equall'd his Presumption. He had a Zeal for *Jesus*, and he show'd it by drawing his Sword in his Master's Quarrel. Notwithstanding this Man of Forwardness gave back, and he that had declar'd so stoutly, *Tho' I die, yet will I not deny thee*, did cowardly deny him, without any such imminent Peril as that of dying. Nay, he did more than deny, he forswore his Lord, and Vows were followed with Imprecations.

And now if the very *Pillars* of Religion were shaken, what a Lesson of Humility and Caution is this to a *common* Vertue? How jealous should we be of our selves and our best Resolutions, how diligent in the use of all holy means to confirm and strengthen them? The greatest Care will be little enough in a religious Course. Our Feet are feeble, and the Ways slippery, and therefore it concerns us to look to the one, and to beseech God that he would follow us with his Grace throughout the other. Under such Protection only, can we travel on with Comfort, and when the

Stage

Stage is at an end, arrive joyfully at the Land of Blessedness.

3. The Unfuitableness of *Elijah's* Prayer serves to enforce the Advice of *Solomon*, that *our Hearts* be not *hasty to utter any thing before God*. The Business of Devotion is too serious a Matter to be sudden upon, and no less requires Thought to precede than Affection to accompany it.

Had the Prophet took up as much time in weighing the Subject-Matter of his Address, as he did in bewailing the Occasion, I am persuaded he had let it drop, and laid his Hand upon his Mouth. And there is as much Reason to suppose, that had the two aspiring Sons of *Zebedee* given way to Reflection, before they ask'd *to sit the one on Christ's Right Hand, and the other on the Left, in His Kingdom*, they had never incur'd the Imputation and the Guilt of *knowing not what they asked*.

Extempore-Ejaculations are very obnoxious to Disorder and Mistake; and it is well if he that throweth 'em out does not get a *Stone* instead of *Bread*, and *Scorpions* instead of *Fish*.

4. *Elijah's* Error in saying *It is enough*, in judging the Work or Business cut out for him was at an end, ought to check and moderate the Desires of Death. His Views were too narrow and contracted. So far was he from having finish'd the Work which

God gave him to do, and made a Riddance great enough to clear the way for a Dissolution, that when he desisted a little, and retired from it, there immediately came a Voice unto him, full of Anger and Rebuke, *What dost thou here, Elijah!* And unless our Pride be very great, we can't pretend our short-sightedness is less. We know 'tis our Part to take Pains in the Vineyard, but our Master only knows the Extent and Duration of our Task. After many Years spent in his Service, it is Presumption to say it is enough, it is high time to rest from our Labours. We cannot have accomplish'd, as Hirelings, our Day, so long as *the Lord delayeth his coming.* And therefore we must never offer at the importunate Speech of *Jonah, Take now, I beseech thee, my Life from me.* David's Petition was much wiser, *O spare me a little,* who was sensible he had not done God so much Service but he might do him yet more. *Job's Soliloquy* far more becoming, *All the Days of my appointed Time will I wait 'till my Change come.*

5. *Elijah's Mistake,* as to the Efficacy of a steady Opposition to Blasphemy and Vice, and the Censure it met withal at the Hands of God, are standing Arguments against an heartless Inactivity and a timorous Vertue. In profligate and troublous times, a true Christian, that takes to Heart the Concerns of
Reli-

Religion, may more easily put the Question than get it answered in the Affirmative, *Who will rise up with me against the wicked, and take God's Part against the Evil-Doers?* Every body will be ready with an
 " I pray thee, have me excused; I am but
 " a single Person, and one or two are as
 " good as none against *the World of the Un-*
 " *godly.* I beseech you then sit down in
 " Quietness, and do not play the *Fury* in
 " Religion; but if your *over-hot* Comple-
 " xion will not hear Reason, as for me
 " and my House, we shall practise it, and
 " content our selves with praying for the
 " Prosperity of *Jerusalem.*

But such lazy *Laodicean* Objections as these may find a Reply in the History before us. For did the solemn Plea for Backwardness and Silence, which seem'd so substantial in the false Scales of Flesh and Blood, weigh much in the Balance of the Sanctuary, *viz. The Children of Israel have forsaken thy Covenant, — and I, even I only am left* to grapple with the many formidable Advocates of Idolatry and Superstition? Yea did it not grate the Ears of the Almighty, and protract the Vouchsafement of his special Presence? And when he did discover himself in the *still Voice*, was not that Voice, tho' a Whisper, a Reprimand? Notwithstanding the grave Pretence, the former Challenge is repeated, "*What dost*

“ *thou here, Elijah?* Here in the desolate
 “ Wilderness where are none of the lost
 “ Sheep of the House of *Israel* whom thou
 “ art to seek and to bring back to the Fold
 “ of God. Thou hast been very jealous
 “ for me, as thou sayest; but do not trou-
 “ ble thy self or me with a fruitless Con-
 “ cernment about my Glory; leave that to
 “ me, and go thou on thy way, discharge
 “ the Commands I give thee. Dost thou
 “ think thy Prophetick Commission is no
 “ longer of force than thy Fears would
 “ have it to be? As solitary and helpless
 “ as you make your self in my Service,
 “ you are as a Preacher of Righteousness,
 “ and Instrument of Vengeance to bring
 “ about a great Revolution in Religion;
 “ nor are there wanting a competent num-
 “ ber of true *Israelites* to back and second
 “ you. I have secured my Truth, my
 “ Worship, my Glory at a better rate than
 “ thou canst imagine.

And now may not God's condescensive Reasoning about the Events of his Providence serve to lift up the Hands which hang down, and strengthen the feeble Knees that are apt to sink under the weight of a general Corruption in Principle and Practice? When whole Floods of Ungodliness run down our Streets as a mighty Stream, it seems, a *Private* Piety must not give way upon cowardly Apprehensions. If it does

its best, it may probably raise a Bank against the polluted Torrent of the Age, and check the spreading Contagion, by inviting the Powers of Heaven, and the Forces of other Men's Zeal to its Assistance. However the Possibility of the contrary cannot justify Remissness. For the doing our Duty is what belongs to us, and the Success of that is what belongeth unto God.

6. Let it be remember'd that the honourable Springs and Motives of *Elijah's* Request for himself that he might die, ought to have the chief Sway and Influence in all our Actions.

When we reflect at once upon his Apologetick Assertion, that he *had been jealous for the Lord of Hosts*, and his ingenuous Confession, that he *was not better than his Fathers*, we cannot but think he loved his Maker exceedingly, and therefore long'd to be upon the wing because he lov'd him. Warmth of Affection made the Man of God impatient at Blasphemy and Profaness; and the Thought of utter Insufficiency for the Extirpation of them, impatient with Life it self. The Dishonours done to Religion were a Burden greater than he could bear; he was ready to burst with Resentment, and nothing promis'd relief but the silent Grave, where all disquieting Thoughts perish.

Now the same Love of God should be our governing Principle, the same Glory of God our ultimate Aim. Only there lies an Exception against the manner of expressing the one, and providing for the other. We must *add to Vertue Knowledge*, and take all our Rules and Measures of acting from the Word of Life ; and then there is no doubt but *Elijah's* God will give us his Blessing.

Lastly, I would add a practical Remark on the *wise* and *just* Conduct of God in reference to his *Prophet*. The foregoing Discourse sets him out as a well-meaning, but mistaken Person, as one who was true to his God, and steady to his Principles ; but yet receiv'd undue Impressions by the gloomy state of Things, and thereupon fell into some Undecencies in his Intercourse with Heaven. The dark *Scene* fill'd him with Melancholy and Disorder ; and while God meant it unto good, he was always prophesying Evil to himself and his Cause from it. Here then was an unhappy mixture of *Zeal* and *Solicitude* ; and how should it have been treated ? If silly Man had been here concern'd, he had overlook'd one part of the Character in regard or in resentment of the other ; and it had been an even lay, whether the *Tisbite* would have went off with *Invective* or *Commendation*. For this is the common measure of judging. If the
Party

Party spoken of, or under Verdict, be a Child or Friend, he has Vertues without number, but no Faults! The ill Qualities are swallow'd up in the *Relation*. If an Enemy or Rival, he has as many Faults, but not a dash of Vertue! At least, his Defects are blazon'd, but his Excellencies must not appear.

But such Partiality as this is no Copy from the *Divine* Procedure. The supreme Judge of all, we are sure, acted otherwise in *Elijah's* Case. His Servant had starts of Misbehaviour, and he corrects him for them. His Servant hung back in the Work appointed him thro' an over-thoughtfulness about Consequences, and he spurs him on with Rebukes. And yet Approbation, if it attended not Censure, followed it. His Merit was not lost in his Infirmities. He was translated alive into a better World, to proclaim how eminently he had served God in this; and he appear'd again with *Moses* at the *Transfiguration*, as the Chief or Representative of the Prophets, to signify that *Moses* and the *Prophets* had in their several Seasons given Testimony of *Jesus*.

Thus the *Almighty* proportions Favour to Desert, and has regard in recompencing not to single Actions, but to the general Tenour of Conversation. And so ought we, most certainly, in our dealings with one another. Affection and Aversion have
nothing

nothing to do in *Characters*. The main Course of a Man's Life is the thing to be considered ; and if that be regular or disorderly, it is not here and there a little variation from it that should turn the Scale for Reproach or Honour. The Frailties of the Good may justly crave a covering ; the devout Fits of the Wicked do hardly deserve a mention.

HAMAN'S

HAMAN'S Discontent.

ESTHER V. 13.

Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the King's Gate.

AS nothing is more natural to the mind of Man than to look back upon past Transactions, and trace the Footsteps of former Times, so nothing is more improving than the Knowledge of them. *History* is indeed the Mirror of Life and Conduct, and has the kindest Aspect both upon our Sentiments and our Morals. It supplies the room of personal Experience, and furnisheth us with Prudence at the easy rate of reading for it. By acquainting us with the Opinions and Sayings of the Men of Business and Converse, it opens the World to our view, and helpeth to frame a true Idea of Things and Persons. By giving us an Account of Events and Consequences, it directs what is fit to be done in a parallel Case,

Cafe, and pointeth out the unhappy Rocks against which others have dash'd.

Hence it is that *sacred* Writ, which was design'd to make us wise for this World, and *wise unto Salvation*, aboundeth so much with Characters and Memoirs. The Lives here recorded are very numerous, and historical Passages almost infinite. Besides *the Chronicles of the Kings* in the Old Testament, and *the Acts of the Apostles* in the New, there are large Accounts and Descriptions even of privater Persons. And all are written for our Learning and Admonition, upon whom the Ends of the World are come. And therefore all are proper to be illustrated in their Turn. But none is more instructive perhaps than the *Story* of wicked *Haman*, none affords a greater Plenty of profitable Speculations and Remarks. And this was the reason why I chose this Speech of his, or solemn Conclusion, for the *Groundwork* or rather *Substance* of my following Discourse. *Yet all this availeth me nothing, &c.*

In handling which Words, I shall

I. Enquire what *All that* was, which he says, *availed him nothing* as to Happiness or Satisfaction.

II. Consider the Reason here assign'd of its Insufficiency to make him happy.

III. and Lastly, deduce some useful Inferences by way of Application.

And

And 1. What that was which *Haman* says was insignificant as to the Purpose of Happiness and Satisfaction, the foregoing Verses expressly inform us.

But then the Subject-matter of them is such, that it is not every one that will care for the Information. For he is there mustering up the Darlings of human Affection, in order to their disparagement, and to set them out as things that little deserve to be so. Every thing that the Earth can boast of or Man desire, hath a Place in his *slighted* Inventory.

Is a plentiful Fortune the general Idol of greedy Mortals? There *he telleth* us of *the Glory of his Riches*. Is a numerous Issue one Ingredient of temporal Felicity? There *he telleth* us of *the multitude of his Children*. Is Civil Grandeur another Object of Admiration? There *he telleth* us of *all the things wherein the King had promoted him, and how he had advanc'd him above the Princes and Servants of the King*.

Are Royal Notice and Court-distinctions marks of common Envy? There *he also telleth* us of *Queen Esther's* singular Observance and Partiality in his Favour, *that she let no Man come in with the King unto the Banquet that she had prepared but himself, and that on the morrow he was invited unto her also with the King*.

Such were the bright and glittering Circumstances of *Haman*, and according to vulgar Notion, he could not fail of Solace and sweet Contentment under them. But if we will take his own word for't, who best knew his own Case, *All this*, that is, All that was in the World, the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life, even this mighty *All* was an empty *Nothing*, far from laying any solid Foundation for Ease and Happiness. A strange and shocking Sentence this, in Air and Appearance full of Absurdity and Contradiction! But we cannot help believing it, when regard is had to the weight and solemnity of its Circumstances.

First, The Quality of the Man that pass'd it, is no inconsiderable Evidence.

Had he stood related to the *Schools*, his *Sincerity* might justly have been call'd in question. For we know the *Heathen* Sages had not much of *this* to boast of. They led their Days as in a Scene, and only perforated a Contempt of all things. Whatever they pleaded in behalf of Vertue was but Flourish; whatever they said against Earthly Glories was but Declamation. Their Thoughts and their Tongues look'd quite different ways; and whilst the World was seemingly thrust off, it was their dear Mistress still, and they lov'd it to their very Hearts. As much as they run it *down*,

they did not live *above* it; they only affected the being thought to do so; and this Affectation set their Satyr o' work, and bid 'em cry out, *All is Vanity.*

Nor is this the whole or worst of their *Story*, that they were given to *Rhodomontade* and Boasting. Ignorance or Envy often lay at the bottom. For they were, most of them, private Persons; and being so, had too much Temptation to undervalue Greatness out of ill Manners, too little Experience to despise it out of Magnanimity. 'Tis necessary to converse with it in all its Degrees for one that would condemn it a-right. At least a Verdict upon Fact will not be heard, that has no Support but from Speculation and Conjecture.

But *Haman*, instead of a *Philosopher*, was a *Courtier*, and therefore his Assertion looks rather like an Opinion, than a Rant or the Language of his Profession. For as Men of that *Character* seldom let such a levelling Speech drop from them; so whenever they do, it is presumable they speak with Thought, with *too much* Thought, as constrain'd thereto by the uneasiness it gives them: Such Talk being ordinarily too mortified for *King's Palaces*, too unfashionable to suit *soft Cloathing*.

Or had he been born and bred up under the *Mosaick OEconomy*, his Discourse might have been imputed to his *Education*. For,

we know, the *Old Testament-Worthies* became in Disposition, what they were in Condition, *Strangers upon Earth*, and looking for a *Better Country*, flighted and disregarded *This* as a very bad one. And it was but natural for their Children to take after them, both in point of Sentiment and Dialect; and consequently to have but a low and mean Apprehension of all Temporalities, and the meanest Phrases too, to express it by.

But instead of a *Jew*, *Haman* was an *Heathen*, and therefore his Assertion could not be the result of Prejudice, but of *Experience*. For *the Gentiles* enjoying but shallow Notions of an *Hereafter*, if one of them could say, It is not good for us to be *here*, we may be sure nothing but Conviction drew out the Confession, and that he had too much ground for making it.

But farther, this *Confession* must needs be rational, because *deliberate*.

Every hard Expression that is bestowed either on Men or Things, is not presently depended on; but we examine Circumstances before we allow it a faithful Account either of the Mind or Case. And there is occasion enough for that Enquiry; for many times that which is *seemingly* told for a Truth, is only an *Invective*, and the Speaker *really* means no more by it. And of this the common Reflections upon *Mammon*

are an Instance. An Indisposition, a Dis-
 aster, an undervaluing Representation, shall
 of a sudden strike him out of our good
 Graces; and during the transport of the
 Impression, our Looks, our Discourses, e-
 very thing is loud against him. But yet
 the whole Scene must go for nothing. For
 it may be said, a Man that is sick has sel-
 dom his taste true. 'Tis plain we are not
then mov'd by the Reason of the Case, but
 hurried on by a Disgust, the rise whereof is
 sudden, and the continuance short. Such
hasty Characters are no more to be heeded,
 than the Opinion of the Feverish touching
 Liquors. If either answers to Fact and
 Nature, 'tis pure Accident; and the wise
 Man will appeal from both to a cool Head,
 and a healthful Body for Satisfaction.

But tho' other Men's profess'd Indiffe-
 rence to the World may appear suspicious,
Haman's Case bears a different Complection.
 We do not read he had any Complaint a-
 gainst his Constitution. His Disorder laid
 not in the Body but the Mind. We do not
 read he was advanc'd in Years, or got with-
 in view of the Days of Darkness. This
 was no Sick-bed Qualm, no melancholy
 Meditation of old Age. Nothing else could
 have been expected from decrepit *Barzillai*;
 but it came, no doubt, from vigorous *Ha-*
man with surprize. We do not read he
 had any grave Lecture made him upon the

World's Emptiness, and his own Frailty by an unhappy *Recluse*, whom Retirement had kept in Ignorance, or a spiteful *Diogenes*, whom Pride had made rude towards his Betters. As for his *Domesticks* and Dependents, they were better vers'd in the Stile of Courts and Methods of ingratiating, than to draw his Picture to disadvantage. They adore his pompous Estate, and recommend a lofty and chearful Air as what would best suit it.

We read indeed of a certain Disappointment that put him upon thus expressing himself; but yet we find he did not thus express himself till after long Pensive-ness and serious Debate. The Scripture says, *He was full of Indignation against Mordecai; nevertheless he refrained himself.* Repentment, especially in its first Fervours, was ever a bad Disputant; and had he given it an immediate vent in such Reflections, they would have, seemingly at least, smelt too strongly of Passion to go for Oracles or clear Reasoning. But he arrested it, that the Mud might have some time to settle again, and Reason to rally all its Forces, before he delivered his Thoughts on the solemn Occasion. He makes for home; and when he came there, instead of receiving a damp from others, he calleth them together, to communicate that Impression to them. Instead of breaking out presently

into

into an hot Fit or Agony upon the Subject of Grievances, with great Coolness and Temper he harangues in a full Audience upon his Affluence and Prosperity; and when he had set them off with the Varnishes and Amplifications of Rhetorick, then the Censure of Vanity follows. As if he meant to let 'em see he understood his Text, and could maintain it, notwithstanding the utmost Gloss that could be set on the gay Objections that appear'd against it.

Thus, we see, he could not be made happy by *worldly Greatness*; let us consider the reason here assign'd of its Insufficiency to make him so. *All this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the King's Gate.*

How! The sight of *Mordecai* turn the Stomach of *Haman*, and convert all his Sweets into Bitterness! This is as hard methinks as it is wonderful, that one Man cannot enjoy himself upon beholding another! What was the secret Spring of this Disquietude, what the hidden meaning of the Speech? Was it a Sence of his Brother's Misery that barr'd personal Fruition? Was it a Concern for *Mordecai's* sitting unreliev'd at the King's Gate, that made his Seat at the King's Table pricking and uneasy to him? Were there any melancholly Languishings in the other's Eyes, any silent

HAMAN'S Discontent.

Discoveries of want to beget tender Relen-tings, inward stirrings of Humanity in his *Heart*? Miserable Objects certainly are very troublesome and affecting. Nature will not let us be at rest, so long as there is Distress within view.

But it does not appear there was here such Emptiness of Bowels on the one Hand, or Impressions of Sympathy on the other. *Mordecai*, tho' a Captive, was hardly so necessitous as *Lazarus*; but if he were, 'tis like *Haman* was full as hard-hearted as *Di-ives*, and scorn'd the Weaknesses of Pity and Compassion.

Was the sight of *Mordecai* offensive to him, as bringing to mind his former Mean-ness and Obscurity? Time was, it may be, when he had more Familiarity with the *King's Gate* than his *Table*. At least his Advancement to the Top-pinnacle of Honour bore Date but yesterday; and how could the Mushroom Upstart bear the least Remembrance of his humbler State? Why did the *Jew* become an Eye-fore to the *A-malekite*, and by his stooping Postures at once declare what himself now was, and hint to the other what he had been? Truly *Mordecai* was not so ready at his Devotion, nor *Haman* so quick of Apprehension in that respect to his own Disturbance. Had he been otherwise well dispos'd, his Reflection upon former things would have

set a better Relish upon the present; or if it did give them an ill taste, he could soon have remedied the Matter, either by a Diversion of his Thoughts, or a Promotion of his Inferiour.

Was the sight of *Mordecai* irksome and afflictive, as calling to Mind his wicked Plots and Contrivances against him and his Countrymen? Did Conscience hence take Occasion to upbraid him with the Barbarity of his Temper, and the Abuse of his Court-Interest? No, had his Design sat uneasy on his Mind, he would immediately have dropped it, and so got rid of the Burthen. But so far was he from letting fall his first Intentions, that he prosecuted them to the utmost; and the Presence of the Object did but render him the more eager for their Accomplishment. The Scripture says, when *his Wife and his Friends*, those Bosom-Councillors of Mischiefe, put him upon soliciting the Execution of *Mordecai*, *the thing pleas'd Haman, and he caused a Gallows to be made.*

Lastly, Was he jealous of *Mordecai*, apprehensive of a future Competition from him? Did he think the poor Man was laying Trains to blow him up, or watching an Opportunity to worm him out, and skrew himself into Royal Favour? If he entertain'd such gloomy Conceits as these, they were enough to distract his Mind, and throw it

off the Hinges. For Rivalties, even when they are not powerful, are vexatious. But 'tis very improbable he should. 'Tis true, *Mordecai* had Claims and Pretensions very considerable. For to him the King ow'd his Life, and consequently the Kingdom its Quietness. But there was no visible Step made towards satisfying them. His Services were quite overlook'd, and his Hopes at an end. His sitting at the Gate did by no means look like an Interest in the Palace; and his Distance from the Ministry promis'd nothing less than a supplanting of the prime Minister of State. Could he have foreseen the Inversion of the Wheel of Providence, and what was to be *done to the Man whom the King delighted to Honour?* And that he himself should be made the Instrument in doing it, his Anticipations of the sorrowful Tragedy would have bore Proportion with his After-resentments.

But there was no room for Prefage and Suspicion. The Sunshine at Court continued, no Clouds of Dislike were observ'd to gather. The Queen interceded for his Admission to one Banquet that she had prepared, and then to another; and the King readily consented to that Act of Grace and Condescension. And tho' there was something more at the bottom of the Request than Courtesy, yet *Haman* with all his Sagacity could smell out nothing else. By
 shewing

shewing Respect to the King's great Favourite, she meant, no doubt, to insinuate her self into his Favour, in Order to get a Reverse of that heavy Edict which he had sign'd for the Destruction of her People. But the Thoughts of her self-admiring Guest were terminated on the Credit of the Entertainment; and good Reason for't, since *Absuerus* had but lately said, *The Silver which thou offerest as the Price of Blood is given to thee for thy own Use; the People also which thou wouldst have at thy Mercy, to do with them as it seemeth good unto thee.* Nay, *Esther* her self, as much as she tender'd *Mordecai's* Welfare, dreamt not of his Promotion, and the King as little intended it. A Divine Suggestion brought his Merit into Consideration, and a Chance-Smile Esth: 4. rais'd him up to Dignity and Honour. In short, he was forgotten 'till it was almost too late to remember him.

How came *Mordecai* then to be so frightful a Spectacle, so grievous to behold? *Haman* had the Royal Ear at will, and seem'd secure in his Prince's Affection. All the Subjects of *Persia* made their Court at his *Levee*, and it was thought a Preferment but to please him. But all this was as good as nothing to him, so long as he saw the contemptible Captive sitting at the King's Gate.

If we carry our Eye back to the ninth Verse, the Mystery will be out. For thence we learn, 'twas not the Man's abiding at the Gate, but his *sitting* at it, when the stately Sir made his Approaches, that gall'd and fretted him. He should have stood up to him who shew'd *the Great Man* in every step, and made Obeisance; but he did not, and for this grand unpardonable Omission *Haman was full of Indignation against Mordecai*, and perfectly out of Conceit with all his Glory.

Alas poor Wretch! to be thus dispirited upon so cheap and homely an Occasion! His Grandeur, he thought, *availed him nothing*, because it could not protect him from Rudeness and Incivility. And truly I think it did avail him nothing, whom it could not raise above the Notice and Resentment of them. For was it not enough to be caress'd by a Royal Master, but he must be saluted too by the very Slave? And when the latter happened to betray his want of Breeding, should *he* have discover'd his want of Temper? Was not the fatal Decree more bitter than the neglectful Carriage? And could not the Danger of the Neck excuse *afterwards* the Adoration of the Knee? Besides, what is a lowly Posture but a forc'd Submission; or if voluntary, but the Homage of Design? And must it not therefore
be

be a little Spirit *indeed*, that is enamour'd of a little Ceremony?

'Tis plain, by his reserv'd way of Expression, our Grandee was self-condemn'd, and to his very Friends car'd not to enlarge upon the Grounds of his inward Trouble. It is resolv'd by him and them, *Mordecai* must be sacrific'd; but 'tis not expressly said he was to fall a Victim to Revenge. No, as great a Fool of *Quality* as he appear'd to be, his Folly came not up to the ridiculous Madness of some *modern* Gentlemen, who when they meet with an ill-plac'd Word, or an untoward Action, presently demand the Blood of the offending Party under the whimsical fantastick Notion of *Satisfaction*. The proud thing in the Text could not cast a willing Eye upon the unmannerly *Jew*; but still the stiffness of the Demeanour which begot that Horror in his Person, makes not a Syllable in the mournful Speech, nor even in the heavy Accusation. For so the Indictment runs, *There is a certain People scattered abroad in all the Provinces of thy Kingdom, who keep not the King's Laws, therefore it is not for the King's Profit to suffer them.* *Mordecai's* Neglect was the Grievance which gave Birth to this Complaint, but yet we find it was complain'd of, not as a personal Affront to *Haman*, but as a Breach of that general Reverence which the King had commanded concerning him.

Esth. 3. 8.

And

And 'tis worth observing, that those who started the Project of destroying *Mordecai*, were unwilling there should be any the least Appearance of a vindictive Temper in it. For 'twas thought adviseable that having obtain'd an Order for his Execution, he should go in merrily with the

Esth. 5:14. King unto the Banquet; and why, but to disguise his Passion, and to avoid the Reproach of harbouring it.

They had, it seems, a right Notion of Revenge, and conceiv'd it would make the great Mortal look but little: For the World therefore he must not own it, but play the part of an easy happy Man in his Countenance, even with a Tempest in his Bosom.

But our mistaken Hero's are open and bare-fac'd in their Malice. When an Affront is given, the Life of him who gave it is challeng'd, and they esteem it but a *just Debt* to their *Honour*, but a *necessary Vindication* of their *Character*, to insist upon it. Whereas, sure, it would be infinitely more honourable, to appear unconcern'd and regardless of petty Provocations, such at least as are too petty to come under the Notice of Civil Justice! For what can be a greater Credit than to keep our Happiness in our Power, and scorn to be turn'd out of it by the Unworthiness and Miscarriages of others? What a more despicable Meaness than to lye open to Discomposure,

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and suffer our Thoughts to be ruffled, and our Passions rais'd at the Pleasure of sorry Wretches? A resentful Disposition is a mighty Leveller, yea giveth the Enemy, how much soever otherwise our Inferiour, a kind of Superiority over us. In the midst of pompous Parade and glittering Accommodations, to say as it were with Finger in Eye, *All this availeth me nothing*, so long as such a one that disoblig'd me is out of the reach of my Vengeance, is like the Cry of humourfome *Children*, who fall out with all their pretty *Play-Things* upon the least Rub or Disappointment in their Sports, walk off, and stand sullen in a Corner. And it cannot be denied but that angry *Haman* in the Palace made a much leaner Figure than *Mordecai* in the Gate.

Having sufficiently, I hope, illustrated the Particulars of the Text, I proceed to the last Thing propos'd, which was to shew what practical Inferences may be drawn from the Consideration of them.

And *first*, The melancholy Words of *Haman*, back'd with the Authority of *Solomon*, should teach us to lay aside all Expectation of true and perfect Felicity upon Earth.

The one was the highest of Subjects, and the other the most glorious of Princes, and so could not but have Art and Nature entirely at their Service. They made the
most

most of their Senses, and laid their Hands upon all sublunary Enjoyments, and so could not but be competent Judges of the worth and value of them. And yet hear what an humbling Motto is inscrib'd upon *All things under the Sun!* This pronounces them *Vanity*, That with Emphasis upon Emphasis, *Vanity of Vanities, and Vexation of Spirit.* And therefore if there be a *greater* Vanity, it must be *that* of looking for Complacency and Satisfaction from them. For whose Judgment shall we be concluded by, if not by his who speaks from Experiment? And what is more likely to proceed from the Judgment, than that which a Man utters to the disadvantage of his own Condition?

Alas! these adored *Pageantries* have need of much colouring and favour. By a kind over-flourishing Fancy, they may be made to look gay and sparkle, but they will not bear the Test of a *thorough* Inspection. If examin'd to the bottom, they fall strangely short, and instead of a *Substance*, prove nothing but a *Shadow*.

2. If Men of *exalted* Stations are not plac'd beyond the reach of Trouble and Vexation, it is very unfair to grudge or repine at their *Prosperity*.

When we look up to those *above* us, our Eye is apt to fix upon the outside of their Condition, which is bright and glaring;

We observe pompous Titles and honourable Commissions, stately Portico's and gawdy Equipage; and hence we are tempted to censure Providence as blind or partial in its Distributions. But were *our ways* more equal, *those* of God would soon appear so. Did we take a perfect view of them and their Circumstances, they would be no longer such happy Creatures in our Opinion, and consequently we should see no more reason to envy them, than they have to despise us. For what? Tho' they are attended with the strain'd *Obsequiousness* of some, they experience the stubborn *Incompliances* of others. And if they are flatter'd at one time, they are affronted at another. And each kind of Treatment must be offensive, upon considering that the humble stoops are not made to them, but to their Fortunes. What? tho' the Ground they stand on is advantageous, their standing is slippery, and how fearless soever they may be of danger, they are not safe. A Captive can withhold the formality of a Cap or Knee; and a Servant can sometimes juggle out his Master. There are *Ziba's* enough in every Court to undermine a good *Mephibosheth*; and on the other hand, 'tis no rare thing under the Sun, that Gibbets provided for a *Mordecai*, snatch up a wicked *Haman*.

Let us therefore, if we must be grieving for the Promotion of others, do it out of *pity* and not ill will, since tho' they may *seem* at present the Objects of *Admiration*, it cannot be long e'er they are *really* so of *Compassion*. Let us sweeten gilded Cares and Solicitudes with a demeanour full of respect and notice; and tho' an *Haman* sitteth at the Helm, rise up before him in token of reverence, notwithstanding the contrary Precedent of *Mordecai*. For we must remember, one of them was a *Jew*, and the other an *Amalekite*, that is, of a Nation that lay under a Divine *Anathema*; but we are *Christians*, that is, *Brethren*.

Nay *Mordecai* himself, if we may credit his own words as delivered by *Apocryphal* History, meant not any *Contempt* of the Royal Favourite by his Omission that was interpreted such; but *did this*, that he might not prefer the Glory of Man above the Glory of God. The Respect exacted from him was *religious*, we may be sure, or it had never been exacted by a formal Injunction, because *Civil* Honour is always suppos'd to follow the Preferred of course; and therefore he that *could have been content with good will for the Salvation of Israel to kiss the Soles of his Enemies Feet*, would rather hazard his own Safety and theirs, than affront Heaven by falling down and worshipping him. Accordingly we must honour

honour our Superiours, but not adore them. Whilst *Flattery* complements Earthly Greatness with Epithets more than Human, and *ill Nature* loves to teaze it by neglectful usage; it is our part, and if we are acted by the sweet Genius of our Religion, it will be our Inclination too, to do all we can, within the measures of Decency, to make it easy and satisfied with it self. For it is pity, a burden that is so heavy should not be a little considered, and have all the relief that so cheap a thing as the Civility of outward Gesture can give it.

3. The sorrowful Case of *Haman* most sensibly instructs us where to lay the Charge of all the *Misery* we endure, even upon our *inordinate Affections*.

The *Passions*, like well-manag'd Servants, work together for good to those that hold 'em in with a strict Rein; but if they can get full scope and carier, they hurry us into a world of Mischief and Disquietude. *Self-love*, for instance, duly moderated, is a Friend to Nature and a Support of Being. And *Desire*, rightly applied, carries out the Soul to useful and honourable Pursuits. But what are the Excesses of them, *Pride* and *Covetousness*, but Disorder, Confusion and Ruin?

Ahab's Avarice was very remarkable; for, it seems, he could not delight himself with the most magnificent Seat in *Israel*, because of

a little Vineyard that bounded it. But his restlessness was no less so, when he found he must lose his longing, and that the Propriety was not to be purchas'd upon any

1 King. 21. Terms. *He came into his House, says the Text, heavy and displeas'd upon the forbidding Answer; he laid himself down upon his Bed, fullen and sick at heart; he turn'd away his face from the Light and Company, mopish, and as one that would not be comforted; he refus'd to eat Bread, like a Person abandon'd to Grief and Sorrow. The splendid Poms of Royalty forsooth were disgustful, the lovely Gardens of Pleasure vile, the ordinary Refreshments of Nature loathsom in this Day of his Affliction; and since he might not have that tiny Plot to furnish him with Sallads, he, kind Man, water'd it with his Tears. At length Jezebel, seeing his blubber'd Eyes continually melting over it, was constrain'd to kill and to take possession, in mere pity to the Disconsolate! To such an unmanly pitch was his Passion wound up first, and his Melancholy afterwards; whereas had his Desires been less eager antecedenly to the Request, his Spirit had not been so sad after the Denial.*

But as woful a Story as this is, Haman's Pride afforded Materials for a worse. Being so exorbitantly fond of Bows and Cringes he was all in a flame, when he found

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he was not valued half so highly as he valued himself. The poor Man's Indifference seen thro' the magnifying Glass of his cholerick Complexion, threw him into a Fever and Transports of Uneasiness. For such a one to come in view, and not bring his Devotion along with him, was such a piece of Presumption and Profaness, as he, fancying himself a God on Earth, could not away with or digest. His Countenance was chang'd by the shocking Usage, and his Thoughts troubled above measure. Because neglected himself, he neglected every thing else, and grew weary even of the Sensualities of a Court, before he had well tasted them.

Such a racking Influence a Forgetfulness of Distance had upon him! He swagger'd away his own Tranquillity; and, to solemnize the loss of a Punctilio, bid adieu to every Delight.

But when the rise of *Mordecai* put a period to that distance, the cutting Sorrow went deeper in proportion. To see him, whom he had destin'd to the Ignominies of a Gallows, singled out for Glory! To see those very marks of Distinction which he reckon'd upon himself, allotted for his Enemy, *the Royal Apparel*, to wit, *which the King used to wear, the Horse he rode upon, and the Crown which was set upon his Head!* To see himself appointed for the business of

Investiture, and to *array the Man whom the King delighted thus to honour!* These were very terrible Passages and Trials, and an overgrown Haughtiness gave them a double Sting and Impression.

After the humbling Work was over, dejected *Haman basted to his House* for a shelter from Infamy, *mourning and having his Head covered.* And what farther Penance he did for his Vanity, in the retired Hours, no Tongue can express or Heart conceive, when his busy Imagination reviv'd the dismal Scene, and acted all over again with the piercing Circumstances.

How happy then had it been for him if he had studied the Lesson of Humility, instead of carrying his Pretensions to regard so high! This would have *availed him something*, altho' his Riches did not, and very much soften'd the blow of Fortune.

Now the *Folly* we have seen with its Inconveniencies, 'tis to be hop'd, will help us to a little *Wisdom.* For who would not keep a severe hand over Sense and Appetite, rather than be ridden by them to his greatest prejudice? It is an odd Scene, when a mighty Storm cometh of a little Cloud, when Trifles give Disturbance, or the Spirit sinks with the outward Fortunes. And yet it will be a familiar one too, in such a variable World as this, so long as Fancy is predominant, and has the liberty to strain
and

and magnify. 'Tis *that* then we must get the better of, if we would preserve Peace within and Credit without; and methinks Men should not need to be argued into such a due Government of themselves as would prevent their hanging down the Head, and looking fillily upon every disoblising Accident or Change in Circumstances.

4. The ridiculous deportment of the Person we have been speaking of, during his *Prosperity*, is, or ought to be a mighty check to our *Ambition*.

No sooner was he lifted up to secular Grandeur, but he made it a kind of Patent or Prerogative to do mischief. A menacing Brow is presently put on, and an awful State set up. And because his Expectations of Observance were not universally answered, he condemns the Guiltless, and for the fault of one would destroy thousands. Nor were Ten thousand Talents (near Two mil-Esth. 3. 9. lions of ~~our~~ Money) thought too much for the Price of Blood. And yet no doubt, whilst yet in an humbler Condition, he had an Opinion of his Sufficiency for great Matters; and concluded that if he were but presented upon a more publick Theater, he should manage his part well and wisely, with credit to himself and benefit to others. Nor, it may be, was there any ground for concluding the contrary. For then his ill

Qualities lay dormant and in the dark, for want of matter to work upon and bring them to light. And his wicked Desires could not have a Being, while the Objects were at a distance that started them.

And hence we see the Necessity both of the most *general* Applications at the Throne of Grace, and a chearful Acquiescence under our appointed Portion. A random-guess and a worse choice are the Properties of a purblind Creature.

Honours and Riches we would have forsooth, as judging them proper and convenient for us; but 'tis like if we were gratified and had them, we should sink fatally under the weight of our own Wishes. We are Fools perhaps at present without much remark and pointing; but these things might render us, as they did him, but the more publick Spectacles of Folly, and add Solemnity to our Shame.

For which Reason God should be advis'd withal, who understands us and them better. He is too wise to mistake Evil for Good, too gracious to bestow a *Serpent* instead of a *Fish*. And being assur'd of this, what can we do better than resign up our Wills entirely to *his*, and beg earnestly *it* may be done on Earth as it is done in Heaven.

5. The Instance we have here of a *Publick Minister's* shameful Imposition on his *Prince,*

Prince, may serve as a Caution to us not to think or *speak evil of the Ruler of God's People*. Whenever there are, or are suppos'd to be *Mismanagements* in the *State*, the *Supreme Magistrate* shall have his share to be sure in the Charge or Imputation of them. As if there was an Ambition in popular Censure, and the higher it climb'd, the less it would be liable to Errors!

But hard indeed is the Fate of *Crowned Heads*, if they must be upbraided with the Faults of others; and they certainly are so, if every flaw in Conduct is laid at their door. For we know they don't use to give themselves Counsel, when business comes before them; it is offered from other Hands, and they take it; nay 'tis expected they should: And can they then be blam'd for having taken it, or for the Consequences thereof, such as they did not foresee, much less intend, but the designing Givers only?

When the King of *Persia* pass'd the Decree for massacring the *Jews*, he meant it as an exemplary piece of Justice on suppos'd Criminals. They were represented as such to him, and he verily thought that in killing them he should do his Country Service. The Information was specious, and so it mis-led him; but when he found it to be false, he readily revok'd the Sentence it drew from him, or rather transferr'd it by way of Vengeance on their E-

nemies. And would not the *Jews* then have done him as great a wrong (of another kind) as was intended them, if instead of endeavouring to set him right in his apprehensions of their Case, they had revild him for his mistake about it and the consequent Severities? *Haman* only had their Investives all the while, and justly too. The Barbarity was wholly *his*; and 'twas merely a private Quarrel to *one* of them that begun the Plot against *all*.

Now it is easy to transfer the *Scene* in our Thoughts to other Kingdoms. The Servants about a Prince (we will make a *Supposition* of that which is often *Fact*) industriously disguise the Truth, and influence him to approve or reject Persons or Things according to the different Aspects given by them. He would fain inform himself aright of Characters, Facts and Circumstances, but cannot; and for want of an insight into the true state of Things does sometimes make a false step; but must he therefore be reflected upon as unfit to govern? If he suffers in his Affairs, must he in his Reputation too? Is it his Crime, as well as his Misfortune, that his greatest Enemies are those of his own Household? *No*, he has trouble enough to see his Administration clog'd by their Folly or Perverseness. We had not need add to it by our Jealousies and Censures. All that is due from him, is to
endeavour

endeavour the spelling out dark Designs and disappoint them, and to throw the *Creatures* out of his Bosom that abuse the kindly warmth of it.

Lastly, I would add one thing more, concerning the ungenerous Spite of this *insolent* Courtier, that it was as impotent as inveterate, and, when at the very brink of accomplishment, became only the sport of a *baffling* Providence. It is entertaining to imagine how one day the *State-Comet* vaunted in the Firmament of Power, threatening Confusion and Death to the Inhabitants of the Vale round about, and how the next, falling from Heaven like *Lucifer*, it became it self the Dung of the Earth to the Joy of *Israel*. When *Haman* was paving the way for a general Persecution, *Mordecai* took care to inform *Esther* that she and her People were in Perils among the Heathen, addressing himself in this awakening manner, *If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there Enlargement and Deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy Father's House shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the Kingdom for such a time as this?* But what could have been expected from his Advice and her compliance with it, without a Divine Interposal, (considering the present state of Things) but that very Destruction which they studied to prevent.

For

For he urges her to go and beg of *Abasuerus* the Lives of all the *Jews*, who were destin'd to the Slaughter; and the very presenting her self before him was no less a breach of one Law, than her Suit was a contradiction to another. But lo an happy Reverse of Accidents! The *King* receives her graciously, the *Queen* prefers her Petition seasonably. The secret *Plotter* is distinguish'd with Reproach and Infamy, the honest *Monitor* with Glory and Acclamations. Which calls to mind the Reflections of holy *David*, which others may take up. *I my self have seen the Ungodly in great Power, and flourishing like a green Bay-tree. I went by, and lo they were gone; I sought 'em, but their place could no where be found!* Verily therefore there is a present Reward for blameless Souls; doubtless there is a God that looketh down from Heaven, and judgeth the Earth, a God truly loving unto *Israel*; and the multitude of the *Isles* may be glad thereof. To which God, Great and Glorious, doing Wonders, be ascrib'd as is most due, by *This* and all the Churches of the Saints, all Honour, &c.

The Private Life of Christ.

S. LUKE ii. 51.

And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.

THE Person here spoken of, is the Blessed *Jesus*; and the Subjection here mention'd, a *Filial* Obedience.

This great *Law-giver*, it seems, was of a very different Mind and Temper from the demure *Pharisees*, who *said but did not*; that were for imposing heavy Burdens upon *others*, but not for touching the lightest *themselves*. He set out earlier in *fulfilling* than in teaching *Righteousness*, and copied forth an universal Pattern of holy Living. His *publick* Part was nothing else but Instruction, and his *retired* one furnisheth out a Lesson. The triennial Ministry extends to the whole compass of *Civil* Conduct, and the Years of Nonage afford a very goodly Scheme of *domestick* Management. And truly

truly, considering the great Neglect almost every where visible of *Family-Obligations* as well as *Politick*, the former were no less proper to be *exemplified* than the latter.

In my following Discourse therefore I shall consider,

I. Our Saviour's *dutiful* Regards of *Joseph* and the *Virgin Mary*, in opposition to the common Practice of *Children*.

II. The peculiar Fitness of his *Example* to enforce a *Filial* Obedience. But forasmuch as no Cause can be too much strengthened, I shall,

III. Urge some other Arguments and Motives that may be of use to the same purpose: and then conclude with a word of Exhortation to such as are *Graceless* and *Disobedient*.

In the *first* place I'm to consider our Saviour's *youthful* Piety, and to set it against the common Practices of *Children*, that I may put them to shame and blushing.

The *Evangelists*, it must be own'd, are not particular and circumstantial in their Accounts of it; and the Reasons of this *Reserve* are some of those secret Things which belong to God, that because not matter of *Revelation*, are by no means a proper Subject for Enquiry. But still we are not left wholly in the dark about it.

The Text tells us, *He went down with Joseph and Mary from Jerusalem, and was*
subject

subject unto them. Now *Subjection* is a comprehensive thing, and includes under it all the *Honour* Parents can expect, or Children pay. *Subjection* in *general* implies a compliance with Authority and accomplishment of Pleasure: In a *Servant*, it denotes a ready, tho' *forc'd* Obsequiousness, built on a dread of *Anger*: In a *Son*, a *willing* Obedience, consequent on a desire of *Favour*. And therefore this Expression singly (were we to seek for other Arguments) would help us to infer, that a most ingenuous Duty and Service was perform'd by the *holy Child Jesus*.

The adjoining Passage, which mentions his Growth in *Grace*, Proficiency in *Wisdom*, and Advance in *Favour with God and Man*, is to the same effect, and speaks out plainly, that the good Spirit of God inhabiting him carried him on to the State of Manhood in an even and constant course of Piety as well towards Man as God.

Too many make a Jest no less of *Paternal* than of *Regal* Government, and cry out with an imperious Air, *Who is Lord over us?* Instead of bowing the Knee to their Father for his *Blessing*, they lift up their Heels against him, and by Word, Deed and Gesture witness their readiness to *curse* him. If he questions them about Matters of near Concernment, they will not answer. If he offers to advise them for their good, they flurt

flurt at the Admonition as if it were the worst of Evils, seeming resolv'd to fulfil no *Will* of his but the *last*, wherein they hope he will fulfil theirs. Venerable *Age* cannot command Attention, nor intimate *Relation* win it. In spite of *Multitude of Days*, his *Wisdom* is overlook'd by *those of Yesterday that know nothing*, and in spite of natural Dominion, his Authority is despised. The one passes for Dotage, the other for Usurpation. But whence have they learn'd these pretty Notions and this fine Behaviour? In the School of Christ? No, *Children, obey your Parents*, was his Doctrine, Obedience his Practice. He was entirely at the beck of his Earthly Parents, and fulfill'd all their Pleasure. They did but say, go down with us to *Nazareth*, and he went to it, tho' a Place remarkable only for its Obscurity, and by the Jews held ignoble to a Proverb. Do this, and he did it, tho' never so toilsom and laborious. 'Tis true, *before*, without their express Leave and Knowledge, he stay'd behind at *Jerusalem*. But then the weight of the Occasion was enough to bear him out in it. He had an *Heavenly Father* to attend and wait upon in his Temple, and that *superiour* Obligation superseded the Discharge of a *less*. He was not taken up with vain Amusements and impertinent Diversions, when they sought him sorrowing. Nor did he act
a ful-

a sullen part, when they found him. His Absence was upon Reasons of Religion, and his Apology for it, such as tended to make them sensible that he respected them highly, notwithstanding it.

Others are of a giddy desultory Humour, and can set a tender Mother's Eye a weeping, by rambling out of its reach upon the least Summons of Vanity or Recreation. They deliver themselves over from one Extravagance to another, and trifle away their Time and their Innocence together. And as their frolicksom Jants hardly admit of an Excuse, so they think it not worth their while to offer at any. They will not account for their mispent Hours, nor be taken to task for their wanton Chaces. They must be treated as *Adonijah* was by *David*, and never hear any such upbraiding Language as *Why hast thou done so?* Even the cold Reproof of *Eli*, which he so solemnly address'd to *Hophni* and *Phineas*, if repeated upon them, presently raises a Flame, and Mildness is requited with Fury.

Our Saviour's Carriage was the Reverse of this. The Days which he took from *Mary's* Presence, were laid out to advantage, and accounted for with readiness. He affected not an Independence, but came to a reckoning about them, as to a Work no less necessary than *that* they were employ'd on. The Expostulation, *Son, why hast thou*

thou so dealt with us, was hardly quicker than the Satisfaction he gave to the Scruples which occasion'd it. It troubled him that she should entertain Jealousies of him; and therefore he hastens to assure her, that while he might *seem* guilty of a Neglect towards his Mother, he was *really* executing a Duty, even *his Father's Business*. And that she might be set perfectly to rights in her Apprehensions, the first Proposal of a Retreat homewards is chearfully closed with. They go hand in hand, like two wedded Lovers, to the place of Habitation; and upon their arrival there, the Rules of Living that are set him, are observ'd to the utmost. He was not only *a Carpenter's Son*, but commenc'd one himself, as we may guess from the 6th of *S. Mark*, and other Records of Antiquity. Nay the Tradition is of early Date, that as he wrought at the Manual Occupation during the Life of *Joseph*, so he follow'd it alone after his Death for the Support of *Mary* and himself.

Some are of that unnatural Temper, so egregiously vers'd in the inhuman Doctrine of the *Scribes and Pharisees*, that how much soever they are able, they are not at all willing to administer to the Necessities of the Loins that begat and the Womb that bore them. What have they that they did not receive; and yet as if they did not receive, they take no care to pay off the Interest-

terest-debt, let Indigence call for it never so pressingly. They can see the Decays of Fortune, without affording Relief, and the Ruins of Constitution, without looking out for a Repair. The Life, which gave 'em theirs, is thought not worth the husbanding, yea fit for nothing but to be extinguish'd as soon as possible. Yea, it may be, they are the sad occasion of Want and Beggary, by with-holding a legal Due (where the *Legs* have been thrown away to stand upon *Crutches*) or by giving a secret Blow to Interest and Reputation! And others that have not the Succours of the Purse within their Power, are altogether as backward to Labours of Love. They will not wage War with Briars and Thistles, to fence off the Assaults of Hunger from another's Bowels, which should be reckon'd their *own*; they will not delve in the Heart of the Earth to fetch up a comfortable Subsistence for an aged Father. The Fruits of personal Drudgery are bestow'd upon their own dear Persons, and beloved Self must engross the Refreshment of whatever can be got by Weariness and Fatigue. Alas! this is a common *Evil under the Sun*. How often may we behold, what we cannot without a Passion, a poor decrepit Couple, that strip'd themselves before they lay down to their long Sleep for the aggrandizing a fowled Youth, made Strangers to their own

Estates and Houses, or insulted in them by the new Proprietor! How often do we hear, what we cannot without Horror, unkind Posterity enquiring into the old Man's Years, and complaining of an unhappy obstruction to the finishing of their Fortunes. As if every Hour added to his Days borrowed Years from the Thread of their expected Greatness!

But so far was our Saviour from leaning towards the Pharisaical Conceit, that his Actions were design'd to baffle and discourage it. It seems, tho' Silver and Gold he had none, he took his Mother's state of Weakness and Inability into Consideration; and when *one* Staff of Age and Infirmity fail'd, made himself *another*. *Joseph*, tho' dead, was yet alive in *the Carpenter's Son*. He kept up the mean Employ, and with his Hands work'd out her Accommodation.

This was his domestick Subjection, this his filial Concern. And I cannot forbear mentioning a very recommending Circumstance, the duration of it. Twenty Years (for ought appears to the contrary) were expended in her immediate Service; nor did he quit the inglorious Trade, till the *Fulness of Time was come*, when he was to exchange one sort of Labour for another.

Many look upon *Home* as a bigger sort of Bird-cage, and often sigh out the melancholy Desire, *O that I had Wings like a Dove,*

Dove, that I might fly away and be at rest! They wish out the Years of Minority, and long to be emancipated with the utmost Impatience. A Father's Presence is an Eye-sore, a Mother's Controul an Abomination. Give me the Portion of Goods that falleth to me, and leave me to my own Conduct, is a Suit the Heart, if not the Tongue, puts up, and to get out of sight, upon such an Indulgence, and *wast the Substance with riotous living*, a matter of Fact as frequent as it is deplorable. In short, the *World* answers to the *Parable*, in this respect, and exceeds it in another: For where there is one that can say with the Elder Son, *Lo! these many Years do I serve thee, neither transgress'd I at any time thy Commandment*, there are thousands that track the Footsteps of the *Prodigal*.

Our Saviour on the contrary dealt tenderly by *Mary* and studied her Satisfaction as much as his own. The Age of Discretion did not steal him away from her dear Company, and nothing but an higher Call, a Voice out of the excellent Glory, could have separated him at that of Thirty. Till his sacred Investiture into the Mediatorial Function, he held out in the mechanic Drudgery, and ceas'd not to be *the Carpenter*, but upon his becoming an *Evangelist*.

Even after the solemn Change, his Cares of her continued, and hardly ended with Life it self.

How and what Provision was made for her during the Triennial Ministry, is not written; but we know what Legacy was appointed her in his *last Will and Testament*. In the Bitterness of his Anguish he compassionated her Condition, as well as Grief; and when he could no longer think of her in Person, he found out a *Proxy* to supply his room and his Affections. First addressing himself to her under the Stile of *Woman* (which, 'tis like, was to prevent the Affronts of a boarish Rabble, to which her near Relation to him, if discover'd, had render'd her liable) he recommends the *Beloved Disciple* to her Love and Endearment, as one that thenceforward would perform the Duty of a *Son*; and then turning to *John*, he recommends her to his Care and Protection as one that might deserve the Title of a *Mother*. And accordingly *S. John* took his Charge to himself, and serv'd her as if his own Mother with all imaginable Fidelity.

Some that even bear the name of *Dutiful*, no sooner take their leave of the native Family, but they forget it too in some measure, and wish others would forget it likewise, that is, their Relation to it, because of its Meanness and Obscurity, which themselves

selves are got above. The Stream of their Affections runs now another way; they find a new Chancel for them, and give 'em the liberty of ranging; they grow *foreign* in their Thoughts and Cares. Their Father's House is estrang'd by Absence; and tho' the Questions of *Health* and *Welfare* are familiar still and of course, natural Kindness sinks at length into a cold Indifference.

But our Saviour is an Exception to this unhappy Remark.

He never out-grew his youthful Tenderness, nor shut the Door against Endearment. When he went about doing good, the remembrance of a *desolate* Mother attended him; and when he was finishing his Course, Love was stronger than Death, and would do its friendly Offices amidst the Agonies of a Crucifixion.

I must confess, the Deferences of our Saviour to Family-Authority carry no direct Advice with them concerning the most important Case of all, I mean, what is requir'd of a Child in reference to a *Change* of Condition and Circumstances; and the reason is, because he neither did nor thought it proper to enter upon a *new* Relation himself; but however they are an implicit, interpretative Direction not to dispose of our selves without a concurrent Choice. For if he was *subject* in every instance, but
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where Obedience had in Scripture a Clause of Exception, 'tis presumable he would have been, upon Trial, in that also which is commanded by God in the Book of

Numb. 30. *Numbers.*

This is an *hard Chapter* to the *forward Young*; and tho' they must allow it a place in their Bibles, they will not in their Memories. No, *Romance* is their Study, and *Passion* their Law; and perhaps no sooner are they let out of the *Nursery*, but they rush into *the World*, not considering that an Attempt to go alone so soon, will sooner or later be unto them an occasion of falling. Being *Love-ridden*, they stay not for their Parents *Benediction*, and how then can they expect God's? A *negative Voice* sure in the point of Matching, is a mutual Right; and he that disputes it on the side of his natural Superiours under the Evangelical OEconomy, in effect says, and will not be thank'd for saying so, that *Christ came not to fulfil the Law* but to *destroy it*.

Now that I have describ'd the *Filial Obedervance* of the Blessed Jesus, before I proceed to recommend it to your Imitation, it may be proper for prevention of Mistakes to shew where it stopped.

That had its Bounds, and so must *ours*. His Honour for God was *absolute* and unre-served, but his Regard for Man *limited* and subordinate. Whenever these Duties inter-fered,

ferred, the former had the Preference. Accordingly knowing it to be the Will of Heaven, an holy *Conference* should be held with the *Doctors* of the *Temple*, he on a sudden withdrew himself from his Parents here on Earth, without giving them any notice of his Purpose; which made known to them, might to their weak Reason have look'd like an extravagant Adventure, and so have receiv'd some Obstruction from their *over-solicitude* for his Safety. And at the next meeting, when they lovingly express'd their past *Sorrows* for the loss of him, he devoutly reprimands their immoderate or ill-tim'd Care, minding them withal of the higher Relation and Capacities he stood under. *How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business; Or, as the Words may be render'd, in my Father's House, whither the Solemnities of Religion summon'd me? The Secrecy of his Actings is not excus'd by him, because subservient to God's Glory and the Ends of Providence. The Complaint of his Mother stands condemn'd, because implying such Expectations of Deference as were inconsistent with them.*

Nor was this the only time in which he made such Distinction in favour of God's Service. When she call'd for the *Miracle* Joh. 2. of Wine, upon the Stock of Motherly Authority which reached not so far; he gave

her more than an Hint of the Presumption, by saying freely, *Woman, what have I to do with thee?* When a certain *Woman of the company* took occasion from what she had seen and heard, to *bles*s not only him but the very *Paps* which he had suck'd, he suffers not her Devotion to rest there, but presently directeth it to the proper Object; averring, *yea rather blessed are all they that bear the Word of God and keep it.*

And once when he was disturb'd in his popular Instructions by one that said, *Behold thy Mother and thy Brethren stand without desiring to speak with thee,* he could not forbear answering in resentment of the Interruption, *Who is my Mother, and who are my Brethren?* He could not forbear owning, in Zeal to his high Commission, that every true Believer was as dear to him as *his Brother and Sister, and Mother.* For this Cause came he into the World to bear Witness to the Truth; and nothing he was resolv'd, no, not natural Alliances, should hinder him from testifying it to the utmost.

Some Children are as apt to err in the height of their Obedience, as others are on the defective side. They mistake Adoration for Duty, and instead of *honouring* their Parents, they *worship* them. For *their* Company, they can forego *God's*, and in complement to their Wickedness remove their own Integrity from themselves. E-
very

very thing they can pronounce lawful that they know to be delightful to those, and at every turn Courtesy gets the better of Morality.

But in this they have not our *Saviour* for their *Precedent*. As he scorn'd to come short of indispensable Duty, so he never would surpass the Line of natural Obligation. The Concernments of Heaven were always uppermost in his Mind, and most influential on his Carriage. And where there was no fear of a Competition, relative Interests took Place. But as he requires us to *hate* our Relations comparatively when they would prove Lets of Piety and Vertue, so he demeaned himself in such a manner as if he *hated* his, whenever such a Demeanour was but necessary to demonstrate his *Love* to God.

It would not then make much for *Jacob's* Excuse, as to the Fact of gaining the *Blessing* by Surprize, to say, that he was over-ru'd in Obedience to his Mother. Her Proposal, we find, could shock him at the first, and he concluded he could not act up to it without drawing a Curse upon himself. And no doubt that sudden Impressi-
on upon his Mind, afterwards resisted, should have determin'd him to the contrary. All Engagements to *human* Duty, as they stand upon a Basis of Conscience, so are to be construed with a *salvo* for that
Duty

Duty which is properly *Divine*. A greater Right in God swallows up all inferior Pretensions.

But tho' we may not disobey our Maker to obey his Creatures, yet Care would be taken that there be nothing else but a Zeal to a *paramount* Authority in our Refusal. Nay, our Non-compliance with their Expectations, must not only *be* but *appear* to be the pure Result of Piety and Conscience. And we should dress it up in the softest Terms, that it may be discern'd we retain our former Regards for them, tho' with a Reserve of acting nothing that may intrench upon God's Laws. This was the Care of *Jesus*, when he was tax'd with a Neglect of paternal Love. He represents the Matter in its true Light, and convinces the holy Virgin, that what he did so much to *her* *Sorrow*, he could not but do, or he had never done it.

It may not be amiss to add here, that where the Commands laid upon us *seem* irrational, so long as we know they are not sinful, we must resign up our Judgment to their Pleasure, because the prescribing Power lodg'd in our Parents properly respects things *indifferent*, and the Impresses of Nature are some Check upon them, to secure against the Prescription of things *unreasonable*. But if they are really arbitrary and froward, they are our Parents
still,

still, and we are their Children; that is, the *Relation* is indissoluble, and so are the Obligations too that follow it. The Submissions of Christ, we are sure, had been the same, supposing *Joseph*, who was a *good Man*, had been a bad one; and he that was so ready to pay a Tribute that was not due for fear of *offending*, stood prepar'd for all *lawful Exercises of Authority* whatsoever.

And now let us consider

2. The peculiar Fitness of his *Example* to enforce a *filial Obedience*. This is suggested to us by the very Conduct of the *inspired Writers*, who altho' they pass over in Silence the greatest part of his *retired Life*, yet forget not to tell us, that *he came down with Joseph and Mary to the City Nazareth, and was subject unto them*. Which plainly intimates, the Account of his dutiful Observance was a thing too material to be omitted, and that the Impression of it, if duly reflected on, must needs be irresistible. Indeed, if we are unaffected by it, we are got beyond the reach of Argument and Influence. For was not he Father and Son to one and the same Person, *the Root and Offspring of David*, in respect of different Natures, did not he create *the holy Virgin* as well as suffer himself to be conceived in her? And if a Divine Subsistence could not exempt his human Nature from temporal Obligations, who can think to stand clear

clear

clear of inferior Dependencies? Did he, tho' infinitely *above* her in Point of Original, stoop *beneath* her, because of that Conception? How then can any comparative Disadvantages on the *Parents* side supersede the Respects of *Children*? Did he, tho' King of *Israel* and Lord of the Creation, wield Hatchets and Hammers for her Relief, and tho' able to *turn Stones into Bread*, by the Word of his Power, vouchsafe to earn hers with the Sweat of his Brow; And what does this Preference of the ordinary Means of Help to supernatural imply, but an Intention of making his Compassions *Exemplary*? Did he, upon the Death of *Joseph*, succeed into his Cares, and supply his part towards the *Virgin* in all the Instances of Love and Duty and Assistance? Even so must *the young Children* be like the *Arrows in the Hand of the Giant*, to succour and defend the desolate Widow. Indeed what are they but the Reserves of Providence, design'd to fill up the vacant Place, and renew the Caresses of the lost Consort in a different Capacity; that so she may want her old Friend, without missing him. The Meanness of her Abilities, the Poverty of her Condition, the low Ebb of her Interest, are so many Calls to their Zeal, so many Incitements to their Service. Again, was he tractable and submissive towards not only his *real* but also his *reputed* Parent,

Parent, and shall we then be stubborn and obstinate in our *Father's* House? If the bare *Name* or Character of *Father*, given by Mistake, with him had a sacred and venerable Accent, surely with us the adhering *Relation* should command Dread and Reverence, stave off a Fellow-like Familiarity, and awe us into good Manners. Was he tender of his dear Mother, and solicitous for her future Welfare, at a time when he was the greatest Object of Compassion himself? And can we that are at ease in our Possessions, sleep over a weeping Mother's Misfortunes, yea drop the Regards of Decency, and set up for Humour and Opposition to *Blood* and Nature?

Lastly, Did his earthly Kindred never experience the least Neglect, but in Cases of absolute Necessity, when the Business of his Father that is in Heaven exacted his Attendance? And shall we appear unmindful of ours, without any such justifiable Cause? He hath left us a Pattern that we should do as he hath done? And shall we, in Contradiction to it, run all the lengths of Impiety, disregard the Counsel of *grey Hairs*, and at last bring them down *with sorrow to the Grave*?

This will be but a sad Story for them to tell, and for us to hear, when he whom *we believe shall come to be our Judge*, actually comes to demand an Account of our Behaviour

Behaviour towards them. And what must the Procedure be of such a Person consequent on such a Charge? Full of Shame, you may be sure, and full of Vengeance! Guilt can look for no Favour from Innocence, *Undutifulness* no Mercy from *Obedience*. The Example which could not reform in time, shall upbraid for ever.

There are not wanting other Motives to this Duty of *honouring* our Parents, tho' it is impossible to urge a better.

For *first*, What Instance of Morality was kept up in greater Repute than *this*, whether among *Jews* or *Heathens*? How active was the great *Aeneas* in the Preservation of aged *Anchises*, how industrious to carry on the vital Thread, which was nigh breaking, to the utmost Extent of Nature? The Flames of his Zeal certainly were as vehement as those of burning *Troy* that gave it vent. How careful is *Virgil* to make Piety the *Master-Ingredient* in his lovely Character, how frequent in repeating the amiable Title of *the dutiful Aeneas*? How celebrated was *Alexander* of *Greece* for his Obeisance to *Olympias*? How noted the *Ptolomies* of *Egypt*, for borrowing their Style, in Token of Respect, from these worthy Relations of Father and Mother? Yea indeed the Monarchs of all Countries have accounted a Title thence an Addition to their Greatness.

And

And how does *Pagan* History abound even with private Instances of *filial* Affection and Reverence? *Pomponius Atticus* not only made a *Funeral-Oration* on his Mother, but gloried in it, that *he never had any occasion* Corin. Nep. *to be reconcil'd unto her*; and yet he buried her at *Ninety Years* of Age, himself being *Sixty seven*. No wonder then the Account of his *Life* is so much set by, when it contains an *Incident* so remarkable! And now may I not fitly enough put the *Question*, Shall *Christianity* fall beneath the Attainments, and the Decencies of *Heathenism*.

To pass to *Scripture-Examples*; With what a pious haste did *Shem* and *Japheth* cast a *Veil* over *Noah's Nakedness*, as if the Gen. 9. Prospect of it had been as criminal as the *Drunkennes* that occasion'd it? With what wonderful *Patience* did *Isaac* submit to the Gen. 22. destructive Intentions of *Abraham*, as if *Duty* was dearer than *Life*? With what nice *Punctuality* did *Jacob* follow *Isaac's* Gen. 23. Advice in the matter of *Marriage*? In what an awful manner did *Joseph*, as highly exalted as he was in the *Court of Pharaoh*, bow himself with his *Face to the Earth*, Gen. 43. when he brought his *Sons* to receive the *Blessing* of *Jacob*? His *Dream* touching the *Sun and Moon's Obeisance*, and his present difference from other *Stars* in *Glory*, could not possess him with *towring Imaginations*, could not tempt him to turn his back upon
the

the Pit of Obscurity out of which he was dig'd. With what humble Modesty did
 x Sam. 19. *Jonathan* plead before *Saul* for the Life of *David*? With what remarkable Tenderness did *David*, in his Exile and Flight before the Strong, deliver his Father and Mother into the safe-guarding Hands of *the King of*
 x Sam. 22. *Moab*, to be with and protected by him, till such time as he should have a Kingdom of his own for their Accommodation? With what pious Regards did *Solomon*, when on
 x King. 2. the Throne of *Israel*, rise up and meet *Bathsheba* in her Advances towards him, as if in some fence a Subject still? With what rigorous Exactness did the *Rechabites* obey the Voice of *Jonadab* in the forbearance even of innocent Liberties and Conveniences? With what devout Attention, lastly, did *Timothy* receive the pious Instructions of *Lois* and *Unice* in the holy Scriptures?

And now if Obedience be not a reasonable Tribute, why was it so readily paid by our *Forefathers*? They had no Design, to be sure, to super-erogate; they did only what they thought their Duty to do, and we must go and do likewise.

Again, the Benefits of *Production* and *Education* are undeniable Titles to *Love* and *Honour*. For is it not a receiv'd Maxim, that he who bestows a Being, has a Right to all the Homage that said Being can render? Are not the Fruits of our Bo-
 dy,

dy, as properly, as much, our own, as those of our Field? Is not Life an invaluable Blessing? And is not Respect then to the Donors of it a necessary Piece of Gratitude. If the *Libertine* will object that the Children are not to thank their Parents for it, but their fleshly Inclinations, may we not answer that to suppose the *carnal* Interest the only End of *Matrimony*, is too severe a Reflection on that State, which is so *honourable* in the Sense both of Scripture and of Reason. May we not urge that allowing Truth in the Supposition, the Obligation stands good, if there be such a thing as a *Debt of Gratitude*; because no Kindnesses are wholly disinterested, wholly grounded upon Generosity and good Nature?

But what Comparison is there betwixt the Kindness of bringing 'em into the World and the Care of nurturing 'em in it? If we regard the Incapacities of the Cradle, the Helplessness of Infancy, the Inadvertency of Childhood, and the Giddiness of Youth, what *constant* Fatigue and *occasional* Hardships must it cost our Parents to rear us up into Maturity and Vigour? How many wearisome Days and sleepless Nights do they spend in watching the tender Blossom which is easily blasted? How do they enable us to crawl over the first Stages of Life, and as it were make their Strength ours in

the feeble Effays of Nature, answer the Calls of Appetite with a ready Sufenance, and guard againſt the Affaults of pinching Cold? How do they ſtoop from their Seriouſneſs and Gravity to pleaſe and gratify us in our little Fancies, to beguile us for our Good, and divert away our Frowardneſs? When we ſlip out of ſight, how do they ſeek us ſorrowing, and when we run into Danger, how do they hazard themſelves for our Recovery from it?

Nor is the *rational* part of our Education leſs painful than the *inferior*. What infinite Application and Conduct does it require to train us up into Reaſon and Religion? How do they drudge in inſtructing us firſt to ſpeak, and then to form Words into coherent Language? What a Work of Toil and Tediouſneſs do they find it to keep Senſe under, and render the Paſſions manageable, to ſet Choice right, and infuſe good Principles? With how fixt an Eye are they forc'd to inſpect our Behaviour, and with how troubled an Heart do they ſpy out our Miſcarriages? When we tread awry, what a doleful Sigh is fetch'd from it, to ſpeak out the inward Reſentment; and when we walk uprightly, what diſquieting Fears of a future Backſliding caſt a ſudden Damp upon all their Happineſs, as oft as this Thought returns, that the Young hang at beſt but in an even Ballance be-

twixt Good and Evil, and it is impossible to foresee which way the Scale will at last turn.

At length, when a riper Age calls for the Disposal of our *Persons* or our *Fortunes*, how is one sort of Solicitude exchange'd for another? How disturb'd must they be to think of parting with their dear Pledges from their Wing and Bosom, that they have enjoyed our Company but for a little while, and perhaps shall enjoy it no more; that a long Interval at least of Time and Place shall separate 'em from every thing but a cold Intercourse of Messages and *Letters*, which convey the Mind but by halves, and the Affections but faintly. If we are to enter upon *Business*, how are their Brains upon the rack, in suiting Employment and Genius, Profession and Talent, and how jealous are they of a Mistake herein, and of its Consequences, as knowing that without such exact Correspondence our Skill will be little, and our Success less. If upon a State of *Marriage*, with what Fear and Trembling do they come to the *Preliminaries*, what Tears of Kindness and Horror are they seen to shed at the *consummating* Solemnity, as knowing that *That* is the most important Cast, next to the great Throw for Eternity, because a State for Life, which is our *for ever* here.

In short, no body can tell the Anxieties and Misgivings that go to Bed with *Parents*. Some of them are excellently express'd in the Book of *Eccles.* *The Father waketh for the Daughter, when no Man knoweth, and the Care for her taketh away Sleep: When she is young, lest she pass away the Flower of her Age; and being married, lest she should be hated: In her Virginity, lest she should be defiled and gotten with Child in her Father's House; and having an Husband, lest she should misbehave her self; and when she is married, lest she should be barren.*

Eccles. 42.
9, 10.

Such are a Parents Burthens; and that they may not sink under the Pressure of them, can we do less than administer the refreshing Cordial of dutiful *Subjection*? Can we do less than requite their Love, by reverencing their Persons?

It was one Argument the *Mother* of the *Maccabees* us'd to recommend her last bitter Admonitions unto Martyrdom, that she had *endur'd for them the Troubles of Education*. And has not that Reflection the same, or rather greater Force, in pleading for a Submission to the much easier Rules of Household-Discipline, which have no other Design than that of the *Angels*, to keep us in all our Ways?

Once more, *Obedience* is the wisest course that can be taken, as smoothing the way

to a comfortable and happy Life. For who so fit to direct as the Experienced, and who so safely to be depended on as the Friendly? And where can we look for Experience and Friendship, if not from those that were born before us, and help'd us to our Being? They have had Opportunity to observe the Events and Consequences of Things, the Humours and Interests of Persons; and thro' such Remarks are best qualified to draw the Model of Practice. Their Sincerity too is as unquestionable as their Skill; they are not designing in their Advice; they will be sure to speak as they think, and no more misguide than mistake the Case before them. And therefore what could be more advisable than to deliver our selves and our Affairs into such good Hands; and where they lead, to follow them with Cheerfulness? Who too live more under the Influence of the Divine Blessing, and the Light of his Countenance than the *Dutiful*? How are they encompass'd with encouraging Prospects in respect both of the World that now is, and of that which is to come? Obedience you know is *the first Commandment with Promise*. What Satisfaction may they reckon upon during Life, in consideration of their Gratitude to those from whom they receiv'd it; and what Fruition will they be admitted to, at the close of it, when their honour'd Parents, that

went before them to the Grave, shall welcome 'em into Glory. It is an old Maxim and a good one, *If thou wouldst be obeyed, being a Father, obey, being a Son.* Those that revere their Parents, shew their Children that they should do so too. Much Good then comes by the very Example of the Thing, but more by the Favour of Divine Providence.

Eccles. 3.

The wise *Son of Sirach* giveth us the Particulars both of their Piety and of their Blessedness in the Sense, tho' not wholly in the Words or Order of the following Sentences. *They do Service to their Father as to their Master, and glory in every thing that will reflect an Honour upon his Person, Name or Memory. They help him in his decrepit Age, even to the performance of the most uncomfortable Offices about him, and despise him not when they are in their full strength. If his Understanding fails, they have patience with him, now a Child, as he had with them, when they were such; and grieve him not as long as he liveth. And by thus requiting of good Turns, they lay up a Treasure for Futurity, and secure themselves an Interest in that which shall come hereafter. For thus clearing Accounts with their Benefactor, they shall be heard when they make their Prayer, and find a stay when they fall. They shall receive a Tribute of Service in their turn, and have joy of their*
own

own Children. They shall have *their Houses establish'd* by the righteous Lord that loveth Righteousness, and *their Sins*, or Infirmities overlook'd by him who beholdeth the thing that is just. But as for the Graceless and Disobedient, all the Terrors of the Lord are drawn out against them. *Their Eyes the Ravens of the Valley shall pick out*, says Solomon in one place; and in another, *their Lamp shall be put out in obscure Darkness.* He that forsaketh his Father, says the abovemention'd Writer, *is as a Blasphemer, and he that angreth his Mother, shall be cursed of God.*

Nor are these mere Bugbear-threatnings, only to scare and terrify. *Ham*, we find, was abandon'd of Heaven for his unnatural Freedom; and *Absalom*, we read, fell a Sacrifice to his Rebel-folly. 2 Sam. 13. There was something very *exemplary* in the manner of his Destruction. He who so deserv'd an *artificial* Gallows, was surpriz'd by a *growing* one; and *Nature* her self, whose Laws he had so shamefully violated, became his Executioner.

And to mention no more Instances of Vengeance, *Hophni* and *Phineas*, that are branded in Scripture for not *bearkening to the Voice of their* loving Father, died by the Hands of their insulting Enemies. Providence even in latter Days, tho' it runneth for the most part under ground and out of

sight, bursteth out sometimes in visible Judgments upon the Children of Disobedience. Nor do the Abettors of it that partake with them in their Sin, go without a share in their Punishment. Even the Prodigals themselves when they bring forth worthy Fruits of Repentance, have this for one, the Rejection of those that led them into Folly. Thus an Historian tells us of *King Richard I.* that he abandon'd such as had been Rebels with him against his Father, and rewarded *Loyalty* with a ready admission to his Court and Service.

Coll. Eccl
Hist. 399.
Col. 1.

And this may suffice for the Enforcement of *Filial Duty*. I have nothing more to add, but a Word of Exhortation to *stubborn* and refractory *Children*.

Consider I beseech you, ye Sons of *Be-lial*, by the Merits of Christ; consider the Evil of your doings, what it is to *mock at your Father, and forsake the Law of your Mother*. Those are Names of Authority and Power, as well as of Tenderness and Endearment; and yet you vilify and abuse the Persons that bear them, as if they imported neither! Heaven has invested them with a kind of natural Sovereignty over you; you are their domestick Subjects, and yet you domineer and swagger, as if the whole Earth was your Jurisdiction. How is it that you neither fear God nor regard *Man*? Whom do ye make your selves? Are

ye

ye greater than *Solomon*, and innumerable other Worthies, that in their Times perform'd *the Obedience of Sons*; or the Holy *Jesus*, that fulfill'd his Mother's Commands as well as his *Father's Business*? If you conceit you are, we must score you up in our Thoughts as fitter for a *Bedlam-Confinement*, than for absolute Liberty: If you confess you are not, upon what pretence can ye challenge an Exemption from that Duty, which they regretted not to pay? Why is Home so homely a thing with you, so dull and tedious? There are Frowns, it may be, that render it somewhat frightful and disagreeable. But is it not in your Power to convert them into Smiles? The same Countenance, no doubt, is susceptible of both, and had much rather entertain the one than the other; but the mischief is, ye will not give it leave to do so. Ye must be allow'd a Life of Sloth and Inactivity, ye must be indulg'd in a full swing of Pleasure and Voluptuousness, or the Family wherein ye were born is sure to have a world of Satyr and Invective thrown at it by your dirty Tongues! Many good Works have been done for you by your Father; for which of them do ye thus afflict and vex him! *Aristotle* observes of the *Spider's* Arist. Hist. Anim. l. 5. c. 2. Off-spring, that when with a great deal of Art and Labour he has spun a curious Web to catch them Food, and to secure it, the strongest

strongest of them, grown ripe for Mischief, makes those Threads fatal to the Parent, which he spent himself in framing for their Maintenance. And when a Man has copied one part of *the Story* in his Practice, by embittering his whole Life with Cares to leave you Wealth and an higher Place, will ye answer the other in your behaviour, by preying upon and consuming the Bowels which did bear and nourish you?

Think, think, wretched Men, what will become of you in the *other* World, after having acted so black a part in *this*. With what Ease can ye live, and how will ye dare to die! O *Generation of Vipers!* let me warn you to fly from the Wrath to come. Ye have tried sufficiently the Folly of your own Counsels, and felt long enough the base Drudgery of *feeding Swine*, the worst sort of them, *divers Lusts* and Vanities. Return, return then, ye wicked Prodigals, to God, to your selves, and to your Happiness, and pity the Bowels that yearn after you. *Arise* each of you, *and go to your troubled Father, and say unto him with bended Knees, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son; make me as one of thy hired Servants*, rather than suffer me to continue a Bond-slave of *Hell*. Ye will find, 'tis like, *a place of Repentance* in him, if ye thus *seek it carefully and with Tears*. His Compassions

sions fail not; they only stand expecting, till ye come and humble your selves for your past Disingenuity. Do but set out upon Submission, and he will run to meet you, fall on your Neck, and kiss you, stoop as low in Expressions of Kindness as you can do in Acknowledgments. He will gather you that were *dead* and are *alive again*, as an Hen broodeth her Chickens under her Wing that were *lost* and are *found*. The *best Robe*, and the *fatted Calf* are ready; the Arms are open for an Embrace, and the Hand lifted up to give a Blessing. Make therefore haste to be received, and he will make as much to receive you into Grace and Favour. There is Joy on Earth over an ungracious Child, *there is Joy in Heaven over a Sinner that repenteth*. And if any of us fall under either Imputation, God grant we may by our timely Repentance contribute to that Joy, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with the Father, &c.

S. Paul's

S. Paul's Christian Gallantry.

ACTS xxvi. 29.

And Paul said, I would to God that not only thou, but that all that hear me this Day were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these Bonds.

THE Words are part of a Speech address'd by S. Paul to Agrippa at his Trial before him. And truly such admirable Conduct is legible in them, even taken separate from the rest of the judicious *Apolo-logy*, as well became an humble Prisoner and a great Apostle. The *Wisdom* of the Serpent is sweetly coupled with the *Simpli-city* of the Dove; and such an happy *Temperature* of both may be found here, as was requir'd in them whom our *Saviour sent forth as Sheep in the midst of Wolves*, with a Commission no less hazardous to themselves than beneficial to others.

This

This will appear by considering two Things.

I. The Moral State of *S. Paul*, or what he was, when he thus wish'd the Judge, the Accusers, and the Audience like *himself*.

II. The Drift or Importance of that affectionate Wish, *I would to God that not only thou, &c.*

And first, the *Moral State* of the Person in the Text was at that time doubtless very good, or he would never have offer'd to make a Resemblance of it the Subject of his Devotion. *Conceitedness* indeed is a *common Frailty*, a Sin that doth very easily beset us opiniative Creatures. In our pretending Fancies we readily assume *foreign Graces*, in our overflourishing Imaginations we oft misrate *inherent Vertues*. We take our selves for Angels, when God will not own us for Saints, and are apt enough to say to *the best* of our Neighbours, *I am holier than thou*, when perhaps the Sadness of our spiritual Condition strikes us out of all comparison with *the worst*.

But *S. Paul*, we are sure, could not be mistaken here as to the Foundation of his Charity. He wishes his Auditors were altogether such as himself, and he had grounds for wishing this. For they were most unlike him, to their great Disadvantage; as unlike him as Vice is to Vertue, as Darknes

to

to Light. They were all without *Christ*, if not *without God in the World*; some *Aliens* even from the *Commonwealth of Israel*, many *Strangers* to the *Covenant of Grace*, more unacquainted with the golden Rule of Equity, that of *doing as they would be done by*. *Festus*, one of them, that had his *Heathenism* still about him, could bestow no other Character than of *Madness* upon the new Religion; and *Agrippa*, that had had his Birth and Education among the *Jews*, was but *almost persuaded to be a Christian*.

On the contrary, the Man at the Bar was a thorough Convert, a *perfect Christian*. The very Occasion of his Appearance there witnessed his Zeal for Jesus; and that *his Zeal was according to Knowledge*, the Backwardness of his Conversion is an Evidence. He stood out against the Force of Miracles and the Testimony of Martyrs. Nay, by his own Confession, he had been nurtur'd in the stiff way of a *Pharisee*, and as keen an Adversary of the Gospel, by Profession and by Temper, as Any Man whatsoever, not only doing many things, but *thinking verily with himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the Name of Jesus of Nazareth!*

Now simple Ignorance is not half so dangerous as Error. Darkness holds in Suspence, but a false Light seduces and hurries into Precipices. But yet he did at last
get

get over Prejudice and Prepossession, and surrender to Christianity; and that he did so, this must be resolv'd into an honest Heart and a well-grounded Resolution.

The *Conscience* he had *lived in* before, tho' erroneous, was a *good* one. His Understanding only wanted to be set right, his will was so already. The Truths of Religion therefore being press'd home upon the former, found an Entertainment, which they owed as well to his Desire of Conviction as to their own Evidence.

And as he acted with Sincerity in the Matter of his *Conversion*, so did he with Spirit in the Course of his *Ministry*. Opposition could not stop, nor Temptation divert him. When a *Voice from Heaven* arrested him in his guilty Journey to *Damascus*, to inform him wherein he had done amiss, an holy Ingenuity presently vented it self in an entire Submission,———*Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?* Which intimated there was nothing so hard to do, so dreadful to suffer, but he would readily do and suffer for the Truth. And when that Call for Instructions was answered, a vertuous Shame, a devout Warmth urg'd on his Soul in a kind of Impatience to fulfil them. So far was he from being *disobedient to the heavenly Vision*, that it became his Meat and Drink to *spend and be spent* in its Service. What were *Hunger and Thirst,*

Thirst, Cold and Nakedness, but Entertainments when undergone for the Benefit of Souls, what *Travels and Imprisonments, Perils among the Heathen, and Perils among his Countrymen*, but Pleasures, when Introductions to the Triumphs of the Cross? How bravely did he contradict the *Sanhedrim* to their Faces, whose vile Instrument he had once been, and declare that *Holy One*, whom they voted a Deceiver, the Son of God, and Judge of them and all Men? How general was his Apostolic Solitude? *The Care of all the Churches*, the Burthen of all the Christian World as it were lay upon his Shoulders. And yet how particular too was his Fatherly Advertence? *Who was weak and he was not weak by Sympathy? Who was offended and he burnt not with Resentment?* In Deni-ance of ravenous Wolves, what a painful Shepherd did he commence over the helpless Flock, here visiting, and there admonishing continually; And how abundantly did he labour to make it greater, by preaching, praying, disputing, writing, apologizing? And (which is the highest Commendation of *pastoral Endeavours*) how were all His within the Measures of *Discretion* and *Regularity*? 'Tis true, there was not wanting a wickedly artful *Tertullus* to implead and represent him as a *pestilent seditious Fellow*, and a Spreader of false Doctrine, as a Disturber of the

Nation,

Nation, and a *Profaner of the Temple*. But tho' Oratory drew up the frightful Charge, Innocence could disprove it. For this was his constant *Exercise*, to have a *Conscience void of Offence*, towards God and towards Men; and this was the encouraging Motive, even the Hope of a *Resurrection from the Dead*, both of the *Just* and of the *Unjust*. The several Articles of *Impeachment* run high, but what were they else but Calumny and Misconstruction? To speak to 'em in the Words of his own Defence, Did they ever find him *raising up the People*, *disputing with any Man in the Temple*, or profaning it? He was *purified* in it, but this could not sure be deem'd a Profanation; he was *purified without either Multitude or Tumult*, and therefore this could not be held Seditious. And as to the *way which they call'd Heresie*, was it any other than that whereby he ought to *worship the God of his Fathers*, was it any other than what his Accusers themselves also allowed, in Opposition to the atheistical *Sadducees*?

And thus you have the History, in short, of St. Paul's Behaviour, antecedent to the Address in the Text; which being premis'd, we may proceed,

2. To our main Business, *viz.* To examine into the Drift and Importance of it.

Now this can be no longer a Secret to us. 'Tis plain, the great Blessing he recommended to that numerous Assembly was an entire Belief and Interest in the Son of God, the Saviour of the World; such a Belief as would render them equally zealous with himself for the Furtherance and Propagation of the Gospel; such an Interest as would entitle them to the same glorious Rewards of Heaven and Immortality. And had they been in a supplicating Frame, could they have found any thing better to implore for themselves? *St. Paul* in this Case made his own Inclinations the Rule of his Benevolence. For doth he not elsewhere profess that he *desir'd to know nothing save Christ, and him crucified?* And yet this Profession could not be imputed to Ignorance or Incapacity. 'Tis a common thing with the *illiterate* Vulgar, to despise what is out of their reach, and make the Disparagement of Learning a creditable Covert for their Dulness, But when *he determin'd not to know any thing but the Evangelical Philosophy*, he had a familiar Acquaintance with the *Human*; to be bred at the Feet of *Gamaliel*, a learned *Rabbi*, was a *Scholar-like* Education; to be vers'd in the chief Authors of his time, *Epimenides, Menander, Aratus*, whom he cites upon Occasion; distinguish'd for a powerful and masculine Oratory, by the Style of *Mer-*

cury, and furnish'd out with Variety of Languages, was an high Attainment, answerable to such a Discipline. But as much as he had laid himself out upon Study, and drudg'd in the Mines of Learning, he declares he found not any *true* Treasure, none worth the owning, till he quitted Speculation for Faith. Nay, did he not too count all his outward Privileges, whether of the Law or the World, but *Loss and Dung for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord?* And yet, absolutely speaking, they were of no mean a Character. We must not imagine he slighted the *Jewish* Prerogatives, because he wanted them. For *if any Man thought that he had whereof he might trust in the Flesh, He more: Circumcised the eighth Day, of the Stock of Israel, &c.* It seems, when he was contented to forego all things for the Christian Religion, he was upon no ill Terms with *Moses*; he had an advantageous Pedigree and a legal Righteousness to boast of. Whence we infer, the Gospel-Dispensation was of infinite Moment in his Account, that he did not go over to it upon little Views, or by way of Refuge from Disgrace, or Insignificancy under the former, but merely for its own sake, and upon a full Persuasion of its transcendent Dignity; and consequently the *Convention* were infinitely beholden to him for his Heart's Desire and Prayer to God,

that they might as cordially embrace it as he had done.

Festus and *Agrippa* were Men of Quality and Station, and wanted not Pageantry and Glitter in their respective Governments. Notwithstanding the Figure he bore in the Christian Church, he was sure, was preferable to theirs *out* of it, and that it would be happy for them if they could be prevailed with to enter upon the same Circumstances.

Nor can we be at a loss to apprehend the Felicity consequent on such a Change. They had commenc'd, as our excellent *Catechism* expresses it, *Members of Christ's Body, Children of God, and Inheritors of the Kingdom of Glory.* They had obtain'd a complete System of admirable Laws to lead 'em in the way everlasting, the refreshing Influences of the Holy Spirit to support 'em under all the Drudgeries of an earthly Pilgrimage, and the Reversion of endless Joys to receive 'em upon finishing of their Course. And doubtless such inestimable Advantages deserv'd the Strefs of a Wish, how little soever those deserved them, in whose Behalf it was made.

The Apostle's *Answer* then, tho' concise in the Expression, was substantial in the Matter. And it is hard to say which it displayed most, his *Charity*, or his *Prudence.* A Christian *Meekness* shin'd out before with

an endearing Lustre. When *Festus* interrupted him in the Narrative he was giving of himself, his Life, and of his Doctrine, with the scornful Imputation of a melancholick Fancy, and a distemper'd Brain, telling him, he talk'd like a Man that was cras'd; he took no other Advantage of the Calumny, than to confute it by a modest Negative, saying, *I am not mad, most noble Festus*, but speak forth the Words of Truth and Soberness. This Supposition, if any thing could, might have justified cutting Language, as being a Satyr not only on the Speaker, but also the Subject of his Discourse, *Religion*; but the Prisoner would not be put besides himself by the rash Pretence that he already was so; and had no more lost his Manners than his Senses. He first bestows Terms of Respect on the Reviler, and then turns to one he presum'd more dispos'd for Attention, *King Agrippa*, *believest thou the Prophets? I know that thou believest*; I will not, cannot think but that you are well read in the ancient Predictions concerning the *Messiah*, and satisfied too as to the full Accomplishment of them in *Jesus*. And when *Agrippa* by his Reply seem'd to give a Look towards Conversion, how solicitous was he to carry him farther, how concern'd to have him settled within the Pale of Christianity?

St. PAUL's Christian Gallantry.

We read in the *feign'd* Account of the *Prodigal Son* that upon his Retreat home-wards, while he was yet a great way off, the *Father* reach'd him with his *Compassions*; and as if the *Heart* had set the *Feet* at liberty in spite of *Age*, *he ran to fall on his Neck and kiss him*. And we read in the *real* History of the inquisitive *young Ruler*, that upon that Declaration, *All the Commandments have I kept from my Youth up, Jesus looking upon him, loved him*, that is, with a *Love of Tendernefs and Pity*, and instructed him farther how he might make sure of *eternal Life*.

And have we not *St. Paul* copying after the *Divine Precedent*, even to *Exactness*? No sooner did the *King* faintly own a *Kindness* for the new *Institution*, but this set his *Affections* at work to contrive the perfecting of the good *Desires*. The remotest *Tendencies* to an holy *Faith* were a welcome *Discovery*, and nothing he desires more than the *Improvement* of them into a *State of Grace and Salvation*.

He congratulates the bare *Appearance* of *Ingenuity*, and tells him 'twas a thousand *Pities* he had not list'd himself by this time in the number of true *Believers*. *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*, was an *Acknowledgment* not worthier of a *Grandee*, than the *Rejoinder* was of a *Divine*, *I would to God that thou wert not on-*
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ly almost, but altogether such as I am. Well but, you'll say, does it not carry with it an Air of Pride and Ostentation? Does it not look like vain Glory and a fishing for Praise to wish another such as himself? No, it cannot do so in our Apostle, who, tho' he had been once of that *godly* Party, was never so far, as to be tinctur'd with this *Leaven of the Pharisees*.

Such *Sounds* we hear not but from *empty Vessels*. On the contrary, the pure *Stile of Humility* runneth through his *Epistles*. What modest *Hyperboles* came from him? *I am the chief of Sinners, the least of the Apostles*. What decent *Remembrances* of his unregenerate State? *I was a Blasphemer and a Persecutor*. What grateful *Reflections* on *Divine Dependence*? *By the Grace of God I am what I am*. When the foulest *Aspersions* call'd for a personal *Defence*, what *Struggles* were there between the *Hatred of Vanity* and the *Love of Truth*? *I am become a Fool in glorying, but ye have compelled me*. When he did upon mere *Compulsion* assert his *Apostolick Authority* and *Zeal*, with what *Abatements* was the *Commendation* clog'd? *In nothing am I behind the very chiefest Apostles, yet I am nothing. I would to God, then, that you were altogether such as I am*, could not be the *Language of Insolence and Boasting*, but of *Compassion and good Nature*. It is the ordi-

dinary Practice of the truly Pious to tell what they *would* be, not what they *are*. And accordingly it was his. *Most gladly would he have rather gloried in his Infirmities.* But as the Credit of his Apostleship one while, so now the Demonstration of his Concern for the Interest of Souls as well demanded as occasion'd an handsom mention of himself. He entertain'd a mighty regard for the professed *half Christian*, and to let him see he did, prays that his own Case may be his; which would render him an *entire* one, wanting nothing. Nay so intense was his good Nature, in recommending his own Case, he makes a tender reserve of such Circumstances as would have lessen'd the Favour of the Comparifon. *I would you were such as I am, except these Bonds.* Here is indeed the Rhetorick of the *Schools*, the Complaisance of the *Court*, and what is greater yet, the Sincerity of the *Gospel!* Were it in the Capacity of the Heart to conceive more generous Thoughts, in the Power of Words to set out greater Benevolence? The bitter Cup which his Saviour had given him, he could relish well enough himself; but he scorn'd, knowing the unsuitableness of it to other Men's Tasts, to let that go in the *Inventory* of Christian Privileges. He had no evil Eye at *Agrippa's* Crown, no other Design upon his Person, than to add to his Glory. He might

might continue, for all him, as *great* as he pleased, so he would but become as *good* as he ought to be. This was the Apostle's aim, and this the Letter of his Address, as well as the meaning. But while he was thus benevolent towards *the King*, he did not forget *the Subjects*; tho' if we consider who they were, he had but little Temptation to remember them with Civility. The *Jews that came down from Jerusalem to Caesarea to lay many grievous Complaints against him, stood round about in the Place of Hearing*; and yet his *Ghostly Blessing* is general and unlimited, like the Mercies of God, *I would to God that not only thou, but all that bear me this Day, were both almost and altogether such as I am*: Nay too he excepts *the Bonds*, with which he stood oppress'd by their means, from having a place in the Wish, and yet excepts none from having a share in the Contents of it.

His *Country-men* could not have injur'd him worse than they did, in a greater degree, or in more Instances. The only Ingredients of mortal Happiness, Liberty, Reputation, Livelihood, they actually wrested from him, and the Foundation both of it and them, they were striking at with the utmost vehemence, Life it self. But he had the Gift of a forgiving Temper to such Perfection as to deal with 'em, notwithstanding, as with Men *that had not injur'd him*

him at all, interest 'em in his devoutest Litanies, and beseech Heaven that they might have the Grace to close with Christianity, but not the Misfortune to suffer for it. So that *Charity* which *seeketh not her own* exclusively of others Welfare, *thinketh no Evil* by way of vindictive Reprizal, *doth not behave it self unseemly, is not easily provoked, beareth all things*; now, if ever, exerted those lovely and loving Qualities to the Life.

Nor was the Method of Management less prudential than ingenuous. The View he acted upon, was to work good Impressions, and *administer Grace unto the Hearers*. And what could have been more effectual to that purpose, what *better for the use of edifying*, than the *Communication which proceeded out of his Mouth*?

As elevated Stations are commonly very unfriendly to nice Vertue, so *Agrippa* was far from standing clear of Immoralities, unless *Incest* and all the ugly Train of attending Vilenesses deserve a better Name. And therefore perhaps *St. Paul* may be condemn'd by our first Thoughts for the Tenderness of his Application. We silly Things may imagine he should have fell to work with his Vices, when it was said, *Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*, and assured him, that he could not be *Almost* a Christian, till he quite ceas'd to be a Libertine. But our
Apostle,

Apostle, who enjoy'd the Divine Tutorage of God's Holy Spirit, knew what he did; and that he ought as little to transcribe the barefac'd Reproaches of an hasty Zealot, as the fulsom Flatteries of a glozing *Tertullus* which he practis'd upon *Felix*. It was not for want of Courage but Occasion, that he forbore the Freedom. He could *reason* with Openness before an adulterous *Felix*, of *Righteousness*, *Temperance*, and *Judgment to come*, not staying to consider whether the plain dealing might not expose him to Extremities; and lay the Sins of the Right-worshipful so home to him as to make him *tremble*. But as, generally speaking, it is not fit to *say to a King, Thou art wicked, or to Princes, ye are ungodly*; so a downright Reproof would have been most improper in the Conference with King *Agrippa*, because unnecessary. He might be work'd upon a more excellent way, that is, with sweet Address and holy Artifice; as is evident from the Event. *St. Paul* made it matter of Presumption, that a *Jew* believed the Prophets; and the bare attributing of this Belief to *Agrippa* produc'd in him kind and favourable Thoughts of Christianity. And when one Complement or stretch of Courtesy, as we may call it, had wrought so well, there was Encouragement enough for bestowing another. So he comes upon him with an obliging Rejoinder, *I would*

to God thou wert not only almost, but altogether such as I am, except these Bonds: where 'twas well the Bonds made an Exception in the courted Likeness. For had he invited him to Christianity and to Chains at the same time, he would have seem'd by such an odd mixture of an Address rather to envy the *great Pomp* and Parade with which he and *Berenice* entred the Tribunal, than to put him in a way of becoming happier still. *If ye suffer for Righteousness-sake, happy are ye*, was a Maxim with Christians, but a Paradox to Jews, whose Religion was endeared to them by temporal Promises and Blessings; and a Crowned Head especially would never have bore being told, that it were a Providence to be wish'd, to be made at once a Disciple and a Prisoner of Jesus Christ, and turn'd out of a voluptuous Palace into a mortifying Durance: Whereas the soft well-worded Reply to that Confession of being half perswaded to turn Profelyte, might probably have carried the Impression deeper. 'Tis most certain, it touch'd the Heart; which if it be not the Seat of Conviction, is an Avenue that must be gain'd before Argument can have access to it. He thereupon pitied him that was in Bonds as bound with him, and as heartily wish'd it had been in his Power to release *the Apostle*, as the other did, it had
been

been in his to instate *the King in the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God.*

Nor was the *Diffusiveness* of the Charity an impertinent Circumstance in it. Those who are well acquainted with the Springs and Methods of human Passions, are no Strangers to the Influence of good Language. Unexpected Civility has often surpriz'd an Enemy into Friendship. And *St. Paul* might hope an affectionate Blessing bestowed, where nothing was looked for but Curses, might melt down the Wrath of his Accusers, and soften 'em into a liking not only of his Person but his Doctrine. Truly, how could the most inveterate Spite be impregnable to such enamouring Goodness? When a poor Sufferer thus breath'd out his Compassions, — *I would to God, all that bear me this day were such as I am,* as well Adversaries as Friends, bating that Severity of Fetters which they have impos'd on me, how could they forbear answering in the Language of *Eli* to meek *Hannab*, *Go in Peace, and God grant thy Petition,* that is, make us such as thy self in point both of Faith and Practice. Indeed Fact came short of this. He did not overcome Evil with Good, any more than he was overcome of Evil; but still the Endeavour was commendable, and it had been successful too, had there not been as great Prodigies in Morality as in Nature.

Thus

Thus I have illustrated the Demeanour of St. *Paul* as well as I could; but to set it out in all its amiable Colours, requir'd a Genius of Eloquence like his.

The practical Observations that by way of Inference may be rais'd from it are these,

1. That we must *bles*s them that curse us, and pray for such as despitefully use and persecute us.

This is a Doctrine which our Lord had long before expressly delivered in his *Sermon*, and very lively exemplify'd in his *Practice*; and such Authorities are sufficient for the Recommendation of the hardest Lesson. But if inferiour Precedents from Men of like Passions and Infirmities with our selves have any additional force, the Text will help us to a very good one. For was ever Malice wound up to an higher pitch than in his Prosecution, or Charity exerted in nobler Strains than in his Conduct? The High Priest and Elders laid at his door the greatest Crimes without the least Foundation, even those of *Sedition* in the State, and *Innovations* in the Church; and yet he could make a Temple of a Tribunal, and turn it into a Place of Devotion for them. They conspir'd his Destruction, and yet he prayed for their Salvation. He wish'd 'em his Graces, but not his Chains; all the Good that was *in* him; but none of the Evils that were *upon* him; all the Good that

that was in him, tho' that was the very Root of all their Bitterness; but none of the Evils that were upon him, tho' those were the Fruits of it.

And does not this wonderful, this self-denying Passage, call out our Thoughts and our Wishes into the Service of God's Enemies and ours? Does it not loudly dictate Intercession to us, and powerfully bespeak a generous overlooking of Trespasses and Indignities? In true Construction, our *Apostle* in his Fetters before the enraged Multitude, thus scattering his Largeesses of Benediction among them, was a much greater Man than *Agrippa* in all his Glory, sitting on the Judgment-Seat to sentence him. And therefore such, to be sure, are lost to all Sence of Honour as well as Morality, that think much to imitate so venerable a Pattern of Christian Bravery.

2. We observe, in the Words before us, the Slight and *Contempt* that a manly *suffering Vertue* passes upon earthly *Grandeur*. It has been always held convenient that *Magistracy* should be distinguish'd by outward Figure. *Furs* and *Scarlet*, Title and Retinue, go for necessary Appendages; and they really are so. But then the Necessity has but an uncreditable Original, the Ignorance of the Multitude, who measure out *Duty* in Proportion to *Appearances*. Alas! these things are at the bottom despicable,

cable, as mean as the Minds that value them. *Sense* is affected by them; but so is not *Reason*, much less *Grace*; the former lets us into the secret of their Appointment, informing us that they are *indeed* a Guard to Authority by the Favour of vulgar Apprehensions about them, but no Addition of Worth to the Man that bears it; the latter tramples on them as mere gilded Trifles that belong only to this World, a Scene of Vanities, and perish with it. That this is no idle Speculation, let St. Paul's Behaviour witness. When *Agrippa* appear'd in his Robes, and his Chair of State, with flanking *Berenice* by his side, and a Train of Nobles about him, the gazing Populace no doubt were aw'd with the Solemnity; and it was expected that the suppos'd Criminal should be so too: Yea he really had been so, had he brought Guilt along with him to help out the Impression. But so far was he from trembling before that mighty Presence, so far from being struck dumb with the Parade, that he speaks out boldly as he ought to speak. Unconsciousness of Misdemeanour gave an assured Air, and a graceful Freedom; and the abiding Conviction on his Mind of better things to come enabled him to despise the things that were seen. Had he said to the proud Mortal, with an Accent of Admiration, *Would I were as thou art,*

set

set aloft in Power and Glory, he had delivered the Wishes of half the Company in respect of themselves; but tho' he *pleas'd all Men*, he could flatter none. No, this was the big Language of *the Christian Hero*, and it well became him, *Would to God thou wert as I am*, and then thou wouldst be *truly* happy. He was not in love with Chains himself, and so did not recommend them; but he could challenge even Majesty to furnish out such Materials for Felicity, as his Zeal help'd him to, that put them on.

There is no Comparison then betwixt the Glitter of *a Crown* and the Glories of *the Cross*, between the Amusements of Honour and the Comforts of Religion. While others place their Merit in their Show, pious Souls find a Worth in themselves that sets them much above it. Whilst the simple Crowd adore Riches with a stupid and astonish'd Reverence, They smile at the Delusion, and pity them. While haughty Sinners are undone by Prosperity, and led in golden Fetters to Perdition, They hug their guiltless and secure Poverty, they rather enjoy than suffer their Afflictions, and knowing themselves to be far more honourable before God than they can be ignominious before the World, they bear up bravely against the Horrors of a Prison, the Insults of *arbitrary* Tribunals, and the Pains of Martyrdom.

3. Another Remark offers, touching the Effects of a true and hearty *Conversion*, that it is generally attended with more than ordinary *Heights* of *Piety* and *Vertue*. For proof hereof I might refer you to *Manasses*, *Zacheus*, *Mary Magdalen*, and other *Penitents*; but the eminent one in the Text is a sufficient Evidence; and if we went no farther than the Text, we should find him so. For how does he here forgive because himself had been forgiven, and expresses an earnestness to communicate that Good to others which he had receiv'd from God! But we have other flights of *Compassion* from him, more wonderful if it be possible. In his first Epistle, he thus bespeaks the *Thessalonians*. *We were gentle among you, even as a Nurse cherisheth her Children*. Melting *Tenderness* indeed! And yet he rises higher in the next Verse. *We were willing to have imparted unto you not the Gospel of God only, but also our own Souls or Lives, because ye were dear unto us*. In his second to the *Corinthians*, he tells them, that *out of much Affection and Anguish of Heart he wrote unto them with many Tears, not that they should be grieved, but that they might know the Love which he had more abundantly unto them*. And did not every Sentence, Word, Syllable of the kind Address carry a *ꝰ* with it sufficient to set them all a weeping for Joy and Transport?

sport? In that to the *Philippians* we find him contented to *abide longer in the Flesh, wherein he groan'd being burthen'd, and to be absent from the Lord*, in whose Presence there is fulness of Joy, because it was *needful for them*, for their Edification and their Comfort. In that to the *Romans* he wishes himself *accursed from Christ for his Brethren, his Kinsmen according to the Flesh*, meaning this at least by the Hyperbole, that their Salvation lay next his Heart, and he would have been glad almost upon any Terms to purchase it.

Such were his Expressions, and he took care to verify them by labouring more abundantly than others. Indeed he was always meditating new Labours for his Zeal and new Advantages for the Church. By owning himself *the chief of Sinners*, he oblig'd himself to be the chief of all Christ's Votaries; and at length he died a Martyr for the Faith, who had been himself a Persecutor of Martyrs.

And the same in some measure is the Conduct of all sincere Converts to Religion. They think, *they* more especially owe the World the Blessings of a good Example and an active Life, by way of Expiation for former Scandals; they consider they were *born out of due time*, and set out late upon their Duty, and that therefore they should double their pace in order to overtake the

more forward Christians, and shew their good Will to the Race set before them. Pursuantly to these animating Reflections, they study to serve God and their Neighbour in the most eminent way and measure possible. Where another's Heart pities, their Bowels yern. Where an ordinary Christian confines himself to such a Piety as may just carry him out of danger, they distinguish themselves by the most generous Efforts of Zeal, as Men not at all afraid of bidding too high for Happiness.

It is no wonder therefore *there is* so much *Joy in Heaven over a Sinner that repenteth*, but rather that there is so little on Earth upon that Occasion. The Fruits of Repentance doubtless which Men on Earth are the only Partakers of, are such as may justly challenge it; and they don't deserve to partake of them, that will not welcome the good Tidings. Reformation, we are sure, is the next best thing to Innocence, I had almost said a great deal better in regard of Consequences. And if he that recovers *one* Person from the Error of his way, and so saveth a Soul from Death, is to be esteemed very highly for the work-sake, the Person recovered will be worthy of double Honour; because likely, as well on the score of Inclination as Capacity, to turn *many* unto Righteousness.

4. Hence we learn that *Self-Vindications* in some Circumstances are very consistent not only with a moderate Vertue, but *Evangelical Perfection*: For otherwise so big a Comparison had never drop'd from the greatest of Saints. To run out into *Personal Praises* is ever an invidious, often an unwarrantable Freedom; and it looks as if a Man had as little Merit as Ingenuity, when he enlarges on his own Character. But as to every Purpose under Heaven there is a Season, so certainly for Apologies. When we lye under the weight of an ill-plac'd Censure, we may, nay we must do our utmost to remove it; for a burden of this kind is an Oppression to Truth as well as Honour; and if that suffers, Religion will so too; it being undeniable that nothing renders a Person so incapable of doing good, as the being reputed bad. St. Paul therefore made bold to glance upon the Inoffensiveness of his own Behaviour; when reproach'd for the contrary; and knowing that a good Name was superiour to all Blessings but that which made it one, a good Conscience, would see that none should *make his glorying void*. Indeed elsewhere he does more than glance, he enlarges on his Endowments, Graces, Privileges; but 2 Cor. 12. then not without a mention of Necessity on one hand and Reluctancy on the other.

And the Liberty he took may be repeated with the Occasion: But so will the Regret too, or we are not *Followers of St. Paul as he was of Christ*.

It is pity the Dirt of Infamy should be laid at his door, that keeps himself unspotted from the World; but it is a shame to let it lye there, when a modest Defence may wipe it off. And Reservedness in this Case as necessarily brings him under the guilt of Carelessness, as unprovok'd Narratives of himself would under that of Ostentation.

5. Hence we learn, *prudential* and artful Management may very well stand with a Principle of true Religion. Wisdom and Goodness are seldom found together in *Practice*; but this is not the Effect or Quarrel of their Natures. They are consistent in *Theory*; and it is the Endeavour of Scripture as well by Example as Precept, to unite them in a sweet and a loving Harmony.

St. Paul certainly was an happy Instance of both; and every Scene he acted in brought each of them to the Test. When brought to a Trial by a Council of his own Nation, and *perceiving that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he crieth out, Men and Brethren, I am a Pharisee, the Son of a Pharisee: of the Hope and Resurrection of the Dead I am call'd in question.*

question. Now the thing he said was true; for the Resurrection was an essential Point of the Religion for which he was call'd in question; and it implied too an excellent Argument *ad Homines*, to Pharisees, in behalf of Christianity and himself, *viz.* that 'twas unreasonable for them who were Assertors of the Resurrection to persecute that Religion, and the Abettors of it, which establish'd their own Doctrine. And it sped accordingly. For the Assembly unanimous in conspiring his ruin were divided thereupon. The skilful Turn broke the mischievous Confederacy, and made one half of them his Friends. Nor did Success only attend it, but Approbation too: As appears by the next Night's Vision, which gave Testimony to him that he had *witnessed a good* Acts 23. 4: *Confession.*

The Conduct we have been considering comes up to the Smartness of that Apology. Here were Presence of Mind and Readiness of Wit to nick the Temper of his Adversary, and take Advantage of his Concessions.

The *Defence* he made before the bloody *Nero* is lost among other desirable Pieces of Christian Antiquity; but from the other Pleadings delivered down to us by Divine Providence, we may well judge, *it* also observ'd the Accommodations of Address, and every befriending Circumstance. Indeed

he had a wonderful Talent in approaching the Passions, and he made a frequent use of it. His Writings are full of brisk Sallies, surprizing Interrogatories, and notable Allusions: And he must be a very inadvertent Reader that does not discern in all of them a very artificial way of Insinuation into the Minds of Men.

And wherein should we be to blame, if we carefully wrote after so fair and ingenious a Copy? Policy and Invention, as oft as they are misus'd to the worst of Purposes, are applicable to very good ones; and we may, no doubt, guard the Conveniencies of this Life by Wariness and Precaution, provided we do nothing against the Interests of the other.

6. Hence also we learn, that when we would reclaim a Man from his Follies, we ought to express a friendly Concern for his Person.

This was not only in the Text, but always the *Apostolical* Method. With what affectionate Compellations and humble Stoops does *St. Peter* address the unthinking Jews? *Dearly Beloved, I beseech you, abstain from fleshly Lusts which war against the Soul.* The Passion of a Father, and the Deference of a Supplicant, meet together to usher in his Advice. With what Softness of Style, and Prefaces of Respect, does *St. Paul* admonish the factious *Corinthians*? When he might have

have come with a judicial *Rod*, or a sharp *Rebuke*, he prefers *the Spirit of Meekness*; when he might have dealt out absolute Injunctions and indisputable Authority, he *beseeches them to avoid Divisions by the Name of our Lord Jesus*, calls them *Brethren*, tho' they walk'd disorderly, and labours to win them over to Unity by all the endearing Instances of pathetick Eloquence. No other Expedients than the Rhetorick of Tears and the Charms of Love were apply'd by these primitive Reformers. And no body can say but that they did the Work effectually which God gave them to do, by adding to the Church daily such as should be saved. It is a gross Mistake then to imagine that Zeal and Gentleness are irreconcilable. *There is no new thing under the Sun: That which hath been, is now*, that is, the same Disposition in Sinners, as formerly, the same Efficacy in the same Means of Impression; and therefore God requires that which is *past*, in order to their Recovery, the same Measures of Behaviour towards them. Nothing, to be sure, doth reason more right than the Coolness of him that offers it.

Not but that a more than ordinary Warmth, yea Bluntness of Expression, may be proper upon an universal Slumber, to awaken Men out of a carnal Security and *immoderate* Zeal for what they call Moderation; but

but *we*, Indifference, at a time when the Spirit of the World overtakes some, and that of *Gallio* besets others. But this Conduct is the last Resort of Christian Piety, and never put in Practice by the Wise and Sober, but with an unwilling Mind, and in Compliance with Necessity. They would not have *Deputies* turn'd away from the Faith, nor *Felixes* withstand it; and therefore they *cry aloud and spare not*, being nothing terrified by their Adversaries. But still they look upon Severity only as an *occasional* Good, like a rough medicinal Application in a *desperate* Case. In their Opinion, remote *side-wind* Reproofs and bare *Hints* to Duty, ordinarily speaking, are sufficient, and they count themselves happy, when they find Mens Apprehensions awake for them.

7. And *lastly*, The particular Nature of that Expression in the Text teaches us that to give a Grace and Authority to our Dissuasives from Vice, we should shew in our own Persons a lively Draught of those Vertues we recommend to others.

Even an *heathen* Critick would allow the Speech to *Agrippa* to be Oratory; but that which chiefly makes it such in the Account of a Christian, is *St. Paul's* setting forth himself in it as an Example of the wish'd-for Graces and Perfections. For nothing is so moving

moving and Argumentative for Piety, as the still Voice of Piety it self; and where religious Discourse *disputes* one Sinner into Repentance, an holy Conversation backing it, *winneth* thousands. That which would reach the Heart must come from it. Men will be satisfied of the *Sincerity* of the Adviser before they can be convinced of the *Reasonableness* of the Advice. And what can give this Satisfaction but the Correspondency of his Manners? Sound Doctrine indeed, yea and sound Principles too, 'tis certain, may be attended with a very corrupt Behaviour, because Thought is not always awake; and that is necessary to make 'em practical. But there is nothing to shew that such in reality are our Sentiments, or Principles, when the Deportment is contradictory; yea it is but reasonable to imagine they are not so, because the inward Sentiment naturally draws its own Picture in the outward Action; and he that believeth well, to be consistent with himself, must walk so too. The Security then as to our being in *Earnest*, when we press a Duty upon our Brethren, and consequently the Success of the Exhortation depends upon a conformable Practice. Let the Discourses of the Wicked be never so seraphical, they are not at all affecting; because the heavenly Life, which would make 'em so, is wanting. But if it
appears

appears we have preach'd to our own Souls; what we deliver to our Auditory, this bespeaks Attention to it, this doubles the Impression. If we can but say without Vanity, after the great Doctor of the *Gentiles*, *I would to God all that hear me were such as I am*, we may say so with Effect, and render 'em such as we would have them; *persuade* them at last to become not only *almost* but *altogether* good Christians. For let me add, that the Blessing of God goes along with such Mens Endeavours, and delights to prosper them. Because they are not only doing his Work, but crediting it too, he esteems himself as it were bound in Honour to second it with his Providence, that so *they* may be credited in their Turn, and rejoice in the Fruits of their holy Toil. Sometimes indeed it falls out otherwise. The very *History* we are upon is an Instance, and the Remonstrances of our Apostles in other Places, are the Language of Jealousy if not Despair. But then this happens but *sometimes*, and when it does, the suppos'd Reasons of it make Amends for the Disappointment. The conscientious Labourer of God's Vineyard concludes the Misfortune now sent only to try his *Patience in the Gospel*, exercise his Humility, and distinguish his Conduct; and so receives it as a *kind* Severity with Submission. He

imputes

Galat. 4. 11.
Heb. 5. 12.

imputes no Omission nor Misconduct to himself; he hath done all that was fit for him to do, but it pleas'd the Divine Wisdom to disappoint him. Tho' he cannot therefore look pleasant on the Event, yet he will notwithstanding it; and *this is his rejoicing, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not with fleshly Wisdom, he has had his Conversation in the World.*

GOD

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GOD made Man :

OR,

Z E A L

F O R T H E

Cause of Christianity

R E C O M M E N D E D .

A N D O U R

Saviour's Miraculous Fast

Enlarg'd upon;

In Two

S E R M O N S

P R E A C H ' D before the

University of OXFORD:

The one on *Sunday, Dec. 19. 1708,*
the other on the *1st Sunday in Lent, 1709.*

L O N D O N , Printed in the Year 1712.

1875

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T H E

P R E F A C E.

THE great Desire I always had of declaring my most dutiful Regards for that venerable Seat of Learning, in which these well-meaning Sermons had the Honour of their first Delivery, will atone, I hope, for my Indiscretion, if there be any, in publishing them.

Their great Arguments, the Nature and Actions of our blessed Saviour, I am very sensible, have suffered by coarse handling; but this lieth only in the ornamental part: I have not to my Knowledge misrepresented either; and so the Picture be true and resembling, it is enough, tho' it falleth infinitely short of the Original.

If there be any thing in any of my Papers, at all exceptionable, in point either of Doctrine or Application, I must take the Shame of it to my self, having no Right to the common Plea, the Prejudices of Education. For certainly if any part of the Christian World be the Pillar of Truth, it is the Apostolical Church of England: If any particular Societies may be look'd upon as the Standards of Orthodoxy, they are our two famous Universities. Whatever Prejudices, Calumnies, or Jealousies, may be rais'd against the Latter, by the Ignorant or the Designing, here I'm sure the Faith,

the Discipline, the Practice of Christianity are taught, vindicated, espous'd. Here the Deist and the Arian, the Fanatick and the Debauchee dare not appear but in Disguise.

Among such Numbers of Youth indeed, tho' one bad Person were too much, it is not to be expected there should be none. But allowing for the Corruption of human Nature in general, and the Frailties of that Age in particular, the Schools of the Prophets doubtless stand clear of Offence and Scandal. Whilst the Returns of Foreign Breeding are superficial, and the Impressions of Rival-Academies at Home pernicious; our ancient Nurseries, by tender Care and wholesome Instructions, introductory to a more publick Appearance on the Stage of Action, do continually make glad the City and the Church of God.

We therefore who have felt the kindly Warmth of their Bosoms, cannot help adoring the Guardian-Providence that sent us thither, and blessing too the Paps which we have suck'd. And may the same good Providence render so pious and well-principled an Education more and more effectual to the great Ends for which it was design'd, the Glory of God, and the Good of Souls.

GOD made MAN.

St. JUDE, the latter part of the third Verse.

— *It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the Faith which was once delivered to the Saints.*

IT is well known that in the first Ages of the Church, Christianity expos'd its Professors to a great Trial of Afflictions, their Names to Mockery, their Possessions to Ruin, and their Bodies to Martyrdom. This was apt to be a *Stone of Stumbling* at the Threshold; it overthrew the Faith of some, and the Feet of others were almost gone, their Treadings had well-nigh slipt. And that which help'd to draw off still more from their holy Profession was a sly

Insinuation of a sort of temporizing Hereticks crept in among them, who consulting Flesh and Blood rather than Conscience and Duty, confidently gave out, That so an *inward* Belief was retain'd, it was lawful to dissemble it in times of Persecution. As if the Head could be found, and the Heart sincere, when the Tongue was silent, or the Innocence of *the Dove* lay in the Subtilty of *the Serpent*!

But the *Apostle*, who *had not so learnt Christ*, addressing himself, according to the Duty of his high Station, to the *unconfirm'd* Christians, thus liable to be either frighted into Apostacy by inveterate Enemies, or invited over to it by pretended Friends, teaches them an otherguesss Lesson of Morality, and presses it upon them with great Vehemence. *Beloved, when I gave all Diligence to write unto you of the common Salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you, that you should earnestly contend for the Faith which was once deliver'd to the Saints.*

An Exhortation *then* not more necessary in it self than encouraging on the Account of that *common Salvation*, which he minds them of as nigh at Hand to reward their Constancy. The Destruction of *Jerusalem* had been plainly foretold by the prophetick Spirit, and was shortly to be accomplish'd by Divine Vengeance. Even that *Genera-*

tion which then lived was not to *pass away* 'till all should be notoriously fulfill'd.

But the Days of Wrath to the *incredulous Jews* were to be a time of Redemption to *persevering Christians*. A *distinguishing* Guardian Providence awaited them, and *he that endured to the End should be saved*. The Roman Eagles had no Commission to devour such: Whilst these were to be busy about the Carcasses, a way to escape was prepar'd for them, and not an Hair of their Heads should Perish. And what might have been expected from so comfortable a Prospect, but a resolute Stedfastness in well-doing, an *earnest Contention for the Faith*? Who would not have hazarded their Lives in the Defence and Propagation of it, when so glorious an Adventure would be the Means of saving them in the Issue? Who would have offered to preserve themselves by an ungodly Dissimulation, when by a little present Security they were but reserv'd for much sorer Calamities, for *Tribulation, such as was not from the Beginning of the World to that Day*, no, nor ever should be afterwards.

Such was the Case of the Infant-Church of Christ, and not wholly unlike is Ours. The Evangelical Doctrine is still shamefully attackt, and as to one Branch or another almost every where spoken against. And tho' the *particular* Enforcement of it (as above

explain'd, agreeably to the Sense of Dr. Hammond) is foreign to us, the Precept is not out of Date, nor without its Motives. I shall therefore insist upon it at present, and since the *Subject* of the *approaching* Festival not only bears the greatest Figure in reveal'd Religion, but was also principally regarded in this Advice; *Jude* immediately subjoining as the Occasion of it, his Apprehensions of Danger from *ungodly Men*, that blush'd not to *deny the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ*. I shall with Reference to that handle these three Particulars.

I. Enquire what was *the Faith once* for all delivered to the *Saints* concerning the *Person of Christ*, about this Season manifested in the *Flesh*.

II. Urge the *Necessity* and Reasonableness of *contending earnestly* for this fundamental Article of the *Christian Faith*.

III. Examine how, and in what way we are bound to express this *Earnestness* and *Zeal*.

And first, I'm to enquire what was *the Faith once* for all delivered to the *Church*, concerning the *Person* of our *Saviour Christ*. Now *the Scriptures*, as they were given by *the Inspiration of God*, so were they written for the *Instruction* of *Man*, as well in *Points* to be believed, as in things that are to be practis'd. And *They are they which testify of Jesus,*
which

which lead us to contemplate in Him a Divine, an Human Nature, and the Union of them both.

Socinus indeed, in the Abundance of his Generosity, allow'd him no other Subsistence than that of *yesterday* in the Land of *Judab!* And altho' *Arius*, as a more liberal Chronologer, went farther back in the Date of his Being, yet he stop'd at the Birth of *Time!* The one suppos'd him to be no more than a *Man*, the other to be but a *Creature*, tho' yet a *Creature* of the greatest Dignity and Perfection. But both greatly err'd for want of determining themselves by the Standard of Truth. His *Divinity* would have been no Secret to them, had they convers'd more ingenuously with Revelation.

If he *began* to be at his Nativity, why is he said, tho' born several Months after him, to have *been before* the *Baptist*; tho' *the* Joh. 1. 15. *Seed of Abraham*, and much *less than fifty* Joh. 8. *Years old, before Abraham*; tho' but lately 57, 58. come into the World, *before the World was.* Joh. 17. 5. These Phrases, as is obvious to the meanest Capacity, were design'd to set out a Distinction, a Pre-eminence; and yet had nothing more been meant by them than a Pre-existence in the *Decree* and Council of God, nothing more was meant, than what might have been equally affirm'd of the Baptist, of *Abraham*, or any of his Posterity; it being certain that all Men existed in that *Meta-*

taphorical Sence, before any Man existed
 Joh. 16. 28. *really*. Why is he said to *come forth from*
the Father, when he came into the World;
 Joh. 3. 13. to *descend from Heaven*, when he appear'd
 on Earth? Or if it be pretended that this
 Descent was long after his first Appearance,
 in Consequence of his having been taken
 up into Heaven to receive his high Com-
 mission, where are the strong Reasons that
 support the *Pretence*, or the plain Passages
 of Sacred History that relate the *Fact*?
 Such a *formal* Assumption surely would have
 deserv'd a Place in the Holy Records, as
 well as other Transactions of his Life that
 found one; and had *it* been but necessary
 to add Weight and Authority to the Divine
 Embassage, it was as necessary to be known
 by all that should be interested in the
 latter.

If he was *created* in Time, so as that
 once he was not *the Word*, but only an I-
 dea in the Mind of God, why is he said to
 Joh. 1. 1. have *been in the Beginning with God*, which
 implies that he had not any *such* himself;
 to have a perfect *actual* Being, when all
 Things else did but *begin* to be, that is,
 before any time conceivable? Why are *all*
things (and so implicitly *Time* it self as well
 as *Nature*) said to have had their Begin-
 ning from him, *All things that are in Hea-*
 ven and that are in Earth, *visible and invi-*
 Col. 1. 16. *sible, whether they be Thrones or Dominions,*
Princi-

Principalities or Powers; to have been all created by him and for him? The Maker, doubtless, must be excepted out of the Number of what were made, and the first Principle of Life look'd upon as *having Life in himself*, without any Dependence on a former one. This Place the *Socinians* would understand in a *moral* Sence, as if it signified only a renewing of the World to Righteousness. And what is this, but to expose themselves and disparage Christ? The Creation here mention'd is ascribed to him as an *appropriate* Enterprize; but the Credit of making *new* Creatures is not all his own; his Ministers assist in *begetting* I Cor. 4. 15. Men thro' the Gospel. Besides, the Effect of his creating Power is declar'd to be of universal Latitude; but if Reformation were the only Exercise of it, all things in general were not, could not be created by him, to wit, not *the Thrones and Dominions, the Principalities and Powers*, on the one Hand, Animals and Vegetables on the other: *Holy Seraphins* having no need of such a Thing, *evil Spirits* no Title to it, and the several Hosts of the lower World no Capacity for it. The *Arians*, on the contrary, keep to the *Letter*, but then they allot him no other Interest in the Operation than that of an *Instrument* or *Servant*. A Supposition as groundless as the former! For if he were but an *Underworker* in the Business of the Creation,

Creation, how could it possibly be true that *all things were created for him*, as well as by him, for his Honour and Glory? And where was the Object that as an Instrument he acted upon, *Materials* being as necessary to such a Cause, as they are inconsistent with such a Performance? 'Tis manifest therefore, tho' entitled *the First-born of every Creature*, he was not *one* himself, but *set up* or begotten *from everlasting*. That Character denotes only a Priority of Duration, not a Similitude of Nature; for else why is the World's Production, that immediately follows it in the Text, assign'd there as its Ground and Reason, why is it attended with so lofty a Periphrasis of him, *the Image of the Invisible God*?

Farther, if he be not *truly* and properly God, why is he called so in holy Scripture, *the Name* being but an Absurdity consider'd without *the Import*? The Almighty himself indeed hath *said*, in the plural number, even of Princes and Rulers, *Ye are Gods*; but at the same time, lest their Spirits should be exalted above measure, adds an humbling Antithesis, and presently minds 'em that they are but mortal ones, of the same frail Mould with those poor Vassals that adore their Power. *Ye shall die like Men*, tho' you look above them, and then your *Grandeur*, and consequently your *Godship* shall be no more. Whereas the Stile
of

PROV. 8. 23.

Col. 1. 15,
16.

Vid. White-
by's Annot.
on the place.

of *Christ* is all of a piece, and Majestick without allay ——— My Lord and my God, the true God, the only true God, the great God, the mighty God, God blessed for ever. And could such August and Emphatical Epithets besit one who was a God only by *Adoption* and not by *Birthright*, by *Office* and not by *Nature*?

Lastly, were he at best but a bright Son of the Morning, the eldest Offspring of that prolifick *Fiat*, which brought forth the Universe, how shall we account for his absolute Remission of Sins, and authoritative Intercession for those whom God had given him, his Mission of the Holy Ghost, and Preparation of heavenly Mansions, his raising of the Dead, and judging of them when raised? How could our Saviour think it no Robbery to be equal with God, and the Apostle no Blasphemy to deliver his Thoughts with Approbation? With what Face could he alledge, *I and the Father are one*, one not in Affection only (which is an Unity common to Saints and Angels, that love and are loved by him, that will exactly as he wills, and act altogether as he would have them) but in Essence too; which is an Unity none partake of besides the Three that are in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit? And when reproach'd by the Jews for challenging Divine Perfections, how could he forbear exercising an Human one,

Joh. 20. 28.

Joh. 17. 3.

Tit. 2. 13.

Isai. 9. 6.

Rom. 9. 5.

Mar. 2.

Joh. 17. 24.

Joh. 15. 26.

Joh. 14. 2.

Joh. 5. 21,

22.

Phil. 2. 6.

Joh. 10.

30.

one, that of *Honesty* in undeceiving them?

Joh. 5. 23. Why must *all Men honour the Son even as they honour the Father*, and the Heavenly
 Rev. 5. 8. Host sings Hallelujahs to *the Lamb* that was slain, as well as to *him that sitteth upon the*
 2 Cor. 12. *Throne*? Why did St. Paul address him in the Hour of Temptation, as one *whose Grace*
 Acts 7. 59. *was sufficient for him*; and St. Stephen in the instant of Martyrdom, as one to whom his *Spirit* was returning, and from whom it came? Why are all those excellent Things which are spoken of *Jehovah* in the Old Testament applied to *Jesus* in the New; whenas 'tis the plain Purport of *both*, that God cannot impart his Prerogatives, and the *Glory* of them *he will not give to another*? Why does our Bible which sets all Creatures, even the highest, at the greatest distance from infinite Majesty, set him upon the same Terms of Advantage with the Creator himself?

Joh. 12.
41.

Such pompous and sublime Expressions as we meet with every where concerning him, are no rhetorical strain'd Flourishes; but, allowing *That* to be a *Divine* Composition, irrefragable Evidences of his *Divinity*. Reason cannot call for better, nor Heaven bestow. If therefore we will judge like Men, we cannot but conclude that he is God, *very God of very God*; and should we be deceiv'd in so concluding, there's *Jeremy's Sanctuary* to fly to, *It is the Lord that hath deceived us.* His

His Humanity or *Incarnation* comes next to be considered; and this, tho' almost as early disputed as preach'd unto the World, is a Fact as unquestionable as plain Scripture can make it. *Simon Magus* advanc'd the Notion of an *aerial* imaginary Body, and we know whence he borrowed it; from Fancy. A likely thing indeed, that a mere Phantom or Spectre should occasion so much talk and bustle in the World, and go thro' so many different Stages of Action and Misery! *Herod* suppos'd he bore something more *substantial* about him, when he endeavour'd his Destruction; and the *Jews* perceiv'd he did, when they effected it. The *Virgin*, no doubt, expected to be a Mother, when *her Soul did magnify the Lord for regarding the low Estate of his Handmaid*; and the Devil verily took him for her Son, when he made bold to tempt him *in the Wilderness*: Satan seeing him so like unto his Brethren, could not believe a difference, tho' just before attested by a Voice out of the excellent Glory, but hop'd to find that Sin it self made no Exception in the likeness.

But as Christ hath taken our *Flesh*, must he take our *Soul* too? May not his Divinity, as *Apollinarius* conceiv'd, supply the Place and Offices of it? Shall we not suppose him void of those *Affections*, which seem to be the *Distempers* of our Constitution?

tion? No, as he is *perfect God*, so is he *perfect Man*, of a *reasonable Soul and human Flesh subsisting*. 'Twas his *Soul*, which *increas'd in Wisdom*, as his *Body* did in *Stature*, as his *Person* did in *Favour with God and Man*; which was a *Stranger to Futurity*, and had no *Knowledge of the last Day or Hour* when the *Heavens and the Earth* shall pass away. The same *Passions* which we complain of as *poisonous Plants* fit to be rooted out of our *Nature*, were set in his, but to better purpose; and 'twas his *Soul* that entertain'd and cultivated them. In his *Father's House*, he knew how to be angry at the *Abuses of it*: At the *Grave of Lazarus*, whom he loved, he could weep bitterly as one that mourneth for his *Friend*. And when his *Eye* was fix'd on perishing *Jerusalem*, commiserating *Tears* drop'd from it. And 'twas his *Soul* that was subject to these different *Impressions of Zeal, Trouble and Pity*. When the bitter *Cup* was ready to be put into his *Hand*, he that as *God* could have had *more than twelve Legions of Angels* to deliver him from it, as *Man* had need of one to *strengthen* him under the *Apprehensions of it*. And 'twas his *Soul* that began to be *sore amaz'd*, to be *exceeding sorrowful even unto Death*. Again, 'twas his *Soul* which desir'd that *Cup* might, *if it were possible, pass from him*; and that upon finding the avoidance of it inconsistent with
the

the Decrees of Heaven, submitted its Will to God's.

Farther, when he was *crucified, dead and buried*, he descended into Hell; and 'twas his Soul alone that did this upon its Separation from the Body, as the *Ancients* argued; it being blasphemous to attribute the Descent thither to his Divinity which was there before, because every where: ridiculous to ascribe that Motion to his Body that was now become incapable of any, because crucified dead and buried. Lastly, if he took not on him the *rational* Soul, how did he redeem it? If that was not the Seat of all his innocent Infirmities, what cou'd be so in him whose other Nature was all Blessedness, all Perfection? Such Questions as these can never be answered upon the *Apollinarian* Supposition, nor that defended without answering them. So it appears that the Son of God (Co-eternal and Co-essential with the Father) *in the fulness of Time* assum'd the entire Nature of Man.

And 'tis as evident he assum'd it into the *Unity* of his own *Person*. This is an hard Saying, if you'll believe *Nestorius*, who can bear it? Utterly unworthy of *the Deity*, which could not, says he, be properly united to *the Manhood* without suffering with it. But not so hard a one, if rightly understood. It is not the *Personal Union*, which could be a lessening, but only his mistake

4

about

about the Consequences of it. It infers indeed a Communication of *Names*, but not a Fellowship of *Infirmities*. Did it suppose that what was endur'd by one of the united Natures was endur'd by the other too, it might be shocking enough. But there's no such thing in the Case. The only Result is, that the Actions which were perform'd only in *one* of them, are attributed to the *other*, or rather to *the* * *Person* who consists of *Both*. And he that is offended with such Attributions, takes Offence where none is given. The *Earthen Vessel* was the immediate Subject of Humiliation, and nothing fell to pieces but that; and yet because the *heavenly Essence* was join'd therewith, *the Gospel* as well as *the Church* asserts that *God* bled and dyed, but Neither that the *Godhead* did. In like manner nothing is more natural or common than to ascribe to the same Man all the Operations of the several Parts of his Frame, as centring in him, tho' absolutely irreconcilable as to the same Part, whether *Flesh* or *Spirit*. And can that way of speaking seem strange in regard of a *Divine Person*, which is so familiar with reference to *human ones*?

Acts 20.
28.

* Ὅτι ἄνθρωπος ἐβλήθη ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς ἐκάλεισεν, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τῆς ἐλάττωσιν ἐστίας ὅλον ἑαυτὸν ἀνόμασε γὰρ καὶ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ αὐτῷ πολλάκις καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς θεότητι, πολλάκις ὅτι ἐπὶ τῆς ἀνθρωπότητι τὸ πᾶν κληθῆναι. Chrysostr. in Joann. c. 3. v. 13.

As to the manner of this *Personal Union*, that *without Controversy is a great Mystery*, as the Apostle tells us concerning it, and so we must expect it will ever be on this side *Vision*. God has left an *Obscurity* upon it (which nothing but the *Illuminations* of a *brighter World* can remove) to administer an *Advantage* and *Commendation* to our *Faith*, not an *Opportunity* and *Argument* to our *doubting*. But however we may safely affirm, having the *holy Fathers* for our *Guides*, and eminent ^a *Councils* for our *Precedent*, that it was effected without either ^b *Confusion* or ^c *Conversion*, and is so intimate as to be ^d *inseparable*. Without *Confusion*, because had both *Substances* been blended together, both had been destroy'd or alter'd to give *Existence* to a third; whereas the *Deity* is liable to *no variable-ness*, *no shadow of turning*. Without *Conversion*, because as it is no where *written*, the *Flesh* became the *Word*, or the *Word*

^a The great Council of Chalcedon us'd these *Negatives* to express the *Union* of the two *Natures* by, viz. *ἀσυγχύτως*, *ἀτρέπτως*, *ἀδιευρέτως*, *ἀχωρίως*.

^b Christus est Deus & Homo secundum utramque substantiam in suâ proprietate distantem. *Tert. adv. Prox.*

^c Divinitas in Creaturam non est murata ut desisteret esse Divinitas, nec creatura in Divinitatem ut desisteret esse Creatura. *S. August. de Trin.*

^d Quid fecit Passio, quid Mors, nisi Corpus ab Animâ separavit? Animam verò a Verbo non separavit. *August. Tract. in Joan.*

ceas'd to be what it was by becoming *Flesh* ; so 'tis not to be imagin'd, *finite* Flesh in the very Moment of passing out of nothing should pass into something else, even into an *infinite* Spirit, or, that the Word, that is, *Life* it self, should be wholly swallow'd up of *Mortality*. And as these *Natures* were preserv'd *distinct* in the great Day of Espousal, so tho' wedded in *Time*, they were wedded for *Eternity*. Death it self, which divorc'd the Soul from the Body, could not sever them ; for Christ rais'd

Joh. 2. 19. himself from it, and this he must do by the Influence of *one* over the Infirmities of the *other*. Their Harmony is sweet beyond comparision, and their Endearments lasting without measure. The Divine *Essence* knew no *Beginning*, and the Divine *Union* shall know no *End*.

This is the *Faith* once bequeath'd to Mankind concerning the Person of our Blessed Lord, and this we are faithfully to retain as a sacred Depositum, and *earnestly* to contend for as a most valuable Legacy. Which therefore brings me in the second place to shew the *Necessity* and Reasonableness of such a *Contention*.

And first, the *Importance* of the Doctrine indispensibly exacts it at our Hands. So important it is, that our Redemption and *that* stand or fall together. Had not Christ been *Emanuel*, he could never have been

Jesus; and were there not ineffable Perfections in him that undertook to save, we should be yet in our Sins, and without a Saviour. For great *Burdens* require the greatest *Strength* to bear them; and a greater one could not be impos'd, than the desperate Service of restoring a *lost* and fallen World to Life and Happiness. When *Adam* had offended his Maker, who was fit to plead for the Creature? The Offender could not well appear as his own *Advocate* before so holy and incens'd a *Judge*: Nor had a full Submission been a sufficient Attonement. *Justice* must have Satisfaction, before there is room for *Mercy*; and that was not to be satisfied by a most punctual Obedience paid *afterwards*, because due *before*. And *Sacrifices* promis'd no more Success than Repentance. Alas! it was not possible, the gross *Blood of Bulls or Goats*, tho' innocent things, should *take away Sin*, or expunge Guilt; should have Virtue enough to cleanse the Heart of polluted Man, or Eloquence enough to dispute away the Wrath of an angry Deity.

There was Impotence at *home* to mortify, no powerful Sollicitors from *abroad* to relieve him in the pressing Exigency. The best of his Posterity were bad enough, thro' actual and imputed Depravity, to need an Intercession; and what they wanted themselves, they could not supply to him. —

And none of the *Celestial* Hierarchy made a motion to fly to his Succour. If they had *Wings*, they had no *healing* under them. In his Saints God foresaw Unrighteousness, and in his Angels he found *Folly*. But supposing they had been pure in his sight, which of them would have heard guilty Man, if he call'd out for help, or been heard himself, if he had besought it for him, charm'd he never so sweetly, never so importunately? No finite Being would have been able to rescue forfeited Souls from the Place of Hell, which infinite Guilt had made their Portion. *It would have cost more to make an Agreement unto God for them, than any mere Creature had to lay down*: So that he must have let that charitable Office alone for ever.

But as soon as the Son of God, in whom he is always well pleased, mov'd by his own Mercy and our Necessity, interpos'd, 'tis easy to imagine, the Gates of Paradise flew open, and the flaming *Cherubins* withdrew from their invidious Charge, to make way for all Believers.

And what the *Excellency* of one Nature made available, the *Weakness* of the other render'd possible, Pain, Crucifixion, and Death. It was requisite our *Mediator* should be a *Creature*, that he might suffer for our Sins; a *Man*, that he might suffer in that Nature, which had sinned, and so give it
a Title

a Title to the Compensation that was made by suffering. And it was as requisite he should be *God-man* in one Person; otherwise the shedding of his Blood could not wash off the Corruption of ours; otherwise the *temporary* Sufferings of the Human could not have been rendred by the Divine Nature an Equivalent of *eternal* Torments.

Surely then the Doctrine of the *Hypostatic* Union is worth the *contending* for, if we have any Value for our *Salvation* which depends upon it. Tho' we look upon it barely as an infallible *Verity*, not only the Homage of our Understandings but the Service of our Zeal is due to it. *Truth* in general, as being the natural and genuine Object of the noblest Faculty in the noblest Creature, has a Right to be caref's'd, promoted, honour'd; and we are false to the Obligations of Reason as well as Religion, if we stand not by it.

But so *concerning* a Truth as this, so much for the Glory of God and Comfort of Man, ought more particularly to be regarded. Double Honour is its meritorious Claim, a labour'd Defence its rightful Tribute. Especially if we consider,

2. What rude Opposition and reproachful Usage it meets with in the World. One would have thought, the Plainness and Frequency of its Delivery in holy *Scripture*, the Weight and Authority of *Decrees* in

Primitive Councils, the *constant* Profession of the *Catholick Church*, and the *daily* Recital of the *Apostolical Creed*, should have made a deep Impression in its Favour upon all Minds, and rendred it a darling Principle; but that we know from *Experience*, 'tis possible for an unwilling Eye to shut out the clearest Light, and from *Revelation*, 'tis necessary for *Heresies* to spring up. Nothing less than irresistible Grace could preserve some innocent; nothing less than *irresistible* Illumination could preserve others *Orthodox*. There is in many Persons such an haughty *Genius* and Pride of Understanding, that they scorn to take up with old-fashion'd Tenets, and find a wondrous Pleasure in starting new Notions and *Hypotbeses*. Should they keep to the beaten Road, they might probably not be taken notice of in the Croud, nor reputed a jot wiser than their Neighbours; and therefore to gain a Singularity in Credit, they affect a Singularity in Opinion. And this wanton Affectation is not contented to quarrel only with *Philosophy*. Religion also must be brought into the Combat, and *Christianity* it self fall a Sacrifice to human Vanity! A *God Incarnate* is the Theme of both Testaments, and has been the common Belief of past Ages; and yet as if that very Consideration, which should have induc'd them to *believe* in him, had been the Cause of their *Infidelity*; from

our selves do Men arise speaking perverse, disparaging, traiterous Things of the Lord that bought them. Divine Testimony and general Assent must go for nothing, and it amazes them to reflect upon the Easiness and Credulity of those that will be born down by them. Lest they should seem to betray a superstitious Reverence for the Word of God and Verdict of Antiquity, they take the Freedom to run counter to both in their Assertions; pitying their Forefathers as deluded Enthusiasts, and applauding themselves for the happy Discovery of the grand Mistake under which the blind Dotards of old Time unfortunately lived and died. Pursuant to this, the Socinian Dialect is brought up in some Places, and Socinian Pamphlets lye uppermost in all; and singularly happy they whose Ears and Eyes are exempted from taking their turn in the dismal Entertainment!

Nor do our *modern* Hereticks confine themselves to oblique Strokes and covert Reflections. Such a bashful skulking and modest Reserve would have somewhat soften'd the Scepticism, and given it a less offensive Air. But instead thereof, these Men of Forehead venture upon flat Denials and barefac'd Abrenunciations! They have *heard it bath been said* of Christ, *This is the true God and eternal Life*; yet these magisterial Dictators dare in express Terms to aver

the contrary — *But I say unto you*, as there is but one God, so is there but one Person in the Godhead! His eternal Generation they make a Jest of, and would put him off with a fantastick *Poetical* Apotheosis. A *Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity*, are flurled at and exploded for cramping Words and inconsistent Notions; and the pert Question — *How can these things be?* is again and again renew'd upon us, notwithstanding that he who cannot lye ascertains us of their Being. Nay the Gospel is so far from setting their Understandings to rights, that tho' *the Letter* is so much against them, they strive with elaborate Artifice and torturing Criticisms, to bring even that over to their side as to its *meaning*. Out of *manifest* Proofs they raise the most *staring* Objections, and shuffle off the force of plain *conclusive* Passages, by running them into impertinent Tropes and out of the way Figures. So *one* Sacred Person suffers with *another* upon more accounts than one; and to get rid of the Divinity of *Jesus*, they father Nonsense, Absurdity, and Contradiction upon the Holy Ghost! Mere Fallacies are sent abroad for unanswerable Demonstrations; and what is wanting in Argument, is made up in Confidence.

Whence it comes to pass that many *silly* Men and *Women* are led captive by them, and *follow their pernicious ways*; having

Ears to hear their *fair Speeches*, *swelling Words*, and plausible Applications, but not Eyes good enough to look through them, and discover the Poison that is in them.

Whence the *Atheist*, taking Advantage of the Dispute, picks up something to colour over his Doubts about Religion; and the *Heathen* is tempted to think there is nothing infallible or certain in it.

Whence the *Jew* is confirm'd in his unjust Prejudice against the true *Messiah*; and the *Turk* in his kind Opinion of *Mahomet* the false Prophet.

And now, since the Mists of Error are so likely to be general and diffusive, *in this their Hour, and of the Power of Darkness*, it is high time for all sincere Lovers of Truth to take the Alarm, and to *contend earnestly for the Faith which was once delivered to the Saints*. The secret Abettors of the Sceptical will be always canting in *Scripture-Phrase*, tho' in a Sence contrary to Scripture, *let your Moderation be known unto all Men*. They would have us, whether in a publick or private Station, sit still and unconcern'd, and regard our *Saviour* no more than *Joash* did *Baal*: *If he be a God, let him plead for himself!*

Judg. 6.31.

But we must beware of such treacherous Advisers, and reject their *sanctified Counsel*, as that which would lead us into an Error in *Practice*, as destructive as any in
Point

Point of *Judgment*. *Moderation* is call'd for out of Season, and tho' to *make it known* may in *some* times be Pocket-Policy, 'tis no part of that Wisdom which cometh from Above. We may be as *moderate* as we please, yea we ought to be so, in the Notice and Redress of *personal* Injuries. Here Meekness is a *Vertue*, and Forbearance a *Commendation*. But where our dear Christ is a *Sufferer*, the Christian must be a *Complainant*. His Quarrel is properly ours, and the Reproaches which are so liberally cast at him, can't be too liberally resent'd by us. When others are loud against him, shall not we be loud for him, and endeavour to silence the peevish Cavils of wicked and unreasonable Men? At the pronouncing of *Blasphemy* the *Jews* us'd to *rend their Cloaths*; the outward Ceremony serv'd as a significant Expression of their inward Horror. And can it be grown innocent of late, because familiar! Can its Nature be so far-soften'd, that what was once *heard* with Indignation, should now be *read* with Patience! Efforts of Displeasure would become us better: Such an *Evil* is to be *resisted*, and where Heaven meets with Rebels, it ought to find its *Champions*. When our very best of Friends is abus'd, 'tis but *Gratitude* to interpose. When the *Faith* is in Distress, 'tis but *Charity* to lend it an helping Hand. Were it much more in Distress than it is,

and

and expos'd us to Perils of all kinds, generous Hazards were to be run for its sake, and if we might not *live* to support, we should *die* to glorify it. The *Apostles* did so, and their *Blood* is *exemplary* as well as their *Conversation*.

But Thanks to a tender *Providence* and a gracious *Sovereign*, the *Enemies of the Cross*, have us not at their Mercy, and I trust never will. With what Pretence then can we be asham'd of the Gospel of Christ, when our Consciences are not like to do us a Mischief, and there is no such Danger in owning *the Truth as it is in Jesus*.

Besides, I question not but the *Boldness* of the Heretical is chiefly owing to the *Remissness* of the Orthodox. Seeing them slack in discountenancing Error, they are the more embolden'd to spread it. We find in the *Parable*, that the Devil steps in and *sows his Tares* among the Wheat, *while Men sleep*, and lullaby themselves into a fond Security. So that tho' we are not Partakers of other Mens Heresies, we may be of their Sin in publishing them. And shall not this awaken and caution us against Lukewarmness and Indifference?

Enough has been said (I hope an honest Zeal will excuse my saying so much) to shew how *needful* it is to *exhort* Men, that they should keep a jealous and vigilant Eye
over

over the Doctrine which they have received.

It remains only that we enquire a little *freely*, how and in what *manner* this *Duty* is to be perform'd.

Now the searching of *the Scriptures*, and Study of Christianity, every one cannot but be sensible, are very suitable *Preliminaries*. We must be *able*, before we can be *ready*, to give a reasonable Account of the Faith that is in us; and the *Truth* must be thoroughly understood, before we can be qualify'd to encounter *Falshood*. Well, but, *when the Foundations are cast down*, or violently struck at, *what shall the Righteous do?* The *Answer* is easy, They must let no Opportunity slip through their Fingers, no Capacity lie idle or unemployed, whereby they may counter-mine the busy *Setters-forth* of new and strange *Doctrines*. I don't mean they should take *Phineas* for an absolute Pattern of Management in this Matter, and rather than infectious Error should go unchastiz'd, proceed even to the snatching of the *Sword* of *Justice* to execute it upon an *Heretick*. That Forwardness indeed was imputed unto him for Righteousness; but if it should now be copyed, it would fall under a quite different Imputation. No, *prophetical* Impressions having long ago ceas'd, they are to imitate not the *Fact*, the thing done

done, but only the *Zeal*, the Affection with which it was done. *There is no Name under Heaven* or in Heaven *whereby we can be saved*, but that of *Jesus*; and therefore he expects it should be hallowed on Earth in requital. But still he requires no other Vindication of it, than what lies within the Verge of their respective Places and Stations.

To be more particular:

If they are indeed Men of Influence and Terror, they must apply that Awe and Terror they are Masters of, to the Maintenance of his *eternal Power and Godhead*, and in a vindictive way overthrow *the Seat of the Scornful* as he formerly did, that of *the Money-Changers*, when the Temple of God was made *a Den of Thieves*. The good *Constantine* no sooner understood the execrable Drift of *Arius*, but he set himself to decree Justice for him by whom Kings do reign. 'Tis true, *knowing what Spirit he was of*, and that there was still room for the other's Repentance, if sought carefully and with Tears, he would not like *the overwarm Disciples call for Fire from Heaven*, or kindle it upon Earth, for his *Person*; but however, like a pious Emperor, he calls a *Council* against him, and condemns his *Books* to the Flames, as knowing that nothing could purify them but what destroyed 'em too. Tho' but *a Novice* in Christianity, he
could

could not bear the Author of it should lie under a Disparagement that he could remedy, nor be so ungrateful as to let sacrilegious Tongues rob him of *the Glory which he had with the Father before the World was*; when *he* had been so gracious as to empty himself of it for a while, purely upon Intuition of qualifying us to be with him, and see his Glory. And a noble Precedent This, for Christian Princes to follow, whom our Saviour has appointed Defenders of the Faith, and Nurses to the Church!

If they *fit in Moses's Chair*, as spiritual Watchmen over the House of *Israel*, they must *rebuke* out of it *with all Authority*, being nothing terrified by their Adversaries. They must suppress *false Teachers* by severe Inhibitions, lest they make the Lord's People to run astray, and in Case of *Contumacy* deliver them over to *Satan*, that they may *learn not to blaspheme* (it being but reasonable that he who would juggle *one Article* out of the Creed should be deprived of his Interest in *another*, and for discarding the *Deity of Christ*, cut off from the *Communion of Saints*.) This we know is what the great Apostle gave in Charge to *Timothy* and his Successors; and this, he tells us, is what himself practis'd upon the Persons of *Hymenæus* and *Alexander*, that erred from the Truth. Sure I am too, *Athanasius* did his part against the Innovations of
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the *Arian* World, by not giving Place by Subjection, no not for an Hour; and *Cy-ril* His, against the Heresy of *Nestorius*, by getting an *Œcumenial* Synod for its Condemnation. And 'tis a comfortable Reflection in evil Days, when such venerable Examples of Bravery and Spirit visibly raise an Emulation in those that come after them.

If they constitute a *scholastic* Body, they have the Power of *Censure* delegated to them in regard of *unsound Members*, and the Privilege of fastning *cautionary Marks* of Infamy upon such *Persons* as are proud of doubting, and such *Writings* as handle the Word of God deceitfully. And as there is great Necessity for such a Power, where the *Principles* of the *next* Generation are at Stake, so there have not been wanting worthy *Instances* of its Application. The *unanimous* Sentence formerly past upon *the naked Gospel*, and other solemn *Decrees* upon like Occasions, make *this Place*, no doubt, *the Praise of all the Churches*, and her *Faith* spoken of throughout the *World*.

If they be fix'd by Divine Providence as *private* Persons in a narrower Sphere of Action, they are notwithstanding in a condition to promote the Honour of their great *Master*, and do him acceptable Service amongst Men. They can take up the Pen of the *Learned*; and as *Workmen that need*

not be *asham'd*, deliver the *sacred Text* from the miserable Abuse of profane Comments and unjust Inferences. (And but for the *Antidotes and Preservatives*, which some of them have *charitably* administred, the *Paper-Pestilence* which walketh at Noon-day, and has destroy'd its Thousands, must inevitably have destroy'd its Ten thousands.) At least by opening unto them the *Scriptures*, they can *build up* the Ignorant and Unlearned in our *most holy Faith*, and by a Word in Season disappoint the *cunning Craftiness* of such as *lye in wait to deceive*.

They can *have Compassion*, as *St. Jude* advises, *on those* who are out of the way; and if they were beguil'd thro' Simplicity, recover them into it by rational Persuasion. Others that met *Objections half way*, and with a *good will* were argued into Infidelity, if not reprobate concerning the Faith, they can *save with fear plucking them out of the Fire*; that is, by sharper Reprehensions, by fearful Representations of the Judgment of the great Day, extort from them an acknowledgment of the Truth, and make 'em believe and tremble.

As to *Perverters* themselves, they have a Remedy for them too, the Discipline of Frowns and Neglect, tho' not of Penalties and Restraints. They can withdraw themselves as *St. Paul* requires, from every Bro-

ther that setteth his Mouth against the Heavens, *have no company with him that he may be asham'd*, and by avoiding *the Man*, condemn *the Heretick*.

And, which is the crowning Instance of holy Zeal, they can besiege Heaven with their ardent and pathetick Importunities for the Presence and Assistance of the Spirit, which God has promis'd to his beloved Church, and by a devout and pleasing Violence engage him to provide that the Powers of Hell, *false Doctrine*, *Heresy* and *Schism*, may never prevail against it, particularly that part of it whereunto they belong.

Thus the *Soldiers* of Jesus Christ are to contend for his *sacred Truths*, and to check the *Devil's Partizans* in their Sallies and Insults upon *Religion*. Every one has his Post of Activity allotted him; and he that acquits himself bravely in it, *a Crown of Righteousness*. The God whom we serve *is not unrighteous to forget our Labours of Love*, and *Patience in the Gospel*; but to him that *overcometh*, that does all he can within the Line of his particular Station for the Interests of common Christianity, *he will give to sit with him on his Throne*, even as he *overcame*, and *sat down with his Father on his Throne*;

Let us then *fight a good Fight, and keep the Faith*: Let us recognize the Captain of our Salvation in his holy Temple, by *bowing* reverently at *the Name* of *Jesus*, and upon all Occasions confront audacious *Deists* with a bold Profession of our Belief in the eternal Trinity, *Three Persons and one God*.

If there must be *Heresies* among us, let those that are approv'd be made manifest by opposing them. If *Apostates* will wrest the *Scriptures* to their own Destruction, let *Believers* see that they don't to that of others.

* Let us all pray heartily for their *Conversion*, in the Use of our excellent *Litany*, and as earnestly for their *Pardon*, in the Language of our meek *Redeemer*,—*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do*. That so there may be *Peace* in the *Church Militant*, and *Joy* in the *Church Triumphant* among the *Angels of God*. And since he that *standeth* may *fall*, let us not be over-confident of our own *Stedfastness*, but in a deep Sence of *Human Inconstancy*, throw our selves into the *Arms of the Divine Protection*.

And now, to shut up my Discourse with the Close of this *Epistle*, *Unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and*

to present you blameless before the Presence of his Glory with exceeding Joy, to the only wise God, our Saviour, be ascribed all Glory and Majesty, Dominion and Power, both now and for evermore. Amen.

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Our Saviour's MIRACULOUS FAST.

S. MATTH. iv. 2.

*And when he had fasted forty Days
and forty Nights, he was afterward
an hungred.*

AS it was the *peculiar* Excellency of our Saviour Christ to do all things well, so is it the bounden Duty of all Christians to lay out their Time and Thoughts in the Contemplation of what he did. Such a complete Preacher of Righteousness Nature and Grace never furnish'd out before. Every Season of his Age was a kind of Lecture to Mankind, every Passage of his Life had a Moral in it. His Freedoms in publick direct as to the moderate use of innocent Liberties and Festival Entertainments. And his Reserves in private recommend to

our Practice in their turn the *severer* Duties of *Fasting*, *Meditation*, and *Prayer*. The *City* was the Witness of his *mighty Works*, the *Desart*, the Scene of what was equally wonderful, his *devout Austerities*. There he *fasted forty Days and forty Nights*, and was *afterward an hungred*. And this variety of *Abodes*, answering to a variety of *Concernments*, not only warrants, but regulates an interchange of *Solitude* and *Conversation*, tacitly instructing us to turn our *backs* upon the *World*, when we would take a nearer view of *the better Country*, and to look it again in the *Face*, when we have business with it.

In discoursing upon the Words before us, I shall follow the *Method* which they suggest, and so remark upon,

- I. His *Abstinence*.
- II. The *Continuance* of it.
- III. The *Consequent* herein specified, his after-submission to the painful *Throws* and *Impressions* of *Hunger*.

And first for the *Abstinence* of our Saviour; that is obvious enough, but the *Motives* to it are not so visible. The *ordinary* Ends of *Fasting* we have *all* often heard of, and no doubt *some* of us have happily exemplify'd. But these are of too mean and disparaging a Nature to find a *Place* or *Interest* in his *Self-denials*.

One *End* is the *crucifying* of vile *Affections* and Rebel-lusts. As unsuspecting of Inconveniencies as we commonly are, where the *Palate-interests* are concerned; there is no greater *Snare* of Innocence than a full and delicate *Table*; no such *Incentive* to Wantonness as the luscious Spoils of the rifled Elements continually set before us. They give Birth to impure Heats within, feed and blow up the *dormant* Sparks of *Original* Concupiscence. They let our *Passions* loose upon us; and while they gratify, increase *irregular* Desires. Hence *Abstinence* becomes necessary to prevent or help off with the ill Effects of *constant* Pleasure, to withdraw the Fuel, that the Flame may gradually die away and cool us into serious Reflections.

But if we regard our *Saviour's* Case, this Necessity was superseded by *absolute* Purity. *The Flesh* in him never warred against the *Spirit*, and so wanted not such rigorous Methods to bring it under. It was always kept a mighty *Stranger* to the things of this World, and so could not be *capable* of abusing them. It receiv'd a *right* Bias at first, and ever afterwards discover'd nothing but a forwardness to *obey*, what sober Reason had a right to require. Why then should it be *roughly* handled like a *Criminal*, tied up, in a solemn manner, even from *common* Necessaries, and put to *undeserved* Penance? Again,

Again, Fasting is prescrib'd as a proper help and furtherance to *Devotion*. The *corruptible Body* is continually groveling upon the ground, as if it long'd to be buried in it; and the mischief is, the *Soul*, which would fain be mounting upwards, is foret and hindred, through its spiteful Influence. As it is dull and heavy in all its proper Motions, so doth it render the other dull and supine in all her noble Operations. Instead of a dutiful Compliance, there is a stubborn Reluctancy. She is forc'd as it were to drag and hale along the cumbersome Lump, and consequently having but little use of her natural Activity, cannot but be soon tired with the best Performances. But she is never more hamper'd and oppress'd by the fleshly Fetters, never finds a greater heaviness and deadness upon her in her *Approaches* to God, than after the grand Work of waiting upon Appetite. Then a sluggish Drowsiness seizes upon the Senses and the Mind at once. The *Springs* of Thought go slow, and the *necessary* Length of Divine Service is an over-match for our *Attention*. An empty Stomach on the contrary is a sovereign Antidote against a cloudy Head and a listless Heart. It fences off spiritual Languors, abates the unwieldiness of the corporeal Organs, and so very much facilitates our Flights towards Heaven.

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It is plain, the *Jews* were of this Opinion, who never begun their *daily* Repast, till they had finish'd their *Morning-Sacrifice*. And the Custom of good *Christians* is grounded upon it, who have always been wont to put by their ordinary Sustenance, when they were going to commemorate the *Sacrifice* of the *Cross*.

But how could this *preparative* Discipline respect the *all-sufficient* Jesus? Being himself the Giver of every good and perfect Gift, he could have no *personal* Occasion for Prayer upon which they are entail'd; being the very *Master-piece* of Nature could feel no Impediments in it. The two Principles of his Humanity were peculiarly fram'd for an happy Pair; and like loving Friends, went hand in hand. Instead of Clogs and Incumbrances, there was a mutual Serviceableness, a constant Harmony; so that he could soar with Ease to the Place from whence he came, and without the least distraction maintain a familiar Intercourse with the *eternal* World.

Fasting likewise is a *Fruit* meet for *Repentance*.

Even *worldly* Grief is generally attended with it, and therefore *Godly* Sorrow, to be sure, would look but with an ill Grace without it. The *Afflicted* during their first Transports are indifferent, yea averse to the usual Solaces and Refreshments of Life; and

and the Penitent neglect 'em, not out of absolute Choice, but out of an holy Indignation against themselves. They judge they have forfeited their Title to them, by dishonouring the bountiful Founder, and they chuse to expresse that their Judgment by refraining from the invaluable Blessing. And truly the Expression seems to be very natural. When we grudge our selves our daily Bread, what do we but acknowledge our daily Unworthiness of it, and the Demerit of those Offences which have rendred us thus unworthy; that Heaven has been too *indulgent* to us poor contemptible Creatures, and we most *ungrateful* towards the *High and lofty one that inhabiteth* it? When we forego a lawful Satisfaction, that we *naturally* much desire, and might also very *innocently* partake of, what do we but declare our abhorrence of *unlawful* ones, that 'tis our Wish we had never enjoyed them in times past, that 'tis our Resolution never to enjoy them more.

And now could the *immaculate Lamb* of God be concerned in such a religious Purpose? No, questionless as he *knew no Sin*, so he *needed no Repentance*. His *Enemies* indeed charg'd him with the one, but his Conscience stood his *Friend* so much as to excuse him the Evidences of the other. 'Twas their business only to hold a Truce with their Mouths, to keep pleasant Morfels

fels from entring *in*, that had suffer'd evil Thoughts to proceed *out* of them.

What then were the *Reasons* and *Uses* of our Saviour's *Abstinence*? Some of the Chief, I presume, might be these that follow.

1. The *Recovery* of *human Nature* from that *Reproach* which it suffer'd by the *Intemperance* of our *first Parents*. No sooner were they settled in a State of *Happiness*, but they made a shift to surfeit themselves out of it. Tho' Heaven was liberal of its sweetest Influences, and the Earth of its best Treasures; tho' *Eden* entertain'd them with Rivers of Pleasure, and the Use of all the Garden was allowed to them, only a *Tree* excepted, as a Mark of God's *Sovereignty*, as a Trial of Man's *Obedience*, yet all this availed them nothing, because of that *Exception*. In the midst of such agreeable *Variety*, they regretted the *single Restraint*, and could not be easy, without trying the tast of the *forbidden Fruit*. And when they had done so, the Crown fell from their *guilty Heads*, and the Glory departed from them. The rest of the rational Creation stood now amaz'd to see the *Unruliness* of their *Infant Appetite*, as they did before to behold Nature's Store-House of Provision for it; and from admiring their wonderful Felicity, began to upbraid their *unaccountable Baseness*. The *Celestial Host* veil'd themselves to cover their Blushes,
and

and the *Infernal* Tribe hiss'd to celebrate their Triumph. We commenc'd Spectacles of Horror to *All*, nay to our very *selves*. With Complacency we humour'd our liquorish Sence, but with Confusion reflected on the voluptuous Act, and thenceforward paid infinitely dear for the wild Frolick in Shame and Infamy.

Now to retrieve, 'tis like, our *Credit* with Heaven, the *second Adam* acted the Reverse of the *first*, and whereas the other made bold with that which was *sacred*, he denied himself even that which was *lawful*. This is certain, his generous Forbearance has done Mankind a world of Honour, and wip'd out the Stain of that presumptuous Curiosity. Now we can look up to our Maker without our wonted Confternation, now we can show our Heads with Confidence among reasonable Beings.

Another excellent *End* for which he *fasted* was that he might teach us by his *Example* how to prepare our selves for *high* or difficult *Employments*. It was an approv'd *Practice* before; all Ages and Countries made it a *Preliminary* to *important* Enterprises. This usher'd in all Attempts in *Religion* that were considerable. Witness what *Jonah* says of the *Ninevites*, our Saviour of *Tyre and Sidon*, and others of the *Pharisees* and *John's Followers*. Nay, this led the way too in *secular* Undertakings. Witness what

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what the Apöſtle obſerves of the *Olympic Competitors*. *Every Man that ſtriveth for the Maſtery is temperate in all things. They that run in a Race, to obtain a corruptible Crown, ſubmit to almoſt unnatural Strictneſſes upon that View.* And the common Wreſtler, before he can hope to ſignalize himſelf by egregious ſleights of Bodily Strength and Activity, muſt be ſeverely *died* for the Combat.

The High Priest of our Profeſſion acted accordingly, when he commenced *ſuch*. But the reaſon why he acted thus was widely different from theirs. Having been lately conſecrated to his Office by a *Deſcent* of the *Holy Ghoſt* upon him, and confirm'd by a recommendatory *Voice out of the excellent Glory*, he preſac'd the Execution of it with Faſting, but not to fit himſelf for diſcharging it. For doth not *David* tell us *prophe-tically* that he was *anointed-with the Oil of Gladneſs above his Fellows*? And the *Baptiſt* aſſure us upon the *Event* that *God gave not the Spirit by Meaſure unto him*, by ſuch minute and ſtinted Proportions as fell to the Share of other Mortals? Yea, did not *the fulneſs of the Godhead dwell in him bodily*? It had therefore been no Intruſion, had he entred upon his great Work *extempore*, no *abrupt* or irregular Proceeding, had he preach'd as ſoon as he was ſent. But yet he did not. A *formal* Retreat from
outward

outward Accommodations must intervene, and why but upon Intuition of leaving a *Precedent* to his *Church*, which they were to follow, in *calling* Labourers into the Vineyard, and the Labourers themselves in encountering the emergent Difficulties of their *Ministry*? At least, That was look'd upon by the Wise and Prudent as a fair *Hint*, an implicit Direction, to *fast* upon such Occasions. For we find it practis'd at the *Ordinations*, not only of *Paul and Barnabas*, when invested with the *peculiar* Acts 13. Charge of opening a Door of Faith to the Gentiles; but also of other Presbyters, when appointed by them for a much easier Service, namely to confirm the Souls of their Acts 14. Converts, and establish them in the Faith. And the *early* Days of Christianity instituted *four* solemn times of *publick* Fasting, commonly call'd *Ember Weeks*, to implore the Divine Grace and Heavenly Benediction upon the *Holy Orders* conferr'd at those Seasons. Which *Usage*, to Her Glory be it spoken, is still retain'd by Her that is in all Respects *truly* primitive, *the Church of England*; and tho' the *People* sadly forget their Part, she carefully performs hers, by putting a suitable *Form of Prayer* into the Hands of all her *Pastors*, to be recited then, with a profound Gravity and the devoutest Affections, in all *the Assemblies of the Saints*.

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Nor would it be at all amiss, if a *private* Application of this Nature attended the Receipt or Conveyance of any momentous Trust, whether *sacred* or *secular*, so the Parties concern'd *appeared not unto Men to fast*, as the manner of some is. We can't too much interest God in our Affairs, who is the Father of Lights, *the everlasting Counsellor* by Style and by Inclination. And therefore whoever is so wise as to own the *lack of Wisdom*, let him *ask it of God*; let him wrestle in Prayer, and take up the stout Resolve of *Jacob*, *I will not let thee go except thou bless me*; but that he may like *Jacob* too, have *Power with God, and prevail*, he must call in Abstinence to his Aid. So fitted out and accomplish'd, he will not *fight uncertainly, or as one that beateth the Air*.

Thus having examin'd upon what Account our Saviour *begun* his Fast, proceed we *secondly* to enquire, Why he *continued* it to the Number of *forty Days and forty Nights*.

Several, and it may be plausible, Conjectures have been advanc'd by the *Learned*; but there is one above the rest that seems to deserve our Notice, and 'tis *this*, that by his *long* Intermission of those lower Offices of eating and drinking, he meant to dispose the Minds of Men for the *Reception* of his *Doctrine*. In the 18th of *Deuter. Moses* thus
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predicteth to *Israel* concerning the *Messiah*. *A Prophet will the Lord thy God raise up from among thee, of thy Brethren like unto me, unto him ye shall hearken.* Now *Moses*, during his forty Days Communion with God on the Mount of *Sinai*, when he was to receive the Law; yea, and *Elias* too, during his forty Days Travel toward the Mount of *Horeb*, when he was to restore it, did neither eat Bread nor drink Water. And therefore it concern'd our Lawgiver likewise, when he address'd himself to perfect it, to live out the same tedious Proportion of Time by the same extraordinary way of Subsistence. Otherwise the Prediction would not have had its full Accomplishment in him; otherwise he would not have shown himself a *Prophet like unto them*, and so the *Jews* could be under no Obligation to hearken to him, as a Teacher sent from God. If this Character of Resemblance had been wanting, they might modestly have question'd, *Who gave thee the Authority thou pretendest to?* Might justly have ask'd, *Master, we would see a Sign from Heaven, that we may believe.* But since he held out so vast a while without seeking the Supplies of outward Nourishment, before the opening of his high Commission, there could be no reasonable Exception against him. So uncommon a Fast, not only as it evidenc'd the Agreement berwixt

Type and Antitype, but also as a singular Performance, prov'd him to be the very *Christ that should come into the World.* For no Man could live so like a *Miracle*, except God were with him. So that hence we may account for the *Self-denial*; and conclude it was to get him the *Honour* of a *Prophet in his own Country*, and cut off all Pretences of *looking for another*.

Some are for inferring the Duty of a like *Forty Days* Abstinence from the Practice in the Text. But it is hard to determine, whether is greatest, the *Indiscretion* or the *Piety* of the Inference. They are to be commended for their good will to our Lord's *Example*, and their desire of transcribing it to the utmost. But here their *Emulation* out-runs their *Ability*; and shall I praise them in this, I praise them not? This Action is above our Strength to go through with, and so should be beyond our Zeal to attempt. In him the *Divine Nature* underprop'd the *Human*; but this *fleshy Tabernacle* of ours, if not constantly repaired, having no Promise of *invisible Support*, will soon fall from under us and crumble into Dust. The Manifestation of *his eternal Power and Godhead* took up *forty Days and forty Nights*; but a *four Days* Trial would sufficiently, if not fatally, convince us that *Man liveth, ordinarily speaking, by Bread alone*. Nay so sensible are

the rigid Task-masters themselves, that *Meats are for the Belly, and the Belly for Meats*; that tho' *Flesh* is severely interdicted with a *Touch not, Taste not, Handle not*, yet a *Fish-Dinner, an Evening-Collation, and more than a little Wine*, we are told, are graciously allow'd *for the Stomach-sake*.

But besides the *Frailty* of our Constitution, the *Silence* of the Scriptures is a check upon us. We are commanded indeed to *walk even as he walked* in the World, but not to *fast as he fasted* in the Wilderness. Had *Christ* intended this for a *Pattern* of our Obedience, as well as a *Recommendation* of his Doctrine, would he not have propounded it as *such*, would he not have signified his Intention somewhere? The *Query* put to him about the *different* Conduct of his *Disciples*, and those of the *Baptist* in reference to *Fasting*, gave him an Opportunity to do so. But we find, he makes no more than a *general Reply*. *The Days will* Matth. 9. *come, when the Bridegroom shall be taken* ^{15.} *from them, and then shall they fast*. Here is an *express Order* and a *weighty Reason* given for future Acts of Discipline, but no *Direction* for *Time* or other *Circumstances*. These things, it seems, are *discretionary*, and wholly left to the *Wisdom* and *Occasions* of the *Church*.

And what was so left at *large*, the Church very fitly determin'd with a special Eye to this *Divine* Fast, tho' not without some respect too to *human* Infirmary. No *impracticable* Austerities were brought up, but only *convenient* Abridgments in point of Diet, Pleasure and Business; no *tedious* Exercises encouraged, but only such *temporary* Devotions, as Man's *weak* Nature could bear, his *spiritual* Case requir'd, and his *ordinary* Duties admitted of.

These *Rules* are of very venerable *Antiquity*, and the *Antepaschal* Fast under such *prudential* Limits, as it is countenanc'd by the *often* Fastings of *St. Paul*, and the great *Abstemiousness* of *Timothy*, so may it be traced almost up to the Days of *St. John*, one of the honourable *Children of the Bride-chamber*.

The Title of a *Divine* or *Apostolical* Tradition given it by many of the *Fathers*; the *famous* Debate before the close of the *second* Century betwixt *Victor* of *Rome* and those of lesser *Asia* about its *ending*; the *immemorial*, tho' various, *Observation* of it, which that noted *Fragment* of *Irenaeus* his *Circular* Letter asserteth; and the *universal* Regard paid to it in the several Countreys where the Name of *Christ* was call'd upon, which *St. Basil* so eminently beareth witness to (it appearing not that any *General* Council ever established it) seem to make
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for its *Apostolical* Authority or Approbation. The heavy Penalties decreed by the *Sixty ninth* Canon for such as should be found to neglect it, whether *Clergy* or *Laity*; the exprefs mention of it by the Councils of *Nice* and *Laodicea*, and the numerous authentick Testimouies collected by the *late* Bishop *Beveridge* upon the Argument in hand, clearly demonstrate it a *Primitive* Constitution or Usage. *Ecclesiastick* Story is full enough in its Favour; and that judicious *Prelate* made so good an use thereof, as perfectly to rout his *pretending* Adversary, and take from him the Armour wherein he trusted.

Cod. Can.
Eccl. l. 3.
de Jejun.
Quadrages

Nor is it more *ancient* than *laudable*, whatever morose *Separatists*, that make it matter of Dispute and not of Practice, may affirm to the contrary. Did we teach indeed for a *Doctrine* of Christ this *Commandment* of Men, there would be *umbrage* for Calumny, ground for *Scruple*. But 'tis well known, we reverence it only as a *Custom* which we *have* ever had and *all the Churches of God*, and yet they will not cease to be *contentious*. Did we make it a ground of *Merit*, a Standard of *Perfection*, they would find sufficient Cause to keep a clutter with that dear *Word*, Popery, that formidable *Thing*, Superstition.

But it is our avowed Sence, and has been the constant Declaration of our *Apologists*,

that *bodily Exercise, without Godliness, profiteth but little*; and yet Detraction will not be struck dumb. If we urge in defence of *that* and other *stated Times of Abstinence*, that there were ordinary Fasts of *human Extraction* under the *Jewish OEconomy*, which are remembred in Scripture and approv'd by God; and therefore why may there not also under the *Christian*? They reply with a concluding Face and a decisive Air, *Days and Months, and Times and Years* are no longer of *lawful Observance*; as if what *St. Paul* design'd as an *Invective against superannuated Ceremonial Ordinances*; was equally a Blow to *moral ones* of a modern Date! Thus *they use their liberty* as an *occasion to the Flesh*, as a *cloak of Maliciousness*. We must forsooth be voted by them the *Disciples of Rome*, because they are so of the refractory *Aerius*!

But in spite of all opposite Pleas and humourfom Cavils, the Dignity of *Lent* stands firm and immoveable. Sure I am in its *original Use*, it had a special Influence upon *Religion*, and brought much Glory to God, much Benefit to Men; whether we consider it as an Opportunity to the *Good* of improving themselves in Vertue by *retired Meditation*, as a means of reclaiming the *Bad* from Vice by *cautionary Penances*, or as an Instrument of *Grace*, fitting *both*; the one in some measure, and the other to great Exactness,

Exactness, for the ensuing Sacrament and Festival of *Easter*. Sure I am, in its *present* Design, it has a very *friendly* Aspect upon *Civil* Society, as it invites a publick *Humiliation* for publick *Iniquities*, which if not timely *expiated* by a *proportionable* Sorrow, must necessarily tend to the ruin of it. But since *National* Sins are capable only of a *temporary* Vengeance, *private* ones also of *eternal* Retributions, because of the different Duration of *States* and *Individuals*; particular Persons are more especially beholden to that which leadeth them to Repentance. Tho' we are oblig'd to have *always* a watchful Eye upon our Actions, and to shake Hands with a *moral* Imperfection as soon as we discover it in our selves; yet it is but necessary some *set* Time, and that of reasonable *Continuance*, should be reserv'd for a more *exact* Scrutiny into our past Behaviour, a more *studious* Subjection of Sense to Reason, a more *solemn* Abrenunciation of the World by Weeping, Fasting and Praying. But such is the *Remissness* of some, and the *Perverseness* of more, if *every* one was left at liberty as to this matter, scarce *any* would ever come to a positive Resolution about it; we should be exceeding busy to project *Reasons* for shifting or drilling off the return of an *unwelcome* Duty, too apt to consult with the *Bosom-Sophisters*, *Flesh and Blood*, in the Case, and too willing to stay the Leisure

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of every vile Lust and vain Impertinency.

The *Spouse of Christ* therefore could do no less than reduce to a Certainty what according to his *Prophecy* was to follow upon the Absence of *the Bridegroom*, and appoint an *annual* Season of Contrition and Mourning to be observ'd by all succeeding Ages till his coming again. And 'tis almost inconceivable what good Effects her *Appointment wrought* even in her *Prodigal Children*, together with the pathetick *Admonitions* of their *Teachers*, and the *exemplary* Conduct of their *Brethren*; what *Indignation* and Relentings, what *Revenge* and Self-displicity, yea what *Carefulness* and *Fear*, yea what *vehement Desire* and *holy Zeal*. A *sincere Piety* got ground apace, and the *Pretence* of better Thoughts, that was taken up by the worst of Men, often ended in the former. *Notorious* Offenders took open shame to themselves as a *Reparation* of *violated* Laws, as a *Satisfaction* for publick *Scandal*. And all the lively *Emblems* of Meanness and Disparagement, of *Horror* and *Deformity*, concurr'd to set out the sadness of their Condition. While the *Groans* of a wounded Spirit hush'd the *Cravings* of a slighted *Appetite*, and made 'em almost insensible of any *Hunger* or *Thirst* but of those *after Righteousness*; rough *Sackcloth* was thrown upon their *Backs*, that the *Flesh*, which had been every way caref'd, might be every way chastis'd; filthy *Ashes* were sprinkled on their
Heads,

Heads, that their Persons, which had forfeited the *Divine Image*, might be represented as *vile Earth* for doing so, fit for nothing but the Dunghill, and more despicable than the very Dust they trod upon: Doleful *Confessions* of Guilt came from them, with melancholy Streams of Water from their troubled Eyes, that it might appear how evil and bitter a thing it was to depart from God, *in whose Favour is Life*; and that nothing might be wanting to compleat the Abasement, *Prostration at the Feet of the Presbyters and the Friends of God*, as *Tertullian*, when a *Catholic*, informs us, was submitted to as a proper supplicating *Posture*; and infinitely glad they were, if after all they were accounted worthy to be restored to *Church-Society*, and the *Privileges* of the *Faithful*.

From the Sense of these Hardships and *Dishonours*, Sinners of an inferiour Rank receiv'd a very kindly Impression, and were induc'd to *sin no more*, lest the same awful Judgment of *Excommunication*, that had already pass'd on others, with the same dismal Consequences should happen to themselves here, or *a worse thing* hereafter, the terrible Sentence of — *Depart ye Cursed*.

And even such as lay not under any *Ecclesiastical* Censure, nor a self-condemning Conscience, readily clos'd with *many* of the *Strictnesses* then used, and having barr'd the door upon *human* Converse and *secular* In-

cumbrances, earnestly address'd themselves to the reviewing of their Lives, the mortifying of their Lusts, and the raising of their Affections above *Earthly Vanities*. *Charity* too *never fail'd*, no more than *Devotion*. Whilst they perfected their own Repentance, washing off those *Occasional Soils* and Defilements, which the tainted Air of a wicked World suffers none that breath in it wholly to escape, they pray'd for that of others, wishing they were *not only almost but altogether such as themselves*; and tho' they knew their *own Guilt* was not great, yet they thought their Humiliation necessary by way of Sympathy with them that wept. In short, the whole *Body* of Christians as *one Man*, made a reverend and frequent Recognition of the Glories of the *Tri-une Divinity*, and sent their Petitions upwards, *like publick Ambassadors*, to sue in their behalf for a general blotting out of Transgressions, and to make their Peace with Heaven. And let me add, that this great *Solemnity*, which was so *grievous* for the time, was no less comfortable in the Issue, as *yielding the peaceable Fruits of Holiness* to those that were exercis'd thereby. The *Course* of Self-denials they begun in *Sorrow*, but finish'd it with *Joy*, such *Joy* as nothing else could give or take away. Every one was of *David's* mind, when his penitential Tears were dried up, and cou'd not but acknowledge it *good for him that he was thus afflicted*.

afflicted. All the while the *Pagan* World look'd on with Envy and Amazement; and from their manly *neglecting*, or rather *afflicting*, of *the Body*, Prejudice it self was forc'd to conclude *that God was in them of a Truth.*

Such was the *glorious* State, the excellent *Genius*, the noble *heights* of primitive Christianity! But alas! *former things* are pass'd away, and we can *now* view the *Church's* Happiness, only by the help of Memory and long Reflections. *Now* it is most Men's Care to undermine that Spirit of Godliness, which the *Forefathers* of our *Faith* were at some Pains to advance; and instead of confessing their Sins as *Penitents* in the Face of the Congregation, with a visible Compunction, they proclaim them as *Sodom* on the House-top, with boasting Confidence. *Now* the Emulation of *Example* and the *Fear* of Shame have shifted their side, and join in an open Confederacy against Vertue. To be *Lewd* is become fashionable, to be *Abstemious* reproachful. So that to maintain the Post of a *good Christian*, asks as much Courage almost as would signalize a *General*. Those that are rich in this World *fare sumptuously every Day*, with the plump *Epicure* in the *Parable*, as if they were resolv'd their *good things* also should rise up in Judgment against them in another; and but few, I'm persuaded, ever vouchsafe to *keep* a Fast that have wherewithal to *break* it! Nay, what thro' the Connivance of the *Magistrate*, and
the

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the Stupidity of the *working* World, that *Good Friday*, that stands distinguish'd by the Effusion of the Blood-Royal of Heaven, and which for that Reason surely ought to be kept holy unto the *Lord that bought* us with it, is so far from being so, that we see it not *solemniz'd* so much as with a Rest from their Labours! When the Sons and Daughters of *Jerusalem* should be *afflicted and mourn, and weep for themselves, and for their Children*, I pray thee *have me excus'd*, is the general Language of Hearts. They have *Farms or Merchandise*, or Sensualities to look after, and therefore they *cannot come* to Divine Worship!

Well therefore may we obey the Call of *our holy Mother*, when she minds us to bewail the Loss, and wish the Revival of that *wholsome Discipline*, which once so bravely triumph'd over *Vice*, and made it *sneak* into Corners like an odious *Singularity*. It has been *her* forest *Trouble*, that the Condition of the Times would not bear it; it would be *her* greatest *Joy* if it could be practis'd again as *successfully* as it was *wisely* instituted at first. And tho' all her Hopes were damp'd at the first Glance upon an untractable Generation, yet her Endeavours were always answerable to her Charge.

Accordingly, since her Hands are so tyed up by unhappy Circumstances, that she can exert her self no farther; a *devotional Exercise* however is provided for to the utmost.

most. Upon the *first Day* of *Lent* she sets it on Foot by a *commanded* Abstinence and a *penitential* Office. On the *first Sunday* she enforces it by setting before us the moving *Argument* of the Text, and a full Account of Christ's *Temptations*; throughout the *intermediate* Season she inculcates it by very pertinent *Exhortations*. On the *Hebdomada Magna*, the *Holy Week*, she perfects it by shewing those *Curses* executed on *Innocence* it self, which the Law threatned against *Transgressors*, and our *own* Mouths antecedently seal with an—*Amen*, in Testimony of their being due to *such*; by drawing out the black *Tragedy* to our View in the several affecting Representations which *inspired* Rhetorick gives of it; by requiring us to humble our selves *daily* in the Dust of the Sanctuary, and in a *spiritual* Sence to die and rise again with our *crucified* Saviour.

For this *she* has, no doubt, the Praise and Admiration of *all* that take to Heart the dear Concerns of Religion, so infinitely befriended by it; and for their Obedience unto This, her pious *Members* may assuredly expect an *Entrance into the Joy* of her Lord, who for our sakes fasted forty Days and forty Nights, and for our sakes too was obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Cross. At present he pitifully beholds the Sorrows of their Hearts, and when they shall have accomplish'd

complish'd as Hirelings their Day, will see that that *mourning in Sion*, which *Fools have accounted Madness* and turn'd to their Reproach, which Drunkards have made Songs upon and abus'd into a *Scene of Merriment*, be rewarded, as the only *true Wisdom*, with Blessedness for evermore.

After so tedious tho' *necessary Digression*, 'tis almost too late to speak to our *last Particular*, which respects the *Consequent* of the *long Fast*, his being subject to the Impressions of *Hunger*.

At any time *Hunger*, tho' a convenient, is a very grating Sensation, a most severe and unacceptable Notice of our present Needs, unless Reliefs be at Hand to quiet it. And in Case of absolute Destitution, so severe and oppressive a Challenge, that to rid themselves of it, some have been ready to take Sanctuary in the Grave, from which *that* was intended to preserve us, by obliging the Mind to look after its Companion.

But *then*, 'tis like, it press'd for immediate Supplies with all possible Vehemence and Importunity. *Nature*, which was *before* upheld by the supernatural Power of the *Spirit*, was *then* suffered to have her Course, and so preyed upon her self for want of other Fuel.

But why *was* she thus suffered? Why, when he could command *Stones* into *Bread*, or strike it out of nothing, did he chuse to

go without it, and languish under Pains that a Word might remedy? The *Usefulness* and *Necessity* of the *Conflict* are an *Answer*. It was *useful*, as making full Proof of his *exemplary* Trust in God; it was *necessary*, as being a Step to an *essential* part of his *Humiliation*, the *Temptations* of the *Devil*. It behoved him, as an intended *Pattern* of *universal* Righteousness, to copy out among the rest the great Duty of *Affiance*; it behov'd him as the *Redeemer* of Mankind to enter the Lists with the Enemy of Souls, to whom we were in Bondage, and subdue him. Now had he not been thus distress'd, there had been no room for that trying Suggestion, ——— “ *If thou be the Son of God*, see that thou be treated like such a one; *command that these Stones* before us *be made Bread* for thy Refreshment: And consequently no Place for that manly *Negative*, “ *No, every Word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God* can accommodate me with *Necessaries*, and if I be the Son of God, as assuredly I am, I must be so much the more at his *Dispose*; I must refer therefore the *particular* Time and Method of *Accommodation* to my Father's Pleasure. But by submitting to the Condition of a Starvling, he tempted Satan out into the Field, to the Subversion of his Kingdom, and by struggling on with that gnawing Wolf, *Necessity*, he hath taught us what may be of *daily Use amidst the Changes*

ges and Chances of a shifting World, an entire Dependance on the *divine* Providence. A Dependance, I say, not Presumption. For we have no *Warrant* from his Example to cast our selves into Hazards of Temptation, only an Argument for our *Faith*, when it befalleth us. *The Captain of our Salvation* indeed lent him a Weapon against himself, but not to embolden us to the same Terms of Disadvantage. But for the *Appearance* of Infirmity, which was intended as a Bait for his ravenous Appetite, the Serpent would never have made his Efforts on our *Saviour*, nor consequently been *formally* vanquish'd by him. *The History* intimates, he did not, 'till the languishing Condition seem'd to promise but a feeble Resistance. And besides, *St. Paul's* Character of himself more eminently befitted Christ at that time. *When* he was *weak*, then was he *strong*. His Flesh might be wasted, and his Spirits faint thro' Fasting; notwithstanding he had Armour left that was impenetrable. *The Prince of this World* found no Corruption in him, and so could draw none out of him.

But what was *Gallantry* in the *Holy one of God*, if I may be allow'd to call it so, would be Fool-hardiness in the frail Sons of *Adam*. There is no need of our beckening to the grand Adversary to come and assault us; we may depend on't, he will make us a *Visit* without an *Invitation*. He is no backward Guest, tho' a troublesome one; but always

in a Readiness to strive with Man, where he *always* reckons upon Victory, and *seldom* fails of it. And certain it is, that if we are the *Aggressors*, he will be the *Conqueror*. For in such a Case we expatiate beyond the *Liberties* of a Christian, and so make a *Forfeiture* of God's Protection, who *never suffers us to be tempted above that we are able*, but when we tempt our selves. Agreeable is the Remark of the Son of *Sirach*, *He that loveth Danger*; it is not said, he that falls into it by unavoidable Necessity, but, *he that loveth* and draws it upon himself, *shall perish therein*. The Wretch is abandon'd to his own perverse Choice, and the Difficulties which he *courted* out of Wantonness, he shall *endure* without Relief.

Such are the ill Consequences of provoking Satan, and playing with Temptation. His Efforts are invigorated upon the mad Adventure, our Succours withdrawn. And *Nakedness* is sure but a thin Defence against so Giant-like a Champion, *Flesh and Blood* unseconded but a poor Guard against *Principalities and Powers*. If therefore we would quit our selves as good Soldiers of the Lord Jesus, we must be sure never to follow him but where he calleth us; if we would get the better of the Foe that labours our Destruction, we must give him no Encouragement by Heedlessness and *Security*. Self-Diffidence will procure the Aids of the *one*, Watching disappoint the Devices of the *other*.

And

And *both* together will render us victorious.

Thus each Branch of the Text is instructive, and to make them more so, I shall add a *general* Reflection from the whole, that *Ease* and *Pleasure*, tho' *beautiful in their Season*, as the *Preacher* observes, carry not with them the greatest Congruity to our *Probation-State*. We call out indeed for *Mirth*, as if it were *the one thing needful*, and we could not breath a Moment without it, and *with-hold not our Hearts from any Joy* that comes within our reach. But what is there to bear us out in this profuse Gayety and *Self-Indulgence*? The *Practice* of *Solomon*? Lo! *a greater than Solomon* crieth, *Learn of me*, who hardly ever *rejoic'd* but in *Spirit*, and was most intimately *acquainted with Grief*. *Fasting* and *Temptations* preceded his *triennial* Ministry, *Weariness* and *Painfulness* came upon him *daily thro' the whole Course* of it. And therefore unless *the Disciple is above his Master, the Servant above his Lord*, pensive Thoughts and a sedate Temper will best become us all the *Years* of our earthly *Pilgrimage*. In earnest Christians, our Time for Transport is not yet. We may *rejoice* without doubt, and nothing but a *stoical* Sourness wou'd suggest the contrary; but then it ought to be in such a manner *as if we rejoiced not*, no farther than *Health* and *Society* require. For we must remember the *Business* of the *next World* will not be done with *Jesting*, and *the Fashion of this passeth away*.

