

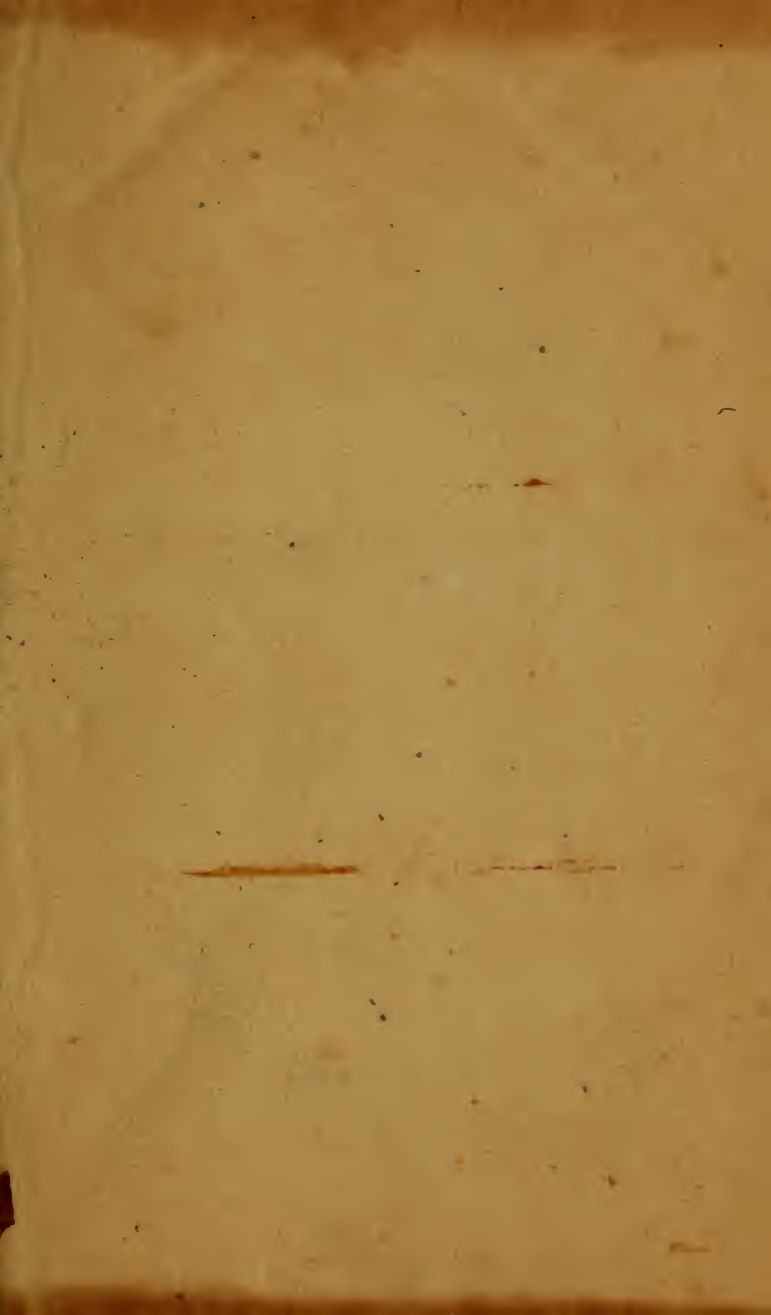
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6

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd to the

S O C I E T I E S

F O R

Reformation of Manners,

A T

S A L T E R S - H A L L,

O N

Monday, June 27th, 1737.

By *DAVID JENNINGS*.

1691-1762

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MATTH. XXIV. 12.

*And because Iniquity shall abound,
the Love of many shall wax cold.*



THE Occasion of our Saviour's speaking these prophetic Words, was an Enquiry his Disciples made concerning another Prediction which he had delivered a little before.

THE Contents of the last Chapter are much like *Ezekiel's* visionary Roll, wherein were written *Lamentations, and Mourning, and Woe*^a. There we hear our Saviour summing up *Jerusalem's* Sins, and denouncing many heavy *Woes* upon its wicked Inhabitants: At the same Time he *laments* and *mourns* over their wretched Condition, as having now, in a manner, filled up the Measure of their iniquities; and being devoted, by the just Judgment of God, to utter ruin^b; upon which he foretels the De-

^a Ezek. ii. 10.

^b Mat. xxiii. 37.

struction of their City and Temple^c: *Behold your House is left unto you desolate.* God's House, and their own Houses, should be all laid waste, and turned into a *Wilderness*, as the *Greek Word* (*ἐρημος*) imports. Presently after this, he took his Farewel of the Temple, and went out of it; intimating, that he should return to it no more^d: *As he went out, and departed from the Temple, his Disciples came to him to shew him the Buildings of the Temple^e; and, as St. Mark relates this Story, one of them said unto him, Master, see what manner of Stones, and what Buildings are here^f.* This, they said, perhaps, as joining with their Lord in his compassionate Lamentation; "What pity is it, " that such a glorious House should become " desolate, and such stately Buildings as those " should be destroyed!" Or, it may be, they meant hereby to divert him from these melancholy Thoughts, which they perceived his Mind was oppressed with. However that was, our Saviour upon this repeated his Prophecy against the Temple, and delivered it in more express Words than before: *And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left one Stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down^g.* The Disciples now perceiving that the Decree was gone

^c Mat. xxiii. 38.
xxiv. 1.

^d Ver. 39.

^f Mark xiii. 1.

^e Chap.

^g Mat. xxiv. 2.

forth

forth against *Jerusalem* and the Temple, and was not to be reversed, they were desirous to know when it should be executed; therefore they take the first opportunity, when Jesus was retired from the Multitude, to ask him *privately*, saying, *Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the Sign of thy coming, and of the End of the World^h?* Here they crowd three Questions together; which yet some Interpreters conceive did all point to the same *Time*, and the same *Event*, viz. to the Destruction of *Jerusalem*. If so, by *Christ's Coming*, must be meant his executing the threatned Vengeance on the *Jews*, and by *the End of the World*, the End of *that Age*, and the Finishing of the *present Dispensation*. This Sense the *Greek Words* (τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος) may possibly bear. But I rather think their crowding these Questions together, was owing to their own mistaken Apprehension, that the *Destruction of Jerusalem*, and *Christ's second Coming*, and *the End of the World*, were all to be at the same Time. It is manifest, however, that our Saviour's Prophecy in this Chapter (at least in the former Part of it) chiefly respected the Destruction of *Jerusalem*; for after he had given his Disciples several Signs of that Event, which he was now speaking of, he tells them, *ver. 34. Verily I say unto you,*

^h Mat. xxiv. 3.

this Generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

ONE Sign which Christ gave them, among many others, whereby they might know that this Vengeance, which was decreed against the *Jews*, was near upon being executed, is this in our Text: *Because Iniquity shall abound, the Love of many shall wax cold.*

THE Matters to be considered and explained in this Text, are

- I. The two Facts which are here foretold, *viz.* that *Iniquity should abound*, and that *the Love of many should wax cold.*
- II. THE *Connexion* of these two, and their *Dependance* one on the other; or, *how* the abounding of Iniquity is a *Cause* of the Decay of Love.
- III. How these are *Signs* of the approaching Ruin of a Nation; as our Saviour here makes them to be *Signs* of the speedy Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and of the *Jewish* State.

THESE Things being considered, will lead us to make a practical Application of the Subject, suitable to the Occasion of this Discourse.

MAY it please our gracious God to assist us in our present Work: And to smile on all YOUR Endeavours to reform and save a
sinful

sinful Nation, and, without Reformation, it may be feared, a sinking one.

I. WE are to enquire concerning the two *Facts* mentioned in our Text; what is here meant by *Iniquity*, and what by the *abounding of it*; and what by *Love*, and by its *waxing cold*.

By *Iniquity* in this Place, some understand *Persecution*, others *Apostacy* from Religion; but I see no Reason to confine the Meaning of the Word to so narrow a Sense. The Greek Word (*ἀνομία*) properly signifies *lawless* or *illegal*, it is translated *a Transgression of the Law*ⁱ, and it is commonly, in the New Testament, applied to *immoral Actions* of any sort; and we have no need to depart from the most common Meaning of it in this Text. By *Iniquity* then we are to understand *outward Acts of Immorality*; and by *Love*, on the other Hand, I understand, in this Place, *inward and vital Religion*, of which sacred Love is the most powerful Principle, and is, on that Account, sometimes put for the whole of it: Thus Love is said to be the *fulfilling of the Law*^k. Love is the great thing in Religion, without which nothing that we either *do*, nor *suffer*, will avail us any thing: *Though I bestow all my Goods to the Poor, and though I give my Body to be burned, and have not Charity, or Love,*

ⁱ 1 John iii. 4.

^k Rom. xiii. 10.

*it profiteth me nothing*¹. And there is nothing that we *should* do, but what divine Love will incline us, and, in a Manner, constrain us to do it: *The Love of Christ constraineth us—to live to him*^m. Love is therefore *the fulfilling of the whole Law*: And it is a sufficiently distinguishing Character of truly good Men, they are such as *love God*ⁿ, and they are such as *love the Lord Jesus Christ in Sincerity*^o: and, in consequence of this, they love all good People; *for he that loveth God, loveth his Brother also*^p; but *he that loveth not his Brother, abideth in Death*^q. Upon the whole then, by *Iniquity*, in our Text, I understand *Immorality*; and by *Love, Religion*. Morality and Religion are different Ideas, and they are two distinct Things; for though Religion always secures the Practice of Morality, yet Morality may be practised without Religion. There were those whom our Saviour compares to *whited Sepulchres*, fair and beautiful without, that is, in their moral Practice, but within they were full of impure Lusts; Sin reigned in their Hearts, and the Love of God had no Place there. They were not religious Persons.

WE are further to enquire, when *Iniquity* may be said to *abound*, and when *Love* may be said to *wax cold*.

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

viii. 28.

^q 1 John iii. 14.

^m 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

^o Eph. vi. 24.

ⁿ Rom.

^p 1 John iv. 21.

1. BY the *abounding of Iniquity*, something more must here be meant, than what is common at all Times and in all Countries; because this is made to be a Sign of a particular Event which was to befall the *Jews*: Therefore it does not mean this only, that evil Men should abound in number beyond good Men; for that is always and every where the Case. Christ's Flock is but a *little Flock*^r. *Strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way which leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it*^f. Nor does the *abounding of Iniquity* here refer to any *secret* wicked Practices, let them be never so vile, and never so many; because Iniquities which are acted in secret, and are not known to others, can have no such bad Effect upon others, as our Text speaks of. But then does *Iniquity* or Immorality *abound*, in the Sense of our Text, when it is openly practised by Multitudes of Persons, as it was by the *Jews* a little before the Destruction of *Jerusalem*. True Religion ran very low among them in our Saviour's Time; but then *Hypocrisy* seems to have been their reigning Sin, which our Saviour, who knew their Hearts, charges upon them over and over: But as yet they preserved tollerable Decency in their outward Behaviour; therefore he compares them to *whited Sepulchres*, which were fair without,

^r Luke xii. 32.^f Mat. vii. 14.

but foul within. But before the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, they grew to be so dissolute in their Manners, that *Josephus*, their own Historian, declares, *There was not a Nation under Heaven more wicked than they were: so that had the Romans delayed to come against those execrable Persons, I believe, says he, that either the Earth would have swallowed up, or a Deluge would have swept away their City, or Fire from Heaven would have consumed it, as it did Sodom; for it brought forth a Generation of Men, far more wicked than they which suffered such things*^t. We have also the Testimony of *St. Paul*, to the abounding iniquity of the *Jews*, in his Epistle to the *Romans* (which was wrote but about *thirteen Years* before the Destruction of *Jerusalem*) where, after he had drawn up a black Catalogue of the immoral Practices of the Heathens, *Chapter the First*, he addresses, in the *Second Chapter*, to the *Jews*, who rested in the Law, and made their Boast of God^u; and judged the Gentiles to be unworthy of everlasting Life. But thou art inexcusable, O Man, says he, (that is, O Jewish Man) whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest, doest the same Things^x: Intimating, that the same Immoralities were commonly practised by the *Jews* in those

^t *Josephus de Bello Judaic. Lib. VI. cap. xxxvii.*

^u *Rom. ii. 17.*

^x *Rom. ii. 1.*

Days, for which the *Gentiles* had been accounted so abominable and unclean. Thus *Iniquity*, that is, open Immorality, abounded amongst that People; and this Sign which our Saviour gave of their approaching Ruin, remarkably came to pass.

2. THE other Sign which our Saviour gave, as consequent upon the former, is, that *the Love of many should wax cold*. By which we understand, the Decay of inward Religion, either in the few more pious *Jews*, or the Christians who dwelt among them. Some forward Professors of Religion, in whose Hearts the Love of God was not well rooted, would turn open Apostates, and go over into the Tents of Profaneness and Immorality; and others, who were sincere Lovers of God and Piety, would yet abate in some measure of the Fervour of their sacred Love. They would grow less *zealous* for God's Honour, and less *active* to advance it; they would grow more *indifferent* to Religion, and more *careless* in the Practice of it: such Declensions in Religion, even true Christians are liable to, in this their State of sinful Infirmary. The *wise Virgins*, in the Parable, *slumber and sleep*^r; and the Christians at *Ephesus*, who had an honourable Testimony from Christ of their *Labours* in Duty, and *Patience* in suffering, and *Zeal against that*

which is Evil, are yet blamed by him, for having *lost their first Love*^z: *I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first Love; remember from whence thou art fallen.* As a Fire may abate, without being quite extinguished; so may a Christian's sacred Love wax comparatively cold, without quite expiring. Such Persons whose Hearts and Thoughts were formerly full of God, now think of him but seldom; and, alas! with how little desire and affection, to what they used to do. Such whose highest Delight was in converse and communion with God, and it may be, once they were longing for the happy Time of Release from a World of Vanity, and Distance from God, that they might go to, and enjoy, his more immediate and blissful Presence in Heaven; how strangely are they now reconciled to the World again! They could almost be content to take up with it as their *Portion*, and stay here always. God has not now so high a Place in their Hearts, nor Heaven in their Desires as once they had. Such as formerly esteemed *one Day in God's Courts*, as *better than a thousand* any where else, have now, in a great Measure, lost their relish for spiritual Duties, and are become Strangers to spiritual Joys and Comforts. They pray but seldom, or at least, they pray but in a cold

^z Rev. ii. 4, 5.

and lifeless Manner to what they used to do; they are grown more indifferent to the Worship of God, both in the Sanctuary and in the Closet, than they were in Months and in Years past. They have not now altogether such an Abhorrence of Sin, as they had formerly; and if at any Time they are overcome by Temptation, and actually commit Sin, it does not give them so much Trouble as it used to do. Thus *David*, whose Conscience was once so tender, that *his Heart smote him* for having only *cut off the Skirt of Saul's Garment*^a; yet afterwards, it is a Shame to say what Sins he committed, in the Matter of *Uria*, and, it should seem too, without any remorse, until *Nathan* came and awakened him by a Message from God. Such as once *beheld the Transgressors and were grieved*^b; and, like *Lot in Sodom*, were *vexed with the filthy Conversation of the wicked*^c; can now hear the Name of God blasphemed, and see his Authority contemned, and his Laws broke, as unconcerned Spectators, little affected, little grieved. And, to close this Account, such as were once ready and forward *to spend and be spent for Christ*, and thought nothing too much, nor enough, to do for his Interest and his Honour, are now grown selfish and worldly, and have but little Zeal for any such Service. Thus

^a 1 Sam. xxiv. 5.^b Psal. cxix. clviii.^c 2 Pet. ii. 7.

has the Love even of true Christians, at sometimes, waxed cold. *How is the Gold become dim? How is the most fine Gold changed^d?*

THAT this Sign also came to pass before the Destruction of *Jerusalem*, we may gather from several Passages in the Apostolical Epistles, which were wrote in those Times: For in them we read of some *who had made Shipwreck of the Faith^e*, and *were turned aside after Satan^f*; we read of those *that had escaped the Pollutions of the World, through the Knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and were again entangled therein, and overcome^g*. St. Paul, writing to the *Galatians*, says, *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the Grace of Christ, unto another Gospel^h*. And such was the general Decay of Christian Love, at the Time when he wrote his Epistle to the *Philippians* (which is supposed by the most exact Chronologers to be about eight Years before the Destruction of *Jerusalem*) that he therein complains, that *all sought their own things, and not the things of Jesus Christⁱ*. And this Declension of the Disciples of Christ, appears to be very much owing to some corrupt *Jews*, or Judaizing Christians, that dwelt among them.

WELL these were the *Acts* which our Saviour foretold in our Text, and these were

^d Lam. iv. 1.

^g 2 Pet. ii. 20.

^e 1 Tim. i. 19.

^h Gal. i. 6.

^f 1 Tim. v. 15.

ⁱ Phil. ii. 21.

the *Signs* which he gave his Disciples, whereby they might know that the Destruction of *Jerusalem* and the Temple, and the utter Ruin of the *Jewish* State and Nation, were near at hand. And as he foretold, so it came to pass; *Iniquity did abound, and the Love of many did wax cold.* We are now

II. To consider *the Connexion of these two Facts*, and the Dependance of one on the other; or how *the abounding of Iniquity*, is a Cause of the *Decay of Love*: BECAUSE *Iniquity shall abound, the Love of many shall wax cold.* Immorality and Religion can never dwell together in the same Person; *What Communion hath Light with Darkness?* and they are troublesome to one another, when they dwell in the same Neighbourhood. The Godly are but uneasy Neighbours to the Ungodly, for their holy Lives reproach and shame the others Wickedness; therefore *the World hateth Christ's Disciples*: And the Wicked are uneasy Neighbours to the Godly; *Lot* found them so when he dwelt in *Sodom*. And such a Grief was it to holy *David* to see other People wicked, that *Rivers of Waters ran down his Eyes, because they kept not God's Law*^k. And there is still a worse Effect, which the Neighbourhood of Iniquity, and of wicked Persons, very often has upon

^k Psalm cxix. 136.

the Godly ; which is to make their sacred *Love wax cold*. When Vice and Immorality abound in any Neighbourhood, City or Nation, it too commonly causes a Decay of Religion among the pious Few. The Love of *many*, even of these Persons, will at such a Time wax cold : Of *many*, says our Saviour, it may be hoped, not of *all*. Some there are, divinely heroic Souls, whose sacred Love is so vigorous and ardent, that *many Waters cannot quench it*, and the *Floods of Iniquity* can neither drown nor damp it. Some who are so *stedfast and immovable* in their Piety, that they will always *abound in the Work of the Lord*, though Iniquity should abound all around them. Such a Man was *Joshua*, though the whole Nation of *Israel* should revolt to Idolatry and *serve other Gods* ; yet *he and his Household would serve the Lord*¹. Such a Man was *Noah*, among the Sinners of the old World ; *When all Flesh had corrupted their Ways upon the Earth, and the Wickedness of Men was great* ; yet *Noah was a just Man, and perfect in his Generations, and Noah walked with God*^m. But the most perfect Instance and Pattern of this Sort, was our Blessed Saviour ; who was *holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from Sinners*, while he dwelt and conversed among them. And though the Work which he came about,

¹ Joshua xxiv. 15.

^m Gen. vi. 9.

sometimes called him to converse with *Publicans* and *Harlots*, and the vilest Sinners of that Age, yet was he never in the least tainted with any of their Vices; nor was his sacred Love thereby in the least abated. But our *Saviour Christ* was a singular Instance of unmoveable Piety; and no wonder, since he only, of all the Descendants of *Adam*, inherited none of his Corruption; and especially, since the human Nature of Christ was united to Deity, so as no other Man ever was. But with mere Men, and even with good Men, the Case is most commonly otherwise: They are apt to receive some Taint of the Vices of their wicked Neighbours; and the abounding of Iniquity around them, is very apt to bring a Decay upon their sacred Love. It was a just Observation of an antient *Greek* Poet, which *St. Paul* has adopted into one of his divine Epistles, *Evil Communications corrupt good Manners* ⁿ. To which, in a good Measure, answers that more antient Observation of *Solomon's*, concerning the Influence which either good or bad Company is apt to have upon us^o: *He that walketh with wise Men, shall be wise; but a Companion of Fools, shall be destroyed*. Men are commonly made either better or worse by those that they converse much with. The severe Prohibitions of the ceremonial Law, against touching

ⁿ ἐσείρασαν ἢ θη χροιάς κακάς. MENAND. 1 Cor. xv. 33.

^o Prov. xiii. 20.

any unclean thing, are generally supposed, both by antient and modern Interpreters, to carry also a moral Sense in them; *viz.* that we should carefully avoid such Company, whereby we shall be like to contract inward Pollutions. And upon this, I find an ingenious Remark by a celebrated Writer: “ That
 “ he who touched a dead Beast, was unclean
 “ but *till the Evening* ^p; but he who touched
 “ a dead Man, was unclean *for seven Days* ^q.
 “ Signifying, that bad Men (who, in the
 “ Scripture Phrase, are *dead in Trespasses*
 “ *and Sins*) are the most dangerous of all
 “ Creatures ^r. The more intimately we converse with such Persons, the greater, to be sure, will be our Danger of being corrupted by them; and even to dwell among them, is an unhappy Situation. The very Neighbourhood of wicked Persons is not without Danger, to our best, our highest and immortal Interest; for when *Iniquity abounds*, that is, when Immorality is very much practised around us, our *Love* will be apt to *wax cold*, and the Power of Religion to decline in our Souls, and that for the following Reasons:

1. *Because the Commonness of Sin is apt to abate our Abhorrence of it; and it tends to reconcile us to it.* Though indeed there is no good Reason that it should do so; for the commonness or uncommonness of Sin, does

^p Lev. xi. 24.

^q Numb. xix 11.

^r Bishop

Wilkin's Sermons, p. 241.

not at all alter the Nature of it. It is the same *evil and bitter Thing*, whether it be practised by many, or by few; but such is the Weakness of human Nature, that we are most struck, and sensibly affected, with things that are rare and uncommon; while we pass by other things, which are more admirable in themselves, without any attention to them. Thus, were there but few wicked Men in the World, they would, no doubt, be looked upon as Monsters in Nature. How astonishingly shocking would it be, to hear a *Creature* blaspheme its *Maker*; and to see such a *Worm* as Man, rise up in Rebellion against the *Almighty God*. *Hear, O Heavens, and give Ear, O Earth, for the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up Children, and they have rebelled against me*^f. Heaven and Earth would wonder at so strange a thing; but the Commonness of Sin prevents our wondering at it; and the more common it grows, the less are we shocked at it. A Person who has been educated in the Paths of Virtue and Piety, and who, in younger Life, would have been startled at a profane Oath; yet when he comes to converse more in the World, and hears *cursing* and *swearing* every Day, it grows more familiar to him, the jarring Sounds do not grate upon his Ears as formerly: He comes in time to hear them without Offence,

^f Isaiah i. 2.

and it is well if, in time too, his own Lips do not learn the profane Language; as *Joseph*, by dwelling long in the *Egyptian Court*, learned to swear, *by the Life of Pharaoh*^t. And thus it is to be feared, there are many whose *Souls* were once *vexed with the filthy Conversation of the Wicked*; but by being more used to it, they grow less offended at it, till at length they can bear it with Patience, and, it may be, hear it with Pleasure. Now Hatred of Sin, and Love to God, are inseparably connected, like the Light and the Sun, which rise and go down together. *Ye that love the Lord, hate Evil*^u. As our Abhorrence of Sin abates, our Love to God will necessarily wax cold. From hence therefore we see one Reason, why the abounding of Iniquity should be a Cause of the Decay of Love. It is to be considered farther,

2. THAT *as Iniquity abounds in any Place, Religion grows out of Fashion*; which yields no little Temptation, to young Persons especially, to grow cold towards it, and to be ashamed of it; and, if the Love of God be not deeply rooted in their Hearts, to quit even the Profession of it. Many are *ashamed of Christ and his Words, in an adulterous and sinful Generation*^x. And, in such a State of things, the godly Few will generally be hated, despised, and treated with Contempt and Scorn.

^t Gen. xlii. 15.^u Psal. xcvi. 10.^x Mark viii. 38.

This our Saviour foresaw, and this he foretold, a little before our Text; that in those times of abounding Iniquity, his faithful Disciples would be evil intreated by the wicked World, and *hated and persecuted for his Name's sake* ^y. Now these are hard Lines to Flesh and Blood, very discouraging Trials, especially to young and feeble Disciples. To sacrifice Reputation and Honour, and our Interest in the Esteem of Men, to be pointed at for Singularity and Oddness, to become the Scorn of our Neighbours, and it may be, *the Song of the Drunkards*; to *do* and to *bear* all this, with an unshaken Courage and Zeal for God, is a high Point of Piety, higher, it may be feared, than many, even of Christ's sincere Disciples, have as yet reached to. Where shall we find the noble Spirit and Courage of *Peter and the other Apostles*, among the modern Professors of Religion, *who rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer Shame for Christ's Name sake* ^z? or of those, who were so far from being discouraged by the Reproaches and Sufferings which *St. Paul* endured for the Gospel, that *they waxed confident by his Bonds, and grew much more bold to speak the Word without Fear* ^a? But Shame and Suffering make other sort of Impressions on the Minds of most Men. And from hence also it is, that when *Iniquity abounds*, and Reli-

^y Mat. xxiv. 9.^z Acts v. 41.^a Phil. i. 14.

gion becomes unfashionable, when the serious Professors of it are generally hated, despised, and it may be, otherwise persecuted, *the Love of many waxes cold*. It requires resolute Virtue, and very warm Love, to bear up against these sort of Discouragements. And, especially, for a Man not only to preserve his own Integrity, and to keep the Flame of divine Love from waxing cold in his own Heart; but also to stand up publickly in the Cause of Virtue and Religion, to endeavour to stem the Torrent of Vice, and to reform the Manners of such a corrupt Age; this requires heroick Christian Courage and Zeal for God. Such noble Souls are worthy of double Honour. Let us farther consider,

3. *The powerful Influence of Examples*; which will suggest another Reason why the *abounding of Iniquity* causes a *Decay of Love*. For though it is, indeed, but a sorry Reason for doing ill, that other Men do so, a Reason which will bear no Man out in the Day of Judgment, *when every one of us shall give Account of himself unto God*; yet, in Experience and Effect, it is found to be a Reason that sways very powerfully with Multitudes of Persons. Men are apt to be carried down with the Stream, and *to follow a Multitude even to do evil*; especially, to follow the Examples of great Men, who are their Betters in worldly Circumstances, and in civil Life. The Examples of such Men have a wide and mighty Influence;

Influence ; great Numbers of their Dependants, and others that live round them, will be ready to follow their Fashion, and to conform, not only their Practice, but their Judgments, to theirs. If such Men are virtuous and religious, many will thereupon conceive a good Opinion of Religion, and be induced to practise Virtue : But if these Men are profligate and vile, their Example creates the Mode ; a contempt of Religion is reckoned Politeness, and Vice and Profaneness spread, like a Plague, through all the Neighbourhood. Would to God, that all those to whom Providence has been distinguishingly liberal, in giving them large Estates, and exalting them to high Stations and Honours above the Bulk of Mankind, would seriously consider, what a Talent God has also put into their Hands, by the Influence of their Examples ; by which they are capable of doing a great deal of Good, or a World of Mischief. It is a Talent which they must account for, at God's Tribunal, another Day. If they are good, what Honour will they bring to God ? what Credit to Religion ? Their Example will be a Means of making other Men good ; or at least of restraining them from being so bad, as otherwise they would be : But if they are wicked, they can hardly perish alone in their Wickedness, but *thousands will fall on their Side, and ten thousands at their right Hand*. They will be, in a great Measure, the guilty Occasions of the Ruin of Multitudes,

Multitudes, who will have Reason to curse them eternally, for leading them the Way to Hell by their bad Examples. Now, from hence you will easily conceive, what an ill Effect the abounding of Iniquity, especially among those of superior Rank, must needs have upon Religion, and how it will Cause the *Love of many*, who had some good liking to it, *to wax cold*.

HERE I may also mention the Example of another sort of Persons, which has often a bad Influence on Religion, and proves a great Stumbling-block to some pious Souls. Such, I mean, who once made a fair Profession of Religion, but are now turned Apostates; and such Persons commonly prove the most vile and profligate of all others. Now Times of abounding Iniquity do usually produce many sad Instances of this sort. So our Saviour foretels, that in those corrupt Times, which he speaks of in our Text, *Many shall be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another*^b. Where *to be offended*, signifies, according to the common Use of that Word in the New Testament, to be tempted to fall away from the Faith, and to quit their religious Profession^c. Thus would many do; and

^b Matt. xxiv. 10.

^c As those Hearers who are compared to the *stony Ground* in the Parable, are said to *believe for a while, but when Persecution for the Word ariseth, by and by they are offended*, Matt. xxiii. 24. i. e. tempted to fall away from their

and not only so, but also *hate and betray* those who should still adhere to it: As it is commonly found, that Apostates turn the most bitter Persecutors. Now, when such Men, as once seemed to be zealous in the Cause of God and Religion, grow weary of their Religion, quit the very Profession of it, and go over into the Tents of Vice and Immorality; it proves a great Stumbling-block to some weak Disciples; it affords a Temptation to Infidelity. Some are tempted to think, “Sure
 “ there is not that Reality in Religion which
 “ we believed, nor that Excellency which
 “ we thought we had discovered in it; since
 “ these Persons who have tried it, have
 “ seen fit to renounce it again.” And how does this tend also to cool the Love of Christians to one another? They know not whom to account of as Brethren, nor on whose Sincerity they can depend; this breeds mutual Jealousy and Distrust of one another. And thus also the abounding of Iniquity, causes the Love of many to wax cold.

I might further have added, under this general Head, That when Iniquity or Immorality abounds, all sorts of Temptations to Sin abound likewise. How many, at such a Time, are the Factors for Hell, the In-

their Christian Profession. So the *Pharisees* are often said to be *offended at our Lord*, when they were tempted to reject and disown him, as none of the true *Messiah*. *Matt.* xv. 12. xiii. 57. *Luke* vii. 23.

ticers to Sin and Wickedness, who take a Pleasure and Pride in debauching the Minds and Morals of such as have been trained up in Sobriety and Religion. How many Temptations to Lewdness and Drunkenness, and to all Kinds of Iniquity, do then lurk in every Street and in every Corner. And if Temptations prevail, and a Person's Morals are once corrupted, all Love to, and all serious Sense of Religion presently expires. This *Iniquity*, and this *Love*, which our Text speaks of, can never stand together.

BUT it is time to dismiss this Head, under which I proposed to shew you, *how the abounding of Iniquity is a Cause of the Decay of Love*. I would only further observe, that it is not such a Cause as must necessarily produce the Effect, as Fire causes Wax to melt, and as the Sun makes Day to the Hemisphere on which he shines; for it is possible, by the Grace of God, for a Man to withstand all these Temptations, and preserve the sacred Flame of divine Love in his Heart, in Times and Places where Iniquity most abounds. 'Tis possible, I say; some brave Souls have shew'd that it is so. There have been some who have not *defiled their Garments* in the most corrupt Ages. Thus *Lot* preserved his Integrity even in *Sodom*, and *Noah* in the most dissolute Age of the World. And when, in the Prophet *Elijah's* Time, and in the Reign of the wicked King *Ahab*,
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the whole Nation of *Israel* seemed to be revolted to Idolatry and Wickedness, the good Prophet thought he was the only Exception; yet God knew of *seven thousand* pious Persons, *who had not bowed their Knees to Baal, neither had their Mouths kissed him* ^d, The Devil himself can do no more than tempt us to Sin; none can corrupt us without our own consent: Therefore if we suffer our Love to grow cold, in a Time of abounding Iniquity, the Fault will be our own; and it will appear, in the Judgment of the great Day, that we ourselves were the Cause of our own Ruin. I proceed now,

III. To consider *how the abounding of Iniquity, and the consequent Decay of Love, are Signs of the approaching Ruin of a Nation and People*; as our Saviour here makes them to be Signs of the approaching Destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the *Jewish* State. That they really are so, and for what Reasons, is not difficult to apprehend, if we consider,

I. THAT the abounding of *Iniquity*, or Immorality, has a *natural Tendency* to bring a Nation to ruin; as by impoverishing and infeebling the People, hurting their Trade, exposing Mens Lives and Properties to continual Danger, disturbing the Peace and Quiet of the Government, and throw-

^d 1 Kings xix. 19.

ing all Things into Disorder and Confusion. In proportion as Dissoluteness of Manners prevails, that honest Industry, which is so essentially necessary to the flourishing of a State and Nation, is constantly laid aside. The People grow luxurious and slothful, Trade consequently declines, and the whole civil Interest languishes. It may easily be made appear, that every Act of Immorality is injurious to the civil Weal; on which account it properly belongs to the civil Magistrate to punish it; and for which Reason every Friend of his Country, as well as every Friend of God, should do all he can to stop the Progress of Vice, and to promote a Reformation of Manners.

THUS, for Instance, *common and profane Swearing* is not only very offensive, and very disturbing to pious Persons, when they hear it; but it naturally tends also to harden Mens Consciences against the Fear of a solemn Oath: From hence therefore come false Witnessing and Perjury in our Courts of Judicature, whereby Justice is perverted, and Men are often deprived of their Properties; from hence too it doubtless proceeds, in a great Measure, that *Custom-House Oaths* are so little regarded by many People, and that *smuggling of Goods* is so much practised, to the great Detriment of Trade, and Injury of the fair Dealer.

DRUNKENNESS is another Iniquity, which is big with Mischief to the whole civil Society,

ciety, as well as to the Drunkards themselves. The devout *Herbert* has very well expressed the complicated Mischief of this Vice, in the following Lines,

*He that is drunken, may his Mother kill
Big with his Sister : He hath lost the Reins,
Is outlaw'd by himself : All kind of Ill
Did with his Liquor slide into his Veins.
The Drunkard forfeits Man——*

What a Multitude of Families has this one Vice brought to Ruin; by wasting their Substance, impairing their Health, and making them grow slothful and lazy. And how many Lives has it destroyed. One pretty often sees an Article in the weekly Bills of Mortality, *died of excessive drinking*, one or two it may be; but if all the *Consumptions*, and *Fevers*, and *Gouts*, and *Dropsies*, that are occasioned by Drunkenness, were to be added to the Article of *excessive Drinking*, I suspect it would often swell that little Article to one of the biggest Numbers in all the Bill. This Vice, instead of lurking in the Dark, like a secret Murderer, as it did in the Apostle *Paul's* Time, who observes, that *they that be drunken, are drunken in the Night*^e, is now become a *Pestilence that wasteth at Noon-day*. There is not therefore more Reason that civil Go-

vernors and Magistrates should endeavour to prevent the Infection of the Plague being brought into their Country ; or to stop the Progress of it, when it is actually broke out in any Part of the Kingdom, in order to save the Lives of the Subjects ; than that they should endeavour, by wholesome Laws, to prevent this Iniquity of Drunkenness, and punish those who are guilty of it.

LEWDNESS is another Iniquity, which, when it abounds in any Country, threatens its Ruin : For this not only, like the Vice last mentioned, very commonly impairs the Health of the People, and brings *Rottenness into their Bones* ; not only does it go Hand in Hand with *Drunkenness*, to waste and depopulate a Country ; but it often intails grievous Distempers on the Children and Posterity of lewd Parents. It is a Sin, for which God does, in the ordinary Course of Providence, and by the established Order of Things, *visit the Iniquities of the Fathers upon the Children, to the third and fourth Generation*. We may add also, the Consideration of its wasting Mens Estates, and bringing them to Poverty ; according as *Solomon* observed long ago : *By means of a whorish Woman, a Man is brought to a Piece of Bread, and the Adulterers will hunt for the precious Life*^f. And, by this means, the Sin of Lewdness very of-

^f Prov. vi. 26.

ten proves the Source of *Theft*, *Rapin* and *Murder*. How many condemned Criminals have, in their dying Confessions, imputed the Villanies for which they were then to suffer, to *Lewdness*, as the first and parent Crime, which brought forth all the rest. Having spent their Substance on lewd Women, and being now got into an idle Way of Life, the next Thing which those abandoned Prostitutes persuade them to, was to turn *Robbers*, in order to support *them* in their Luxury and Idleness. Lewd Houses are the Seminaries, from whence *Highwaymen* swarm in our Roads, and *Housebreakers* and *Pickpockets* in our Streets. Thus it is easy to see, how the abounding of such Houses, and of such lewd Persons, apparently tends to, and threatens the Ruin of a City or Country. Those Creatures should be treated as the Pests of Society, as one of the worst sort of Plagues that can infest a Country. It becomes every good Magistrate to exert his Power, and every good Subject to lend his Help, to rid them, if possible, out of the Land.

AGAIN, *Profaning of the Lord's-Day*, either by selling of Wares, or by Sports and Pastimes, is another Iniquity and Offence, not only against God, but against the civil Society: For hereby those that make Conscience of keeping this Day holy, are often interrupted and disturbed, in their attending
on

on the Duties of it, in publick or in private; in which they have a Right of being protected by the civil Magistrate, as conforming in this their Practice to the *Laws of their Country*, which are supposed to be approved by the Majority of the Nation, as well as to the Laws of God. Besides, some Persons following their *Trades* on that Day, is a manifest Injury to their conscientious Neighbours, who are thereby deprived of their *Customers* and *Trade*; and it is surely an unequitable thing, that any should suffer by keeping the Laws of God and their Country, while others are Gainers by breaking both. I may farther add, it is certainly found upon Experience, that the profaning of the Lord's-Day, and neglecting the Duties of it, is one main Source of that Torrent of *Immorality* and *Impiety* which at present overflows our Land. By such frequent Returns of Days of *Sport* and *Idleness*, as *one in seven*, People contract an idle Habit, and grow out of love with their Labour. Sometimes the Gains of the whole Week past are consumed in Rioting and Drunkenness, on the Lord's-Day, and a poor Family starves for it the whole Week after. And *farther*, by making this a Day of Sport and Idleness, many young Persons have been seduced into bad Company, which has proved their Ruin; for this I might also appeal to the dying Confessions of great Numbers of
condemned

condemned Malefactors. So that the profaning of the Lord's-Day, is not only a Sin against God, but it appears to be an Evil in Society, and injurious to the civil State. 'Tis an Iniquity that helps forward the Ruin of a Nation, at a mighty rate; and therefore it merits Punishment from the *Magistrate* in this World, as well as from *God* in the World to come.

THERE need no more Instances to make it evident, that the *abounding of Iniquity has a natural Tendency to bring a Nation to Ruin*; on which account, it is a Sign of its Ruin, as near approaching. Such a debauched and infeebléd People, like a crazy Body which the next Attack of a Distemper kills, become an easy Prey to the next Enemy that invades them; or, even without a foreign Enemy, their own Vices will soon throw all Things into Confusion, and make them a wretched and miserable People. Thus a general Dissoluteness of Manners weakened the *Jews*, and made them an easy Prey to the *Romans*, who came upon them and burnt their City and Temple, and *took away both their Place and Nation*.

2. THE *abounding of Iniquity*, and the consequent *Decay of Love*, are Signs of the approaching Ruin of a Nation, as *they are Tokens of God's forsaking it*. We read in Scripture of God's being *present* with, and of God's *withdrawing from*, and forsaking Per-

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sons

sons and Nations ; which can have no reference to his essential Presence, because that is every where, and always the same ; but to his special Favour, which he manifests towards a Nation, by his Protection and Care of it, whereby he makes it safe and flourishing. And then is God said, on the other Hand, to *forsake* a People, and to *hide his Face from them*, when he suffers them to be *devoured*, and when *many Evils and Troubles befall them* &c. Now there is not a surer Sign of God's being about to forsake a Nation, than when *Iniquity abounds* in it, and *Religion declines* and languishes. *The Lord is with you, while ye be with him ; if ye seek him, he will be found of you ; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you*^h. And woe to a Nation when God departs from it ; its Glory and its Defence is gone, and its Ruin is not far off. Like *Sampson*, when he had lost his mystick Hair, *the Lord was departed from him*, and then his Strength was gone too ; and he that was before the *Terror* of his Enemies, was now easily made their *Captive*, and became their *Scorn*. So will it be with a Nation that is forsaken of God ; and what less can be expected when *Iniquity abounds*, *Iniquity* which his Soul hateth ? *They that forsake the Lord, shall be consumed*ⁱ. And when the *Love* of the pious Few does also *wax cold*, when

^g Deut. xxxi. 17.

^h 2 Chron. xv. 2.

ⁱ Isa. i. 28.

the Power of Religion visibly declines; when even God's People corrupt themselves with the Abominations of the Land in which they dwell; when the Spirit of Prayer is restrained; and when there are but few, very few, who, like *Moses*, *stand in the Breach, to turn away the Wrath of God from a sinful People, lest he should destroy them*^k; and when the Influences of God's Spirit are withheld from his Churches, and the Gospel is attended with little or no Success; these are sad Tokens of God's being about to forsake such a People, and that his Judgments upon them are not a great Way off. I add once more,

3. *It may reasonably be expected from the Justice of God, that he will punish the abounding Iniquity of a Nation, and their Defection from Religion, with some heavy national Judgment*; on which account also these are Signs of a Nation's Ruin. For though the future State is chiefly the State of Retribution, in which every Man shall receive the due Reward of his own Deeds; yet Judgments upon *Nations and Communities of Men* must be executed in the present World. Nations, as such, cannot be punished in the future State, for they have no existence there; therefore national Sins are commonly punished with temporal national Judgments. Now when a Nation grows generally corrupt and

^k Psalm cvi. 23.

wicked, and God's holy Religion is generally neglected, and, if things should also come to so wretched a pass, as that Immorality is not only not restrained by wholesome Laws, or by a due Execution of them, but is rather countenanced and encouraged by the Examples of Magistrates and Governors; in such a Case, surely Guilt lies upon the Nation, and it may reasonably be expected, that God will punish it with some national Judgment: It is certain he often has done so. *He has made his Righteousness known, by the Judgments which he has executed on wicked Cities and Countries; as on Sodom and Gomorrah, where Iniquity abounded to a monstrous Degree, for which God rained down Fire and Brimstone on those Cities, and consumed them and their Inhabitants together. So when the Amorites, the antient Inhabitants of Canaan, were grown profligately vile and wicked, God, in his Providence, dispossessed them of their Country, and gave it to his People Israel. And that it might plainly appear to be an Act of Righteousness, for God thus to punish that wicked Nation with so remarkable a Judgment, he had Patience with them for four hundred Years, after he had promised their Country to his favourite Nation, that is, till they had so filled up the Measure of their Iniquities, and were grown so exceedingly corrupt and wicked, that not a Devil should*
murmur,

murmur, that God dealt unjustly with them. It is therefore expressly given as the Reason why God did not put his beloved *Israel* into Possession of that good Land long before; *Because the Iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full*¹. Thus also when his once beloved *Israel* grew abominably wicked, he brought an overflowing Scourge upon their Land, and made them to be as remarkable Instances of his Vengeance, as ever they had been formerly of his indulgent Providence. And when Iniquity abounds, and Religion declines in any other Nation, may not the same, or the like Judgments from God upon such a Nation, very reasonably be expected? What can one think, but that the Ruin of such a People must be very near? Read a Description of a profligate Nation, and how God was determined to deal with it; *Jer. v. 6, &c. Their Transgressions are many, and their Backslidings are increased. How shall I pardon thee for this? Thy Children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no Gods. When I fed them to the full, they then committed Adultery, and assembled themselves by Troops in the Harlots Houses. Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? and shall not my Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this? Those that partake of Babylon's Sins, must expect to receive of her Plagues*^m.

¹ Gen. xv. 16.

^m Rev. xviii. 4.

THUS I have shewed you how the abounding of Iniquity, and the Decay of Religion in a Nation, are, on several Accounts, Signs of that Nation's approaching Ruin.

I HAVE now finished the Explication of my Text and Subject. What further remains, is to make a practical Improvement of it, and such as may be suitable to the Occasion of this Discourse, and of our present meeting together; which is, to encourage one another in the good Work of *suppressing Immorality, and promoting a Reformation of Manners.*

IN order to this, let us be wise to *discern the Signs of the Times.* Let us seriously consider how far these Signs, which our Saviour gave of the approaching Ruin of the *Jewish* Nation, will agree to the present Day, and to our own Country. That Man must surely be a Stranger in our *Israel*, who does not see that these Tokens of God's approaching Vengeance are now actually upon us. *This Day is this Scripture fulfilled in your Ears; Iniquity does abound among us, to a very dreadful Degree, and the Love of many is waxed cold.*

Profane Cursing and Swearing were surely never so common. One can hardly step out of Doors, without having one's Ears wounded with that Language of Hell. This Branch of Iniquity abounds among us, beyond what it ever did among the *Jews* in their most
corrupt

corrupt State; for they always preserved a Reverence to the Name of God, JEHOVAH, perhaps even to Superstition. It is said, that no Nation under Heaven is so infamous for this Vice, as *England* is.

THE Sin of *Drunkenness* is got to such a Height, as to defy all Laws, both divine and human. We hoped this *beastly* Vice would have been *wounded to Death*, by a Law which was made the last Year, with a Design to restrain it; but its *deadly Wound* seems to be, in a Manner, *healed*. The many Tricks which are contrived to evade that Law, give us Reason to fear that its good Effect will not be very great, nor lasting; but that *Drunkenness* will, in the End, get the better of it.

DID ever more *lewd Women* swarm in our Streets by Night? and when were the *Harlots Houses* frequented by bigger *Troops*, than they are now? Nay, the very Sins of *Sodom* are not Strangers in *London*.

As for *profaning the Lord's-Day*, how few are the Exceptions to its being become a universal Practice? I question whether the Lord's-Day was so universally profaned in *England*, even when the *profaning* of it, by *Sports and Pastimes*, was encouraged by Royal Declaration in two successive Reignsⁿ, as it
is

ⁿ King *James I.* published a Declaration, to encourage Recreations and Sports on the Lord's-Day, after divine Service, in the Year 1618. which his Son King *Charles I.* renewed

is now ; for in those Days, the sober Part of the Nation generally kept it with great Strictness. While loose People only were revelling on the Lord's-Day Evening, serious and religious People used to be reading the Scriptures, repeating Sermons, singing Psalms, and Praying in their own Houses : Whereas, alas ! now, instead of those Exercises of Devotion, *visiting* on the Lord's-Day Evening is become all the Mode ; and I am grieved to see how very general that Practice is grown. For Persons, *professing Godliness*, to waste and profane the Lord's-Day Evening in visiting, was a Thing never known among our pious Ancestors ; and never, I believe, among *Protestant Dissenters*, till of very late Years. I mourn this growing Evil, and I cannot but look upon it as a very sad Token of the Decay of vital Religion, and serious Godliness.

THUS it is manifest, that *Iniquity does abound among us* ; nor is it less evident, that the *Love of many is waxed cold*. Zeal for God and Religion languishes. Many, such as are represented by the *wise Virgins* in the Parable, that is, sincere Christians, like *them* too, *slumber and sleep* °. A careless Neglect, and even a Contempt of revealed Religion,

newed and confirmed in the Year 1633. commanding that the People should not be troubled or molested in their Recreations.

° Mat. xxv. 5.

and

and avowed Infidelity, greatly prevail, not only in this City, but all over the Kingdom. Must not these things give sad Apprehensions to every true Lover of God and his Country; and should it not awaken a holy Zeal in all good Men to do what they can, in their several Stations, to put a stop to these threatening Symptoms. For God's sake, and for Religion's sake, for the sake of our Country, and of our dear Children and Posterity; let us stir up ourselves, and encourage one another to the good Work of Reformation.

SHALL I here offer a few Considerations, by way of Encouragement, more especially to you, GENTLEMEN *of the Societies for Reformation of Manners.* As

I. CONSIDER the *Excellency of this Design and Work which you are engaged in.* You hereby appear *on the Lord's Side*, in the Cause of Virtue, against *Sin*, which is the Work of the *Devil*. You are hereby serving the Interest of Religion, (the best Interest in the World) while you are removing away some of the chief Obstacles and Discouragements that lie in the Way of its Progress and Advancement. You are endeavouring to drive its chief Enemies, *viz.* Profaneness and Immorality, out of the Land. You are doing a good Work to those very Sinners whom you bring to Shame and Punishment. Though many of them are so wicked, as to require

your Charity with Reproaches and Curses now ; yet they will know that your Labour was a *Labour of Love*, and that your *smitting them* was a *Kindness* ; that you did it out of tender Compassion both to their Bodies and their Souls. You are expressing a generous Love to your Country, whilst you are taking the very best Methods you possibly can, to secure its Peace and Prosperity, and to save it from impending Ruin. I look upon such as labour in, and encourage this Work of Reformation, to be the best Patriots, and the most worthy Members of the State. “ *He, said a wise Heathen, that doth no harm,*
 “ *is honourable ; but he is worthy of double Ho-*
 “ *nour, that prevents it ; and he that assists the*
 “ *Magistrate in punishing it, is most honour-*
 “ *able, and far excels all other Citizens* P.” So that the Design you are engaged in is, on all accounts, very excellent and honourable. The Lord strengthen your Hands in this good Work : *For our Brethren and Companions sake ; for our Children and Servants sake ; for the sake of the present, and of the rising Generation ; and for the sake of Religion, and of our native Country ; we will now say, Peace be with you, may good Success attend you.*

2. *Let your past Successes in this good Work, encourage you to go on in it.* You have your

Discouragements, no doubt, and you have your Encouragements too; you have not been able to do so much good as you have wished, *Iniquity still abounds*: But bless God for what you have done, and rather for what He has done by you. You have kept an Account of more than a *hundred Thousand* and *six hundred* Persons, who have been actually prosecuted by your Societies, for Debauchery and Profaneness, in the Space of the last *forty two Years*, that is, since the first Institution of them. And I find, by your last Year's printed Account, that in that one Year you have prosecuted, and been assisting in prosecuting, no less than *six hundred and sixty nine Persons* for *lewd and disorderly Practices, and Sabbath-breaking* &c. And after all this, will any say that *you do nothing*? Or will any of yourselves be disheartened, as if you did *little* or *no Good*? I hope and trust you have done, and are doing a *great deal*. Were there no such Societies for Reformation, I am satisfied we should see Iniquity abound still much more than it does. And had it not been for the Check you have given to the growing Contagion of Sin, for several Years past, very probably, the *Iniquity of England* had by this time been *full*, and we

¶ *Vid.* the forty second Account of the Progress made in the Cities of *London* and *Westminster*, and Places adjacent, by the Societies for Reformation of Manners.

had now been groaning under some heavy national Judgment; by this Time we had been a ruined People. Do we not then owe it, in a great Measure, to you GENTLEMEN, under God, that as yet we have *Peace within our Walls*, and Prosperity and Plenty in our Land: Especially that we have the Gospel still among us, and that *Golden Candlestick* is not yet removed out of its Place, nor divine Love and Religion quite expired and lost out of our Nation? Further than all this, I greatly rejoiced to read, in your last Year's Account, that you have Reason to hope that, by the various Methods you have used (as by bringing Offenders to timely Shame and Punishment, and also by dispersing of many *Thousand* good Books, and putting them into the Hands of lewd and profane Persons) many Persons have, by the Blessing of God, been brought to a Sense of their Sin and Danger; who though they have at first been exasperated against the Instruments of awakening them out of their dreadful Lethargy, and stopping them in their sinful Courses; yet have they afterwards blessed God for their Recovery, and been heartily thankful to those who had been serviceable to them therein. And is not this glorious Success? Let him know, that he which converteth a Sinner from the Error of his Way, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall hide a Multitude of

of Sins^r. Do not be disheartened therefore, do not grow weary of your *well-doing*; your Labour is not, and shall not be in vain. This leads me to mention another Encouragement.

3. *Whatever your Success may be at present, assure yourselves God will not forget your Work and Labour of Love another Day.* Then those that have *honoured him* in this World, he will *honour*; and those that have *boldly confessed Christ before Men*, especially in an *adulterous and sinful Generation*, or in Times of *abounding Iniquity*, *them will he confess before his Father, and before the Angels of God*^t. Then *they that be wise, shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever*^t. Whatever Difficulties you now meet with in the Prosecution of your noble Design, whatever Expences you are at, and whatever Dangers you thereby expose yourselves to; this blessed Sentence of the Great Judge will abundantly compensate all: *Well done, good and faithful Servants, you have been faithful in a little, I will make you Rulers over much, enter into the Joy of your Lord*^u.

THESE are the Encouragements which I would leave with you; and I hope they may also encourage and induce some others

^r James v. 20.

^s Mat. x. 32. Luke xii. 8.

^t Dan. xii. 5.

^u Mat. xxv. 23.

to join with and assist you in your good Work; either by active Service, in apprehending and prosecuting Offenders, or by contributing towards defraying the Charges of such Prosecutions, as also of buying good Books; of which sort above *four hundred and forty four Thousand* have already been given away by these Societies ^x.

I SHALL only farther presume to offer two Words of Advice to the worthy Gentlemen of these Societies, before I conclude.

THE first is, *That you would be very watchful over yourselves*, that no just Imputation of Iniquity may ever sully your own Character. It was not, perhaps, without a moral Meaning, that the *Candlestick and Snuffers* of the Sanctuary were to be of *pure Gold* ^y. Intimating, that Ministers, who are to enlighten the World by their preaching, and all who take upon them to reprove and correct the Vices of others, should themselves be pure and free from blame. It becomes and concerns you, my Friends, to be more than ordinarily watchful against Temptations, and to stand at a Distance from *all Appearance of Evil*. There are many who seek Occasion of Reproach against you; could they find any, how would it be improved, to discredit your Societies, and to bring your noble Design into contempt! You will therefore, I hope, be very

^x *Vid.* Forty second Account, &c. ^y *Exod.* xxxvii. 23.

careful to support the Honour of your Cause, and to forward the Work of Reformation, by your own exemplary Behaviour. As bad Examples have a mighty Influence in propagating Vice, so have good Examples in promoting Virtue. In this way therefore, *let every one of us* labour in the Work of Reformation, in our several Stations, in our several Families, and in the several Neighbourhoods where we dwell: *Let our Light so shine before Men, that they seeing our good Works, may glorify our Father which is in Heaven.*

MY second Advice is, *That you would accompany all your other Means of Reformation, with Prayer to God for Success;* for it is his Blessing alone that can give it. Even a Paul *may plant, and Apollos water,* and both to no purpose, unless *God gives the Increase.* This Work of Reformation is not to be effected merely by human Might and Power, but *by the Spirit of God.* Go forth therefore, in this your Warfare against Sin, in a humble Dependence on the divine Spirit, imploring his blessed Influences, to animate your Hearts with Courage and Zeal for this your Service, and, as a Spirit of Wisdom, to guide you in your way; and also to renew and sanctify those impure Sinners, whose Manners you endeavour to reform: So shall the Work be done effectually, and great will be your Joy in the Success of it.

And

And let your whole Dependance for the Acceptance of your Services with God, be on the Merits of Christ, *who alone is worthy*. Whatever Thanks and Honours you may deserve from Men, yet remember you are but unprofitable Servants unto God; it is therefore from his Grace, and not from your own Merits, that you must expect your Reward.

MAY the Grace of Christ be at all Times sufficient for you, while you are engaged in this War against Sin; and may you come off in the End Conquerors, and *more than Conquerors, through him that loved you*.

F I N I S.







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