



LIBRARY
OF THE
Theological Seminary,
PRINCETON, N. J.

Case, Div. 7
Shelf, Section
Book, No.

A DONATION

FROM

Rev. R. K. Rodgers D.D.

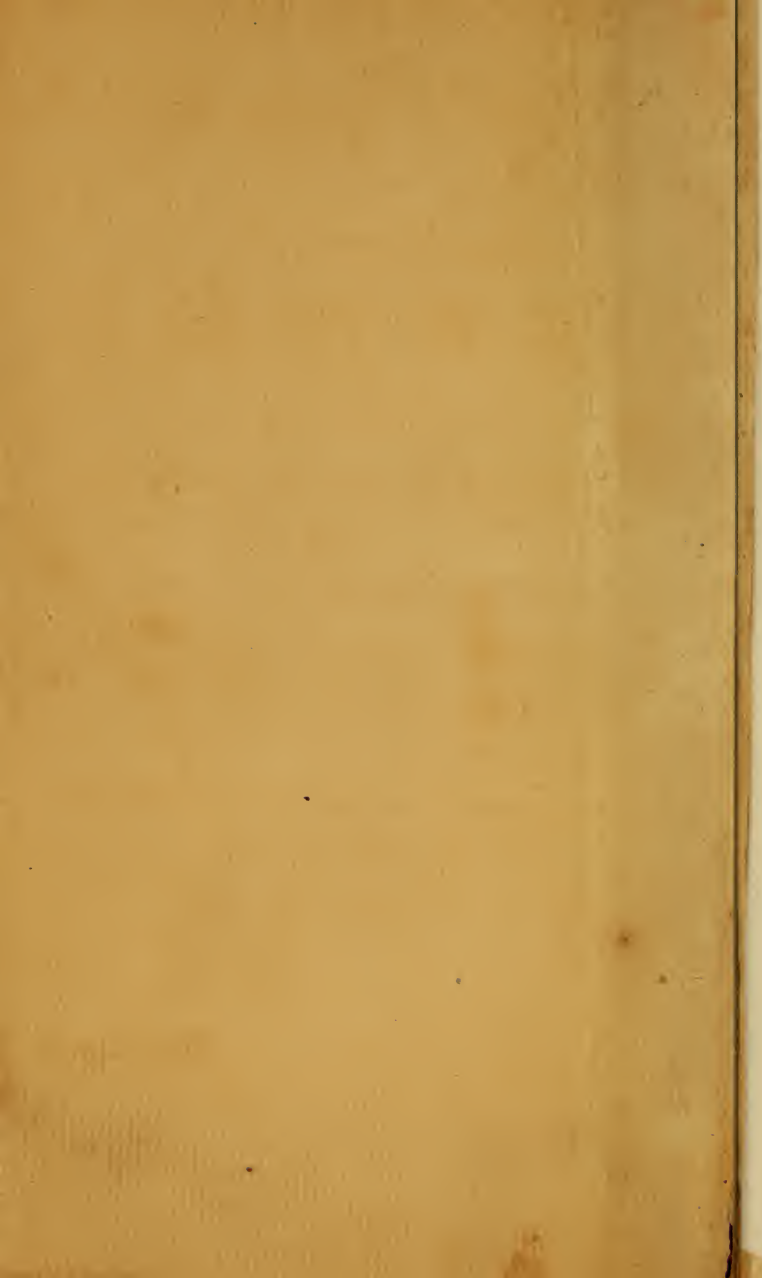
Received

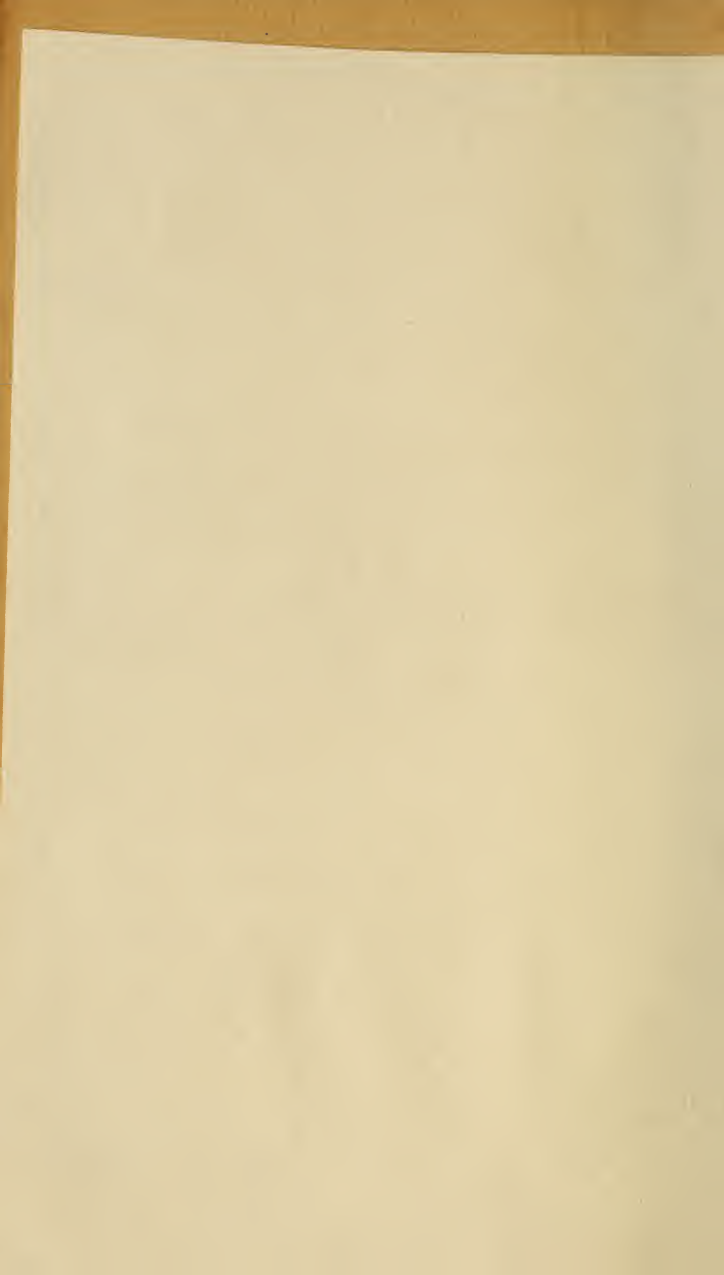
Nov. 1874.

SCB
11073

503

11073





Reformation Sermons at Salter's Hall by

Tac: Merrell . . .	June 27 . 1709 . . .	n ^o 1
Sam ^l Wright . . .	June 27 . 1715 . . .	2
Sam ^l Rosewell . . .	June 29 . 1719 . . .	3
Dan ^l Mayo . . .	July . 1 . 1717 . . .	4
Moses Lowman . . .	June 27 . 1720 . . .	5
John Barker . . .	June 26 . 1721 . . .	6
Dan ^l Neal . . .	June 25 . 1722 . . .	7
Jos ^a Bayes . . .	July . 1 . 1723 . . .	8
Jos ⁱ Denham . . .	June . 29 . 1724 . . .	9
Sam ^l Price . . .	June . 28 . 1725 . . .	10
B A Atkinson . . .	June . 29 . 1726 . . .	11
George Smyth . . .	June . 26 . 1727 . . .	12
Ob: Hughes . . .	July . 1 . 1728 . . .	13
Tho ^s Leavesley . . .	June . 29 . 1730 . . .	14
John Partington . . .	July . 2 . 1733 . . .	15
John Guyse DD . . .	June 30 . 1735 . . .	16
David Jennings . . .	June 27 . 1737 . . .	17
Sam ^l Chandler . . .	Sep ^r 25 . 1738 . . .	18

7

A
S E R M O N

P R E A C H ' D to the
S O C I E T I E S

F O R

Reformation of Manners,

A T

SALTERS-HALL;

On MONDAY *June 25.* 1722.

By *DANIEL NEAL*, M. A.

PUBLISHED at their REQUEST.

L O N D O N :

Printed for E M A N. M A T T H E W S at the *Bible*
in *Pater-noster Row.* M. DCC. XXII.

SERMON

ON THE

FORMATION OF MANKIND

BY

JOHN WILKINSON

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

IN A SERMON PREACHED AT THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY'S, CAMBRIDGE, ON SUNDAY, JULY 1, 1791.

LONDON: Printed by J. JOHNSON, in Pall-mall.



PSALM xciv. 16.

*Who will rise up for me against the
Evil-doers? or, Who will stand up
for me against the Workers of
Iniquity?*



THE former Part of this Psalm is an Address to God, against the insolent Behaviour of the Wicked, who had not only spoken *hard Things* against his People, but were advanced to such a degree of Impiety, as to *slay the Widow and the Stranger, and to murder the Fatherless*; saying, *the Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it*. The Psalmist first prays, that God would give a check to their insolent Behaviour; *O Lord God to whom Vengeance belongs, shew thy self. Lift up thy self, thou Judge of the Earth; render a Reward to the Proud. How long shall the Wicked triumph, and the Workers of Iniquity boast themselves* *? And then proceeds to a Confu-

* Ver. 1, 2, 3.

tation of their Atheistical Principles : *Understand, O ye brutish among the People, and ye Fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the Ear, shall not he hear? He that formed the Eye, shall not he see? He that teacheth Man Knowledge, shall not he know * ?* He argues from the Effect to the Cause; if we believe there is a God that made and fashioned us, we must conclude, that all the Perfections of our Nature are in him, as the first Cause. He could not have communicated them to us, if they had not been first in Himself; for Men therefore to imagine that God does not observe their wicked Actions, because they are covered from the Eyes of their fellow Creatures, is to go against the clearest Evidence in the World to the contrary; for *does not God fill Heaven and Earth with his Presence? Do not his Eyes behold, and his Eye-lids try the Children of Men? Yes certainly; the Lord knows the very Thoughts of Men, that they are Vanity.*

But for as much as wicked Men are not easily convinced by Arguments; and God does not always think fit to take Vengeance on their Iniquities in this Life; therefore the Psalmist, in the Name of the Church, calls for Assistance from her Friends: The Church was now in Captivity, and almost destroyed by cruel Oppressors; the Plowers had ploughed on her Back, and made long their Furrows, but finding Things grow worse and worse, and seeing no End of her Troubles, at length she cries out in the Words of my Text, *Who will rise up for me against the Evil-doers? or who will stand up for me against the Workers of Iniquity?*

“ Have I any Friend that will appear for me?
 “ Has Justice any Friend that will plead her
 “ injured Cause? Or must she be oppressed
 “ and dwell in Silence? I looked and there
 “ was none to help, and I wondred that there
 “ was none to uphold.

Now from hence it is very natural to observe, that *Vice and Immorality have abounded in every Age*. The World was not seventeen hundred Years old, before the Wickedness of Man was so great in the Earth *, that God determined to *destroy both Man and Beast, and creeping Things and Fowls of the Air*. Soon after we are told, that the Inhabitants of *Sodom and Gomorrah* were so corrupt, that there were not ten righteous Persons left in both those populous Cities. We have no Accounts of those early Ages of the World from any of our *prophane Writers*, but if we consult the inspired Writings of the Old Testament, we shall find, that Things were very often at such a Pass, that it might be truly said, *There is None Righteous, no not One; They are all gone out of the Way, and become unprofitable; their Mouths are full of Cursing and Bitterness; their Feet are swift to shed Blood; Destruction and Misery are in their Ways, and there is no fear of God before their Eyes* †. Sometimes God in his Providence raised up a Virtuous Prince in an Age, who restored Religion, and promoted a Reformation of Manners among his People; but no sooner was he buried in the Sepulchre of his Fathers, but Vice and Prophanenels came in again like a Flood.

* Gen. vi. 7.

† Rom. iii. 10.

This was the State of Affairs among the Jews, and we may be sure, it was much worse with the Gentile World ; for the Scripture declares, *That God had given them up to a Reprobate Mind, being filled with all Unrighteousness, Fornication, Wickedness, Covetousness, Maliciousness, Envy, Murder, Debate; and though they knew the Judgment of God, that they which commit these Things were worthy of Death, they not only did the same, but took Pleasure in them that did them* *. It must be confess'd, when the Gospel was first preached among the Gentiles, it had a powerful Influence on their Lives and Manners ; but what Opposition did it meet with from the Powers of this World ? and how many bloody Persecutions did the Primitive Christians suffer within the Space of three hundred Years ? Afterwards, when the *Roman Empire* became Christian, how soon did it become the Seat of the Beast, *whose coming, according to the Apostle, is after the working of Satan, with all Power and Signs, and lying Wonders, and with all Deceivableness of Unrighteousness* †. The glorious Reformation of Religion which began about two hundred Years ago, gave some Revival to Truth, and Holiness in these Parts of the World. But now again, the Glory is so far departed from us, that there is little or no Difference between the Morality of a Protestant and a Papist ; and the Prospect is still more melancholy for Time to come ; for it is expressly foretold, of the latter Times, *that Iniquity shall abound, and the Love of many wax cold ; that Covetousness, Pride and Blasphemy shall prevail, and that*

* Rom. i. 28, &c.

† 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10.

Men shall be Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God *. So that tho' Religion and Virtue have always been kept alive in the World, they have seldom had the Multitude on their Side; the Body of the People in all Ages have been deservedly rank'd among the *Workers of Iniquity*.

From hence it follows in the *second Place*, that *Religion and Virtue can have but few Friends to appear for them*. For if the Multitude in every Age have been vicious, sober and virtuous Persons must be rare; this was evidently the Case with the Church of the Jews at this Time, as appears from the Words following my Text; *Unless the Lord had been my Help, my Soul had almost dwelt in Silence*. The Government under which they lived in their Captivity, was become a *Throne of Iniquity, which framed Mischief by a Law; they gathered themselves together against the Soul of the Righteous, and condemned innocent Blood*; and though it is possible there might be some that wished them well, yet not a Man had the Honesty or Courage to rise up for them against the Evil-doers: So that unless God himself had stood by them, as He did by the Apostle *Paul* in a like Case, they must have been entirely crush'd. Nor was this the only Time that Religion and Virtue have been deserted by their Friends; for though there were seven thousand Men in the Prophet *Elijah's* Time, that had not bowed the Knee to *Baal*, not one of them had the Courage to appear against the Workers of Iniquity; for the Prophet complains, that *He was left alone, and that They sought his Life to take*

* 2 Tim. iii. 1.

it away *. The Prophet *Isaiah* began to prophesy under the Reign of a very good King, *who sought God, and had Understanding in the Visions of God*; and yet the Nation of the Jews was so universally corrupted in his Time, *that from the Sole of the Foot even to the Head, there was no Soundness, but Wounds and Bruises and putrifying Sores*. He allows indeed that there were some few good People left, but they were like a *Cottage in a Vineyard, like a Lodge in a Garden of Cucumbers, or like a besieged City*; and had it not been for them, the Nation had been destroyed long before it was; *Except the Lord had left us a very small Remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like to Gomorrah* †.

I might lead you forward to the Times of the New Testament, and shew, that though the World improved very much in its Morals by the spreading of Christianity, yet corrupt Nature has been always the same; Vice and Prophaneness have been too stubborn for all the Arguments that have been brought against them from the Word of God, and from the Light of Reason; and therefore our Legislators have been obliged, not only out of Regard to the Honour of God, but for the Good of the Society, to enact Laws against them. All Societies have certainly a Right to preserve themselves, and to secure the Lives and Properties of their Members; they have therefore a Right to make Laws, against such Vices, as have a Tendency in their own Nature, to breed Confusion, and every evil Work; nor is this an invading the Rights of Conscience, but a

* 1 Kings xix. 10.

† *Isaiah* i. 6, 8, 9.

necessary Part of Self-Preservation; for if the Lewdness and Debauchery of the present Age should be unrestrained, our Lives would be in Danger as we walk the Streets, and our dear Children and Posterity be exposed to inevitable Ruin; but notwithstanding all that has been done in Favour of Piety and Virtue, it is but too evident that it has been attended but with very little Success; for there are but very few in the present Age, who have the Courage to *rise up for God against the Evil-doers, or stand up for him against the Workers of Iniquity.*

And this leads me to a third Observation which I design to enlarge my Thoughts upon; *Namely, that when Vice and Prophaneness abound in a Place, it is the Duty of those few good Persons that are in it, to make a publick Stand against the Workers of Iniquity.*

That, *Vice and Prophaneness* are at a very great Height in this City, is plain to every one's Observation; for all Ranks and Orders of Men are corrupted; the very Sins of *Sodom* are found among us; many of our Citizens are overcharged with Surfeiting and Drunkenness every Week; prophane Cursing and Swearing is so much in Fashion, that it is common with some People to salute each other with a Curse. No Nation in the World is so infamous for this Vice as ours; the Jews in their most corrupt Times, had a Reverence for the Name *JEHOVAH*, and would not take it into their Mouths on common Occasions. Is it not a Shame then, that we who call our selves Christians, and reformed Protestants, should dare to trample under Foot the Blood of the Son of God, and mix the most execrable Oaths and Curses with our common Conversation?

And yet where can we go Abroad either in City, Country, or Camp, without having our Ears offended with such Language? The meanest of the People are prodigiously corrupted in this Respect, the Labourers, the common Soldiers, the Footmen, and the very Beggars, bid Defiance to the God of Heaven, and call upon him to damn them every Day of their Lives, so that all Reverence for the Deity is lost, which, if the Mercy of God does not prevent, must necessarily spread universal Infidelity and Atheism over the whole Kingdom.

But besides the Vices already mentioned, there are these two, that deserve a particular Notice at this Time.

The first is, *the Multitudes of lewd Women that walk the Streets in the Night*, and like the Harlot, of whom Solomon speaks; *entice away the young Men void of Understanding, saying, come let us take our fill of Love till the Morning: Let us Solace our selves with Love* *. These are the Vermin of the City, which I am afraid will in a little Time, debauch the Youth of the whole Kingdom: For not to say any Thing against this Vice, as it is a Sin against God, consider only the Mischief it does to Society; how many sober Apprentices have been seduced? How many young Gentlemen born to good Estates have been ruined? Nay, how many grave Citizens and Merchants have by *their* Means defiled the Marriage-Bed, and propagated a loathsome Disease to their Posterity? What a dismal Prospect does this give us of the rising Generation! If these *Locusts* are

* Prov. vii. 7, 18.

not destroyed, there is not a Family in Town or Country, but will be infected by them in a little Time. Do not Gentlemen that have given their Children a virtuous Education, and are capable of giving them good Fortunes, find it very difficult to dispose of them into sober Families? and after they have made the best Enquiries, have they not been disappointed, and lived to see their Children ruined, both in Body and Estate? Now whence does this arise, but from the Swarms of *lewd Women* that infest the Streets, and draw the unthinking Youth into their Snare? and when they are once entangled, they seldom recover themselves, but continue to go after them, *as an Ox goes to the Slaughter, or a Fool to the Correction of the Stocks, till a Dart strike through their Liver, as a Bird hasteth to the Snare, and knoweth not that it is for his Life.* I am afraid this Disease through Length of Time, and the Connivance of our Officers of the Peace, is become almost incurable; for (if I am rightly informed) it is dangerous for sober Persons to walk the Streets in an Evening, because of the Insults of these Creatures, who have put off all that Shame that is the Ornament of their Sex, and dare to insult even Magistracy it self. It is Time therefore, for such as would save the Nation from Ruin, to unite their Counsels, and use their best Endeavours to destroy these Nests of *Evil-doers*.

But *Secondly*, There is another Immorality that is no less dangerous to the Publick, than the former; and that is, *the prodigious Increase of Gaming-Houses, both in City and Country*, where some People play away more Money in a Week, than their Fortunes will produce in a Year. The Vice of Gaming was

never in such Repute as in the present Age ; it was formerly accounted infamous for Persons of a sober Character to appear at the *Gaming-Tables* ; but it is now the fashionable Diversion of all the Places of publick Resort in the Summer Time ; you may there see not only Gentlemen of the first Quality, but Merchants and Tradesmen, mixing themselves with Men of desperate Fortunes, and throwing the Dice for their Estates.

Nor is this Vice peculiar to the Men ; for *Ladies* of a sober and virtuous Education, have of late Years, given too much Countenance to these Houses, by appearing at the Tables, and engaging in these criminal Diversions. I would not say any Thing that looks severe upon this Head, but I humbly submit it to Consideration ; Whether publick Gaming in *virtuous Ladies* is not a little out of Character ? Whether it does not draw them into mixt Company, and give them an Air of Boldness, which is perfectly inconsistent with that Modesty and Shamefacedness, which is the Ornament of the Fair Sex ? Whether it does not engage them in an Habit of Idleness, and of keeping ill Hours ? Whether their Passions are not sometimes disordred ? and whether the Losses they sustain, have not a Tendency to breed ill Blood in their Families, and between their nearest Relations ? It has been often observed, that Gaming in a *Lady* has usually been attended with the Loss of Reputation, and sometimes with that, which is still more valuable, the Loss of her Virtue and Honour. And I will venture to add, that this Vice has something so very infamous in it, that how fond soever great Numbers of People are of the Practice, you can't put a greater Affront on Persons of

Repu-

Reputation, in any Company, than to give them the Name of *common Gamesters*.

The like Inconveniencies attend this Practice, in *Merchants* and *Tradesmen*; it destroys their Estates, ruins their Credit, and teaches them the Arts of Tricking and Cheating; when they meet with Losses, their Passions are raised to such an Height, as to break out into the most execrable Oaths and Curses; and at last, they are push'd upon taking unlawful Methods to support their extravagant Expences. How many fair Estates have been lost? and how many reputable Families have been reduced to Poverty and Want, by these Methods? The Cry of the Widow and the Fatherless is against them. It were well for the World, if these *common Gamesters* hazarded nothing but their own; but Alas! they very often play away the Labour of the Husbandman, and the Bread of the honest Shopkeeper, so that when they fall, they bury a great many poor industrious Families in their Ruin.

The Increase of this Vice of Gaming, is evident from the *pompous Houses*, that are erected for this Use, in all the Places of publick Resort, and from the Crouds of Company of both Sexes that attend them. I would be very far from passing a Censure on any innocent and lawful Diversion; Persons of Quality and Fashion, have certainly a Right to live in a more generous and free Manner than others; but to *play deep*, or to game for Profit or Advantage, is neither becoming a Gentleman, nor a Christian; it is the Destruction of Trade, and the Ruin of all Kinds of Charity and good Works; it is murdering of precious Time, as affording no real Entertainment for the Body
or

or the Mind; it very often occasions Quarrels and Bloodshed, and in a Word, as the first Motive to this Vice is Covetousness, it usually ends in Poverty and Disgrace.

It were some small Alleviation of our Calamity, if this Vice of Gaming was confined among the Nobility and Gentry of the Kingdom; but the Infection is spread among the lowest of the People, many of whom are playing away their Week's Wages at an Ale-house, whilst their Wives and Children are starving at Home. It is incredible to think what Numbers of little Gaming Houses are supported in the Suburbs of this City, by the Extravagance of the meaner Sort of People. These are the Seminaries of Idleness, Drunkenness, prophane Cursing and Swearing, and all Kinds of Lewdness. It is here the Minds of the common People are debauched, and ripened for the Execution of those pernicious Designs, which the Enemies of our happy Constitution are always forming against it.

This is the naked State of our Case, which in my Opinion, has a threatening Aspect on the small Remains of Religion and Virtue that are left amongst us; and therefore I appeal to your selves, whether there be not sufficient Reason for me to call upon you at this Time, in the Words of my Text, *Who will stand up against the Evil-doers: Or, Who will rise up, against the Workers of Iniquity.*

I would therefore beg Leave, in Pursuance of the Design of our coming together at this Time, to recommend this Duty in the first Place, *to all Magistrates, and Officers of the Peace*, who are appointed by God to be a *Terror to Evil-doers, and a Praise to them that do well;*
and

and when they enter upon their Office, bind themselves by a solemn Oath, " To chastise
 " and punish all Persons offending against those
 " Statutes and Ordinances, that are made for
 " the quiet Rule and Government of his Ma-
 " jesty's People. " So that for *Magistrates* to
 bear the Sword in vain, by conniving at the
Workers of Iniquity, or discouraging those who
 would bring them to publick Justice, is not
 only to betray the Trust that God and their
 Country have reposed in them, but to bring
 upon themselves the Guilt of Perjury. The
 like may be said concerning *Constables*, whose
 Authority, when they are upon Duty in the
 Night, is in a manner unlimited; it is very
 much therefore in their Power to lessen the
 Number of Vagabonds, and Night Walkers,
 to break up the Habitations of Lewdness, and
 by keeping a watchful Eye upon the Publick
 Houses within their Rounds, to prevent a great
 deal of that Drunkenness and unlawful Ga-
 ming, which leads young Persons into all Kinds
 of Debauchery. This they are bound to by
 their Oath, *and if a Man swear an Oath* (says
 the Prophet *) *to bind his Soul with a Bond,*
he shall not break his Word, but shall do accord-
ing to all that proceeds out of his Mouth. And
 therefore all *Magistrates* and *Officers* of the
 Peace, are under the most solemn Engagements
 both to God and their Country, to use the
 Authority with which they are intrusted, for
 putting the Laws in Execution against these
Workers of Iniquity.

* Numb. xxx. 2.

I would recommend this Duty in the second Place to the *Ministers of God's holy Word*; for though the Execution of the Laws is not intrusted with them, yet they are to reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all Long-Suffering and Doctrine. *Son of Man* (says God to the * Prophet) *I have made thee a Watchman to the House of Israel, therefore hear the Word at my Mouth, and give them Warning from me. When I say to the Wicked, Thou shalt surely dye, and thou givest him not Warning, nor speakest to warn the Wicked from his wicked Way, to save his Life; the same wicked Man shall die in his Iniquity, but his Blood will I require at thine Hand.* Ministers of a Church or Congregation have the Care of Souls, and are to watch for them as those that must give an Account; they are to instruct their Hearers in all necessary Truth, and to warn them against the Vices of the Age in which they live. *They are to crie aloud, and not to spare, but to lift up their Voices like a Trumpet, to shew the People their Transgressions, and the House of Jacob their Sins* †. Let me therefore humbly beseech my Reverend Brethren who are of the same Faith, to lay aside their angry Contentions with one another, and unite their Zeal against the common Enemy. We are set for the Defence of the Gospel against Vice and Prophaneness, as well as against Heresy and Error. Let us therefore bear our Testimony against both, and not play all our Artillery against one Attack of the Enemy, lest while we are defending the Breach that is made upon Truth, Vice and Prophan-

* Ezek. iii. 17, 18.

† Isaiah lviii. 1.

ness, should break in upon us at another Quarter, and destroy both our Churches and Nation.

I would recommend this Duty in the third Place, *to particular Persons of all Parties and Denominations*; for how widely soever we may differ in our Opinions about Ceremonies, and Modes of Worship, we must all agree in this, that *Vice is a Reproach to any People*; a Whoremonger, a common Gamester, a Drunkard, or a Blasphemer, in any Livery, is an Enemy to the Society in which he lives, and therefore every good Subject should rise up against him. Here can be no Complaint of Persecution, for no Man pretends Conscience for these Vices; the punishing of them therefore is but a necessary Defence of the publick Peace. What would become of our Wives and Children? Nay what Hazard should we run of our Lives as we walk the Streets, if these Vices were tolerated among us? Our Condition in this City would in a few Years be like *Lot's* in *Sodom*; who had no sooner received a Couple of beautiful Strangers into his House, but the Mob surrounded it, and threatned to pull it down, unless he would deliver them up to their Pleasure *. To rise up therefore against the *Workers of Iniquity*, is no more than *Self-Preservation*, which is the very first Principle of the Law of Nature; it is for the Preservation of our Religion, our Laws, our Wives and Children, and every Thing that is dear to us in the World. The Laws of our Country will not execute themselves. It is therefore necessary, that all

* Gen. xix. 4.

good Subjects should assist the Magistrate in the Execution of this Part of his Office. But forasmuch as the Efforts of private Persons were found to be too weak, to put a Stop to the Growth of *Vice* and *Prophaneness*; therefore by the Encouragement of their late Majesties King WILLIAM and Queen MARY of immortal Memory, a Society for *Reformation of Manners* was erected in this City, by whose honest Care and Diligence, some thousands of prophane Swearers, Drunkards, and other lewd and disorderly Persons have been brought to Justice; the Vices, I have been complaining of, have been kept under some Restraint, and by that Means, some hundreds of young Persons have been preserved from Ruin. It appears then to be the Interest and Duty of all Ranks and Orders of Men, to rise up in their Places against the *Workers of Iniquity*.

If any of you enquire what Measures should be taken to render this Duty effectual: I will take Liberty to offer my Advice under these four Particulars.

First, *Begin with personal Reformation*; for it is ridiculous to punish that in another, which we allow in our selves; *Thou art inexcusable, O Man, whosoever thou art, that doest so; Thou that saist a Man should not commit Adultery, dost thou commit Adultery? Thou that abhorrest Idols dost thou commit Sacrilege?* The World will never believe such Persons in Earnest, nor is it possible for them to do any real Service to the Cause of Reformation, because they pull down with one Hand, what they build up with another. A few good Examples in a Neighbourhood, will have a greater Influence on the People's Morals, than the

the most rigorous Execution of Justice by a vicious Magistrate. Begin therefore at Home, and avoid those Vices in your selves, which you would reform in others ; have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darknes, but rather reprove them ; and after the Example of faithful *Abraham*, keep a watchful Eye over your Children and Servants, and all that are under your immediate Care ; *I know Abraham* (says God *) *that he will command his Children, and Household after him, to keep the Ways of the Lord.* The Neglect of Family Government among sober People, has had a prodigious Influence upon the Licentiousness of the present Age: For Families are the Nurseries of the Commonwealth, and according to the Care we take in their Education and Government, we may reasonably expect they will prove better or worse Citizens and Subjects. Let me exhort you therefore to walk in your Houses with a perfect Heart, set good Examples before your Children and Servants, and give them good Advice ; and if after all they will make themselves vile, by Swearing, Drunkenness, or any kind of Lewdness, tell them plainly, in the Words of the Psalmist, † *A froward Heart shall depart from me ; I will not know a wicked Person ; He that worketh Deceit shall not dwell in my House ; He that telleth Lies shall not tarry in my Sight.*

Secondly, To render this more effectual, attend it with Prayer ; for the effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous Person prevaieth much. Whilst *Moses* lifted up his Hands, *Israel* pre-

* Gen xviii. 19.

† Psalm ci. 4. 7.

vailed, and when he let them down *Amalek* prevailed; the Blessing of God, and the Influences of his Holy Spirit, are absolutely necessary to the Reformation of a wicked World; for, as the Prophet observes *, *it is not by Might nor by Power, but by the Spirit of the Lord*: It was therefore a very comfortable Promise that God made to his afflicted Church, † *When the Enemy shall come in like a Flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a Standard against him*; or, as it is in the Margin of your Bibles, *the Spirit of the Lord shall put him to Flight*. Let us pray then that God would pour out his Spirit upon all Ranks and Orders of Men, that it may put to flight these Enemies of Mankind, and produce among us the Fruits of *Love, Joy, Peace, Long-Suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, and Temperance*. This would argue a Renovation of Mind, and if the Minds of Men were changed, their Manners would quickly be reformed; for a good Tree cannot bring forth evil Fruit, nor a corrupt Tree bring forth good Fruit. And let us pray more especially, that God would set over us such Magistrates and Judges, as may judge the People in Righteousness, that whosoever will not do the Laws of God, and of the King, may have Judgment executed speedily upon them, whether it be to Death, or to Banishment, or to Confiscation of Goods, or to Imprisonment ‡. We have lost a very excellent Magistrate out of this City lately by Death ||, one whom all good Men loved, and wicked Men feared; a Patron of Virtue, an Enemy of

* Zech. iv. 6. † Isa. lix. 19.

‡ Esra. vii. 25, 26.

|| Sir Thomas Abney.

all Kinds of Vice and Prophaneness; and one who did not bear the Sword of Magistracy in vain. Let us pray that God would send a double Portion of the same Spirit, on those who survive, or who may succeed him: It is the Spirit of God that must animate Magistrates, and Ministers, and all that will rise up against the *Workers of Iniquity*; if we can obtain this Blessing, we are sure the Weapons of our Warfare will be successful; but without this, I am afraid, our preaching against the Prophaneness of the Age, and your Attempts for a National Reformation, will be of little Service.

Thirdly, Let your Prayers be accompanied with *vigorous Endeavours, to put a Stop to the Growth of Vice and Prophaneness*; for Prayer alone will not do the Work, but whilst *Moses* is lifting up his Hands in the Mount, *Israel* must be fighting in the Valley: That is, you are to endeavour as Opportunity offers, to see *the Laws put in Execution*, for the Laws of the Land are to be your Rule; where there is no Law, there is no Transgression, but when the Laws of the Land are broken, and violated in Matters of Consequence to the publick Peace, every good Subject should rise up in their Defence. I am very sensible that an INFORMER has been a Name of Reproach among good People for a great many Years, on the Account of those Severities, that some of the most sober and virtuous People of the Kingdom underwent, in the Reign of King *Charles II.* for the Sake of their Consciences. But certainly it is a very different Thing to bring Men into Trouble, *who desire to lead peaceable and quiet Lives, in all Godliness and Honesty*; and to inform against those flagrant Immoralities, that have a

Ten-

Tendency not only debauch the whole Kingdom, but to subvert the very Peace and Order of the Government; if the Laws against Vice and Prophaneness are just and necessary, one would wish to see them put in Execution, which can't be done, unless People will be at the Trouble of giving Information to the proper Officers. Her late excellent Majesty Queen MARY, whose Heart was in this Work, was so very sensible of this, that in her Letter to the Justices of the Peace of *Middlesex*, she commanded them to give Encouragement to Persons, who should bring them Information of Offenders against these Laws; and accordingly the *Justices of the Peace*, in their printed Orders, did invite those, who were Well-wishers to their Country, to bring them Information, of the Breaches of the Laws against Immorality and Prophaneness.

But *Fourthly*, if Men are not willing to appear themselves in this Cause, the least they can do, is *to contribute to the Expences of those who are engaged in it*. I have already observed, that it pleased God in the Reign of the late King WILLIAM, and Queen MARY, to encline the Hearts of some excellent Persons in this City, both of the *Established Church*, and among the *Dissenters*, to form a Design for putting the Laws in Execution against *Vice and Prophaneness*, and that by their Means, many Houses of Lewdness and Debauchery have been broken up, and some Thousands of Criminals brought to Justice; but this Work has been attended with a great deal of Hazard and Expence, for the Patrons of Vice have combined together, and spared no Cost to support their Cause: They have had Money and Friends, and by that Means have made a considerable Stand against the Patrons
of

of Virtue. On the other Hand, the Societies for Reformation of Manners have met with a great many Discouragements, they have lost many of their Friends by Death, and the Love of others seems to wax cold, so that the Burden lies now upon a very few; I would therefore invite such, whom God has prosper'd in the World, to contribute something out of their Abundance to this good Work; 'tis a noble and generous Design, worthy the Patronage of all true Lovers of their Country. What large Sums of Money would some Gentlemen and Citizens, give to recover their Sons and Daughters out of the Snare of the Devil, and to reduce them to the Paths of Virtue and Goodness! And who can tell, how soon this may be his own Case? Ought we not then to contribute our Assistance to the plucking up these Seminaries of Wickedness by the Roots? Or if that be impossible, to the lessening of their Numbers and Influence in the City. It is in vain, to object against this *Design*, that the Managers of it may have committed some Mistakes, for this would be an Argument against all Societies, and against Government it self. Would any of you choose to live in a State of *Anarchy*, where your Lives and Fortunes would be at the Mercy of Plunderers, because every Form of Government has some Inconveniences attending it? 'Tis enough therefore to satisfy all Objections of this Kind, that the Societies for Reformation of Manners have done a great deal of Good, and prevented a great deal of Mischief in the City, with no private Advantage to themselves, and with as little Prejudice to any honest Man's Reputation, or good Name, as can be imagined. The Cause they are engaged in

is the Cause of Virtue, Justice, and Honesty; 'tis for the Preservation of the public Peace, and for the suppressing those Disorders, which, if they are suffered to go unpunished, will in a little Time corrupt all our Families, and spread universal Confusion over the whole Kingdom.

Allow me therefore, before I conclude, to recommend this Duty of giving your Assistance towards the suppressing of *Vice* and *Prophaneness*, by some proper Motives.

And first, consider *'tis for the Honour of God*. When the Children of *Israel* had revolted from God, and worshiped the golden Calf; *Moses* stands in the Gate of the Camp, and cries out, *who is on the Lord's * Side, let him come hither?* The Cause of Reformation of Manners is the Cause of God, 'tis for the Honour of his moral Government of the World; and will you not appear on his Side? Will any Man dare to stand neuter in this Quarrel, when our blessed Saviour has told him, † *He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathers not with me scatters abroad?* Shall we be content to hear the holy and reverend Name of God blasphemed, and the Blood of his Son trampled under Foot? to see the Laws of our Country violated, and which is worse, the Image of God amongst Men defaced, without declaring our Abhorrence of these *Workers of Iniquity*? Where is your Zeal for the Lord of Hosts! If a Subject of King *George* should be in Company, where his Majesty's Person and Government were insulted, without bearing his Testimony against such Disloyalty; would not all good

* Exodus xxxii. 26.

† Math. xi. 30.

Subjects censure his Want of Zeal to his King and Country; How much more then are they to be blamed, who are unconcerned at the publick Dishonour that is done to God every Day, by the *Workers of Iniquity*.

Secondly, Our standing up against the Workers of Iniquity is, *the most effectual Way to secure our holy Religion*; I am very sensible there is a wide Difference between true Religion, and an outward Reformation of Manners; the former proceeds from a Principle of the Grace of God in the Heart, and always teaches Men *to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts*; whereas the latter may consist with Infidelity, and a secret Enmity to the Life and Power of Godliness. But this is certain, that all, who are Enemies to Reformation, are Enemies to all true Religion, and when they have debauched our Morals, they will quickly beat us from our Religious Principles, and throw us back into a State of Nature, wherein *every Man may do that which is right in his own Eyes*; let us therefore carefully defend the *Out-works* of Religion, that the Fear of God, and the Practice of Piety may not be ridiculed and hissed out of the Nation; but that sober and conscientious Persons of every Denomination of Christians, may be protected and countenanced in their religious Privileges, and may be able *to live peaceable and quiet Lives in all Godliness and Honesty*.

Thirdly, By standing up against the Workers of Iniquity, *we shall do public Service to our Country*: For Vice and Prophaneness have a Tendency to introduce Riots and Disorders, and to dissolve the Bands of Government; hereby the Valour and Renown of the *English Nation*

will be destroyed, the Minds of the Youth will be enfeebled, and we shall become an easy Conquest to the first *Invader*. 'Tis recorded of one of the Kings of *Assyria*, that he chose rather to overcome the City of *Babylon*, by sending in *Players* and *lewd Women* to debauch it, than to invade it by a powerful Army. But that which is worse than all this, is, that the Growth of *Prophaneness* and *Immorality* will certainly draw down the Vengeance of God, upon the Nation. It was this that provoked God to send a Deluge upon the *old World*, and to rain down Fire and Brimstone from Heaven upon the Cities of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*. If we read over the History of the *Jewish Nation*, we shall observe, that God dealt with them according to the Regard they paid to his Laws; when they were obedient, Providence blessed their Affairs, and gave them Credit and Reputation with their Neighbours; but when Idolatry and Vice prevailed amongst them, they were the Scorn of the Nations round about them, and were always visited with one Judgement or another from Heaven. The Prophet *Jeremiah* puts the deplorable Change of their Affairs a little before the Captivity upon this Score, * *Your Iniquities have turned away these Things, and your Sins have with-holden good Things from you; for, among my People are wicked Men, they lay Wait, as he that sets a Snare, they set a Trap, they catch Men; as a Cage is full of Birds, so is their House full of Deceit. — They over-pass the Deeds of the wicked; they judge not the Cause of the Fatherless, and the Right of the needy do they not judge.*

The City of *Jerusalem* was at this Time full of Luxury and Ease, but withal universally corrupted both in Religion and Morals. *Run to and fro* (says God) *through the Streets of Jerusalem, and see and know, and seek in the broad Places thereof. If ye can find a Man, if there be any that executeth Judgment, that seeketh the Truth, and I will pardon it **. There was not an upright Magistrate amongst them, and therefore they are threatned twice over in this Chapter, in the following Words, *Shall I not visit for these Things (saith the Lord?) Shall I not be avenged on such a Nation as this?* So that it is evident, that an universal Corruption of Manners draws down the Vengeance of God upon a People. God may spare them a little while, for the Sake of a few righteous Persons that remain with them, or at the Intercession of such extraordinary Persons as *Noah, Daniel, and Job*; but sooner or later the *overflowing Scourge will pass through the Land*, except they repent. We are now under threatening Symptoms of the Divine Displeasure in these Nations: Poverty is already come in upon us like an armed Man; publick Credit is at a very low Ebb; we are miserably divided in our Affections to one another, and the Pestilence is still in a neighbouring Kingdom; and yet there are no Signs of Repentance, or Reformation amongst us, but *Luxury, Gaming, Drunkenness, Swearing*, and all Kinds of *Lewdness* are as much in Fashion as ever. If then we have any Love to our dear Country, or any Regard to Posterity; if we would Appease the Divine Anger, and save the Nation from Ruin, let us

* Jer. v. i.

rise up as one Man against the *Evil-doers*, and contribute our best Assistance against the *Workers of Iniquity*.

Fourthly, *By this means we may be instrumental of doing good to particular Persons*; for *he that converteth a Sinner from the Error of his Ways, saves a Soul from Death, and covereth a Multitude of Sins* *. This is the noblest Act of Charity; for, as much as the eternal Happiness of Heaven is preferable to a comfortable Subsistence in this Life, so much is the Charity of saving a Soul from Death, preferable to the clothing his Nakedness, or doing him any Kindness, that terminates only in the present Life. I readily acknowledge, that God only can convert a Sinner from the Error of his Way, *his Almighty Arm must do the Work*; but *Ministers* may be instrumental of doing something towards it in their Pulpits, as well as *Magistrates* in the due execution of their Office. There is one Way, by which we may all contribute to this good Work; namely, by endeavouring to break up those Nurseries of *Lewdness* and *Gaming* that abound in the City and Suburbs; Nothing can be a greater Discouragement to Virtue, or Temptation to Vice than these Houses; The destroying of them therefore will save a great many young Persons from Ruin, and consequently prevent a *Multitude of Sins*; For when Men have not Opportunities of being vicious, or when they see that strict Enquiry is made after all disorderly Houses, they will be afraid of entring upon such a Course of Life; and this, by the Blessing of

* James v. 19, 20.

God, may be a Means of making them *think on their Ways, and turn their Feet to his Testimonies.*

Fifthly, *Your standing up against the Workers of Iniquity, will be crowned at Length with a great Recompence of Reward.* You may meet with Reproach and Opposition for doing your Duty; nay, you may die in the Battel, as some of the Society's *Agents* have done; but *your Work is with the Lord, and your Judgment with your God.* You know how acceptable to God the Zeal of *Phinehas* was, in executing Judgment upon a Couple of lewd People; *It was accounted to him for Righteousness unto all Generations for evermore* *. The Time will come, when Men of a publick Spirit, who have appeared boldly against the Prophaneness of the Age in which they lived, shall be distinguished from those useless Creatures, to whom God has given Riches, but has not given them Power to do Good with them. These Men's Estates are a Curse, and will serve only to increase their Account in the Day of Judgment; but they who serve their Generation according to the Will of God, and their Duty, will have all the Pleasures of a good Conscience whilst they live, and when they come to give an Account of their Stewardship, to the Judge of all the Earth, will hear that blessed Sentence pronounced on them, *Well done good and faithful Servants, ye have been faithful in a little, I will make you Rulers over much, enter into the Joy of your Lord.*

* Psalm cvi. 31.

These Considerations may serve to encourage those who have lifted themselves in the Service of God against the *Workers of Iniquity*, to go on with their Work, and to invite others to come into their Assistance.

To all which I may add the present happy Situation of our Affairs, under the wise and prudent Administration of our most gracious Sovereign King GEORGE; who gives the Laws their free Course, and is desirous to make all his Subjects easy and happy. What would become of the *Protestant Religion*, and *Reformation of Manners*, if the wicked Designs of some profligate Wretches among us, to set the Crown upon the Head of the *Pretender* to his Majesty's Dominions, should take Place? The Throne of *Great Britain* would then be a *Throne of Iniquity*, and Mischief would be established by a *Law*; Blood and Confusion would fill every Corner of the Land, and our dear Children and Posterity must be content with being Slaves, Beggars, and Papists. We have been told from the Throne, that these *Workers of Iniquity* have no Prospect of Support or Assistance from any of the foreign Powers of *Europe*; all their Expectations of Success are therefore built upon our domestick Murmurings and Complaints. But is it not very ungrateful for *Englishmen* and *Protestants*, to charge the Miscarriages of Subjects upon their Sovereign? and to *speak Evil* of the King, who has gained nothing by our Losses, nor had any other Share in bringing them upon us, than passing a Law which the whole Kingdom almost desired at that Time. If Men did but consider how these ill *natured Insinuations* weaken the King's Hands, by dividing his Friends, and strengthening his Enemies
Abroad

Abroad and at Home ; and what a Tendency they have to throw the Nation into Confusion, I hope a great many of them would change their present Language and Behaviour.

However, let us *Protestant Dissenters* who have felt the kind Influences of his Majesty's Government, bless God who has lately brought to Light the hidden Works of Darknes, and turned the Counsels of his Enemies into Foolishness. Let us continue to pray for the best of King's, and Study to out do each other in Loyalty and Zeal for his Majesty's Person and Government, on this and all proper Occasions. We have often heard him declare from the Throne, his firm Resolution to support the *Protestant* Religion, and the religious and civil Liberties of all his Subjects. He has likewise given it under his Royal Hand, " That he
 " would chearfully concur † in whatever Me-
 " thods should be taken for promoting of Pi-
 " ety, and the Discouraging Prophaneness and
 " Immorality, and for preventing the Growth
 " of Popery." And his Majesty is a Prince, that has been always true to his Word and Honour.

Let all good *Protestants* therefore of every Denomination, Love God, Honour the *King*, and improve the present Time of Peace and Tranquility, for promoting a National Reformation. The Honour of God, the Support of our holy Religion, the Peace of Society, our own, and our Posterity's Welfare call for it ; for if the execrable Vices of *prophane Cursing and Swearing, Lewdness and Gaming* spread a little wider, every one's Property will be in Danger ;

and we may reasonably expect that Almighty God, who renders to all Men according to their Deserts, * *will make our Plagues wonderful, and the Plagues of our Seed, even great Plagues and of long Continuance, and that he will bring upon us every Disease, till we are destroy'd from the Earth:* But if the Magistrates and Gentlemen of this City, will stand up courageously against the *Workers of Iniquity*, it will have an happy Influence upon the whole Kingdom; the Generations to come will call them blessed, and the great God who is the Rewarder of all generous and good Actions, will hereafter *think of them for Good, according to all they have done for this People* †.

* Deut. xxviii. 59.

† Nehem. v. 19.

F I N I S.





