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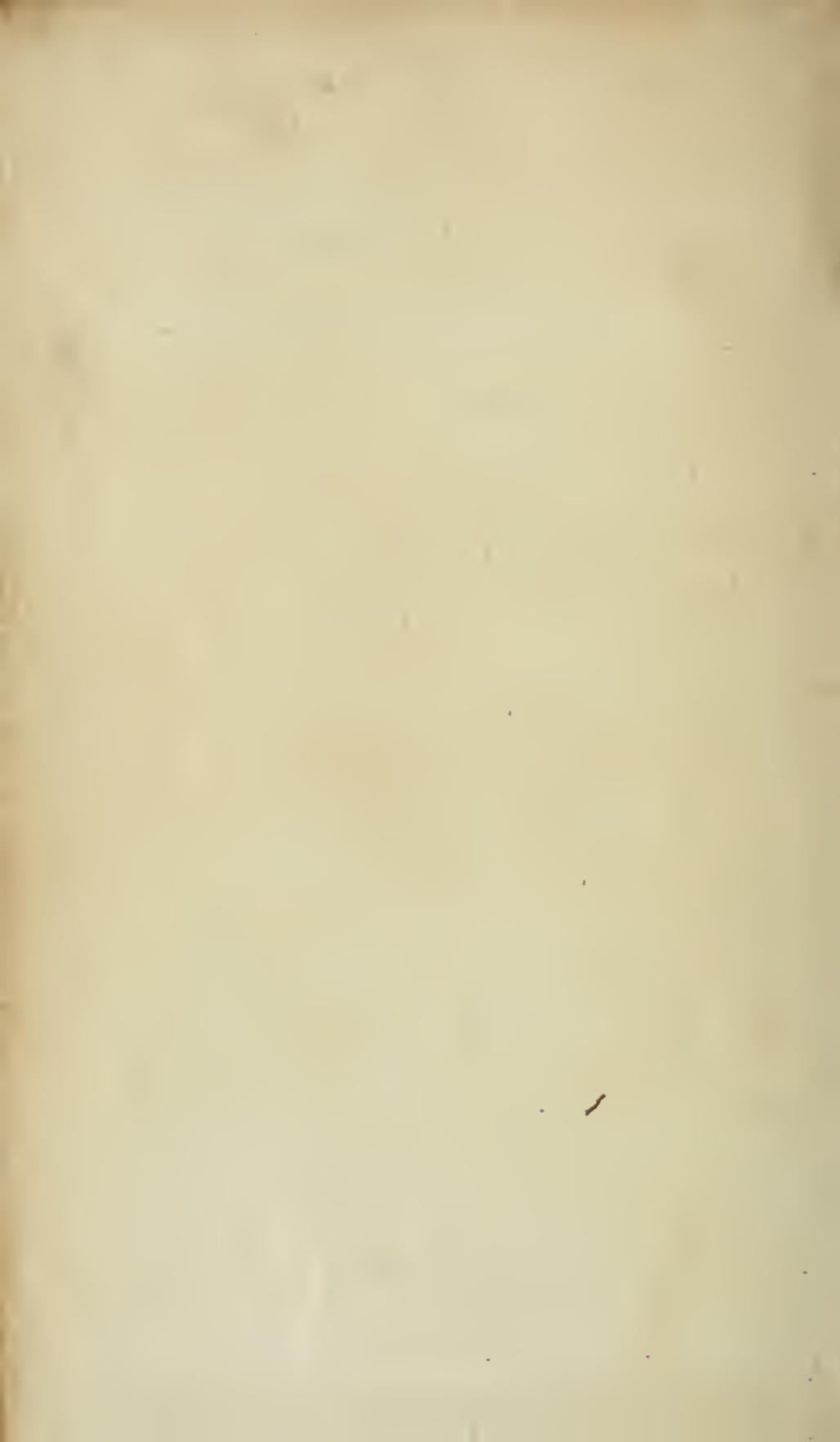
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John M. Yelter

Feb 1976

(Blackwells)

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S E R M O N S

A N D

RELIGIOUS TRACTS

Of the late Reverend

PHILIP DODDRIDGE, D. D.

Now first collected together,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOLUME THE FIRST,

CONTAINING,

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I. The Care of the Soul urged as the One Thing Needful. | |
| II. The Absurdity and Iniquity of Persecution for Conscience-fake. | |
| III. Submission to Divine Providence in the Death of Children. | |
| IV. The Temper and Conduct of the Primitive Ministers of the Gospel. | |
| V. Practical Reflections on the Character and Translation of <i>Enoch</i> . | |
| VI. A Sermon on Account of | the late dreadful Fire at <i>Wellingborough</i> in <i>Northamptonshire</i> . |
| | VII. The Necessity of a general Reformation, in order to a well grounded Hope of Success in War. |
| | VIII. A Friendly Letter to the Private Soldiers in a Regiment of Foot, which was engaged at the Battle of <i>Culloden</i> . |
| | IX. An Oration at the Grave of the Rev. Mr. <i>John Newman</i> . |
| | X. The Evil and Danger of neglecting the Souls of Men. |
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L O N D O N :

Printed by Assignment from the Author's Widow,
For C. HITCH and L. HAWES, J. BUCKLAND, J. RIVINGTON,
R. BALDWIN, W. JOHNSTON, J. RICHARDSON,
S. CROWDER and Co. T. LONGMAN, B. LAW, T. FIELD,
and H. PAYNE and W. CROPLEY.

M DCC LXI.



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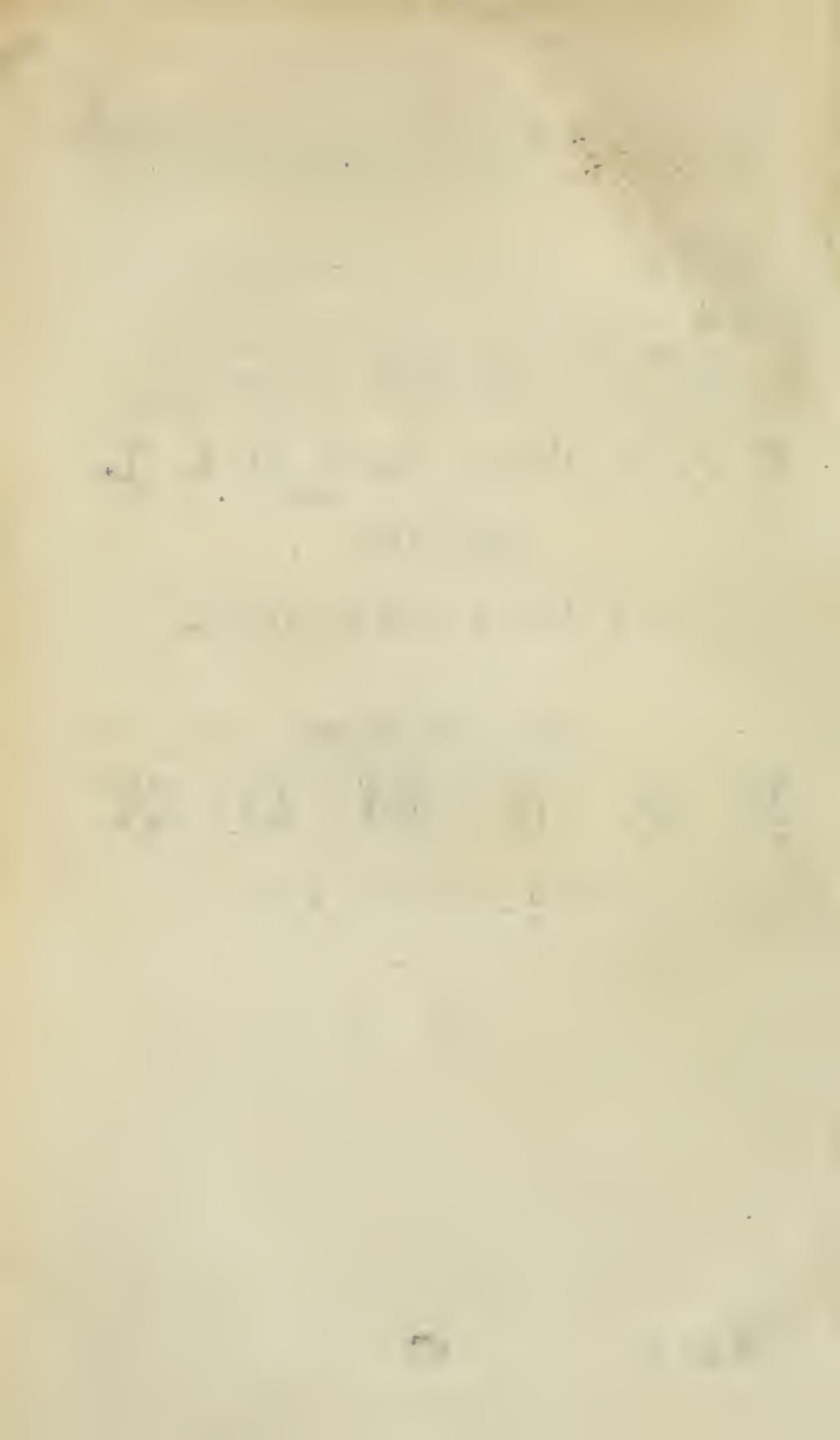
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THE
CARE of the SOUL
Urged as the
ONE THING NEEDFUL.

A
SERMON

Preach'd JUNE 22, 1735.



A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

*A*S I would not willingly incur the Censure of being over-forward in publishing so plain a Sermon on so common a Subject, I beg leave to inform the Reader of the Occasion that determined me to do it.

The following Discourse was first preached to a very numerous Auditory at the Funeral of a young Person, who being seized on a sudden with a violent and mortal Illness, which nevertheless did not destroy the Exercise of her Reason, was deeply impress'd with a Sense of her eternal Interest, and express'd that Sense in a manner which affected me as much as any thing of that Nature which I had ever seen; not only recommending the Text to me, but also charging this one Thing needful on her Brother and Sisters in my Hearing, with a Solemnity and Earnestness, which I hope neither they nor I shall ever forget. But I imputed the remarkable Attention with which the Sermon was heard, and the kind Notice which was afterwards taken of it by many, to that awful Circumstance, rather than to any thing in the Discourse itself.

I had afterwards the Honour to preach it, with some proper Alterations, before some worthy and excellent Persons of considerable Rank and Eminence in Life, who are not ashamed publickly to own, that Religion is their greatest Concern. They were pleased to express such Satisfaction in the Seriousness and Plainness with which this important Subject was handled, that they urged me, with an Earnestness which I did not at all expect, to let them have some printed Copies of it, that they might disperse them amongst their Tenants and Servants. I think too highly of these valuable Friends to prefix their Names to so inconsiderable a Performance, which would do a great Honour to a Book, far superior to any I can ever hope to present them with. But as I am well assured of their continued Candour towards me; so I hope the Authority of their Command, will be allowed as a sufficient Apology for this Publication.

We are so near the Eternal State, and must so soon be silent in the Dust, that methinks nothing which looks like a Call of Providence, directing to any Opportunity of doing good to the Souls of Men, should be neglected. And if these obvious but weighty Truths may, through the Concurrence of divine Grace, be made useful for the Conversion of one of the lowest of those for whose Service this Discourse was asked and transcribed, I shall think this little Labour abundantly repaid, even though many others should say, as they probably will, that I have made a little Addition to the Number of unnecessary Books with which the World is already incumbered.

London,
July 29, 1735:

P. DODDRIDGE.





LUKE X. 42. former Part.

One Thing is Needful.

IT was the amiable Character of our blessed Redeemer, that *he went about doing good* *. This great Motive, which animated all his Actions, brought him to the House of his Friend *Lazarus*, at *Bethany*, and directed his Behaviour there. Though it was a Season of Recess from public Labour, our Lord brought the Sentiments and the pious Cares of a Preacher of Righteousness into the Parlour of a Friend; and there his Doctrine *dropp'd as the Rain, and distill'd as the Dew*, on the little happy Circle that were then surrounding him. *Mary*, the Sister of *Lazarus*, with great Delight made one amongst them; she set herself down at the Feet of Jesus, in the Posture of an humble Disciple; and we have a great deal of Reason to believe, that *Martha*, his other Sister, would gladly have been with her there; but domestic Cares press'd hard upon her, and she was *cumbered with much serving*, being perhaps too solicitous to prepare a sumptuous Entertainment for her heavenly Master and the Train that attended him. Happy are they that in a Crowd of Business do not lose something of the Spirituality of their Minds, and of the Composure, and Sweetness of their Tempers! This good Woman comes to our Lord with too impatient a Complaint; insinuating some little Reflection, not only on *Mary*, but on himself too. *Lord, dost thou not care that my Sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me* †. Our Lord, willing to take all Opportunities of suggesting useful Thoughts, answers her in these Words,

B 3

of

* Acts x. 38.

† Luke x. 40.

of which the Text is a Part, *Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many Things, but one Thing is needful, and Mary has chosen that good Part, which shall not be taken away from her, q. d.* Alas *Martha!* the Concerns of the Soul are of so much greater Importance than those of the Body, that I cannot blame your Sister on this Occasion: I rather recommend her to your Imitation, and caution you, and all my other Friends, to be much on your Guard, that in the midst of your worldly Cares, you do not lose the Sight of that which so much better deserves your Attention.

I shall consider these Words, *One Thing is needful*, as a kind of Aphorism, or wise and weighty Sentence, dropp'd from the Mouth of our blessed Redeemer, and evidently worthy of our most serious Regard. In handling them I shall,

- I. Consider what we are to understand by the *one Thing* here spoken of.
- II. Shew you what is intended when it is represented as the one Thing *needful*.
- III. I will shew how justly it may be so represented, or prove that 'tis indeed the one Thing needful.
- IV. Conclude with some Reflections and Application.

My Friends, the Words which are now before us are, to this Day, as true, as they were seventeen hundred Years ago. Set your Hearts to attend to them. Oh that you might, by divine Grace, be awaken'd to hear them with a due Regard, and might be so impressed with the plain and serious Things which are now to be spoken, as you probably would, if I were speaking by your dying Beds, and you had the full Exercise of your Reason, and the near and lively View of Eternity!

I. I am briefly to consider what we are to understand by the *one Thing needful*.

Now I answer in a few Words, it is the Care of the Soul, opposed, as you see in the Text, to the Care, *i. e.* the excessive Care of the Body, for which *Martha* was gently admonished by our Lord. This is a general Answer, and it comprehends a variety of important Particulars,

particulars, which is the Business of our Ministry often to open to you at large: The Care of the Soul implies a Readiness to hear the Words of Christ, to set ourselves with *Mary* at his Feet, and to receive both the Law and the Gospel from his Mouth. It supposes that we learn from this divine Teacher the Worth of our Souls, their Danger, and their Remedy. That we become above all Things solicitous about their eternal Salvation. That, heartily repenting of all our Sins, and cordially believing the everlasting Gospel, we receive the Lord Jesus Christ for Righteousness and Life, resting our Souls on the Value of his Atonement, and the Efficacy of his Grace. It imports the sincere Dedication of ourselves to the Service of God, and a faithful Adherence to it, notwithstanding all the Oppositions arising from inward Corruptions, or outward Temptations, and a resolute Perseverance in the Way of Gospel Dependence, till we receive the End of our Faith in our complete Salvation. This is the *one Thing needful*, represented indeed in various Scriptures by various Names. Sometimes it is called *Regeneration*, or *the New Creature*, because 'tis the blessed Work of God's efficacious Grace. Sometimes the *Fear of God*, and sometimes *his Love*, and the *keeping his Commandments*; and very frequently in the New Testament is called *Faith*, or *receiving Christ*, and *believing on him*, which therefore is represented as the *great Work of God* *; *i. e.* the great Thing which God in his glorious Gospel requires, as well as by his Spirit produces in us: Each of these, if rightly understood and explained, comprehends all that I have said on this Head. On the whole, we may say, that, as the *Body is one, though it has many Members*, and the Soul is one, though it has many Faculties; so, in the present Case, this real, vital Religion is *one Thing*, one sacred Principle of divine Life, bringing us to attend to the Care of our Souls, as of our greatest Treasure. 'Tis *one Thing*, notwithstanding all the Variety of Views in which it may be considered, and of Characters under which it may be described. I proceed,

* John vi, 29.

II. To consider what may be intended in the Representation which is here made of it, as the *one Thing needful*.

Now I think it naturally includes these three Particulars: 'Tis a Matter of universal Concern, of the highest Importance, and of so comprehensive a Nature that every thing which is truly worthy of our Regard may be considered as included in it, or subservient to it. Let me a little illustrate each of these Particulars, reserving the Proof of what I now assert to the third General, where it will abundantly appear.

1. The Care of the Soul may be called the *one Thing needful*, "as it is Matter of universal Concern."

Our Lord you see speaks of it as *needful* in the general. He says not for this or that particular Person; or for those of such an Age, Station or Circumstance in Life, but needful for all. And indeed, when discoursing on such a Subject, one might properly introduce it with those solemn Words of the Psalmist, *Give Ear, all ye People, bear, all ye Inhabitants of the Earth, both High and Low; Rich and Poor together* *. For 'tis the Concern of all, from the King that sits upon the Throne, to the Servant that grindeth at the Mill, or the Beggar that lieth upon the Dunghill. 'Tis *needful* for us that are *Ministers*, for our own Salvation is concerned. And Woe, insupportable Woe will be to our Souls, if we think it enough to recommend it to others, to talk of it in a warm, or an awful manner, in public Assemblies, or in our private Converse; while it does not penetrate our Hearts as our own greatest Care. Our Case will then be like that of the *Israelitish* Lord in *Samaria* †, who was employed to distribute the Corn when the Siege was raised, seeing it with our Eyes, and dispensing it with our Hands, we shall ourselves die miserably, without tasting the Blessings we impart. 'Tis *needful* to all *you that are our Hearers*, without the Exception of one single Person. 'Tis *needful* to you that are *rich*, though it may on some Accounts be peculiarly difficult for you; even as difficult, comparatively speaking, as for a *Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle* ‡; yet if it be neglected, you are poor in the midst of all your Wealth, and miserable in

* Psalm xlix. 1, 2.

† 2 Kings vii. 2.

‡ Matt. xix. 24.

in all your Abundance; and a Wretch starving for Hunger, in a magnificent Palace and a rich Dress, would be less the Object of Compassion than you. 'Tis *needful* for you that are *poor*; though you are distressed with so many anxious Cares, *what you shall eat, and what you shall drink, and wherewithal you shall be clothed* *. The Nature that makes you capable of such Anxieties as these, argues your much greater Concern in the *Bread which endures to eternal Life* †, than in that by which this mortal Body must be supported. 'Tis *needful* for you that are advanced in Years, though your Strength be impaired so that the *Graypopper is a Burthen* ‡; tho' you have by your long Continuance in Sin rendered this great Work so hard, that were it less important, one would in Pity let you alone without reminding you of it: Yet, late as it is, it must be done, or your hoary Heads will be brought down to the Grave with Wrath, and sink under a Curse aggravated by every Year and by every Day of your Lives. 'Tis *needful* to you that are *young*, though sollicitated by so many gay Vanities, to neglect it; though it may be represented as an unseasonable Care at present, yet I repeat it, it is needful to you; immediately needful, unless you who walk so frequently over the Dust of your Brethren and Companions, that died in the Bloom and Vigour of their Days, have made some secret *Covenant with the Grave* for yourselves, and found out some wonderful Method, hitherto unknown, of securing this precarious Life, and of answering for Days and Months to come, while others cannot answer for one single Moment.

2. The Care of the Soul is “ a Matter of the highest Importance;” beyond any thing which can be brought into Comparison with it.

As Solomon says of Wisdom, that it is *more precious than Rubies, and that all things which can be desired are not to be compared with her* §, so may I properly say of this great and most important Branch of Wisdom, whatever can be laid in *the Balance* with it, will be found *altogether lighter than Vanity*. This is strongly implied when 'tis said in the Text, *one Thing is needful*; *q. d. one Thing*, and

B 5 one

* Matt. vi. 31.

† John vi. 27.

‡ Eccles. xii. 5.

§ Prov. iii. 5.

one Thing alone is so. Just as the blessed God is said to be *only wise* *, and *only holy* †, because the Wisdom and Holiness of Angels and Men is as nothing, when compared with his. What seems most great and most important in Life, what Kings and Senates, what the wisest and greatest of this World are employing their Time, their Councils, their Pens, their Labours upon, are Trifles, when compared with this *one Thing*. A Man may subsist, he may in some considerable Measure be happy, without Learning, without Riches, without Titles, without Health, without Liberty, without Friends, nay, though *the Life be more than Meat, and the Body than Raiment* ‡, yet may he be happy, unspeakably happy, without the Body itself. But he cannot be so in the Neglect of the *one Thing needful*. I must therefore bespeak your Regard to it in the Words of *Moses*, *it is not a light thing, but it is your Life* ||.

3. The Care of the Soul is of so comprehensive a Nature, that “every thing truly worthy of our Regard may be considered as included in it, or subservient to it.”

As *David* observes, that the *Commandment of God is exceeding broad* §, so may we say of this *one Thing needful*; and as *Solomon* very justly and emphatically expresses it, *to fear God and to keep his Commandments is the whole of Man* **; his whole Duty, and his whole Interest; and every thing which is wise and rational does in its proper Place and Connection make a Part of it. We should judge very ill concerning the Nature of this Care, if we imagined, that it consisted merely in Acts of Devotion, or religious Contemplation; it comprehends all the lovely and harmonious Band of social and humane Virtues. It requires a Care of Society, a Care of our Bodies, and of our temporal Concerns; but then all is to be regulated, directed, and animated by proper Regards to God, Christ, and Immortality. Our Food and our Rest, our Trades and our Labours are to be attended to, and all the Offices of Humanity performed in Obedience to the Will of God, for the Glory of Christ, and in a View to the improving the Mind in a growing Meetness for a State of compleat Perfection. Name any thing which has

* 1 Tim. i. 17.

† Rev. xv. 4.

‡ Matt. vi. 25.

§ Deut. xxxii. 47.

§ Pl. cxix. 96.

** Eccles. xii. 13.

has no Reference at all to this, and you name a worthless Trifle, however it may be gilded to allure the Eye, however it may be sweetened to gratify the Taste. Name a Thing which, instead of thus improving the Soul, has a Tendency to debase and pollute, to enslave and endanger it, and you name what is most unprofitable and mischievous, be the Wages of Iniquity ever so great; most foul and deform'd, be it in the Eyes of Men ever so honourable, or in their Customs ever so fashionable. Thus I have endeavoured to shew you what we may suppose implied in this Expression of *one Thing being needful*. I am now,

III. To shew you with how much Propriety the Care of the Soul may be represented under this Character, as the *one Thing needful*, as a Matter of universal and most serious Concern, to which every thing else is to be considered as subservient, if at all worthy of our Care and Pursuit. Now let me appeal to the Sentiments of those who must be allowed most capable of judging, and to the evident Reason of the Case itself, as it must appear to every unprejudiced Mind.

1. Let me argue "from the Sentiments of those who must be allowed most capable of judging in such an Affair," and we shall quickly see that the Care of the Soul appears to them the *one Thing needful*.

Is the Judgment of the blessed God according to Truth, how evidently and how solemnly is that Judgment declared? I will not say merely in this or the other particular Passage of his Word, but in the whole Series of his Revelations to the Children of Men; and the whole Tenor of his Addresses to them. Is not this the Language of all, from the early Days of *Job* and *Moses* to the Conclusion of the Canon of Scripture. *If * Wisdom be hid from the Eyes of all the Living, surely God understandeth the Way thereof, he knoweth the Place thereof;* and if he does, 'tis plainly pointed out, for unto Man he still saith, *behold the Fear of the Lord that is Wisdom, and to depart from Evil, that is Understanding.* By *Moses* he declared to the *Israelites*, that to do the Commandments of the Lord would be their Wisdom and their Understanding in the Sight of the Nations, who should hear his Statutes,

and say, *surely this is a wise and an understanding People* *; When he had raised up one Man on the Throne of Israel, with the Character of the wisest that ever lived upon the Face of the Earth, he chose to make him eminently a Teacher of this great Truth. And now all that he spoke on the curious and less concerning Subjects of Natural Philosophy, is lost, *though he spoke of Trees from the Cedar to the Hyssop, and of Beasts, and of Fowls, and of creeping Things, and of Fishes* †; that Saying is preserved in which he testifies, that *the Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom* ‡, and those Proverbs, in almost every Line of which they who neglect God and their own Souls are spoken of as Fools, as if that were the most proper Signification of the Word, while the Religious alone are honoured with the Title of wise. But in this respect as attesting this Truth in the Name of God and in his own, *a greater than Solomon is here.*

For if we inquire what it was that our Lord *Jesus Christ* judged to be the *one Thing needful*, the Words of the Text contain as full an Answer as can be imagined; and the Sense of them is repeated in a very lively and emphatical Manner, in that remarkable Passage wherein our Lord not only declares his own Judgment, but seems to appeal to the Consciences of all, as obliged by their own secret Convictions to subscribe to the Truth of it. *What is a Man profited, if he gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul; or what shall a Man give in Exchange for his Soul* ¶? If it were once lost, what would he not be willing to give to redeem it? But it depends not on the Words of Christ alone. Let his Actions, his Sufferings, his Blood, his Death speak what a Value he set on the Souls of Men. Is it to be imagined, that he would have relinquished Heaven, that he would have dwelt upon Earth, that he would have laboured by Night and by Day, and at last have expired on the Cross, for a Matter of light Importance? Or can we think that he, in whom *dwell all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge, and all the Fulness of the Godhead bodily* §, was mistaken in Judgment so deliberately formed; and so solemnly declared?

If

* Deut. iv. 6.
 ¶ Matt. xvi, 26.

† 1 Kings iv. 33.
 § Col, iii, 9.

‡ Prov. i. 7. ix. 10.

If after this there were room to mention human Judgment, and Testimonies, how easy would it be to produce a Cloud of Witnesses in such a Cause, and to shew that the wisest and best of Men in all Ages of the World have agreed in this Point, that amidst all the Diversities of Opinion and Profession, which succeeding Generations have produced, this has been the unanimous Judgment, this the common and most solicitous Care of those, whose Characters are most truly valuable, to secure the Salvation of their own Souls, and to promote the Salvation of others.

And let me beseech you seriously to reflect, what are the Characters of those who have taken the Liberty, most boldly and freely to declare their Judgment on the contrary Side? The Number of such is comparatively few; and when you compare what you have observed of their Temper and Conduct, I will not say with what you read of holy Men of old, but with what you have yourselves seen in the faithful, active, and zealous Servants of Christ, in these latter Ages, with which you have conversed, do you on the whole find that the Rejectors and Deriders of the Gospel, are in other Respects, so much more prudent and judicious, so much wiser for themselves, and for others that are influenced by them, as that you can be in Reason obliged to pay any great Deference to the Authority of a few such Names as these, in Opposition to those to which they are here opposed?

But you will say, and you will say it too truly, tho' but a few may venture in Words to declare for the Neglect of the Soul and its eternal Interest, the greater Part of Mankind do it in their Actions. But are the greater Part of Mankind so wise, and so good, as implicitly to be followed in Matters of the highest Importance? And do not Multitudes of these declare themselves on the other Side, in their most serious Moments? When the Intoxications of worldly Business and Pleasures are over, and some languishing Sickness forces Men to Solitude and Retirement; what have you generally observed to be the Effect of such a Circumstance? Have they not then declared themselves convinced of the Truth we are now labouring to establish? Nay, do we not sometimes see

that a Distemper which seizes the Mind with Violence, yet does not utterly destroy its reasoning Faculties, fixes this Conviction on the Soul in a few Hours, nay sometimes in a few Moments? Have you never seen a gay, thoughtless Creature, surpris'd in the giddy Round of Pleasures and Amusements, and presently brought not only to Seriousness, but Terror and Trembling, by the near Views of Death? Have you never seen the Man of Business and Care interrupted, like the rich Fool in the Parable, in the midst of his Schemes for the present World? And have you not heard one and the other of them owning the Vanity of those Pleasures and Cares, which but a few Days ago were every thing to them? Confessing that Religion was the *one Thing needful*, and recommending it to others with an Earnestness, as if they hoped thereby to atone for their own former Neglect? We that are Ministers frequently are Witnesses to such Things as these, and I believe few of our Hearers are intire Strangers to them?

And once more, what if to the Testimony of the Dying, we could add that of the Dead? What if God were to turn aside the Veil which separates between us and the invisible World, and to permit the most careless Sinner in the Assembly to converse for a few Moments with the Inhabitants of it? If you were to apply yourself to a happy Spirit, that trod the most thorny Road to Paradise, or pass'd thro' the most fiery Trial, and to ask him, "Was it worth your while to labour so much, and to endure so much for what you now possess?" Surely if the Blessed in Heaven were capable of Indignation, it would move them to hear that it should be made a Question. And on the other Hand, if you could inquire of one *tormented in that Flame* below, though he might once be *clothed in Purple and fine Linen, and fare sumptuously every Day**, if you could ask him, "Whether his former Enjoyments were any Equivalent for his present Sufferings and Despair?" What Answer do you suppose he would return? Perhaps an Answer of so much Horror and Rage, as you would not be able so much as to indure. Or if the Malignity of his Nature should prevent him from returning any Answer at all, surely
there

* Luke xvi. 19.

there would be a Language even in that Silence, a Language in the Darkneſs, and Flames, and Groans of that infernal Priſon, which would ſpeak to your very Soul what the Word of God is with equal Certainty, tho' leſs forcible Conviction, ſpeaking to your Ear, that *one Thing is needful*. You ſee 'tis ſo in the Judgment of God the Father, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, of the wiſeſt and beſt of Men, of many, who ſeem'd to judge moſt differently of it, when they come to more deliberate and ſerious Thought, and not only of the Dying, but of the Dead too, of thoſe who have experimentally known both Worlds, and moſt ſurely know what is to be preferr'd. But I will not reſt the whole Argument here, I add therefore,

2. I appeal to the evident Reaſon of the Caſe itſelf, as it muſt appear to every unprejudiced Mind, that the Care of the Soul is indeed *the one Thing needful*.

I ſtill conſider myſelf as ſpeaking not to Atheiſts, or to Deiſts, but to thoſe who not only believe the Exiſtence and Providence of God, and a future State of Happineſs and Miſery, but likewiſe who credit the Truth of the Chriſtian Revelation, as many undoubtedly do, who live in a fatal Neglect of God and their own Souls. Now on theſe Principles a little Reflection may be ſufficient to convince you, that 'tis *needful* to the preſent Repoſe of your own Mind; *needful* if ever you would ſecure eternal Happineſs; if ever you would avoid eternal Miſery, which will be aggravated, rather than alleviated, by all your preſent Enjoyments.

1. The Care of the Soul is the *one Thing needful*, becauſe “without it you cannot ſecure the Peace of your own Mind, nor avoid the Upbraidings of your Conſcience.”

That noble Faculty is, indeed, as you are often told, the Vicegerent of God in the Soul. 'Tis ſenſible of the Dignity and Worth of an immortal Spirit, and will ſometimes cry out of the Violence that is offered to it, and cry ſo loud, as to compel the Sinner to hear, whether he will or no. Do you not ſometimes find it yourſelves? When you labour moſt to forget the Concerns of your Soul, do they not ſometimes force themſelves on your Remembrance? You are afraid of the Reflections of
your

your own Mind, but with all your Artifice and all your Resolution, can you intirely avoid them? Does not Conscience follow you to your Beds, even if denied the Opportunity of meeting you in your Closets, and tho' with an unwelcome Voice, there warn you, "that your Soul" "is neglected, and will quickly be lost:" Does it not follow you to your Shops and your Fields, when you are busiest there? Nay, I will add, does it not sometimes follow you to the Feast, to the Club, to the Dance, and perhaps, amidst all Resistance, to the Theatre too? Does it not sometimes mingle your sweetest Draughts with Wormwood, and your gayest Scenes with Horror? So that you are like a Tradesman, who, suspecting his Affairs to be in a bad Posture, lays by his Books and his Papers, yet sometimes they will come accidentally in his Way. He hardly dares to look Abroad for fear of meeting a Creditor or an Arrest; and if he labours to forget his Cares and his Dangers, in a Course of Luxury at Home, the Remembrance is sometimes awaken'd, and the Alarm increased, by those very Extravagancies in which he is attempting to lose it. Such, no doubt, is the Case of some of your Minds, and 'tis a very painful State; and while Things are thus within, external Circumstances can no more make you happy, than a fine Dress could relieve you under a violent Fit of the Stone. Whereas if this great Affair were secured, you might delight in Reflection, as much as you now dread it; and Conscience, of your bitterest Enemy, would become a delightful Friend, and the Testimony of it your greatest Rejoicing.

2. The Care of the Soul is the *one Thing needful*, "because without it you cannot possibly secure your eternal happiness."

A Crown of everlasting Glory is not surely such a Trifle as to be thrown away on a careless Creature, that will not in good Earnest pursue it. God doth not ordinarily deal thus, even with the Bounties of his common Providence, which are comparatively of little Value. As to these, the *Hand of the Diligent* generally makes rich, and he would be thought distracted, rather than prudent, who should expect to get an Estate merely by wishing for it, or without some resolute and continued Application

plication to a proper Course of Action for that Purpose. Now, that we may not foolishly dream of obtaining Heaven, in the midst of a Course of Indolence and Sloth, we are expressly told in the Word of God; that *the Kingdom of Heaven suffers Violence, and the Violent take it by Force* *; and are therefore exhorted to *strive*, with the greatest Intensity, and Eagerness of Mind, as the Word properly signifies, *to enter in at the strait Gate*, for this great and important Reason, *because many shall another Day seek to enter in, and shall not be able* †. Nay, when our Lord makes the most gracious Promises to the humble Petitioner, he does it in such a manner as to exclude the Hopes of those who are careless and indifferent. *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you* ‡. If therefore you do not ask, seek and knock, the Door of Mercy will not be opened, and eternal Happiness will be lost.

And surely if I could say no more as to the fatal Consequences of your Neglect, than this, that *eternal Happiness will be lost*, I should say enough to impress every Mind that considers what *Eternity* means. To fall into a State of everlasting Forgetfulness might indeed appear a Refuge to a Mind filled with the Apprehension of future Misery. But, Oh how dreadful a Refuge is it! Surely it is such a Refuge, as a vast Precipice, from which a Man falling would be dashed to pieces in a Moment, might appear to a Person pursued by the Officers of Justice, that he might be brought out to a painful and lingering Execution. If an extravagant Youth would have Reason to look round with Anguish on some fair and ample paternal Inheritance, which he had sold or forfeited merely for the Riot of a few Days: How much more melancholy would it be for a rational Mind to think that its eternal Happiness is lost for any earthly Consideration whatever. Tormenting Thought! had I attended to that *one Thing* which I have neglected, I might have been great and happy, beyond Expression, beyond Conception. Not merely for the little Span of ten thousand; thousand Ages, but FOR EVER. So that the Moment would have come, when, if it had been asked concerning me, “How long has that glorious Spi-

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* Matt; xi, 12.

† Luke xiii, 24.

‡ Matt, vii, 7.

“ rit been an Inhabitant of Heaven? How long has it
 “ been enjoying God, and itself, in that State of Per-
 “ fection? ” — The Answer would have been such,
 that a Line reaching even to the remotest Star would
 not have been able to contain the Number of Ages, nor
 would Millions of Years have been sufficient to figure
 them down. This is Eternity, but I have lost it, and
 am now on the Verge of Being. This Lamp, which
 might have outlasted those of the Firmament, will pre-
 sently be extinguished, and I blotted out from amongst
 the Works of God, and cut off from all the Bounties of
 his Hand. Would not this be a very miserable Case, if
 this were all. And would it not be sufficient to prove
 this to be *the better Part*, which, as our Lord observes,
 can *never be taken away*. But God forbid that we should
 be so unfaithful to him, and to the Souls of Men, as to
 rest in such a Representation alone. I therefore add
 once more,

3. The Care of the Soul is *the one Thing needful*, be-
 cause “ without it you cannot avoid a State of eternal
 “ Misery, which will be aggravated, rather than alle-
 “ viated by all your present Enjoyments.”

Nothing can be more evident from the Word of the
 God of Truth. If there plainly appears to be a deter-
 mined Case, which leaves no Room for a more favour-
 able Conjecture or Hope. *The Wicked shall be turned in-
 to Hell, even all the Nations that forget God**. *They shall
 go away into everlasting Punishment †*, into a State where
 they shall in vain seek Death, and Death shall flee from
 them. Oh! Sirs, 'tis a certain, but an awful Truth,
 that your Souls will be thinking and immortal Beings,
 even in Spite of themselves. They may indeed tor-
 ment, but they can't destroy themselves. They can no
 more suspend their Power of Thought and Perception,
 than a Mirror its Property of reflecting Rays that fall on
 its Surface. Do you suspect the contrary? Make the
 Trial immediately. Command your Minds to cease
 from thinking but for one Quarter of an Hour, or for
 half that Time, and exclude every Idea and every Re-
 flection. Can you succeed in that Attempt? Or rather,
 does not Thought press in with a more sensible Violence
 on

* Pl. ix. 17.

† Matt. xxv. 46.

on that Resistance; as an anxious Desire to Sleep, makes us so much the more wakeful. Thus will Thought follow you beyond the Grave, thus will it, as an unwelcome Guest, force itself upon you, when it can serve only to perplex and distress the Mind. It will for ever upbraid you, that notwithstanding all the kind Expostulations of God and Man, notwithstanding all the keen Remonstrances of Conscience, and the Pleadings of the Blood of Christ, you have gone on in your Folly, 'till Heaven is lost, and Damnation incurr'd; and all for what? for a Shadow and a Dream.

Oh think not; Sinners, that the Remembrance of your past Pleasures, of your Success in your other Cares, whilst that of the *one Thing needful* was forgotten, think not that this will ease your Minds. It will rather torment them the more. *Son, remember that thou in thy Lifetime receivest thy good Things.* Bitter Remembrance! Well might the Heathen Poets represent the unhappy Spirits in the Shades below, as eagerly catching at the Water of Forgetfulness, yet unable to reach it. Your present Comforts will only serve, to give you a livelier Sense of your Misery, as having tasted such Degrees of Enjoyment; and to inflame the Reckoning, as you have misimprov'd those Talents lodg'd in your Hands for better Purposes. Surely, if these Things were believed, and seriously considered, the Sinner would have no more Heart to rejoice in his present Prosperity, than a Man would have to amuse himself with the Curiosities of a fine Garden, thro' which he was led to be broke upon the Rack.

But I will enlarge no farther on these Things. Would to God that the unaccountable Stupidity of Men's Minds, and their fatal Attachment to the Pleasures and Cares of the present Life, did not make it necessary to insist on them so frequently and so copiously!

IV. I proceed to the Reflections which naturally arise from hence, and shall only mention two.

1. How much Reason have we to lament the Folly of Mankind in neglecting the *one Thing needful*.

If Religion be indeed the truest Wisdom, then surely we have the justest Reason to say with Solomon, *that Folly and Madness is in Mens Hearts* *. Is it the *one Thing*

* Eccles. ix. 3.

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needful? Look on the Conduct of the generality of Mankind, and you would imagine they thought it the *one Thing needful*: The vainest Dream and the idlest Amusement of the Mind. God is admonishing them by Ordinances, and Providences, sometimes by such as are most awful, to lay it to Heart; he *speaks once, yea twice, yea a Multitude of Times, but Man regards not* †. They profess perhaps to believe all that I have been saying, but act as if the contrary were self-evident; they will risk these Souls and this Eternity, for a Thing of nought, for that, for the sake of which they would not risk so much as a Hand, or a Finger, or a Joint, no, nor perhaps a Toy that adorns it. Surely this is the Wonder of Angels, and perhaps of Devils too, unless the Observation of so many Ages may have render'd it familiar to both. And can we, my Christian Brethren, behold such a Scene with Indifference? If some epidemical Madness had seized our Country, or the Places where we live, so that as we went from one Place to another, we should every where meet with Lunatics, and see, among the rest, some perhaps of the finest Genius and Improvements, and in the most eminent Stations in Life, amusing themselves with Straws and Bubbles, or wounding themselves and others; surely were we ever so secure from the Danger of Infection or Assault, the Sight would cut us to the Heart. Surely a good-natured Man would hardly be able to go Abroad, or even be desirous to live, if it must be amongst so many sad Spectacles. Yet these poor Creatures might, notwithstanding this, be the Children of God, and the higher their Frenzy rose, the nearer might their compleat Happiness be. But alas, the greater part of Mankind are seized with a worse kind of Madness, in which they are ruining their Souls: And can we behold it with Indifference! The Lord awaken our Compassion, our Prayer, and our Endeavours in Dependance on Divine Grace, that we may be instrumental in bringing them to their right Mind, and making them wise indeed, that is, wise to Salvation.

2. How necessary is it that we would seriously inquire how this *one Thing needful* is regarded by us!

Let me intreat you to remember your own Concern
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† Job xxxiii. 14.

in it, and inquire—Have I thought seriously of it?—Have I seen the Importance of it?—Has it lain with a due and an abiding Weight on my Mind?—Has it brought me to Christ, that I might lay the Strefs of these great eternal Interests on him?—And am I acting in the Main of my Life as one that has these Convictions?—Am I willing in fact to give up other Things, my Interests, my Pleasures, my Passions to this?—Am I conversing with God and with Man as one that believes these Things, as one that has deliberately chosen *the better Part*, and is determined to abide by that Choice?

Observe the Answer which Conscience returns to these Inquiries, and you will know your own Part in that more particular Application, with which I am to conclude my Discourse.

1. Let me address those that are intirely unconcern'd about the *one Thing needful*.

Sirs, I have been stating the Case at large, and now I appeal to your Consciences, are these Things so? or are they not? God and your own Hearts best know for what the Care of your Soul is neglected; but be it what it will, the difference between one Grain of Sand, and another, is not great, when it comes to be weigh'd against a Talent of Gold. Whatever it is, you had need to examine it carefully. You had need to view that Commodity on all Sides, of which you do in effect say, for this will I sell my Soul, for this will I give up Heaven and venture Hell, be Heaven and Hell whatever they may. In the Name of God, Sirs, is this the Part of a Man, of a rational Creature? To go on with your Eyes open towards a Pit of eternal Ruin, because there are a few gay Flowers in the Way. Or what if you shut your Eyes? will that prevent your Fall? It signifies little to say, I will not think of these Things, I will not consider them. God has said, *in the last Days they shall consider it perfectly* *. The Revels of a drunken Malefactor will not prevent, nor respite his Execution. Pardon my Plainness; if it were a Fable, or a Tale, I would endeavour to amuse you with Words, but I cannot do it where your Souls are at Stake.

2. I would apply to those who are convinc'd of the

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Importance of their Souls, yet are inclin'd to defer that Care of them a little longer, which in the general they see to be necessary.

I know, you that are young are under peculiar Temptations to do this; tho' 'tis strange that the Death of so many of your Companions should not be an Answer to some of the most specious and dangerous of those Temptations. Methinks if there were the least Degree of Uncertainty, the Importance is too weighty to put Matters to the Venture. But here the Uncertainty is great and apparent. You must surely know that there are critical Seasons of Life for managing the Concerns of it, which are of such a Nature, that, if once lost, they may never return: Here is a critical Season. *Now is the accepted Time, now is the Day of Salvation* †. *To Day if ye will hear his Voice harden not your Hearts* ‡. This Language may not be spoken To-morrow, Talk not of a more convenient Season, none can be more convenient; and that to which you would probably refer it, is least of all so. A dying Time. You would not chuse then to have any important Business in hand; and will you of Choice refer the greatest Business of all to that languishing, hurrying, amazing Hour. If a Friend were then to come to you with the Balance of an intricate Account, or a View of a Title to an Estate, you would shake your fainting Head, and lift up your pale trembling Hand, and say perhaps with a feeble Voice, "Alas, is this a Time for these Things?" And is it a Time for so much greater Things than these? I wish you knew, and would consider into what a Strait we that are Ministers are sometimes brought, when we are called to the dying Beds of those who have spent their Lives in the Neglect of the *one Thing needful*. On the one hand we fear, lest if we palliate Matters, and speak smooth Things, we shall betray and ruin their Souls; and on the other, that if we use a becoming Plainness and Seriousness, in warning them of their Danger, we shall quite overwhelm them, and hasten the dying Moment which is advancing by such swift Steps. Oh let me intreat you, for our Sakes, and much more for your own, that you do not drive us to such sad Extremities: But that if you are

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† 2 Cor. vi. 2.

‡ Heb. iii. 7, 8.

convinc'd, as I hope some of you may now be, that the Care of the Soul is that *needful Thing* we have represented, let the Conviction work, let it drive you immediately to the Throne of Grace, that from thence you may derive that Wisdom and Strength which may direct you in all the Intricacies which intangle you, and animate you in the midst of Difficulty and Discouragement.

3. I would in the last Place address myself to those happy Souls who have in good Earnest attended to the *one Thing needful*.

I hope when you see how commonly it is neglected, neglected indeed by many, whose natural Capacities, Improvements, and Circumstances in Life, appear to you superior to your own, you will humbly acknowledge, that it was distinguishing Grace that brought you into this happy State, and form'd you to this most necessary Care. Bless the Lord therefore who hath *given* you that *Counsel*, in Virtue of which you can say that *He is your Portion*.—Rejoice in the Thought that the great Concern is secured; as 'tis natural for us to do, when some important Affair is dispatch'd which has long lain before us, and which we have been inclin'd to put off from one Day to another, but have at length strenuously and successfully attended.—Remember still to continue acting on these great Principles which at first determin'd your Choice; and seriously consider, that those who desire their *Life* may at last be *given* them *for a Prey*, must continue on their Guard, in all Stages of their Journey thro' a Wilderness, where daily Dangers are still surrounding them. Having secured the great Concern, make yourselves easy as to others of smaller Importance. You have chosen *the Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness, other Things therefore shall be added unto you*; and if any which you desire should not be added, comfort yourselves with this Thought, that you have *the good Part which can never be taken away*. And, not to enlarge on these obvious Hints, which must so often occur, be very solicitous that others may be brought to a Care about the *one Thing needful*. If it be *needful* for you, 'tis so for your Children, your Friends, your Servants. Let them therefore see your Concern in this Respect

spect for them, as well as for yourselves. Let Parents, especially, attend to this Exhortation, whose Care for their Offspring often exceeds in other Respects, and fails in this. Remember that your Children may never live to enjoy the Effects of your Labour and Concern, to get them Estates and Portions. The Charges of their Funerals may perhaps be all their Share of what you are so anxiously careful to lay up for them. And Oh! think what a Sword would pierce thro' your very Heart, if you should stand by the Corpse of a beloved Child with this Reflection, "This poor Creature has done with Life before it learnt its great Business in it, and is gone to Eternity, which I have seldom been warning it to prepare for, and which perhaps it learnt of me to forget."

On the whole, may this grand Care be awakened in those by whom it has been hitherto neglected; may it be revived in each of our Minds. And that you may be encourag'd to pursue it with greater Chearfulness, let me conclude with this comfortable Thought, that in Proportion to the Necessity of the Case, is the Provision which divine Grace has made for our Assistance. If you are disposed to sit down at Christ's Feet, he will teach you by his Word and Spirit. If you commit this precious Jewel, which is your eternal All, into his Hand, he will preserve it unto *that Day*, and will then produce it richly adorn'd, and gloriously improv'd to his own Honour, and to your everlasting Joy. *Amen.*

THE
ABSURDITY AND INIQUITY
OF
PERSECUTION
FOR
CONSCIENCE-SAKE,
In all its KINDS and DEGREES.
CONSIDER'D in a
SERMON
PREACH'D at NORTHAMPTON.

The P R E F A C E.

THE Emissaries of the Roman See are so far from giving up their Cause in this Kingdom as lost, that the most distant Prospects of Success produce new and vigorous Efforts to promote it. Some Time since, they were very busy in Town, and in many Places in the Country, perverting the common People, and making Proselytes. These bold Steps awakened the Attention of those who have always manifested a warm and disinterested Zeal for the Reformation; and gave Occasion to that seasonable Attempt, which was made the last Year, by several eminent Ministers, in a Course of Lectures at Salters-Hall, to prevent the Growth of Popery. Our Fathers beheld that Mystery of Iniquity with Abhorrence and Terror: but the present Generation were not so well acquainted with its fatal Tendency. It would, therefore, have been an inexcusable Neglect, if, while the Enemies were sowing Tares, the Servants had slept, or had not faithfully warned the rising Age of their gross Errors in Doctrine, and of that Superstition and Idolatry with which they corrupt and defile the Christian Worship.

I observed, with Pleasure, that those Sermons met with general Acceptance. The vast Demand for them, amongst Persons of a different Taste and Education, is a full Evidence of the masterly Manner in which that important Design was executed. And I cannot but look upon it as a singular Happiness to the Publick, that the Work fell into the Hands of Men who understood the true Principles of Liberty, and steadily pursued them through the whole Performance; which has not always been the Case of those who have gone before them in that Controversy. The secular Powers were not called upon to interpose with their Authority; but a calm and sober Appeal was made to the holy Scriptures, and to the Reason of Mankind, as the only proper Judges in these Debates.

On a careful Perusal of the following Discourse, I conceived it might be of Service to publish it; and since it attacks one of the principal Bulwarks of the Popish Usurpation, I apprehended it could not appear with greater Ad-

vantage, than as an Appendix to the above-mentioned Lectures, if my worthy Brethren concerned should approve of it in that View.

It has been the great Unhappiness of many Protestant Dissenters, that they have entertained too narrow Sentiments of the Right of private Judgment; without which a Separation from an Establishment can never be rationally defended. The Writings on that Argument, in which the Question, in all its Circumstances, is examined, are so large, and the Reasoning so abstracted, that I have long wished for something more immediately calculated for popular Use: and so much the rather, as pious and well-disposed Minds have been too much impressed with the Pretextes urged to justify religious Severities, without considering the Consequences to which they lead.

My known Affection to the Author may perhaps incline some to conclude, that I am prejudiced in his Favour, and will readily recommend every Composition which he offers to the World: but so far as I am capable of judging of this Discourse, it is the best I have ever seen on the Subject in so narrow a Compass; the Case of Persecution is so clearly stated, the Absurdity and Iniquity of it so fully exposed, and the Reasons advanced in its Defence, especially those drawn from the Penal Laws amongst the Jews, are so well answered, that, I am willing to believe, it will give Satisfaction to all impartial and candid Readers.

It is with a great deal of Concern, that I have taken Notice of some unwary Expressions, dropt by our Writers of the last Age, which countenance Restraints inconsistent with Toleration in its largest Extent. These have been industriously collected to upbraid and condemn us. And it has been artfully and maliciously insinuated, that when we are pleading for Liberty, we are only struggling for Power to deprive others of the Privileges we claim for our selves. I hope the ensuing Pages, in Concurrence with that ample Testimony which has been borne to the same Cause, by the most considerable Persons amongst us, will silence our Adversaries, and wipe off so unjust and invidious a Reproach.

Harborough, Feb. 17.

1735-6.

D. SOME.

Luke



Luke ix. 55, 56.

But he turned, and rebuked them ; and said, ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of ; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy Mens Lives, but to save them.



IF Popery be consider'd in a religious View, it must appear the just Object of our Contempt, as well as our Abhorrence ; but if we regard it as a political Contrivance, to gratify the Avarice, and Ambition of the Clergy, it will appear very artfully adapted to answer that End. The *Wisdom of the Serpent* eminently prevail'd, when the *Innocence of the Dove* had long been lost. Cunning Ecclesiasticks, who were by their Office oblig'd frequently to converse with Persons under Awakenings of Conscience, and serious Impressions, laid hold on that Opportunity of improving themselves in an Acquaintance with human Nature ; and on that Foundation they gradually formed and compleated a Scheme, dexterously adapted to make the Minds of their People easy, by the same Notions and Forms by which the Clergy enriched themselves, and secured that temporal Dominion and Grandeur, for which they were contented to exchange true Christianity, and to make Merchandise of the Souls committed to their Care.

Some of these Principles were so evidently absurd, that the common Sense of Mankind, however bribed in their Favour, must often have risen up in open Opposition to them, had Freedom of Inquiry been allowed, and the Scriptures been left in the Hands of the People.

It was therefore one of their most important Artifices to take away that *Key of Knowledge*, and to put out that Light which would have exposed the Folly and Wick- edness of their Conduct. And farther, to support that *Babel* which must otherwise have sunk under its own Weight, the Powers of this World were brought in, and its Rulers taught to think it their highest Honour to employ their Sword against those obstinate Miscreants who were disobedient to the Faith, as the Priests thought fit to explain it. To injure the weaker Part of their Sub- jects in their religious Rights, was represented as an ample Atonement for violating the Civil Liberties of them all; and thus the Mouths of Gainsayers were most easi- ly and effectually stopp'd. From some Countries the Re- formation was utterly excluded, in others it was stifled in its very Infancy, and in some rooted out, after it had for a while been happily advanc'd.

This is undoubtedly the grand Bulwark of Popery, even to this very Day; and were it removed, the Ana- themas of the Church would become as incapable of giving Terror, as they are of doing any real Mischief. And therefore one of the most effectual Methods which can be taken to secure and promote the Reformation, is to convince Men, if possible, *of the Absurdity and Iniquity of Persecution for Conscience-sake, in all its Kinds and in all its Degrees.*

This is what, by the Divine Assistance, I purpose to attempt this Day; nor could we at any Time more properly examine the Subject*; since it is to the repeated Deliverances of this Day, that we owe our Exemption from those Usurpations and Inhumanities, which would have deprived us of the Liberty of arguing, or even of complaining. How justly the Church of *Rome* is charged with persecuting Principles and Practices, you have heard: and blessed be God that you have only heard it †. How absurd those Principles, and how criminal those

* *N. B.* This Sermon was preach'd Nov. 5, 1735.

† *N. B.* This particularly refers to a Sermon on the *Persecuting Principles and Practices of the Church of Rome*, with which the Author had concluded his Course of Lectures against Popery last Year. What is most important in that Discourse may be seen, with much greater Advantage, in Dr. *Grosvenor's* Sermon at *Salter's-Hall*, on the same Subject;

those Practices are, I am now to shew you. And amongst a Variety of Scriptures, which might have been prefixed to such a Discourse, I could think of none more proper than this which I have now been reading.

Our Lord was now going up to *Jerusalem*, at one of the great Feasts; probably that of *Tabernacles*: and as he then came from *Galilee*, he thought it proper to pass through *Samaria*. This was the directest Road, which it was then perhaps necessary for him to take, in order to his being at *Jerusalem* in due Time. You well know that in this Country, *i. e.* on Mount *Gerizim*, there was a Temple built as a Rival to that on Mount *Zion*, to which the *Samaritans*, who after their Way kept the three great annual Feasts appointed by *Moses*, were probably at this Time preparing to resort. But as our Lord appeared to be passing by this Temple, and setting his Face towards that where the *Jews* worshipped, these bigotted *Samaritans* denied him the common Rites of Hospitality, and would not suffer him and his Attendants so much as to refresh themselves at any of their Inns; which seems to be all the Favour they now asked. This was indeed very outrageous and inhumane Treatment, and the Apostles *James* and *John*, who were now present, resented it with a great deal of Warmth. Full of Zeal, and as they imagined of Piety and of Faith too, they only ask Leave of our Lord to command Fire from Heaven upon these unreasonable and wicked Men, assuring themselves that if an Affront offer'd to the Prophet *Elijah*, even by the express Command of the King of *Israel*, were once and again thus severely aveng'd, the Artillery of Heaven would be yet more ready to plead the Cause of the Son of God, when thus affronted, perhaps by some of the meanest of the People.

How far they would have extended the Execution, if our Lord had favoured their Motion, we cannot certainly say: perhaps it had reach'd farther than the Persons from whom the Offence directly came, and might have laid the whole City in Ashes. 'Tis certain, that a Judgment, inflicted in such a miraculous way, would have

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been

Subject; which is full of that easy, but penetrating and convincing Eloquence, of which he is so eminent a Master.

been less liable to Objection, than if secular Power had been arm'd on the Occasion. Yet our gentle and compassionate Redeemer, far from indulging their Request, very faithfully reproves it, and expressly says, *Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of; i. e.* "You neither consider the Difference which there is between the Genius of the *Mosaick* and the *Christian* Dispensation; nor do you sufficiently weigh the secret Motives, which influence you on this Occasion: for, if you did, you would see there is something of Pride, and personal Revenge, mingling itself with your Zeal for God, your Affection to me, and my Kingdom. Your Proposal is, on the whole, most unsuitable; and, as such, I absolutely reject it. *For the Son of Man is not come to destroy Mens Lives, but to save them.* 'The general Design of my Appearance is most benevolent and gracious, and I am determin'd still to act agreeably to it, and to exert my miraculous Power in Works of Kindness, rather than of Terror; for the Preservation of Mankind, and not for their Destruction."

Now, surely, if our Lord thus severely rebuked his Disciples for the Proposal they here made, he would have censured them, with much greater Displeasure, if they had talked of using his Interest amongst the *Jews*, to raise an Army to ravage *Samaria* by Fire and Sword; and, on the same Principle, to spread Desolation over the Face of the whole Earth, wherever they and their Doctrine had not met with a favourable Reception. The Argument urged in the Text would have concluded against this with equal and superior Force: *The Son of Man came not to destroy Mens Lives, but to save them.*

You see then, how properly these Words may be used, to introduce a Discourse against Persecution on any religious Account: I shall therefore, without any farther Preface, go on,

I. To state what I apprehend to be the Christian Doctrine on this Head, as opposed both to the Tenets and Practices of the *Romish* Church, with regard to it.

II. To shew, by some plain Arguments, the Absurdity and Iniquity of Persecution, for Conscience-sake.

III. To

III. To answer some of the most plausible Considerations which have been urged in Defence of it. After which I shall,

IV. Conclude with some practical Improvements of the whole.

I should abundantly exceed the Limits of a single Discourse, if I were not to content myself with a few short Hints on each of these Heads, which have furnished out copious Matter for several large Volumes. And I hope, those who have had an Opportunity of enquiring most accurately into the Subject, and of perusing what has been written upon it, by some of the most celebrated Persons of our Age and Nation, will not be displeas'd with such a short Survey of what seems most material on both Sides the Question. And it may be highly necessary for others, who have not such Leisure or Abilities, and who, for want of having the Matter fairly and clearly stated, may fall into Sentiments very injurious to the Honour of their Profession, and the Peace of their Minds.

I. I am to propose what I take to be the *Christian* Doctrine on this Head; and to offer some previous Remarks toward stating the Question aright, and preventing Mistakes which often embarrass it.

I say, the *Christian* Doctrine, lest, if I call it the *Protestant*, any should question the Propriety of the Expression. It is indeed too plain, that our first Reformers, when they separated from other Corruptions of the *Romish* Church, retain'd this unhappy Principle: "That Error and Heresy are to be extirpated by Violence; and that the Conduct of some pious Princes amongst the *Jews*, in destroying Idolaters, is to be a Model for Christian Magistrates." This was not the Opinion of the pious *Calvin* alone, whatever Pleasure some may now take in heaping distinguished Infamy on him; but 'tis much easier to make a large Catalogue of those in *England*, as well as Abroad, who maintain'd this Tenet, than of those who oppos'd it. Nor indeed can we justly wonder, that the whole System of Truth did not break in upon them at once. We have great Reason to

be thankful, that they were enabled to lay such a Foundation, and that others, in succeeding Ages, have, in any measure, rais'd and improv'd the Superstructure: yet I will not presume to say, that all Protestants are now agreed in what I take to be the Truth here; it would be much for the Credit, and much for the Interest of their Cause, if they were: and we ought earnestly to pray, that God, by his Spirit of Goodness and Love, would purge out the Remainder of that old Leaven, which still fours the Hearts of some. But, I persuade myself, I am about to represent Sentiments, in which Multitudes of worthy and excellent Men, of all Parties amongst us, concur; and they seem to be breaking in on Mens Minds with a growing Light: May it *shine more and more, until the perfect Day!* The Protestant Doctrine on this Head, so far as Protestants are consistent with themselves, seems plainly to be this: "That
 " none are to be subjected to any Kind or Degrees of
 " civil Penalties, merely on account of their religious
 " Opinions, or for any Practices arising from them, if
 " those Practices be not detrimental to the Peace of
 " Society, which the Magistrate, by his Office, stands
 " engaged to preserve."

We readily allow, that if any Man's religious Principles carry him on to any Actions injurious to others, in their Persons or Properties, he is to be restrained and punished, as any other Offender might be. Should any Man, for instance, offer his Son as a Sacrifice to *Moloch*, he would justly be treated as a Murderer, notwithstanding any Plea of Conscience which he might pretend to make. For the Magistrate has no Business with Conscience, which is intirely under the Jurisdiction of God, but must never be allow'd as an Excuse for an Action injurious to others; for this very obvious Reason, that if it should be so allow'd, there would be no Room for any penal Laws at all, and consequently all civil Government would be overthrown. For a bold and impudent Malefactor would never fail to have Recourse to this easy and unanswerable Apology, if his Judges were so weak as to admit it. Nor can we indeed imagine any blacker Villainies, than those which some have pretended to commit for Conscience-sake.

We likewise grant, on the same Principle as before, that if any Man's Religion necessarily subject him to the Obedience of a foreign Prince, the Government under which he is born and protected, has a Right, by the grand Law of Self-preservation, to insist on some more than ordinary Security for his good Behaviour in such Circumstances. And this is evidently the Case of the Papists amongst us. They are under such Obligations in Conscience to obey the Pope, and to submit themselves to whatsoever Prince he shall see fit to establish here, that they are at best but very precarious Subjects to that Royal Family which the gracious Providence of the Almighty has been pleas'd to fix on the Throne of these Nations; especially while there is a Pretender to that Throne devoted to the See of *Rome*, and espoused by it. Justly therefore may the present Government insist on such Security from them, as it does not demand from other Subjects. And if in Consequence of this, some Hardships should fall on a few peaceable and well-disposed Persons, who are too wise and honest to act to the utmost of what their own Principles would warrant, it must be borne as an Inconvenience inseparable from present Circumstances. And perhaps 'tis an Inconvenience less than those very Persons might suffer, from the Establishment of a Religion so oppressive and tyrannical, as Popery always appears, when it comes to be array'd with the Robe of the Magistrate, and arm'd with his Sword. However, it is a Pleasure to every good-natur'd Protestant, to think, that what they can suffer by the Laws put in Execution against them, is not very extreme; and that they suffer this, not for believing Transubstantiation, or Purgatory, nor for praying to Saints, or bowing down before Images; but merely for acknowledging the Supremacy of the Pope, a Doctrine so hurtful to all other supreme Authority, that 'tis amazing all the Princes in *Europe* have not long ago renounc'd it with the utmost Disdain.

Allowing for such Cases as these, which are not properly Exceptions, we still maintain our Proposition in its utmost Extent; and assert, that unless God, the Searcher of Hearts, is pleas'd to interpose by a special Revelation,

tion, (which there is now no Reason to believe he will ever do) taking the Matter on the Principle of human Reason, or of the Christian Religion, no Man is to suffer the least Degree of Punishment, either in his Person or Property, on account of his religious Opinions, or of any Practice consequent upon them, which is not an overt Act, plainly inconsistent with the publick Peace, and punishable in another Subject. They who are for a Toleration limited, as good Mr. *Baxter* us'd unhappily to express it, "to Errors which are not quite intolerable;" and would have such punished at least with Fines and Imprisonments, if not with greater Severities, seem not to be aware of the Consequences of their own Scheme: and, as Dr. *Owen* very forcibly speaks, in his excellent Treatise of Toleration *, "They had need to examine their Light; for their Tenet must lead down to the Chambers of Blood." We do not indeed pretend to say, that the Magistrate is obliged to make such Provision for maintaining and accommodating those whom he apprehends to be Teachers of Error, as he may for those who are of his own Sentiments, and consequently, whom he believes on the Side of Truth. This would be carrying Matters to an Excess; but surely, he has no Right to inflict any Penalties upon them, nor, in any Degree, to abridge them in those Liberties, which peaceable Subjects are entitled to. And if he may exclude any from such Places of civil Trust, as their Capacity, Experience and Fidelity might otherwise qualify them for, merely because their religious Persuasions, and their Modes of Worship, differ from his own, it is upon Principles which I am yet to learn; nor can I perceive at present, how they are to be reconciled with those of a Christian, and a Protestant.

You will easily imagine, what Reason I had to be thus particular in stating, and in guarding my Proposition. I proceed,

II: To

* Which, by the Way, goes on as large Principles, as Mr. *Locke's* afterwards did, and contains what is most essential in the Controversy.

II. To offer some obvious, but important Considerations, for the Proof it.

And here I shall particularly shew, that Persecution, for Conscience-sake, in all its Kinds and Degrees, is built on the absurd Supposition, that one Man has a Right to judge for another, in Matters of Religion;—That it contradicts the grand Principle of doing to others, as we would think it reasonable they should do to us;—That 'tis by no means calculated to answer the End pretended to be aimed at by it;—but, on the other Hand, tends to introduce a great deal of Mischief and Confusion, and to overthrow Truth and Religion in the World.—On these Accounts, 'tis inconsistent with natural Religion;—and it appears from the whole Tenor of the Christian Revelation, that it is most contrary to that.

1. Persecution for Conscience-sake, *i. e.* inflicting Penalties on Men, merely for their religious Principles or Worship, is plainly founded on an absurd Supposition, that one Man has a Right to judge for another, in Matters of Religion.

How absurd this Supposition is, has been fully proved at large, by many excellent Writers in this Controversy; and you have, no doubt, often heard, how contemptibly weak those Arguments are, by which the *Romish* Church would appropriate this Right to itself. Nevertheless, absurd as their Pretence to Infallibility is, I confess there is much more Consistency in the Persecutions of those who claim such a Privilege, than of those who acknowledge they are destitute of it. Can any Man, with the least Colour of Reason, pretend that I have a Right to judge for myself, and yet punish me for using it? That is, for doing that which he acknowledges I have a Right to do. To plead for it, would be a direct Contradiction in Terms. And if it should be said, as some have most weakly asserted, that the Erroneous are to be punished, not for their Opinions, but for their Actions in Consequence of those Opinions, I would then enquire, for what Actions? And how are these Actions condemned? Not on account of their Tendency to disturb and annoy the Publick; for that Case has already been

been excluded from the Charge of Persecution: and, when that is excluded, I repeat the Question, How are those Actions condemned? Why, the Persecutor must say, "I know them to be contrary to the divine Law." But, how do you prove, that you are not mistaken? If you allow of Argument on the Head, you give up the Cause of Persecution so far. If you wave Argument, you only, in effect, say, "The Actions are wrong, because I condemn them; *i. e.* in other Words, I am infallible, I am to judge for myself and you; and, by a Parity of Reason, for all the World besides." And who might not make that Pretence? Or, how should it ever be decided but by the Sword, in the present Circumstances?

2. Persecution is most evidently inconsistent with that obvious and fundamental Principle of Morality, That we should do to others, as we could reasonably desire they should do to us.

This is a Rule which carries its own Demonstration along with it; and it was intended on purpose to take off that Bias of Self-Love, which would draw us aside from the strait Line of Equity, and lead us to be partial Judges between our Neighbours and ourselves. Now, I would ask the Advocate of wholesome Severities, How he would relish his own Arguments, if they were turned upon himself? What if he were to go Abroad into the World, amongst Papists, if he be a Protestant; amongst Mahometans, if he be a Christian? Supposing he was to behave like an honest Man, like a good Neighbour, like a peaceable Subject; avoiding whatever would injure and provoke, and taking all Opportunities to serve and oblige those about him: would he think that, merely because he refused to follow his Neighbours to their Altars, or their Mosques, he should be seiz'd and imprison'd, his Goods confiscated, and his Person condemn'd to Tortures, or Death? Undoubtedly, he would complain of this as a very great Hardship. And what if one, who heard him plead for religious Severities at Home, were to remind him of it, would he not be wounded with his own Arrows? What could he answer? "I am in the right and these Peo-
ple

“ ple are in the wrong.” Nay, would the Inquisitor, or the *Turk*, cry full as loudly as he, “ But we are in the Right:” and they might justly add, “ With what Face can you complain of us, for treating you in such a Manner, as, you must confess, you should think yourself bound in Conscience to treat us, if we were in your Power, -as you are in ours ?” Surely, a Man would see the Absurdity and Injustice of such a Treatment, when it fell upon him ; when, with such *Measure* as he had *meted* to others, *it was measured* to him *again*. And accordingly, I must observe, as many have done, that the Effect of this Argument is so cogent, that those who, when they have had the Power in their own Hands, have been least willing to tolerate others, have immediately found new Light breaking in upon them, as soon as they have needed Toleration themselves.

3. Persecution is evidently absurd, as 'tis, by no means, calculated to answer the End which its Patrons profess to intend by it.

I say, which they profess to intend: for if the Priests do really intend to make the Laity Slaves, that they may exalt their own Empire, and increase their Possessions, it may indeed very probably answer that End ; and these holy Men may make themselves fat with the Sin and Plunder of the People, and purchase Church-Lands with the Price of their Blood. But, to save Appearances at least, they profess to intend the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Men ; for so you know the Forms of the Inquisition run, “ To answer to sundry Questions relating to their SOULS HEALTH, as well as the Correction of their Manners and Excesses.” Now, I beseech you, let it be seriously considered, how Persecution can be like to do good to Mens Souls.

To be sure, if it does them good at all, it must be, by making them truly religious. But what is true Religion ? Is it to repeat a Creed, or subscribe a Confession, to wear a Name, or perform a Ceremony ? If it be, I am sure Religion is much changed from what it was, when the Scriptures were writ : and the Nature of God

God must be intirely changed too, before such a Religion can be acceptable to him, or before it can have the least Value in his Sight.

True Religion must be founded in the inward Conviction of the Mind, or 'tis impossible it should be what yet it must be, *a reasonable Service* *. And pray let it be considered what Violence and Persecution can do, towards producing such an inward Conviction. It cannot to be sure do it immediately by its own Power; because 'tis a Demonstration, that will at the same Moment suit both the Parts of a Contradiction. And 'tis certain a Man might as reasonably expect to bind an immaterial Spirit with a Cord, or to beat down a Wall by an Argument, as to convince the Understanding by Threats or by Tortures. They may indeed make a Man mad, but 'tis the hardest Thing in the World to imagine how they should ever make him wise.

Not immediately, you will say: we grant that. But mediately they may; as by these Severities his Mind may be awakened to attend to Arguments; thus a rational Conviction may be introduced: and *the Rod and Reproof may give Wisdom* †. But I confess I cannot see how a Man is the more likely to judge of an Argument because he hears it on the Rack, or because he sees the Lath, or perhaps the Sword over his Head, and trembles lest he should not believe it. Far from opening the Mind to fair Conviction, methinks it should rather prejudice a Man against it; as it would give him some Aversion even to a Draught otherwise agreeable, to have it forced down by such Methods as a Drench is given to a Horse. There is, if you will pardon the Expression, a kind of an Elasticity in the human Mind; and the more violently it is press'd down and bent, the more forcibly does it endeavour to expand itself again. But if this were to be put out of the Question, we may depend upon it that none will ever have the better Opinion of any Religion because it makes its Professors very bad Men; and so they will undoubtedly think their Persecutors to be.

Nay

* Rom. xii. 1.

† Prov. xxix. 15.

Nay, indeed, I should rather think that if they were pretty well satisfied in the Religion of their Country before, the very Thought of its being defended and obtruded on by others in this brutish and unnatural Way, would be enough to raise some secret Suspicions to its Disadvantage *: Suspicions which perhaps might prevail, and impress the Mind more strongly, where Men were not allow'd to give any Vent to them; or even to propose their Doubts, lest it should be look'd upon as a crafty Way of insinuating their Heresies, and should be a Word spoken against their Estates, or perhaps against their Lives. On the whole, as you have often been told, Persecution is much more likely to make Men Hypocrites than sincere Converts. They may perhaps, if they have not a firm Integrity, and heroick Courage, change their Profession, while they retain their Sentiments; and, supposing them before to have been unwarily in the wrong, may learn, I will not say to barter away Honesty for Truth, (though that were a Traffick which no wise Man would covet) but rather to add Falshood and Villainy to Error. How glorious a Prize after all! especially, when we consider, at what an Expence it is gain'd. Which leads me to add,

4. That Persecution evidently tends to produce a great deal of Mischief and Confusion in the World.

It may truly be said, where Persecution is, and that Zeal, and Rage which is inseparable from it, *there is Confusion, and every evil Work* †. 'Tis mischievous to those on whom it falls, and in its Consequences mischievous to others too; so mischievous, that one would wonder, that any wise Princes should ever have admitted it into their Dominions; or that they should not immediately banish it thence. This follows, in part, from what I said under the former Head of my Discourse; even where it succeeds so far, as to produce a Change in Mens Forms of Worship, it generally makes them no more than hypocritical Professors of what they do

* If there be on Earth a Way to render the most sacred Truth suspected, it is supporting it with Threats, and pretending to terrify Men into the Belief of it.

Sbasif. Char. Vol. III. p. 107.

† James iii. 16.

do not believe; and this must undoubtedly debauch their Characters: so that having been Villains in one respect, it is very probable they will be so in another; and having brought Deceit and Falshood into their Religion, they will easily bring it into their Conversation and Commerce.

This Effect Persecution will have where it is yielded to. In other Respects, it will be yet more immediately and apparently mischievous where it is opposed. And 'tis probable it will be often opposed, by those who have certainly a Title to the greatest Protection and Favour of the Government; I mean upright and conscientious Men. An honest Mind, zealous for what it apprehends to be the Cause of Truth, and animated by the Thoughts of the divine Presence and Protection, will learn to say of *Bonds and Imprisonments*, and even of Tortures, as *St. Paul* did, *none of these things move me, in such a Cause, neither count I my Life dear unto me* *. As *Mr. Boyle* very justly and finely expresses it †: “ Personal Sufferings, which a well-meaning Man undergoes for his Conscience, are but such a kind of Burthen to his Mind, as Feathers to an Eagle or a Falcon; which though in themselves considered they have a Weight, in the Situation in which they are placed about him, enable him to soar towards Heaven, and to reach a Height which makes him prais'd and wonder'd at by Beholders.” Nay, perhaps where there is no true Religion, a native Sense of Honour in a generous Mind may encourage it to endure some Hardships for the Cause of Truth; not to say that sometimes on the Principles we hinted above, “ Obstinacy may rise as the Understanding is oppress'd, and continue its Opposition for a while, merely to avenge the Cause of its injur'd Liberty ‡.”

And it is farther to be remember'd, that where the Persecution is not very extreme, and sometimes even where it is, Spectators are brought to judge more favourably of the Cause thus violently oppos'd, when they observe the Fortitude with which the Patrons of it endure

* Acts xx. 24.
Ethiop. p. 353.

† *Occas. Medit.* p. 147.

‡ *Ludolph's*

endure Handships and Severities, from which they might otherwise deliver themselves at so easy a rate. Thus *Tertullian* boasts to *Scapula*, under all the Butcheries he exercised at *Carthage*; "Our Sect, says he, is built up
 " by your Endeavours to destroy it. The very Sight of
 " our Patience in Sufferings awakens Men's Consciences
 " to enquire into the Cause of it; and that Inquiry
 " leads them to discover the Truth, and embrace it,
 " even though it expose them to the same Sufferings *." This made the *Blood of the Martyrs*, what it was so often called, the *Seed of the Church*. And something of the same Spirit has appeared in succeeding Ages. Now in proportion to the Degree in which a prohibited Religion spreads, Persecution must spread and propagate itself, and its Desolations. And at this Rate, if the Persecution be severe, (as it must be in order to a Victory) how many Persons, how many Families, must be undone by it? For 'tis apparent, that in many Instances what one suffers for the Case of his Conscience, draws Ruin on a Family, perhaps on many Families dependent on him, wherein some may hardly know their Right-hand from their Left. I might also mention the Encouragement hereby given to Informers, who generally in such Cases are the vilest and most infamous of Mankind: and might discourse copiously on the Animosities hereby rais'd amongst Neighbours, on the Discouragement of honest Industry, and the Injury done to Trade and Commerce †. But I rather chuse to refer these and many more Calamities, which stream forth from this bitter
 Fountain,

* Nec tamen deficiet hæc Secta quam tunc magis ædificari scias cum cædi videtur. Quisque enim tantam Tolerantiam spectans, ut aliquo Scrupulo percussus & inquirere accenditur, quid sit in Causa, & ubi cognoverit veritatem, & ipse statim sequitur.

Tert. ad Scop. ad fin.

† I doubt not but on this Occasion many of my Readers will recollect that the *Dutch* were some of the first Protestant States which allowed a universal Toleration; to which, as Sir *William Temple* most justly observes, "they owe the continued and undisturbed Peace of
 " their Government, and the mighty Increase of their People;
 " wherein will appear to consist chiefly the vast Growth of their
 " Trade, and Riches; and consequently, the Strength and Greatness
 " of their State."

Temple's Netherl. C. v. p. 208.

Fountain, to your own Reflection, which may easily enlarge on the melancholy Subject.

Now when so much must be sacrificed to publick Orthodoxy and Uniformity, who can wonder if such a Degree of *Oppression make a wise Man mad*, and force Multitudes into desperate Measures, most destructive to the Community? Who can wonder if an injur'd and persecuted People rise up, I will not say in Rebellion, for it deserves not that infamous Name, but in a just and generous Vindication of their Liberties; and even when the Event is most hazardous, chuse rather to die warm with their Swords in their Hands, than to perish perhaps by the artificial Cruelties of a lingering Execution, or to starve in the Darknes and Solitude of a Dungeon?

How many Wars, and how great Confusions have by this means arisen in *Great-Britain, Ireland, France, Germany, the Low Countries*, and various other Places, even since the opening of the Reformation; it is not for a few Moments, or indeed a few Hours, to recount. But I take it for granted, that few of you are intirely unacquainted with these Things, which make up one of the most instructive, though at the same time, the most melancholy Parts of History. As the Consequence of all, it has generally been found both at Home and Abroad, that Ecclesiastical and Civil Tyranny has been either established or expelled together; and that wherever this Dragon has kept its Seat, it has devoured the Glory of the Land around it, and heap'd Infamy and Misery on its Inhabitants. It has mark'd its Way by Desolations; so that one may well apply to the Bands of Persecutors, what *Joel* says of the Armies of Locusts and Caterpillars, when the Country is *like the Garden of Eden before them, 'tis behind them a desolate Wilderness* *. And surely were not the Remainder of their Wrath to be restrained, Religion and Truth would be buried in the Ruins. Which leads me to add,

5. The Christian Religion, which we here suppose to be the Cause of Truth, must, humanly speaking, be not only obstructed but destroyed, should persecuting Principle universally prevail.

Let.

* *Joel* ii. 3.

Let us for Argument's sake suppose, what I am sure we have no Reason to believe, that in some particular Countries it might be a Means of promoting and establishing the Purity of the Gospel, yet it must surely be a great Impediment to its Progress. What wise Prince, who was a Heathen or a Mahometan, would ever admit Christian Preachers, if he knew that it was a Principle of their Religion, that as soon as the Majority of the People were converted by Arguments, the rest, and himself amongst them, if he continued obstinate, must be profelyted or extirpated by Fire and Sword? Surely if this were known to be the Case, the secular Power would at once seize on such Missionaries as publick Enemies, and condemn the whole Sect on this single Tenet, whatever their other Doctrines or Precepts might be.

Nay farther, if it be, as the Advocates for Persecution generally suppose, a Dictate of the Law of Nature, that the true Religion is to be propagated by the Sword, then 'tis certain that a Mahometan or an Idolater with the same Notion, supposing himself to have Truth on his Side (as no doubt many of them do suppose, and also admitting the Principle we contest) must think himself obliged in Conscience, if he have an Opportunity to do it, to arm his Powers for the Extirpation of Christianity. Thus a holy War must commence over the Face of the whole Earth, in which nothing but a Miracle could render Christians successful against so vast a Disproportion in Numbers. Now I think it hard to believe that to be a Truth, which would naturally lead to the Extirpation of Truth in the World; or that a Divine Religion should carry in its Bowels the Principle of its own Destruction.

If these Reasonings be admitted, then Persecution will by the Light of Nature appear so absurd, so unjust, and so mischievous a Thing, that it ought to be rejected with Abhorrence; unless it should be warranted and required by a Divine Revelation, which had such Degrees of Evidence as should be sufficient to overballance that strong Objection against it, which would arise from the Consideration we have now been urging. But on this
Head

Head we need have no Apprehension, for I am to shew you,

6. That Persecution is so far from being required, or encouraged by the Gospel, that it is most directly contrary to many of its Precepts, and indeed to the whole Genius of it.

A Mahometan may perhaps prove from his *Alcoran* *, that the true Faith is to be propagated by the Sword, and that Hereticks and Unbelievers are to be cut off or made tributary; but if a Christian plead in favour of Persecution, while he has his New Testament in his Hand, in an intelligible Language, he must be condemn'd out of his own Mouth. 'Tis condemn'd by the Example of Christ, *who went about doing good* †, *who came not to destroy Mens Lives but to save them*; who waved the Exercise of his miraculous Power against his Enemies, not only in this Instance in the Text, but even when they most unjustly and cruelly assaulted him ‡; and never exerted it in one single Instance that we read of, to inflict Death or any corporal Punishment even on those who had almost justly deserved it: his Doctrine also as well as his Example has taught us, *To be harmless as Doves, to love our Enemies, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us* ||. And will a Maxim like that allow us to persecute others? When *Peter* desired leave to smite with the Sword, though drawn in so just a Cause, Christ commanded him to *put it up in its Sheath again* §; and he declared before *Pilate*, that *his Kingdom was not of this World* **; which he expressly mentions as a Reason why he did not arm secular Power to plant or to defend it.

As for the Apostles they declared, agreeably to the Example and Precepts of their Master, that the Power they had received was *for Edification and not for Destruction* ††, that *the Weapons of their Warfare were not carnal* ||||, and

* Alcoran, Cap. 2, 4, 5, ad pass.

† Acts x. 38.

‡ John xviii. 6.

|| Mat. v. 44.

§ John

xviii. 11.

** John xix. 9.

†† 2 Cor. x. 8.

|||| 2 Cor. x. 4.

and that the Servant of the Lord, the Christian Minister, was not to strive, but in meekness to instruct those who opposed themselves *. They inculcated it as of the highest Importance, that Religion must be a reasonable Service †, and that bodily Exercise, which is the utmost Persecution can extort, profited but little ‡, and was a Thing of a most different Nature from true Godliness. That the Strong ought to bear with the Infirmities of the Weak ||. And in a Word, that Christians must in the whole of their Conversation be harmless, as well as holy and undefiled, in the midst of a crooked and perverse Generation, shining amongst them, by these amiable Examples, as Lights in the World, and so hold forth the Word of Life §.

You well know, that these Passages are but a little Specimen of those which might be produced on such an Occasion. Most prudently therefore do the Popish Clergy wrest the New Testament out of the Hands of their People, before they venture to arm them with a Sword, to destroy others for their Religious Opinions.

These are the principal Arguments against Persecution which have occur'd to my Mind. You easily see they are chiefly pointed at high Severities; but if you consider them attentively, you will find that they proportionably conclude against every Degree of it, not excepting the lightest Pecuniary Fines, or Civil Incapacities. I am,

III. To touch on the chief Arguments which are urged in Defence of Penal Laws enacted for the pretended Security and Advancement of Religion.

Persecution is so harsh and so infamous a Word, that few will defend it. But under this milder Name they maintain the Thing, by pleading the Glory of God and the Good of Mankind, (sacred prostituted Names) the penal Laws of the Jewish Constitution, and a few tur'd Passages of the New Testament; which one would think

* 2 Tim. ii. 25.
 † Rom. xiv. 1.

‡ Rom. xii. 1.
 § Phil. ii. 13, 16.

‡ 1 Tim. iv. 8.

think mentioned to expose the Cause, rather than seriously to serve it.

1. The Glory of God is generally pleaded as an Apology for Persecution.

The Time is come, when those that slay his Servants are supposing they offer him an acceptable Service. "God, say they, is the God of Truth; and therefore the Cause of Truth is his Cause; and the Magistrate, who is in his Sphere the *Minister of God**, is to be a *Nursing Father* to his Church †, and to point the Sword he has received from him against those impious Persons, who will no otherwise be restrained from *perverting the right Ways of the Lord*."

Now it is most evident, this is taking for granted the Innocence and Morality of the Thing in the general, as well as the Infallibility of the Magistrate, or of the Priest, whose Executioner he must be. But if, as we have endeavour'd to prove above, Persecution in general is contrary to the Light of Nature and to the Christian Revelation, it must be great Impiety to pretend to consecrate it the Divine Glory. And a Man might on the same Principle lye and plunder, or even murder his Neighbour, could he but persuade himself that God would be honoured, as the Truth might be promoted by it, and take it for granted that the Goodness of the End must sanctify the Badness of the Means. *Paul* evidently determines the Matter otherwise, when he introduces a Man as excusing his own Lye, by its Tendency to promote the Truth of God; and overrules that Plea by observing, that if it were allowed, we *might do Evil that Good may come*. Which he accounted so abominable a Maxim, that he says *that the Damnation of such is just* †.

Yet, after all, if the preceding Arguments were to be waved, and we were to begin our Enquiry with examining what would be most for the Glory of God, and the Advancement of Truth, I am fully persuaded, that Persecution, instead of being established, must, on this Foundation, be exploded, and condemned. For, not

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* Rom. xiii. 4.

† Isa. xlix. 23.

‡ Rom. iii. 8.

to repeat what I said above, of the Improbability of fixing any rational Conviction by this Means; 'tis plainly a Dishonour to Truth, and therefore to God, to suppose, that it needs the Supports of secular Terrors, and that its Enemies must be suppressed by Violence. We then *sanctify the Lord our God in our Hearts*, when we are ready to give an Answer to those that enquire into the Foundations of our Religion, and our Hope, *with Meekness and Fear* *; and when we use those Methods with others, which are likely most effectually to engage them to render him a rational Service. But when we drag Men to his Altars, as unwilling Victims, and attempt to bind them otherwise than with the *Cords of a Man, and the Bonds of Love* †, he may surely reject our forward and officious Zeal, as an Affront; and say, *Who has required these things at your Hands* ‡? The same Answer will, in a great Measure, serve for the second Plea in favour of Persecution: which is,

2. That it may tend to promote the Happiness of Mankind.

If we will believe those, who have sometimes a Crocodile's Tear to shed over those whom they are devouring, all the Severity they use to Mens Bodies, is in mere Mercy to their Souls. But 'tis hard to say, how this can be an Argument for putting them to Death, in what they call a damnable Error; as an ill-natur'd Man may call any Error, and an Inquisitor must, of course, call that which he makes capital. I know they will answer, 'tis for the Good of others, that they may be deterr'd from the like pestilent Heresy. But I endeavoured to shew before, that such a Course was much more likely to prejudice and to exasperate, and to debauch Mens Minds, than to recover or secure them. And here their most plausible Answer is, that tho' it should be granted, that the first Converts of Violence are insincere, yet at least succeeding Generations, being educated in the Bosom of the Church, and the Forms of the true Religion, may cordially imbibe it, even to their everlasting Salvation. A rich Equivalent, as some may think, for present Inconveniencies to others! But I see not that we

* 1 Peter iii, 15.

† Hof. xi, 4.

‡ Isa. i, 12.

can be obliged to introduce so much Confusion and Misery in our own Days, out of Regard to Posterity, any more than to burn up the Produce of our own Fields and Plantations, that the Ashes may meliorate the Soil, and render 'it more fruitful to those that come after us. If such an Expedient were not likely to answer, even that End, it illustrates the Subject so much the more. For we may naturully expect to find, in the Hearts of Children, a deep Resentment of the Wrong done to their Parents, and even to their remoter Ancestors: nor is it any uncommon Case at all, for an Aversion or Attachment to particular Notions and Forms, to prove hereditary; especially when young Persons, so exceedingly jealous of their Liberty, as at their Age they are, apprehend a Religion to be forced upon them, contrary to that which their Ancestors bravely defended, at the Expence of their Estates and their Lives; or which they unwillingly seem'd to renounce, for the Preservation of them. 'Tis exceeding probable, that the Penal Laws, by which Idolatry was imposed on the *Jews*, in some Years of the *Babylonish* Captivity, might contribute greatly to give them that Aversion to it, which has been transmitted through so many following Ages. And the Contempt, which both the *Spaniards* and *Portuguese* put on those whom they call new Christians, (that is, whose Ancestors, most of them above two hundred Years ago *, were obliged, by Violence, to profess Christianity) seems plainly to intimate, that they secretly suspect them to be *Jews* or *Mahometans* in their Hearts, as many of themselves declare themselves to be, when they escape into a Land of Liberty †.

Yet,

* The *Morisco's* were expell'd *Spain*, A. D. 1492, and the Inquisition erected about four Years after.

† It is very remarkable to this Purpose, that *Orebio* the *Jew*, in his Conference with *Limborch*, freely acknowledges, That, in *Spain* and *Portugal*, all the Monasteries and Nunneries are full of *Jews*: that many Canons, Inquisitors, and Bishops, being descended from *Jewish* Parents, are still *Jews* in their Hearts; tho', for temporal Advantages, they profess to be *Christians*. Some of these, he says, repent, and, if they can, escape into other Countries; of which he himself was one: who confesses, he had often complied with the Idolatries of the Place. — *Ego qui toties miser genua Baali flexi, peccaturs*

Yet, perhaps, many of more pious Dispositions, and more tender Tempers than those of whom I have been now speaking, may be ready to plead, that unlimited Toleration will leave Room for writing and publishing the most pernicious Books; whereby the Principles of young and unexperienced Minds may easily be corrupted, and Heresy and Profaneness introduced into the rising Generation; and, with it that Licentiousness of Practice, which generally attends such an Apostacy from the Truth.

I acknowledge, that the Plea seems to have a considerable Weight; but I desire it may be seriously examined, whether the Mischief of such a Restraint be not yet greater than the Advantages of it? Might not the most excellent and useful Writings of the best Men be suppressed on this Principle? Nay, is it not on this Principle, that the Bible itself is prohibited in Popish Countries? Some Inconveniencies arise from every imaginable Constitution: 'tis the Part of Wisdom to choose that which is attended by the fewest and the least, and to apply the most proper Remedies to *them*. If Toleration be abus'd, as the Means of sowing Tares amongst the Wheat, let it teach all, and especially those who have the Care of young Persons, to be so much the more watchful over their Charge, to keep them out of the Way of Infection, or to furnish them with proper Antidotes against it. But let not those, who would approve themselves the Patrons of Truth, act as if they thought Religion such a scandalous Cause, that it must suffer by the Freedom of Inquiry, and could only be safe under the Covert of Darknes.

On the whole, let the Friends of the Truth fairly propose its Evidences, and shew its Influence too, by the Candor of their Temper, and the Benevolence and Use-

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fulness

catum meum ego recordor, &c. Jud. Script. Test. N^o. 4. p. 102. And *Limborch* afterwards declares, that *Orobic* had himself own'd, that the *Jews in Spain* are taught by their Parents, that, in order to escape the Inquisition, it is lawful to profess Christianity, while they deny it in their Hearts; and to confirm that Profession by swearing on the Cross, and by eating Swine's Flesh, &c. *Limb. Resp. ad Scrip.* III. Cap. V. p. 178.

fulness of their Lives; and if its Enemies raise Objections, as against what Cause may not Objections be raised? let us give them a fair Consideration, and endeavour to expose the Sophistry and Weakness of them, in a plain, rational and convincing Manner, in the Spirit of Meekness and Serenity. We may then hope, thro' the concurrent Influences of divine Grace, that the Souls of Men will be established, even by the Attempts made to pervert them; and that, in another Sense than the Apostle originally intended the Phrase, the *Trial of that Faith, which is far more precious than the purest Gold, (which, in succeeding Ages, perishes and wears out, tho' it have been tried in the Fire) will be found to Praise and Glory**. And if, (which may very probably be the Case) some who will eagerly listen to every Objection against the Truth, will not have the Patience to hear or examine its Defence, we must leave them to the final Judgment of *him, who searches the Hearts, and tries the Reins of the Children of Men* †. With so dishonest a Temper, a Name, or a Form, whatever it had been, could have done them but very little Good. 'Tis impossible for us to save Men against their own Wills; and I cannot see, that it will be any Part of Christian Charity, to put out their Eyes, or tie up their Hands, lest they should use them to the Injury of themselves or others.

If any should pretend, that we are to punish Heretics, and Infidels, that we may not make ourselves Partakers of other Mens Sins, and draw down the Judgments of God on the Nation in which we live: I answer, that this Argument so evidently takes it for granted, that Persecution is for the Glory of God, and will be a proper Expedient for promoting the true Religion, that what I have said, under the former Heads, is an abundant Answer to it. I shall not therefore enlarge on this as a distinct Topick, but proceed to another of much greater Importance.

3. The most plausible Argument, in Favour of the Doctrine we oppose, is taken from the Penal Laws, which made a Part of the *Jewish* Constitution.

It

* 1 Pet. i. 2.

† Jer. xi. 20.

It is urged here, that God did, in the strongest Terms, expressly appoint, that all who taught or practised Idolatry amongst the *Jerus*, should be punished with Death*; and that many severe Executions were accordingly done on this Statute: not only by the Prophet *Elijah* †, an extraordinary divine Messenger, but likewise by *Jehu* ‡, and *Josiah* §, and other Princes amongst them ||; who, far from being censur'd, were applauded and rewarded on this Account.

If we answer here, as we most easily and naturally do, that the merciful Genius of the Christian Dispensation is so different from the Rigour and Severity of the *Mosaic* Law, that no Argument can be drawn from the one to the other; it is pleaded, that this will at least serve to overthrow the greater Part of our Discourse, which was intended to prove the natural Absurdity and Immorality of Persecution; unless we will allow, what surely no Christian can, that a natural Immorality was made an essential Part of a divine Institution.

It will be proper, therefore, to examine this Matter a little more largely; which I shall the rather do, because I think it has seldom been handled with the Accuracy which it requires. Now, I apprehend, the Solution of this Difficulty will depend on considering, on the one Hand, the Limitations attending these Penal Laws; and, on the other, the peculiar Circumstances of the *Jerus*, to whom they were given.

1. Let us consider the Limitations which attended these Penal Laws.

They affected only the Inhabitants of the Land of *Canaan*; and animadverted only on some overt Act, whereby they publickly declared a Revolt from God to Idols.

There was no Commission given to the *Jerus*, to arm themselves for the Propagation of their Faith amongst their Heathen Neighbours; nor was there any express Law, to pursue any *Israelite* with the Sword, who settling

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among

* Deut. xiii. 6, 18.

† 1 Kings xviii. 40.

‡ 2 Kings x. 25.

§ 2 Kings xxiii. 20.

|| 2 Kings xi. 18.

among Idolaters in foreign Countries, should conform to the Religion of them. Tho', for Reasons afterwards to be mentioned, his Part in the Land of *Israel* would undoubtedly have been forfeited. And, 'tis farther to be remembered, that even with Regard to the Inhabitants themselves, the Law only took Cognisance of some overt Act of Revolt. Had God given a large Confession of Faith to the *Jews*, to every Article of which he had required them, on some high Penalties, to subscribe their Assent, a much stronger Objection against what I have advanced would have arisen from such a Constitution. But this was so far from being the Case, that the *Sadducees*, erroneous as they were in some of the most important Articles of natural as well as revealed Religion, were not only tolerated, but, without any direct Violation of the *Mosaick* Law, were frequently promoted to Offices of high Dignity and Authority. Now there is a most evident Difference between a Law thus limited, and an universal Allowance of Religious Severities, to *Jews* or others, in any such Circumstance as they should think fit. And, were the particular Reasons ever so unknown, the former might be allowed, as consistent with the divine Perfections, without laying a Foundation to infer that the latter might be so. As there was an apparent Difference between God's requiring *Abraham* to sacrifice *Isaac*, and his publishing a general Declaration, allowing any Parents whatsoever to sacrifice their Children, whenever they should suppose that the Glory of God, and the Interest of Religion, would be advanced by it. Thus the Limitation of these Penal Laws destroys the Argument which might be drawn from them, in Favour of Persecution in general. And, if it still appear a Difficulty, that, even with these Limitations, they should be enacted, I hope the Point may be yet more fully cleared up, by considering,

2. The peculiar Circumstances whereby the *Jews* were distinguished from all other People.

Now here, the extraordinary Discoveries which God made of himself amongst them, and the peculiar Manner in which he stood related to them, as their King, concur, both to vindicate the Equity of the Laws in Question, and to prove that no reasonable Consequence can be drawn

drawn from them, in Favour of Persecution, in any other Nation upon Earth.

It is surely of some Importance, to recollect the *extraordinary Discoveries* which God had made of himself to them, tho' the whole Stress of the Point does not lie here. The Miracles which he had wrought amongst them, in order to prove his Deity, and the Vanity of Idols, were of the most awakening and convincing Nature; and these were not only delivered to them by credible Report, as they are now delivered to us; but God was, from Age to Age, raising up Prophets, with a Power of renewing these Wonders before their Eyes. Nay, he had interwoven into their Constitution, certain periodical, and most extensive and obvious Miracles, not only in the extraordinary Fruitfulness of every sixth Year, (when, after the Ground had been exhausted in the five preceding Years, the poorest Harvest must naturally have been expected;) but also in the Safety of their Borders, tho' surrounded with Enemies, when all the Males were gone up to worship, even in the very Heart of their Country, as they were obliged to do three Times in the Year, between the Beginning of *March*, and the End of *September*; which is the most proper Time for Armies to be Abroad.

Now, God, the Searcher of all Hearts, might know, that nothing but obstinate and incorrigible Wickedness could make a Man an Idolater, in such Circumstances as these. And consequently, he might righteously condemn him to Death, and appoint his Fellow-Creatures to execute the Sentence. But no Argument can be drawn from thence for inflicting the like Punishment on another Person, who is not as expressly sentenced by the divine Law, and whose Opportunities of better Knowledge are not, and cannot be entirely the same.

But it is farther to be considered, as of the utmost Weight in the present Argument, that God also stood in a *peculiar Relation* to the People of *Israel*, as he was their temporal King, as well as their God. Their Government, as you well know, was different from that of all other Nations: it was indeed a *Theocracy*, as *Josephus* very justly calls it; their whole System of Civil Laws

being enacted by God, and their Magistrates appointed by him. And when they came to have Kings, as other Nations had, yet even these Kings were to be considered but as the Viceroys of God: as appears by their being obliged to transcribe his Law, when they begun their Reign; to consult his Oracle on all extraordinary Exigences; and, from his interposing in various Cases both in *Judah* and *Israel*, to transfer the Crown from one Person and Family, to another.

Now, in Consequence of this peculiar System of Government, God thought it proper, as it apparently was, to annex certain temporal Privileges to their Obedience to him; and they held their Estates, and Possessions in the fine Country they inhabited, not by one absolute Donation to them, and their Heirs for ever; but through succeeding Generations, as Tenants to the Crown, upon an express Condition of certain Homages to be paid to God, as the great Proprietor; renouncing all Dependence upon, and all Subjection to any of his Competitors. Now it was plainly equitable, that, as the Counterpart of these Advantages, they should be subjected to some peculiar temporal Punishments; if, while they claimed these Privileges, they falsified that Allegiance which was the Condition of them: in which Case they suffered, not merely as Idolaters, but as Traitors.

I will further add, that as God was determined, in the Course of his Providence, to send national Judgments upon them, in case of a national Revolt to Idolatry, which he accordingly always did, it was a merciful as well as just Severity, thus to animadvert, upon the first Appearances of this aggravated Crime, to which they were strongly inclined; and by which, if it prevailed amongst them, they must be universally undone.

But, as all these Circumstances were peculiar to the *Jews*, I hope you are, by this Time, fully convinced, that 'tis most absurd to draw an Argument in Favour of Religious Severities in general, from the Penal Laws of the *Mosaick* Institution*. I have been so large on this
Head,

* I have not mentioned the Argument which some have brought from *Jeb's* saying, that Idolatry is a *Wickedness to be punished by its Judge,*

Head, that I must only hint at those weak and contemptible Arguments which are brought,

4. From some abused Passages in the New Testament.

And indeed I should hardly mention them, but to expose them; and to shew to what wretched Straits ingenious and interested Men must be brought, when they will condescend to make Use of such Arguments: for, after all, to their Shame I must say, the chief Texts which I find produced for their Purpose, by Popish Writers, are two; which I am persuaded, a wise and honest Man might have read a thousand times before he had ever dreamt of such a Consequence from them. Christ gave *Peter* a Commission to *feed his Sheep* *; and that must, say some, imply a Power in the Church, and especially in the Pope, as the Head of it, to kill Wolves, that is, Hereticks. As if an Argument, from this figurative Expression, to so distant a Circumstance, could be allow'd against such strong Evidence, both of Scripture and Reason. But I must do them the Justice to say, their grand Argument is behind; and 'tis couch'd in those Words, *Compel them to come in* †. But, what Compulsion and Violence must be offered to these Words, before they will be of any Service in the Cause of Persecution! How often have they been told, that this relates only to friendly Importunity, like that which the Disciples used to engage Christ to spend the Evening with them at *Emaus*, when, as the Evangelist expresses it, *they constrained him* ‡? And how absurd it would be to suppose Servants out sent with Sword in Hand to force in Guests to an Entertainment, I think you will easily

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Judge, Job xxxi. 28. because 'tis so evident, that *Job* spake unadvisedly with his Lips, in some Instances, as he himself owns, *Job* xl. 3—8. xlii. 3—6. And I think, if we grant there were in his Days such a Law in *Arabia*, as made Idolatry capital, it can never be proved of divine Institution from these Words, any more than it can be argued from *Judab's* Sentence against *Tamar*, (*Gen.* xxxviii. 24.) that there was then a divine Law for executing Women while they were big with Child. * *John* xxi. 15, &c. † *Luke* xiv. 32. ‡ *Luke* xxiv. 29.

apprehend †. Another Argument a little more specious than either of these might be brought from the corporal Punishments inflicted on Blasphemers in the Apostle's Times ‖, but it is to be consider'd that these were the Effects of a miraculous Power, and consequently had a proper Tendency to convince the Understanding of the Sufferers and Spectators, of the divine Mission of those with whom the Hand of the Lord thus remarkably was. It is therefore most absurd to talk of substituting the Power of the Magistrate instead of these extraordinary Penalties, unless the Magistrate can inflict them the same Way; and then we will acknowledge they merit not the Name of Persecution, but come under that singular Exception which we admitted in the Beginning of the Discourse.

I have the Pleasure to assure you that these wretched Arguments, or rather empty Shadows of Argument, are the most material which I have seen produced from the New Testament in Favour of Religious Severities. 'Tis the Glory of that sacred Book, that it affords no better Arguments in so infamous a Cause. And I cannot forbear observing, that the Silence of the New Testament on this Head is a strong Argument against Persecution, and would have been so, had the Apostles omitted the many Passages before quoted, in which they seem directly to oppose it.

I know it may be said, the sacred Writers did not advise the primitive Christians to use Violence, because their Religion was then in its Infancy, and they had no Power in their Hands. Yet, one would imagine, that if the Apostles would have approv'd themselves honest Men on the Scheme we oppose, they should have laid in some Directions for future Times, and have instructed Chris-
tians

† I think the Word *ἀνάγκη* occurs but nine Times in the New Testament, Mat. xiv. 22. Mark vi. 45. Luke xiv. 23. Acts xxvi. 2. xxviii. 19. 2 Cor. xii. 11. Gal. ii. 3, 14. vi. 12. 'Tis only in the 4th and 5th of these Places, that it can refer to the Use of Secular Power. *Παραβίαζομαι* is used twice Luke xxiv. 29. Acts xvi. 15. and in both those Places can signify no more than friendly Impunity. ‖ Acts v. 5, 10. xiii. 11. 1 Cor. v. 15. 1 Tim. i. 20.

tians in the Use of their secular Power, when it was obtained; as the *Jews* were particularly directed in the Management of theirs. Especially since this is a Case in which *the Wrath of Man, which worketh not the Righteousness of God*, is so ready to throw about Firebrands, Arrows and Death.

Nor will it here be improper to remind you that there was at least one Prince converted to Christianity in the Apostles Time; I mean *Sergius Paulus*, Proconsul of *Cyprus*: yet we don't find *St. Paul* exhorting him to proselyte his Subjects by Violence, or even to inflict any Penalties on *Elymas* the Sorcerer, tho' he had been convicted of Error in so miraculous a Way, and tho' an inspir'd Apostle had call'd him, in his Presence, *a Child of the Devil and an Enemy of all Righteousness**.

I must also add here, that it is well known Masters amongst the *Greeks* and *Romans* had an unlimited Power over the Persons and Lives of their Slaves. Now if corporal Severities were ordinarily to have been used to promote the Gospel, we might have expected that the Apostles writing, as they so often do, of the Duty of Masters, should have added some Exhortations to them to compel their Slaves to embrace it. Yet nothing of that Kind occurs, which I think makes the negative Arguments as strong as one can well suppose a Negative Argument to be.

IV. I must conclude my Discourse with touching on those Reflections which I have left myself but little Time to enlarge upon.

1. Let us bless God that we are free from the Guilt of persecuting others, and the Misery of being persecuted ourselves.

Had we been born in *Spain* or *Portugal*, Education and Example might have corrupted our Judgment so much, that without farther Inquiry we might have taken it for granted, as a first Principle (as many there seem to do) that Hereticks are to be punished with Death.

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And

* Acts xiii. 10,

And on this Foundation we might have practis'd or applauded the greatest Inhumanities, perhaps towards the best of Men. We might have been presenting to God what is much worse than Robbery, even Murther *for a Burnt-offering*: and trusting in that for the Expiation of our other Offences, which is itself in the Number of the greatest Enormities which human Nature can commit. In such a Case I fear the Blindness and Ignorance of our Zeal would not have been allow'd as an Excuse for its pernicious Consequences. St. Paul calls himself the *Chief of Sinners* for those Severities which he exercised on Christians *ignorantly* *, and while he *verily thought* that it was his Duty to *do many Things against the Name of Jesus of Nazareth* †. And indeed, as Mr. Baxter well expresses it, in his masculine and lively Manner ‡, “ If Charity be a Grace most necessary to Salvation, then certainly it will not keep any Man from “ Damnation, that he had Malice and Uncharitableness enough to persuade him, that the Members of “ Christ were Children of the Devil, tho’ he persecuted “ them under that Notion.”

Let us be thankful that we are preserved from that Guilt, and let us also acknowledge it as an Instance of the divine Goodness to us, that we are not suffering by Persecution; that we are not plunder'd and banish'd, or perhaps imprison'd and tortur'd for Conscience-sake; and so brought under a formidable Temptation, to make Shipwreck of that as well as of Faith. Let this Day remind us of the frequent Dangers of this Kind to which we have been expos'd: and let us gratefully own God's watchful Care over us, and that powerful Hand exerted in our Favour, to which we owe it, that *our Soul is escaped as a Bird out of the Snare of the Fowlers*, which was once and again spread for our Lives, *the Snare is broken and we are escaped* §. Let the Memory of those who were the glorious Instruments of our Deliverance be ever dear to us, and the Persons of those who under
God

* 1 Tim. i. 13—15.
Works, Vol. I. p. 612.

† Acts xxvi. 9.
§ Psalm cxxiv. 7.

‡ Baxt. Pract.

God are the great Guardians of our Civil and Religious Liberties, be regarded with becoming Reverence, Affection, and Obedience.

2. Let us envy none that Liberty of Conscience which they enjoy, on such equitable Principles.

While we rejoice in a Toleration ourselves, we were inexcusable if we were grieved that many who most widely differ from us share in the same common Benefit. A Variety of Opinions must be expected, and Debates will unavoidably arise from it; but when we are press'd by the Arguments of our Opponents, or, it may be, provoked by what we think their Obstinacy; let us not indulge even to a secret Wish, that there were a Sword in our Hand to slay them, or a Chain to bind them. Far from complaining of it as an Evil, let us rather rejoice in it as the peculiar Glory and Happiness of our Age and Country, perhaps beyond any other, that our Neighbours, as well as we, enjoy a Freedom of chusing their Religion for themselves; and amidst all the Diversity of that Choice, *fit every one under his own Vine and Fig-tree*, and have none on that Account to *make them afraid* *.

And I will add, let not private Malice and Uncharitableness assume the Place of publick Severities. Let those who are in the superior Relations of Life, lay aside a rigorous and imposing Temper, towards those who are under their Care. In Matters of Conscience let not the Husband pretend to determine for the Wife, nor the Parent for the Child, nor the Master for the Servant; but if fair Argument and Love will not fix a Conviction on their Mind in Favour of what we apprehend to be right, let us leave them to worship God in their own Way, without absolutely insisting upon it that they should do it in ours.

Once more, let not Neighbours and Equals be severe on one another upon account of religious Differences, but make the most candid Allowances which the Case will bear for the Errors and Weaknesses of each other.

Far

* Mich, iv, 4,

Far from injuring and reviling each other, and refusing the mutual Offices of Humanity and Friendship, let us study to abound in them more and more. Let us pray, that *if any are otherwise minded*, than Truth, Reason and Scripture would teach, God would in his own Method, and Time reveal unto them whatever it may be of Importance for them to know; and in the mean Time let us endeavour to act on the great Principles of Virtue and Benevolence, which, blessed be God, are not peculiar to any distinguishing Forms of religious Profession amongst us. And I heartily pray, that domestick Persecution may never be the Guilt or the Misery of any, who by the Laws of our Country are protected from publick Violence.

Lastly, Let us be very cautious that we do not abuse that religious Liberty which, by the singular Favour of Providence, we enjoy.

Let us remember, that as the best Blessings may be perverted, 'tis too possible that even this may be turned into Licentiousness. 'Tis true, that our Consciences are under no human Jurisdiction, but let it be consider'd they are not *without Law, but under Law, to God*. He who searches Mens Hearts, knows how to judge of the Sincerity and Impartiality of our Inquiries into Truth, though none else can do it. Let us therefore be wary in our Determinations in Matters of Importance, and let us earnestly pray for the enlightening Influences of God's Holy Spirit, to preserve us from erroneous Principles, and superstitious Worship.

And, once more, let us be very careful that we don't abuse our religious Liberties by trifling with Opportunities for spiritual Improvement, either absenting ourselves from them, or attending them in a careless and unprofitable Manner. Let us remember, *the Servant who knows his Master's Will, and prepares not himself to act according to it, will be beaten with many Stripes**. The freest Profession of the purest Religion on Earth will signify nothing, if it be no more than a Profession; and all that Zeal for Liberty which is consistent with being the Slave of Sin, is only a natural
Haugh-

* Luke xii. 47.

Haughtiness of Spirit, which will aggravate a Man's Guilt rather than extenuate it. The Lord grant that none of us may reject the Truth, and that none may *hold it in Unrighteousness*: lest the Time come, when we wish for that Excuse which they will have, who have known the Restraints and Discouragements of Persecutions; and another Day reflect with Horror, even on those repeated Deliverances, for which we are this Day returning our publick Acknowledgements.



S U B M I S S I O N

T O

DIVINE PROVIDENCE

I N T H E

DEATH of CHILDREN,

Recommended and inforced.

I N A

S E R M O N

PREACH'D at NORTHAMPTON,

O N T H E

DEATH of a very amiable and hopeful

CHILD, about Five Years old.

The P R E F A C E.

THE Discourse which I now offer to the Publick was drawn up on a very sorrowful Occasion; the Death of a most desirable Child, who was formed in such a Correspondence to my own Relish and Temper, as to be able to give me a Degree of Delight, and consequently of Distress, which I did not before think it possible I could have received from a little Creature who had not quite completed her Fifth Year.

Since the Sermon was preached, it has pleased God to make the like Breaches on the Families of several of my Friends; and, with Regard to some of them, the Affliction hath been attended with Circumstances of yet sorer Aggravation. Though several of them are removed to a considerable Distance from me, and from each other, I have borne their Afflictions upon my Heart with cordial Sympathy; and it is with a particular Desire of serving them, that I have undertaken the sad Task of reviewing and transcribing these Papers; which may almost be called the Minutes of my own Sighs and Tears, over the poor Remains of my eldest and (of this Kind) dearest Hope, when they were not as yet buried out of my Sight.

They are, indeed, full of Affection, and to be sure some may think they are too full of it: but let them consider the Subject, and the Circumstances, and surely they will pardon it. I apprehend, I could not have treated such a Subject coldly, had I writ upon it many Years ago, when I was untaught in the School of Affliction; and knew nothing of such a Calamity as this, but by Speculation or Report: how much less could I do it, when God had touched me in so tender a Part, and (to allude to a celebrated ancient Story) called me out to appear on a publick Stage, as with an Urn in my Hand, which contained the Ashes of my own Child!

In such a sad Situation Parents, at least, will forgive the Tear: of a Parent, and those Meltings of Soul which overflow in the following Pages. I have not attempted to run through the Common-place of immoderate Grief, but have
only

only selected a few obvious Thoughts which I found peculiarly suitable to myself; and, I bless God, I can truly say, they gave me a solid and substantial Relief, under a Shock of Sorrow, which would otherwise have broken my Spirits.

On my own Experience, therefore, I would recommend them to others, in the like Condition. And let me intreat my Friends and Fellow-Sufferers to remember, that it is not a low Degree of Submission to the Divine Will, which is called for in the ensuing Discourse. It is comparatively an easy Thing to behave with external Decency, to refrain from bold Censures and outrageous Complaints, or to speak in the outward Language of Resignation. But it is not so easy to get rid of every repining Thought, and to forbear taking it, in some Degree at least, unkindly, that the God whom we love and serve, in whose Friendship we have long trusted and rejoiced, should act what, to Sense, seems so unfriendly a Part: that he should take away a Child; and if a Child, that Child; and if that Child, at that Age; and if at that Age, with this or that particular Circumstance; which seems the very Contrivance of Providence, to add double Anguish to the Wound; and all this, when he could so easily have recalled it; when we know him to have done it for so many others; when we so earnestly desired it; when we sought it with such Importunity, and yet, as we imagine, with so much Submission too:—That, notwithstanding all this, he should tear it away with an inexorable Hand, and leave us, it may be for a while, under the Load, without any extraordinary Comforts and Supports, to balance so grievous a Trial. —In these Circumstances, not only to justify, but to glorify God in all, —cheerfully to subscribe to his Will, —cordially to approve it as merciful and gracious, —so as to be able to say, as the pious and excellent Archbishop of Cambray did, when his Royal Pupil, and the Hopes of a Nation were taken away*, “If there needed no more than to move a
“Straw to bring him to Life again, I would not do it, since
“the Divine Pleasure is otherwise.” —This, this is a difficult Lesson indeed; a Triumph of Christian Faith and Love, which I fear many of us are yet to learn.

But let us follow after it, and watch against the first Rising of a contrary Temper, as most injurious to God, and prejudicial to ourselves. To preserve us against it, let us re-
views

* The Duke of Burgundy. See Cambray's Life, p. 329.

view the Considerations now to be proposed, as what we are to digest into our Hearts, and work into our Thoughts and our Passions. And I would hope, that if we do in good earnest make the Attempt, we shall find this Discourse a cooling and sweetening Medicine, which may allay that inward Heat and Sharpness, with which, in a Case like ours, the Heart is often inflamed and corroded. I commend it, such as it is, to the Blessing of the great Physician, and could wish the Reader to make up its many Deficiencies, by Mr. Flavel's Token for Mourners, and Dr. Grosvenor's Mourner; to which if it suit his Relish, he may please to add Sir William Temple's Essay on the Excess of Grief: Three Tracts which, in their very different Strains and Styles, I cannot but look upon as in the Number of the best which our Language, or, perhaps, any other, has produced upon this Subject.

As for this little Piece of mine, I question not, but, like the Generality of single Sermons, it will soon be worn out and forgot. But in the mean time, I would humbly hope, that some tender Parent, whom Providence has joined with me in sad Similitude of Grief, may find some Consolation from it, while sitting by the Coffin of a beloved Child, or mourning over its Grave. And I particularly hope it, with Regard to those dear and valuable Friends, whose Sorrows, on the like Occasion, have lately been added to my own. I desire that, tho' they be not expressly named, they would please to consider this Sermon as most affectionately and respectfully dedicated to them; and would, in Return, give me a Share in their Prayers, that all the Vicissitudes of Life may concur to quicken me in the Duties of it, and to ripen me for that blessed World, where I hope many of those dear Delights, which are now withering around us, will spring up in fairer and more durable Forms. Amen.

Northampton,
Jan. 31, 1736-7.

P O S T S C R I P T.

I could easily shew, with how much Propriety I have called the dear Deceased an amiable and hopeful Child, by a great many little Stories, which Parents would perhaps read with Pleasure, and Children might hear with some Improvement: yet as I cannot be sure that no others may happen to read the Discourse, I dare not trust my Pen and my Heart, on so delicate a Subject. One Circumstance I will however venture to mention, (as I see here is a Blank Page left) which may indeed be consider'd as a Specimen of many others. As she was a great Darling with most of our Friends that knew her, she often received Invitations to different Places at the same Time; and when I once asked her, on such an Occasion, what made every Body love her so well; she answer'd me, (with that Simplicity and Spirit, which alas! charm'd me too much) Indeed, Pappa, I cannot think, unless it be because I love every Body. A Sentiment obvious to the Understanding of a Child, yet not unworthy the Reflection of the wisest Man*.

* Tibi monstrabo Amatorium sine Medicamento, sine Herbis, sine ullius Veneficæ Carmine, Si vis amari, ama. SEN.



2 KINGS iv. 25, 26.

And it came to pass when the Man of GOD saw her afar off, that he said to Gebazi his Servant, Behold, yonder is that Shunamite: Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, Is it well with thee? Is it well with thine Husband? Is it well with the Child? And she answer'd, IT IS WELL.

WHEN the Apostle would encourage our Hope and Trust in the Tenderness of Christ as the great High Priest, and convince us that he is capable of being touched with a sympathetic Sense of our Infirmities, he argues at large from this Consideration, that Jesus *was in all Points tempted like us*; so that as *he himself has suffered, being tempted, he knows how more compassionately to succour* those that are under the like Trials *. Now this must surely intimate, that it is not in human Nature, even in its most perfect State, so tenderly to commiserate any Sorrows, as those which our own Hearts have felt: as we cannot form a perfect Idea of any bitter Kind of Draught, by the most exact Description, till we have ourselves tasted it. It is probably for this Reason, amongst others, that God frequently exercises such, as have the Honour to be inferior Shepherds in the Flock of Christ, with a long Train of various Afflictions, *that we may be able to comfort them who are in the like Trouble, with those Consolations with which we have ourselves been comforted of God* †. And, if we have the Temper which becomes our Office, will greatly

* Heb. iv. 15.—ii. 18.

† 2 Cor. i. 4.

greatly reconcile us to our Trials, to consider, that from our weeping Eyes, and our bleeding Hearts, a Balm may be extracted to heal the Sorrows of others, and a Cordial to revive their fainting Spirits. May we never be left to sink under our Burden, in such a manner, that there should be Room, after all that we have boasted of the Strength of religious Supports, to apply to us the Words of *Eliphaz* to *Job* *, *Thou hast strengthen'd the weak Hands, and upheld him that was ready to fall; but now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it touches thee, and thou art troubled!* May we never behave, as if the *Consolations of God were small* †; lest it should be as *when a Standard-Bearer fainteth* ‡; and whole Companies of Soldiers are thrown into Confusion and Distress!

My Friends, you are Witnesses for me, that I have not stood by as an unconcerned Spectator amidst the Desolations of your respective Families, when God's awful Hand hath been lopping off those tender Branches from them, which were once our common Hope and Delight. I have often put my Soul in the stead of yours, and endeavour'd to give such a Turn to my publick as well as my private Discourses, as might be a Means of composing and chearing our Minds, and forming you to a submissive Temper, that you might *be subject to the Father of Spirits, and live* ||. In this View I have, at different Times largely insisted on the Example of *Aaron*, *who held his Peace* §, when his two eldest Sons were struck dead in a Moment by Fire from the Lord, which destroyed them in the very Act of their Sin; and I have also represented that of *Job*, who, when the Death of ten Children by own Blow was added to the Spoil of his great Possessions, could say, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord* **. The Instance which is before us, is not indeed so memorable as these; but to present Circumstances it is, in many Respects, more suitable: and it may the rather deserve our Notice, as it shews us the Wisdom, Composure, and Piety of one of the weaker and tenderer Sex, on an Occasion of such aggravated Distress, that had *Aaron* or *Job* behaved just as she did, we must have acknowledged,

* Job iv. 3—5.
 || Heb. xii. 9.

† Job xv. 11.
 § Lev. x. 3.

‡ Isa. x. 18.
 ** Job i. 21.

ledged, that they had not sunk beneath the Dignity of their Character, nor appeared unworthy of our Applause, and our Imitation.

Indeed there may be some Reason to imagine, that it was with Design to humble those who are in distinguished Stations of Life, and who have peculiar Advantages and Obligations to excel in Religion, that God has shewn us in Scripture, as well as in common Life, some bright Examples of Piety, where they could hardly have been expected in so great a Degree; and hath, as it were, *perfected Praise out of the Mouths of Babes and Sucklings* *. Thus when *Zacharias* †, an aged Priest, doubted the Veracity of the Angel which appeared to assure him of the Birth of his Child, which was to be produced in an ordinary Way; *Mary*, an obscure young Virgin, could believe a far more unexampled Event, and said, with humble Faith and thankful Consent, *Behold the Handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy Word* ‡. *Jonah* the Prophet, though favoured with such immediate Revelations, and so lately delivered, in a miraculous Way, from the very *Belly of Hell* §, was thrown into a most indecent Transport of Passion, on the withering of a Gourd; so that he presumed to tell the Almighty to his Face, that *he did well to be angry even unto Death* ||: whereas this pious Woman preserves the Calmness and Serenity of her Temper, when she had lost a Child, a Son, an only Child, who had been given beyond all natural Hope, and therefore to be sure was so much the dearer, and the Expectation from him so much the higher. Yet these Expectations dash'd almost in a Moment; and this, when he was grown up to an Age when Children are peculiarly entertaining; for he was old enough to be with his Father in the Field, where no doubt he was diverting him with his fond Prattle; yet he was not too big to be laid *on his Mother's Knees* **, when he came Home complaining of his Head; so that he was probably about five or six Years old. This amiable Child was well in the Morning, and dead by Noon; a pale Corpse in his Mother's Arms! and he now *lay dead in the House*; and yet she had the Faith, and the Goodness to say, "*It is well.*"

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* Matth. xxi, 16.

† Luke i, 13.

‡ Ibid. ver. 38.

§ Jon. ii. 2.

|| Ibid. iv. 5.

** 2 Kings iv. 18, 20.

This good Woman had found the Prophet *Elisha* grateful for all the Favours he had received at her House ; where she had from Time to Time accomodated him in his Journies, and thought it an Honour rather than an Incumbrance. She had experienced the Power of his Prayers, in Answer to which the Child had been given ; and 'tis extremely probable, that she also recollected the Miracle which *Elijah* had wrought a few Years before, though till that Time the like had not been known in *Israel*, or on Earth ; I mean, in raising from the Dead the Child of that Widow of *Sarepta* *, who had nourished him during the Famine. She might therefore think it a possible Case, that the Miracle might be renewed ; at least, she knew not how to comfort herself better, than by going to so good a Friend, and asking his Counsels and his Prayers, to enable her to bear her Affliction, if it must not be removed †.

Accordingly she hasted to him ; and he, on the other Side, discovered the Temper of a real Friend, in the Message with which he sent *Gebazi* his Servant to meet her, *while she was yet afar off*. The Moment she appeared, the Concerns of her whole Family seem to have come into his kind Heart at once, and he particularly asks, *Is it well with thee ? Is it well with thine Husband ? Is it well with the Child ?* A beautiful Example of that affectionate Care for the Persons and Families of their Friends, which Christian Ministers (who, like the Prophets of old, are called *Men of God* ‡) should habitually bear about in their Hearts ; which should be awakened by every Sight of them, and expressed on every proper Occasion.

Her Answer was very remarkable : *She said, It is well*. Perhaps she meant this, to divert the more particular Enquiry of the Servant ; as she had before made the same Answer to her Husband, when he had examined into the Reason of her intended Journey, as probably not knowing of the sad Breach which had been made : *She said, It is well* || ; which was a civil way of intimating her Desire that he would not ask any more particular Questions. But I cannot see any Reason to restrain the
Words

* 1 Kings xvi. 17, & seq.

† 1 Tim. vi. 17. 2 Tim. iii. 17.

‡ See *Henry*. in loc.

|| 2 Kings iv. 23.

Words to this Meaning alone: we have Ground to believe, from the Piety she expressed in her first Regards to *Elisba*, and the Opportunities which she had of improving in Religion by the frequent Converse of that holy Man, that when she used this Language, she intended thereby to express her Resignation to the Divine Will in what had lately pass'd: and this might be the Meaning of her Heart, (though one ignorant of the Particulars of her Case, might not fully understand it from such ambiguous Words;) “ *It is well* on the whole. “ Though my Family be afflicted, we are afflicted in “ Faithfulness; though my dear Babe be dead, yet “ my heavenly Father is just, and he is good in all. “ He knows how to bring Glory to himself, and Advantage to us, from this Stroke. Whether this Application do, or do not succeed, whether the Child “ be, or be not restored, *it is still well*; *well* with him, “ and *well* with us; for we are in such wise and such “ gracious Hands, that I would not allow one murmuring Word, or one repining Thought.” So that, on the whole, the Sentiment of this good *Shunamite* was much the same with that of *Hezekiah*, when he answered to that dreadful Threatening which imported the Destruction of his Children, *Good is the Word of the Lord which he hath spoken* *; or that of *Job*, when he heard that all his Sons and his Daughters were crushed under the Ruins of their elder Brother’s House, and yet (in the fore-cited Words) *blessed be the Name of the Lord*.

Now this is the Temper to which, by divine Assistance, we should all labour to bring our own Hearts, when God puts this bitter Cup into our Hands, and *takes away with a Stroke* those dear Little-ones, which were the *Desire of our Eyes* †, and the Joy of our Hearts. Let us not content ourselves, in such Circumstances, with *keeping the Door of our Lips* ‡, that we break not out into any Indecencies of Complaint; let us not attempt to harden ourselves against our Sorrows by a stern Insensibility, or that sullen Resolution which sometimes says, *It is a Grief, and I must bear it* §; but let us labour, (for a *great Labour* it will indeed be) to compose

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and

* Isa. xxxix. 3.
 † Jer. x. 19.

† Ezek. xxiv. 16.

‡ Psa. cxli. 3.

and quiet our Souls, calmly to acquiesce in this painful Dispensation, nay, cordially to approve it as in present Circumstances every Way fit.

It will be the main Business of this Discourse, to prove how reasonable such a Temper is, or to shew how much Cause Christian Parents have to borrow the Language of the Text, when their Infant Offspring is taken away, and to say with the pious *Shunamite*, in the noblest Sense that her Words will bear,—*It is well.*

And here I would more particularly shew,—It is well in the general, because God does it:—It is surely well for the pious Parents in particular, because it is the Work of their Covenant God:—They may see many Respects in which it is evidently so, by observing what useful Lessons it has a Tendency to teach them:—And they have Reason to hope, it is well with those dear Creatures whom God hath removed in their early Days.

These are surely convincing Reasons to the Understanding: yet who can say, that they shall be Reasons to the Heart? *Arise, O God, and plead thine own Cause* * in the most effectual Manner! May thy powerful and gracious Voice appease the swelling Billows of the Passions, and produce a great and delightful Calm in our Souls, in which we may yet enjoy thee and ourselves, though a Part of our Treasure be for the present swallowed up!

I. There is surely Reason, in such a Case, to say *it is well*,—because God doth it.

This pass'd for an unanswerable Reason with *David*, *I was dumb, I opened not my Mouth, because thou didst it* †, and with good old *Eli*, under a severer Trial than ours, *It is the Lord, let him do as seemeth good in his Sight* ‡. And shall we object against the Force of it: Was it a Reason to *David*, and to *Eli*, and is it not equally so to us? Or have we any new Right to *reply against God* ||, which those eminent Saints had not?

His kingdom ruleth over all §; and there is *not* so much as a Sparrow that falls to the Ground without our Father, *but*

* Psal. lxxiv. 22.

† Psal. xxxix. 9.

‡ 1 Sam. iii. 13.

|| Rom. ix. 20.

§ Psal. ciii. 19.

but the very Hairs of our Head are all numbered * by him. Can we then imagine that our dear Children fall into their Graves without his Notice or Interposition? Did that watchful Eye that *keepeth Israel*, now, for the first Time, *slumber and sleep* †, and an Enemy lay hold on that fatal Moment to bear away these precious Spoils, and bury our Joys and our Hopes in the Dust? Did some malignant Hand stop up the Avenues of Life, and break its Springs, so as to baffle all the Tenderness of the Parent, and all the Skill of the Physician? Whence does such a Thought come, and whither would it lead? Diseases and Accidents are but second Causes, which owe all their Operations to the continued Energy of the great original Cause. Therefore God † says, *I will bereave them of Children* ‡; *I take away the Desire of thine Eyes with a Stroke* §. *He changeth their Countenance, and sendeth them away* §. *Thou Lord turnest Man to Destruction, and sayest, Return ye Children of Men* **. And what shall we say? Are not the Administrations of his Providence wise and good? Can we *teach him Knowledge* ††? Can we tax him with Injustice? Shall the most High God learn of us how to govern the World, and be instructed by our Wisdom when to remove his Creatures from one State of Being to another? Or do we imagine that his Administration, in the general Right and Good, varies when he comes to *touch our Bone and our Flesh* †††? Is that the secret Language of our Soul, “That it is well, others should drink of the Cup, but not we; that any Families but ours should be broken, and any Hearts but ours should be wounded?” Who might not claim the like Exemption? And what would become of the Divine Government in general; or where would be his obedient Homage from his Creatures, if each should begin to complain, as soon as it comes to his own Turn to suffer? Much fitter is it for us to conclude, that our own Afflictions may be as reasonable as those of others; that amidst all the *Clouds and Darknes* of his present Dispensation, *Righteousness and Judgment are the Habitation of his Throne* §§; and, in a Word, that *it is well*, because

E 3

God

* Matt. x. 29, 30.

† Psal. cxxi. 4.

‡ Jer. xv. 7.

§ Ezek. xxiv. 16.

§ Job xiv. 20.

** Psal. xc. 3.

†† Job xxi. 22.

††† Ibid. ii. 5.

§§ Psal. xcvi. 2.

God hath done it. It suits the general Scheme of the Divine Providence, and to an obedient submissive Creature that might be enough; but it is far from being all. For,

II. Pious Parents, under such a Dispensation, may conclude *it is well for them* in particular,—because he, who hath done it, is their Covenant God.

This is the great Promise, to which all the Saints under the Old and New Testament are Heirs, *I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a People**: and if we are interested in it, the happy Consequence is, that we being his, all our Concerns are his also; all are humbly resigned to him,—and graciously administer'd by him,—and incomparably better Blessings bestowed and secured, than any which the most afflictive Providence can remove.

If we have any Share in this everlasting Covenant, all that we are or have, must, of course, have been *solemnly surrender'd* to God. And this is a Thought peculiarly applicable to the Case immediately in view. “Did I not,” may the Christian, in such a sad Circumstance, generally say, “did I not, in a very solemn Manner, bring this my Child to God in Baptism, and in that Ordinance recognize his Right to it? Did I not, with all humble *Subjection to the Father of Spirits* †, and *Father of Mercies* ‡, lay it down at his Feet, perhaps with an express, at least to be sure with a tacit Consent, that it should be disposed of by him, as his infinite Wisdom and Goodness should direct, whether for Life or for Death? And am I now to complain of him, because he has removed not only a Creature of his own, but one of the Children of his Family? Or shall I pretend, after all, to set up a Claim in Opposition to his? A Heathen Parent, even from the Light of Nature, might have learn'd silent Submission: how much more then a Christian Parent, who hath presented his Child to God in this initiatory Ordinance; and perhaps also many a Time, both before and since, hath presented himself at the Table of the Lord! Have I not there taken that *Cup* of

* Heb. viii. 10.

† Ibid. xii. 9.

‡ 2 Cor. i. 3.

“ of Blessings, with a declared Resolution of accepting
 “ every other Cup how bitter soever it might be, *which*
 “ *my heavenly Father* should see fit to put into my Hand* ?
 “ When I have perhaps felt some painful Fore-bodings of
 “ what I am now suffering ; I have, in my own Thoughts,
 “ particularly singled out that dear Object of my Cares
 “ and my Hopes, to lay it down anew at my Father’s
 “ Feet, and say, *Lord thou gavest it to me, and I resign it*
 “ *to thee ; continue, or remove it, as thou pleasest.* And
 “ did I then mean to trifle with God ? Did I mean in
 “ effect to say, *Lord, I will give it up, if thou wilt not*
 “ *take it ?*”

Reflect farther, I beseech you, on your *secret Retire-*
ments, and think, as surely some of you may, “ How
 “ often have I there been on my Knees before God on
 “ account of this Child ; and what was then my Lan-
 “ guage ? Did I say, Lord, I absolutely insist on its Re-
 “ covery ; I cannot, on any Terms or any Considera-
 “ tions whatsoever, bear to think of losing it ?” Sure
 we were none of us so indecently transported with the
 fondest Passion, as to be so *rash with our Mouths* as to
 utter such Things before the Great God †. Such Pre-
 sumption had deserved a much heavier Punishment than
 we are now bearing, and, if not retracted, may per-
 haps still have it.—Did not one or another of us rather
 say, “ Lord, I would humbly intreat, with all due
 “ Submission to thy superior Wisdom and sovereign
 “ Pleasure, that my Child may live ; but if it must be
 “ otherwise, *not my Will, but thine be done* ‡ ? I and mine
 “ are in thine Hand, *do with me, and with them, as*
 “ *seemeth good in thy Sight* ||.” And do we now blame
 ourselves for this ? Would we unsay it again, and, if
 possible, take ourselves and our Children out of his
 Hands, whom we have so often owned as all-wise and all-
 gracious, and have chosen as our great Guardian and
 theirs ?

Let it farther be consider’d, it is done by that God
 who has *accepted of this Surrender*, so as to undertake the
 Administration of our Affairs : “ He is become my
 “ Covenant God in Christ,” may the Christian say ;

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“ and,

* John xviii. 11.

† Eccles. v. 2.

‡ Matt. xxvi. 39.

|| 2 Sam. xv. 26.

“ and, in Consequence of that Covenant, he hath engaged
 “ to manage the Concerns and Interests of his People
 “ so, that *all Things shall work together for good to them*
 “ *that love him* * : and do I not love him? Answer,
 “ Oh my Heart, dost thou not love thy God much better
 “ than all the Blessings which Earth can boast, or
 “ which the Grave hath swallowed up? Wouldst thou
 “ resign thine Interest in him to recover these precious
 “ Spoils, to receive this dear Child from the Dust, a
 “ a thousand Times fairer and sweeter than before? Ra-
 “ ther let Death devour every remaining Comfort, and
 “ leave me alone with him; with whom when I indeed
 “ am, I miss not the Creatures, but rather rejoice in
 “ their Absence, as I am then more intire with *him*
 “ *whom my Soul loveth*. And if I do indeed love him,
 “ this Promise is mine, and *all Things*, and therefore
 “ this sad Event in particular, *shall work together for my*
 “ *good*. Shall I not then say, *It is well*? What if it
 “ exceeded all the Stretch of my Thoughts, to con-
 “ ceive *how* it could, in any Instance, be so? What
 “ are my narrow Conceptions, that they should pretend
 “ to circumscribe infinite Wisdom, Faithfulness, and
 “ Mercy? Let me rather, with *Abraham*, give *Glory to*
 “ *God, and in Hope believe against Hope* †.”

Once more; let us consider how many *invaluable*
Blessings are given us by this Covenant, and then judge
 whether we have not the utmost Reason to acquiesce in
 such an Event of Providence. “ If I am in Covenant
 “ with God,” may the Believer say, “ then he hath
 “ pardoned my Sins, and renewed my Heart, and hath
 “ made his blessed Spirit dwelling in me, the sacred
 “ Bond of an everlasting Union between him and my
 “ Soul. He is leading me through the Wilderness,
 “ and will, ere long, lead me out of it to the heaven-
 “ ly *Canaan*. And how far am I already arrived in
 “ my Journey thither, now that I am come to the Age
 “ of losing a Child! And when God hath done all this
 “ for me, is he rashly to be suspected of Unkindness?
 “ *He that spared not his own Son* ‡, he that gave me with
 “ him his Spirit and his Kingdom, why doth he deny, or
 why

* Rom. viii. 28.
viii. 32.

† Ibid. iv. 18, 20.

‡ Ibid.

“ why doth he remove, any other Favour? Did he
 “ think the Life of this Child too great a Good to
 “ grant, when he thought not Christ and Glory too pre-
 “ cious? Away with that Thought, O my unbelieving
 “ Heart, and with every Thought which would dero-
 “ gate from such rich amazing Grace, or would bring
 “ any Thing in Comparifon with it. Art thou under
 “ thefe Obligations to him, and will thou yet com-
 “ plain? With what Grace, with what Decency canft
 “ thou difpute this, or any other Matter, with thy
 “ God? *What Right have I yet to cry any more to the
 “ King*?*” Would any of my Brethren venture to fay,
 “ What though I be a Child of God, and an Heir of
 “ Glory, it matters not, for *my Gourd is withered*; that
 “ pleafant Plant which was opening fo fair and fo de-
 “ lightful, under the Shadow of which I expected long
 “ to have fat, and even *the Rock of Ages* cannot shelter
 “ me fo well? I can behold that beloved Face no more,
 “ and therefore I will not look upward to behold the
 “ Face of God, I will not look forward to Christ and
 “ to Heaven?” Would this, my Friends, be the Lan-
 guage of a real Christian? Nay, are there not many
 abandoned Sinners who would tremble at fuch Expreffions?
 Yet is it not in effect the Language of our tu-
 multuous Paflions, when, like *Rachael*, we are *mourn-
 ing for our Children*, and *will not be comforted, becaufe they
 are not †*? Is it not our Language while we cannot, like
 the pious *Shunamite* in the Text, bring our afflicted
 Hearts to fay, *It is well*.

III. Pious Parents, in fuch a Circumftance, have farther Reason to fay, *It is well*,—as they may obferve an apparent Tendency in fuch a Difpenfation to teach them a Variety of the moft instructive and ufe-ful Lessons, in a very convincing and effectual Manner.

'Tis a juft Obfervation of *Solomon*, that *the Rod and Re-
 proof give Wisdom †*; and 'tis peculiarly applicable to fuch a Chafifement of our Heavenly Father. It fhould therefore be our great Care to *bear the Rod and him that*

* 2 Sam. xix. 28,
 xxix. 15.

† Jer. xxxi. 15.

‡ Prov.

hath appointed it * ; and so far as it hath a Tendency to teach us our Duty, and to improve the divine Life in our Souls, we have the highest Reason to say, that *it is indeed well*.

Every Affliction hath in its Degree this kind of Tendency, and 'tis the very Reason for which *we are thus chastened*, that we may *profit* by our Sorrows, and be made *Partakers of God's Holiness* †. But this Dispensation is peculiarly adapted, in a very affecting Manner, —to teach us the Vanity of the World, —to warn us of the Approach of our own Death, —to quicken us in the Duties incumbent upon us, especially to our surviving Children, —and to produce a more intire Resignation to the Divine Will, which is indeed the surest Foundation of Quiet, and Source of Happiness.

I shall insist a little more particularly on each of these ; and I desire that it may be remembered, that the Sight and Knowledge of such mournful Providences as are now before us, should, in some Degree, be improved to these Purposes, even by those Parents whose Families are most prosperous and joyful : may they learn Wisdom and Piety from what *we* suffer, and their Improvements shall be acknowledged as an additional Reason for *us* to say, *It is well*.

1. When God takes away our Children from us, it is a very affecting Lesson of the Vanity of the World.

There is hardly a Child born into it, on whom the Parents do not look with some pleasing Expectation that it shall *comfort them concerning their Labour* ‡. This makes the Toil of Education easy and delightful : and truly 'tis very early that we begin to find a Sweetness in it, which abundantly repays all the Fatigue. Five, or four, or three, or two Years, make Discoveries which afford immediate Pleasure, and which suggest future Hopes. Their Words, their Actions, their very Looks touch us, if they be amiable and promising Children, Children, in a tender, but very powerful Manner ; their little Arms twine about our Hearts ; and there is something more penetrating in their first broken Accents of Indearment,

* Mich. vi. 9.

† Heb. xii. 10.

‡ Gen. v. 29.

Indearment, than in all the Pomp and Ornament of Words Every Infant-Year increases the Pleasure, and nourishes the Hope. And where is the Parent so wise and so cautious, and so constantly intent on his Journey to Heaven, as not to measure back a few Steps to Earth again, on such a plausible and decent Occasion, as that of introducing the young Stranger into the Amusements, nay perhaps, where Circumstances will admit it, into the Elegancies of Life, as well as its more serious and important Business? What fond Calculations do we form of what it *will be*, from what *it is*! How do we in Thought open every Blossom of Sprightfulness, or Humanity, or Piety, to its full Spread, and ripen it to a sudden Maturity! But, oh, who shall teach those that have never felt it, how it tears the very Soul, when God roots up the tender Plant with an inexorable Hand, and withers the Bud in which the Colours were beginning to glow! Where is now our Delight? Where is our Hope? Is it in the Coffin? Is it in the Grave? Alas! all the Loveliness of Person, of Genius, and of Temper, serves but to point and to poison the Arrow, which is drawn out of our own Quiver to wound us. Vain, delusive, transitory Joys! “And such, Oh my
 “Soul,” will the Christian say, “such are thine earth-
 “ly Comforts in every Child, in every Relative, in
 “every Possession of Life; such are the Objects of thy
 “Hopes, and thy Fears, thy Schemes, and thy La-
 “bours, where Earth alone is concerned. Let me
 “then, once for all, direct mine Eyes to another
 “and a better State. From these *broken Cisterns*, the
 “Fragments of which may hurt me indeed, but can
 “no longer refresh me, let me look to the *Fountain of*
 “*living Waters* *. From these setting Stars, or rather
 “these bright but vanishing Meteors, which make my
 “Darkness so much the more sensible, let me turn to
 “the *Father of Lights*. Oh Lord, *What wait I for?*
 “*my Hope is in thee* †, my sure Abode, my everlasting
 “Confidence! My Gourds wither, my Children die;
 “but *the Lord liveth, and blessed be my Rock, and let the*
 “*God of my Salvation be exalted* †. I see, in one In-
 “stance more, the sad Effects of having over-loved the

E 6

“ Creature

* Jer. ii. 13.

† Psal. xxxix. 7.

‡ Ibid. xviii. 46.

“ Creature ; let me endeavour for the future, by the
 “ Divine Assistance, to fix my Affections there where
 “ they cannot exceed ; but where all the Ardor of them
 “ will be as much my Security and my Happiness, as it
 “ is now my Snare and my Distress.”

2. The Removal of our Children by such awful Strokes may warn us of the Approach of our own Death.

Hereby God doth very sensibly shew us, and those around us, that *all Flesh is as Grass, and all the Glory and Loveliness of it like the Flower of the Field* *. And when our own Habitations are made the Houses of Mourning, and ourselves the Leaders of that sad Procession, it may surely be expected that we should lay it to Heart, so as to be quickened and improved by the View. “ Have my Children died in the Morning of
 “ their Days, and can I promise myself that I shall see
 “ the Evening of mine ? Now perhaps may I say, in a
 “ more literal Sense than ever, *The Graves are ready for*
 “ *me* †. One of my Family, and some of us may add,
 “ the First-born of it, is gone as it were to take Posses-
 “ sion of the Sepulchre in all our Names ; and ere
 “ long I shall lie down with my Child in the same Bed ;
 “ yea, perhaps, many of the Feet that followed it shall
 “ attend me thither. Our Dust shortly shall be blended
 “ together ; and who can tell but this Providence
 “ might chiefly be intended as a Warning Blow to
 “ me, that these concluding Days of my Life might
 “ be more regular, more spiritual, and more useful than
 “ the former ?”

3. The Providence before us may be farther improved to quicken us in the Duties of Life, and especially in the Education of surviving Children.

It is, on the Principles I hinted above, an Engagement, that *whatever our Hand findeth to do, we should do it with all our Might*, since it so plainly shews us that we are going to the Grave, where there is no Device, nor Knowledge, nor Working ‡ : but permit me especially to observe, how peculiarly the Sentiments we feel on these sad Occasions, may be improved for the
 Advan-

* 1 Pet. i. 24.

† Job xvii. 3.

‡ Eccles. ix. 20.

Advantage of our dear Offspring who yet remain, and quicken us to a proper Care in their religious Education.

We all see that it is a very reasonable Duty, and every Christian Parent resolves that he will *ere long* apply himself to it; but I am afraid, great Advantages are lost by a Delay, which we think we can easily excuse. Our Hands are full of a Variety of Affairs, and our Children are yet very young: we are therefore ready to imagine 'tis a good Husbandry of Time to defer our Attempts for their Instruction to a more *convenient Season* *, when they may be able to learn more in an Hour, than the Labour of Days could now teach them; besides that we are apprehensive of Danger in over-loading their tender Spirits, especially when they are perhaps under Indisposition, and need to be diverted, rather than gravely advised and instructed.

But I beseech you, my Friends, let us view the Matter with that Impartiality, which the Eloquence of Death hath a Tendency to produce. “ That lovely Creature
 “ that God hath now taken away, though its Days were
 “ few, though its Faculties were weak, yet might it not
 “ not have known a great deal more of Religion than it
 “ did, and felt a great more of it too, had I faithfully
 “ and prudently done my Part? How did it learn Lan-
 “ guage so soon, and in such a Compass and Readiness?
 “ Not by multiplied Rules, nor laboured Instruction,
 “ but by Conversation. And might it not have learned
 “ much more of Divine Things by Conversation too,
 “ if they had been allowed a due Share in our Thoughts
 “ and our Discourses; according to the Charge given
 “ to the *Israelites*, to *talk of them going out and coming in,*
 “ *lying down and rising up* †? How soon did it learn
 “ Trifles, and retain them, and after its little way ob-
 “ serve and reason upon them, perhaps with a Vivacity
 “ that sometimes surprized me! And had I been as di-
 “ ligent as I ought, who can tell what Progress it might
 “ have made in Divine Knowledge? Who can tell but,
 “ as a Reward to these pious Cares, God might have
 “ put a Word into its dying Lips, which I might all my
 “ Life

* Acts xxiv, 25.

† Deut. vi. 7.

“ Life have recollected with Pleasure, and *out of its feeble Mouth might have perfected Praise* *?”

My Friends, let us humble ourselves deeply before God under a Sense of our past Neglects, and let us learn our future Duty. We may perhaps be ready fondly to say, “ Oh that it were possible my Child could be restored to me again, though it were but for a few Weeks or Days! how diligently would I attempt to supply my former Deficiencies!” Unprofitable Wish! Yet may the Thought be improved for the good of surviving Children. How shall we express our Affection to them? Not surely by indulging all the Demands of Appetite and Fancy, in many early Instances so hazardous, and so fatal; not by a Solitude to treasure up Wealth for them, whose only Portion may perhaps be a little Coffin and Shroud. No; our truest Kindness to them will be to endeavour, by Divine Grace, to form them to an early Inquiry after God, and Christ, and Heaven, and a Love for real Goodness in all the Forms of it which may come within their Observation and Notice. Let us apply ourselves immediately to this Task, as those that remember there is a double Uncertainty, in their Lives, and in ours. In a Word, let us be *that* with regard to every Child that yet remains, which we proposed and engaged to be to that which is taken away, when we pleaded with God for the Continuance of its Life, at least for a little while, that it might be farther assisted in the Preparations for Death and Eternity. If such Resolutions be formed and pursued, the Death of one may be the Means of spiritual Life to many; and we shall surely have Reason to say *it is well*, if it teach us so useful a Lesson.

4. The Providence before us may have a special Tendency to improve our Resignation to the Divine Will; and if it does so, it will indeed be *well*.

There is surely no imaginable Situation of Mind so sweet and so reasonable, as that which we feel when we humbly refer ourselves in all Things to the Divine Disposal, in an intire Suspension of our own Will, seeing and owning the Hand of God, and bowing before it with a filial Acquiescence. This is chiefly to be
learn'd

* Matth. xxi. 16.

learn'd from suffering; and perhaps there is no Suffering which is fitter to teach it, than this. In many other Afflictions there is such a Mixture of human Interposition, that we are ready to imagine, we may be allowed to complain, and to chide a little. Indignation mingles itself with our Grief; and when it does so, it warms the Mind, though with a feverish Kind of Heat, and in an unnatural Flow of Spirits, leads the Heart into a Forgetfulness of God. But here it is so apparently his Hand, that we must refer it to him, and it will appear bold Impiety to quarrel at what is done. In other Instances we can at least flatter ourselves with Hope, that the Calamity may be diverted, or the Enjoyment recovered; but here alas! there is no Hope. "Tears will not," as * *Sir William Temple* finely expresses it, "water the lovely Plant so as to cause it to grow again; Sighs will not give it new Breath, nor can we furnish it with Life and Spirits by the Waste of our own." The Sentence is finally gone forth, and the last fatal Stroke irrecoverably given. Opposition is vain; a forced Submission gives but little Rest to the Mind; a cordial Acquiescence in the Divine Will is the only Thing in the whole World that can ease the labouring Heart, and restore true Serenity. Remaining Corruption will work on such an Occasion, and a painful Struggle will convince the Christian how imperfect his present Attainments are: and this will probably lead him to an attentive Review of the great Reasons for Submission; it will lead him to urge them on his own Soul, and to plead them with God in Prayer; till at length the Storm is laid, and *Tribulation worketh Patience, and Patience Experience, and Experience a Hope which maketh not ashamed, while the Love of God is so fixed abroad in the Heart* †, as to humble it for every preceding Opposition, and to bring it even to a real Approbation of all that so wise and good a Friend hath done; resigning every other Interest and Enjoyment to his Disposal, and sitting down with the sweet Resolution of the Prophet, *Though the Fig-tree do not blossom, and there be no Fruit in the Vine, &c. yet will I rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my*
Salva-

* *Temple's Essays*, Vol. I. p. 178.

† *Rom. v. 3--5.*]

Salvation *. And when we are brought to this, the whole Horizon clears, and the Sun breaks forth in its Strength.

Now I appeal to every sincere Christian in this Assembly, whether there will not be Reason indeed to say *it is well*, if by this painful Affliction we more sensibly learn the Vanity of the Creature; if we are awakened to serious Thoughts of our own latter End; if by it we are quickened in the Duties of Life, and formed to a more intire Resignation of Soul, and Acquiescence in the Divine Will. I will only add once more, and 'tis a Thought of delightful Importance,

IV. That pious Parents have Reason to hope, *it is well* with those dear Creatures who are taken away in their early Days.

I see not that the Word of God hath any where passed a damnatory Sentence on any Infants; and if it has not, I am sure we have no Authority to do it; especially considering with how much Compassion the Divine Being speaks of them in the Instance of the *Ninivites* †, and on some other Occasions. Perhaps, as some pious Divines have conjectured, they may constitute a very considerable Part of the Number of the Elect, and, *as in Adam they all died*, they may *in Christ all be made alive* ‡. At least, methinks, from the Covenant which God made with *Abraham*, and his Seed, *the Blessings of which are come upon the believing Gentiles* ||, there is Reason to hope well concerning the Infant Offspring of God's People, early devoted, and often recommended to him, that their Souls will be *bound in the Bundle of Life* §, and *be loved for their Parents Sakes* **.

It is, indeed, impossible for us to say, how soon Children may be capable of contracting personal Guilt. They are quickly able to distinguish, in some Degree, between Right and Wrong; and 'tis too plain, that they as quickly, in many Instances, forget the Distinction. The Corruptions of Nature begin early to
work,

* Hab. iii. 17, 18.
xv. 22.

† Jonah iv. ult.

‡ Gal. iii. 14.

§ 1 Cor.

§ 1 Sam. xxv. 29.

** Rom. xi. 28.

work, and shew the Need of sanctifying Grace; yet, without a Miracle, it cannot be expected that much of the Christian Scheme should be understood by these little Creatures, in the first dawning of Reason, though a few evangelical Phrases may be taught, and, sometimes, by a happy Kind of Accident, may be rightly applied. The tender Heart of a Parent may, perhaps, take a Hint, from hence to terrify itself, and exasperate all its other Sorrows, by that sad Thought, “ What if my dear “ Child be perished for ever? gone from our Embraces, “ and all the little Pleasures we could give it, to ever- “ lasting Darkness and Pain?” Horrible Imagination! and Satan may, perhaps, take the Advantage of these gloomy Moments, to aggravate every little Infirmity into a Crime, and to throw us into an Agony, which no other View of the Affliction can possibly give, to a Soul penetrated with a Sense of Eternity. Nor do I know a Thought, in the whole Compass of Nature, that hath a more powerful Tendency to produce suspicious Notions of God, and a secret Alienation of Heart from him.

Now for this very Reason, methinks, we should guard against so harsh a Conclusion, lest we, at once, injure the Divine Being, and torture ourselves. And, surely, we may easily fall on some Reflections which may encourage our Hopes, where *little Children* are concerned; and 'tis only of that Case that I am now speaking. Let us think of the blessed God, as the great Parent of universal Nature; whose *tender Mercies are over all his Works* *; who declares that Judgment is *his strange Work* †; who *is very pitiful, and of tender Mercy* ‡, *gracious and full of Compassion* §; who *delighteth in Mercy* §; who *waiteth to be gracious* **; and *endureth, with much Long-suffering, even the Vessels of Wrath fitted to Destruction* ††. He intimately *knows our Frame* ††, and our Circumstances; he sees the Weakness of the unformed Mind; how forcibly the volatile Spirits are struck with a thousand new amusing Objects around it, and borne away as a Feather before the Wind; and, on the other

* Psal. cxlv. 9.
 † Psal. cxi. 4.
 †† Rom. ix. 22.

† Isa. xxviii. 21.
 § Micah vii. 18.
 †† Psal. ciii. 14.

‡ James v. 11.
 ** Isa. xxx. 18.

other Hand, how, when Distempers seize it, the feeble Powers are over-borne in a Moment, and render'd incapable of any Degree of Application and Attention. And, Lord, wilt thou *open thine Eyes on such a one, to bring it into strict Judgment with thee* *? Amidst all the Instances of thy Patience, and thy Bounty, to the most abandoned of Mankind, are these little helpless Creatures the Objects of thy speedy Vengeance, and final Severity?

Let us farther consider, as it is a very comfortable Thought in these Circumstances, the compassionate Regard which the blessed *Jesus* expressed to little Children. He was *much displeas'd* with those who forbad their being brought to him; and said, *Suffer them to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God; and taking them up in his Arms, he laid his Hands upon them, and blessed them* †. In another Instance we are told, that he *took a little Child*, (who appears to have been old enough to come at his Call) and *set him in the Midst of his Disciples, and said, Except ye become as little Children, you shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven* ‡. May we not then hope that many little Children are admitted into it? And may not that Hope be greatly confirmed from whatever, of an amiable and regular Disposition, we have observed in those that are taken away? If we have seen (a) a *Tenderness of Conscience* in any Thing which they apprehended would displease the great and good God; a *Love to Truth*; a *Readiness to attend on Divine Worship, from some imperfect Notion of its general Design, though the Particulars of it could not be understood*; an *open, candid, benevolent Heart*; a *tender Sense of Obligation, and a Desire, according to their little Power, to repay it*; may we not hope that these were some of the *first Fruits of the Spirit* ||, which he would, in due Time, have ripen'd into Christian Graces, and are now, on a sudden, perfected by that great Almighty Agent *who worketh all, and in all* §?

Sure

* Job xiv. 3.
xviii. 2, 3.

† Mark x. 13—16.

‡ Mat.

|| Rom. viii. 23.

§ 1 Cor. xii. 6.

(a) I bless God, all these Things were very evident in that dear Child, whose Death occasioned this Discourse.

Sure I am, that this blessed Spirit hath no inconsiderable Work to perform on the most established Christians, to finish them to a complete Meetness for the Heavenly World: would to God, there were no greater Blemishes to be observed in their Character, than the little Vanities of Children! With infinite Ease than can be perfect what is lacking in their unfinished Minds, and pour out upon them, in a Moment, that Light and Grace, which shall qualify them for a State, in Comparison of which, ours on Earth is but Childhood or Infancy.

Now what a noble Source of Consolation is here! Then may the affectionate Parent say, "*It is well,*" not only with me, but *with the Child* too: incomparably better than if my ardent Wishes, and importunate Prayers for its Recovery, had been answered. *It is indeed well,* if that beloved Creature be *fallen asleep in Christ*; *; if that dear Lamb be folded in the Arms of the compassionate Shepherd, and gathered into his gracious Bosom. Self-love might have led me to wish its longer Continuance here; but if I truly *loved* my Child with a solid, rational Affection, I should much rather *rejoice*, to think *it is gone* to a heavenly *Father* †, and to the World of perfected Spirits above. Had it been spared to me, how slowly could I have taught it! and in the full Ripeness of its Age, what had it been, when compared with what it now is! How is it shot up on a sudden, from the Converse and the Toys of Children, to be a Companion with Saints and Angels, in the Employment, and the Blessedness of Heaven! Shall I then complain of it as a rigorous Severity to my Family, that God hath taken it to the Family above? And what if he hath chosen to bestow the distinguished Favour on *that one* of my little Flock, who was formed to take the tenderest Hold of my Heart? Was there Unkindness in that? What if he saw, that the very Sprightliness and Softness which made it to me so exquisitely delightful, might, in Time, have betrayed it into Ruin; and took this Method of sheltering it from Trials which had, otherwise, been too hard for it, and so fixing a Seal on its Character and Happiness?

What

* 1 Cor. xv. 18.

† John xiv. 23.

“ What if that strong Attachment of my Heart to it,
 “ had been a Snare to the Child, and to me? Or what if
 “ it had been otherwise? Do I need additional Reasons
 “ to justify the Divine Conduct, in an Instance which
 “ my Child is celebrating in the Songs of Heaven? If
 “ it is a new and untasted Affliction to have such a tender
 “ Branch lopp'd off, it is also a new Honour to be the
 “ Parent of a glorified Saint.” And, as good Mr.
Howe expressed it on another Occasion, “ *If God be*
 “ *pleas'd, and his glorified Creature be pleas'd, who are we*
 “ *that we should be displeas'd*?*”

“ Could I wish, that this young Inhabitant of Hea-
 “ ven should be degraded to Earth again? Or would it
 “ thank me for that Wish? Would it say, that it was
 “ the Part of a wise Parent, to call it down from a
 “ Sphere of such exalted Services and Pleasures, to our
 “ low Life here upon Earth? Let me rather be thank-
 “ ful for the pleasing Hope, that though God loves my
 “ Child too well to permit it to return to me, he will
 “ ere long bring me to it. And then that endeared pa-
 “ ternal Affection, which would have been a Cord to
 “ tie me to Earth, and have added new Pangs to my
 “ Removal from it, will be as a golden Chain to draw
 “ me upwards, and add one farther Charm and Joy
 “ even to Paradise itself.” And oh, how great a Joy!
 to view the Change, and to compare that dear Idea, so
 fondly laid up, so often reviewed, with the now glorious
 Original, in the Improvements of the upper World!
 To borrow the Words of the sacred Writer, in a very
 different Sense? “ *I said, I was desolate and bereaved of*
 “ *Children, and who hath brought up these? I was left*
 “ *alone, and these where have they been†?* Was this my
 “ Desolation? this my Sorrow? to part with thee for a
 “ few Days, that I might receive thee for ever‡, and
 “ find thee what thou art!” It is for no Language,
 but that of Heaven, to describe the sacred Joy which
 such a Meeting must occasion.

In the mean time, Christians, let us keep up the lively
 Expectation of it, and let what has befallen us draw
 our Thoughts upwards. Perhaps they will sometimes,
 before

* *Howe's* Life, pag. 32. Fol. Edit.
 † Philem. ver. 13.

‡ Isa. xlix. 21.

before we are aware, sink to the Grave, and dwell in the Tombs that contain the poor Remains of what was once so dear to us. But let them take Flight from thence to more noble, more delightful Scenes. And I will add, let the Hope we have of the Happiness of our Children render God still dearer to our Souls. We feel a very tender Sense of the Kindness which our Friends expressed towards them, and think, indeed very justly, that their affectionate Care for them lays a lasting Obligation upon us. What Love then, and what Service do we owe to thee, oh gracious Father, who hast, we hope, received them into thine House above, and art now entertaining them there with unknown Delight, tho' our former Methods of Commerce with them be cut off! "Lord," should each of us say in such a Case", I would "take what thou art doing to my Child as done to myself, and as a Specimen and Earnest of what shall "shortly be done." *It is therefore well.*

It only remains, that I conclude with a few Hints of farther Improvement.

1. Let pious Parents, who have lost hopeful Children *in a maturer Age*, join with others in saying, *It is well.*

My Friends, the Reasons which I have been urging at large, are common to you with us; and permit me to add, that as your Case has its peculiar Distress, it has, I think, in a yet greater Degree, its peculiar Consolations too.

I know you will say, that it is inexpressibly grievous and painful, to part with Children who were grown up into most amiable Friends, who were your Companions in the Ways of God, and concerning whom you had a most agreeable Prospect, that they would have been the Ornaments and Supports of Religion in the rising Age, and extensive Blessings to the World, long after you had quitted it. These Reasonings have, undoubtedly, their Weight; and they have so, when considered in a very different View. Must you not acknowledge *it is well*, that you enjoyed so many Years of Comfort in them? that you reaped so much solid Satisfaction from them? and saw those Evidences of a Work of Grace upon their Hearts, which give you such abundant Reason
son

son to conclude that they are now received into that Inheritance of Glory, for which they were so apparently *made meet*? Some of them, perhaps, had already quitted their Father's House: as for others, had God spared their Lives, they might have been transplanted into Families of their own: and if, instead of being removed to another House, or Town, or Country, they are taken by God into another World, is that a Matter of so great Complaint; when that World is so much better, and you are yourselves so near it? I put it to your Hearts, Christians, Would you rather have chosen to have buried them in their Infancy, or never to have known the Joys and the Hopes of a Parent, now you know the Vicissitude of Sorrow, and of Disappointment? But perhaps, you will say, that you chiefly grieve for that Loss which the World has sustained by the Removal of those, from whom it might reasonably have expected so much future Service. This is, indeed, a generous and a Christian Sentiment, and there is something noble in those Tears which flow on such a Consideration. But do not so remember your Relation to Earth, as to forget that which you bear to Heaven; and do not so wrong the Divine Wisdom and Goodness, as to suppose, that when he takes away from hence promising Instruments of Service, he there lays them by as useless. Much more reasonable is it to conclude, that their Sphere of Action, as well as Happiness, is enlarged, and that the Church above hath gained incomparably more, than that below can be supposed to have lost by their Death.

On the whole, therefore, far from complaining of the Divine Conduct in this Respect, it will become you, my Friends, rather to be very thankful that these dear Children were spared so long, to accompany and entertain you in so many Stages of your short Journey through Life, to answer so many of your Hopes, and to establish so many more beyond all Fear of Disappointment. Reflect on all that God did in and upon them, on all he was beginning to do by them, and on what you have great Reason to believe he is now doing for them; and adore his Name, that he has left you these dear Memorials, by which your Case is so happily distinguished

from ours, whose Hopes in our Children withered in the very Bud; or from theirs, who saw those who were once so dear to them, perishing, as they have Cause to fear, *in the Paths of the Destroyer.*

But while I speak thus, methinks I am alarmed, lest I should awaken the far more grievous Sorrows of some mournful Parent, whom it will not be so easy to comfort. My Brethren and Friends, what shall I say to you, who are lamenting over your *Abfaloms*, and almost wishing you had died for them*? Shall I urge you to say it is well? Perhaps you may think it a great Attainment, if like *Aaron*, when his Sons died before the Lord, you can hold your Peace †, under the awful Stroke. My Soul is troubled for you; my Words are almost swallowed up. I cannot unsay what I have elsewhere said at large on that melancholy Subject ‡. Yet let me remind you of this, that you do not certainly know what Almighty Grace might do for these lamented Creatures, even in the latest Moments, and have therefore no Warrant confidently to pronounce that they are assuredly perished. And if you cannot but tremble in the too probable Fear of it, labour to turn your Eyes from so dark a Prospect, to those better Hopes which God is setting before you. For surely you still have abundant Reason to rejoice in that Grace, which gives your own Lives to you as a Prey, and has brought you so near to that blessed World, where, hard as it is now to conceive it, you will have laid aside every Affection of Nature, which interferes with the Interests of God, and prevents your most chearful Acquiescence in every Particular of his wise and gracious Determinations.

2. From what we have heard, let us learn not to think of the Loss of our Children with a slavish Dread.

It is to a Parent indeed such a cutting Stroke, that I wonder not if Nature shrink back at the very Mention of it: and, perhaps, it would make those to whom God hath denied Children more easy, if they knew what

* 2 Sam. xviii. 33. † Lev. x. 3. ‡ In the Sixth of my Sermons to young Persons, intitled, *The Reflections of a pious Parent on the Death of a wicked Child.*

what some of the happiest Parents feel in an uncertain Apprehension of the Loss of theirs : an Apprehension which strikes with peculiar Force on the Mind, when Experience hath taught us the Anguish of such an Affliction in former Instances. But let us not anticipate Evils : perhaps all our Children, who are hitherto spared, may follow us to the Grave : or, if otherwise, we *sorrow not as those who have no Hope* *. We may have Reason still to say, *It is well* ; and, thro' Divine Grace, we may also have Hearts to say it. Whatever we lose, if we be the Children of God, we shall never lose our Heavenly Father. He will still be our Support, and our Joy. And therefore let us turn all our Anxiety about uncertain, future Events, into an holy Solitude to please him, and to promote religious Impressions in the Hearts of our dear Offspring ; that if God should see fit to take them away, we may have a Claim to the full Consolations, which I have been representing in the preceding Discourse.

3. Let us not sink in hopeless Sorrow, or break out into clamorous Complaints, if God has brought this heavy Affliction upon us.

A stupid Indifference would be absurd and unnatural : God and Man might look upon us as acting a most unworthy Part, should we be like *the Ostrich in the Wilderness, which hardeneth herself against her young ones, as if they were not hers ; because God hath deprived her of Wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her Understanding* †. Let us sorrow like Men, and like Parents ; but let us not, in the mean Time, forget that we are Christians. Let us remember how common the Calamity is ; few Parents are exempt from it ; some of the most pious and excellent have lost amiable Children, with Circumstances perhaps of peculiar Aggravation. 'Tis a Trial which God hath chosen for the Exercise of some who have been eminently dear to him, as we may learn from a Variety of Instances both ancient and modern. Let us recollect our many Offences against our heavenly Father, those Sins which such a Dispensation may properly bring to our Remembrance ‡ ; and let that silence us, and

* 1 Theff. iv. 13. † Job xxxix. 16, 17. ‡ 1 Kings xviii. 18.

and teach us to own, that 'tis of the Lord's Mercies we are not consumed*, and that we are punished less than our Iniquities deserve †. Let us look round on our surviving Comforts; let us look forward to our future, our eternal Hopes; and we shall surely see, that there is still Room for Praise, still a Call for it. Let us review the Particulars mentioned above, and then let Conscience determine whether it doth not become us, in this particular Instance, to say it steadily, and chearfully too, even *this is well*. And may the God of all Grace and Comfort apply these Considerations to our Mind, that we may not only own them, but feel them, as a reviving Cordial when our Heart is overwhelmed within us! In the mean Time, let me beseech you whose *Tabernacles are in Peace* ‡, and whose *Children are yet about you* §, that you would not be severe in censoring our Tears, till you have experimentally known our Sorrows, and yourselves tasted the *Wormwood and the Gall*, which we, with all our Comforts, must have in a long and bitter *Remembrance* ||.

4. Let those of us who are under the Rod, be very solicitous to improve it aright, that in the End *it may indeed be well*.

Hear, my Brethren, my Friends and Fellow-Sufferers, hear and *suffer the Word of Exhortation* **. Let us be much concerned, that we may not bear all the Smart of such an Affliction, and, through our own Folly, lose all that Benefit which might, otherwise, be a rich Equivalent. In Proportion to the Grievousness of the Stroke, should be our Care to attend to the Design of it. Let us, now God is calling us to Mourning and Lamentation, be *searching and trying' our Ways, that we may turn again unto the Lord* †. Let us review the Conduct of our Lives, and the State and Tenour of our Affections, that we may observe what hath been deficient, and what irregular; that proper Remedies may be applied, and those important Lessons more thoroughly learnt, which I was mentioning under the former Branch of my Discourse. Let us pray, that through our Tears we may

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read

* Lam. iii. 22. † Ezra ix. 13. ‡ Job v. 24. § Ibid. xxix. 5. || Lam. iii. 19, 20. ** Heb. xiii. 22. † Lam. iii. 40.

read our Duty, and that by the Heat of the Furnace we may be so melted, that our Dross may be purged away, and the Divine Image instamped on our Souls in brighter and fairer Characters. To sum up all in one Word, let us endeavour to set our Hearts more on that God, who is infinitely *better to us than ten Children**, who hath *given us a Name better than that of Sons and Daughters* †, and can abundantly supply the Place of all earthly Enjoyments with the rich Communications of his Grace: nay, perhaps, we may add, who hath removed some Darling of our Hearts, left to our infinite Detriment it should fill his Place there, and, by alienating us from his Love and Service, have a fatal Influence on our present Peace, and our future Happiness.

Eternal Glory, my Friends, is so great a Thing, and the compleat Love and Enjoyment of God so unutterably desirable, that it is well worth our while to bear the sharpest Sorrows, by which we may be more perfectly formed for it. We may even congratulate the Death of our Children, if it bring us nearer to our heavenly Father; and teach us, (instead of filling this Vacancy in our Heart with some new Vanity, which may shortly renew our Sorrows) to consecrate the whole of it to him who alone deserves, and can alone answer the most intense Affection. Let us try what of this Kind may be done. We are now going to the Table of the Lord ‡, to that very Table where our Vows have often been sealed, where our Comforts have often been resigned, where our *Isaacs* have been conditionally sacrificed, and where we commemorate the real Sacrifice which God hath made even of his only begotten Son for us. May our other Sorrows be suspended, while we *mourn for him whom we have pierced, as for an only Son, and are in Bitterness as for a First-born* §. From his Blood Consolations spring up, which will flourish even on the Graves of our dear Children; and the Sweetness of that Cup which he there gives us, will temper the most distasteful Ingredients of the other. Our Houses *are not so with God,*

* 1 Sam. i. 8. † Isa lvi. 5. ‡ N B. This Sermon was preached October 1, 1736. it being Sacrament Day. The Child died October 1. § Zech. xii. 10.

God, as they once were, as we once expected they would have been, but *he hath made with us an everlasting Covenant*, and these are the Tokens of it. Blessed be his Name, we hold not the Mercies of that Covenant by so precarious a Tenure as the Life of any Creature: *It is well ordered in all Things and sure: may it be all our Salvation, and all our Desire* *; and then it is but a little while, and all our Complaints will cease. *God will wipe away these Tears from our Eyes* †; our peaceful and happy Spirits shall ere long meet with those of our Children which he hath taken to himself. Our Bodies shall sleep, and ere long shall also awake, and arise with theirs. *Death, that inexorable Destroyer, shall be swallowed up in Victory* ‡, while we and ours surround the Throne with everlasting Hallelujahs, and own, with another Evidence than we can now perceive, with another Spirit than we can now express, that *All was indeed well*. Amen.

* 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

† Rev. xxi. 4.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 54.



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THE
TEMPER AND CONDUCT
OF THE
PRIMITIVE MINISTERS
OF THE
G O S P E L,

Illustrated and recommended:

IN A
S E R M O N

Preached at *WISBEACH*, June 8, 1737,

AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE

Rev. Mr. WILLIAM JOHNSTON.



2 COR. IV. 5.

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your Servants for Jesus sake.

THE Apostle observes, that *what had happened to him with Regard to his Imprisonment at Rome, tho' it seemed to bear so melancholy an Aspect, yet did on the whole fall out by the special Providence of God for the Furtherance of the Gospel* * ; and we may justly apply the same Reflection to several other very afflictive Circumstances of his Life, and particularly to the most perverse and unjust Opposition which he met with from those factious Teachers, especially of *the Circumcision*, who gave so much Disturbance to him and the Churches. The Attack which they made upon his Character and Interest at *Corinth*, laid him under a Necessity of saying many Things which he would have gladly omitted, and of mentioning some Circumstances in his History, which had otherwise perhaps remained unknown, at least could never have appeared with equal Evidence and Spirit. While he is engaged in his own Vindication, and entering into the Particulars of his Character and Conduct, he drops many very edifying Expressions, which are worthy the most attentive Regard both of Ministers and private Christians; of which the Words I have now been reading, are none of the least considerable. He was obliged to say something which might look like an Encomium on himself, and therefore chuses to speak in the Name of all his faithful Brethren in the Ministry, as well as his own.

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Now

* Phil. i. 12.

Now after he had declared that they had *renounced the hidden Things of Dishonesty*, (which were the great Mysteries of the *Heathen Priesthood*, and probably the secret Spring which actuated these *Judaizing Teachers*) *not like them, walking in Craftiness, not handling the Word of God deceitfully*, or adulterating it with any foreign and corrupt Mixtures; but acting so *constantly in the Sight of God*, as to secure to themselves a secret Testimony in the Consciences of all that intimately knew them, and accurately observed them; he adds, *For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your Servants for Jesus sake* *. Oh that every Christian Minister, who in succeeding Ages hath read these Words, had been delivered into the Mold of them! Oh that we whom God hath honoured with this high and holy Calling, may make it our increasing Care to form ourselves by them; and *beholding as in a Glass the beautiful Model, may be changed into the same Image from Glory to Glory*.

It will be my Business in the Process on my Discourse from these Words,

I. To illustrate the Account which the Apostle here gives of his own Conduct, and that of his Brethren in the Christian Ministry.

II. To consider the Principles on which we may reasonably conclude they acted, and by which they were influenced to it.

III. I shall close with some Reflections on the whole.

I chuse to throw my Discourse into such a Form, as it will give me an Opportunity of suggesting my Advice and Exhortations to you, my dear and reverend Brother, who are this Day giving yourself up to this excellent Work, in the most humble and respectful Manner; which I am now the more solicitous to do, lest I should seem to dictate to those from whom I shall always be ready, with great Pleasure and Deference, to receive Instructions. I. I am

* It seems evident to me, that *Ver. 3 and 4*, come in as a Parenthesis.

I. I am to consider the Account which the Apostle gives of his own Conduct, and that of his Brethren in the Christian Ministry: *We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your Servants for Jesus sake.* In which Words he plainly declares—that they did not make themselves the chief End of their Ministry, but faithfully devoted it to the Service of Christ as the great Lord, whom they endeavoured to serve by all the most humble and affectionate Condescensions to those that were committed to their Ministerial Care.

1. The Apostles did not make themselves the chief End of their Ministry.

We, says St. Paul, *preach not ourselves.* It is to be feared that some did so even in these early Days, for the Antichristian Spirit began to work betimes; so that it gave Paul Reason to say, that *they served not Christ Jesus, but their own Belly*, while they preached him out of Contention rather than Love, supposing to add Addition to his Bonds*; infomuch that he complains of it as a general, though, blessed be God, not a universal Character, *all seeking their own Things, not the Things which are Jesus Christ's* †. But this was far from being the Character of the Apostle, or any faithful Disciple of Christ; who must have learnt, in some measure, that essential Branch of the Christian Character, *to deny himself, and taking up even his Cross to follow his Master to Crucifixion itself*, should he lead him on in that painful and dangerous Way ‡.

It may be worth our while more particularly to observe, that these good Men did not seek their own *Applause*, their own *Interest*, or their own *Power and Authority*, as the chief End of undertaking and prosecuting the Ministry; for each of these Particulars must be included in this general Expression, *we preach not ourselves*, and it will be our Wisdom to regard each.

These primitive Ministers did not, in preaching the Gospel, aim at their own *Applause* and *Reputation*.

The greatest Men amongst the *Heathens* did it, and avowed it; they reckoned the Love of Fame amongst the

* Phil. i. 16.

† Ibid. ii. 21.

‡ Matt. xvi. 24.

noblest of Passions, and the Pursuit of it appeared a Mark of the most generous Mind. But Christian Apostles had higher Views. They considered themselves as in the Presence of God, and had the truly great Ambition * of being *accepted of him*, and then human Applause and Admiration disappeared as less than nothing. It is, says good St. Paul, *a very small Thing to me*, the smallest Matter one can imagine, † *to be judged of Man's Judgment, for he that judgeth me is the Lord*. On this Principle we find, that when he came to *Corinth*, though it were so learned and polite a City, he did not affect to come with *the Excellency or Loftiness of Speech, and the persuasive Words of Man's Wisdom* ‡; he did not labour for the exactest Forms of Expression, nor study to compose and deliver his Discourses in such a Manner as might most easily have gained him the Reputation of an exact Orator, so that People should point after him as he passed through the Streets, and say, *That is Paul!* a little Circumstance with which poor *Demosthenes* was so highly delighted; but he contented himself with preaching the plain Things of the Gospel, in a plain and serious, a rational and unaffected Manner, whether Men would hear, or whether they would forbear. And indeed, he was rather on his Guard against too pompous and florid a Style, lest it should seem that a Man who was so studious to adorn the Doctrines of the Gospel, did not thoroughly believe them; and so the *Cross of Christ* should have become of none Effect §, when an Apostle seemed so little penetrated with the Argument drawn from it, as to be at Leisure for Trifles.

Such a Turn of Mind we may easily perceive in his Epistles. They appear to be written out of the Fulness of his Soul, but without any Anxiety about the Style, or any very exact Care even to range the Ideas according to the most methodical Order; abounding every where with a great many lively and beautiful Digressions, that often run into each other in a Manner which the strictest Rules of polite Writing

* 2 Cor. v. 9.
§ Ibid. i. 17.

† Ελαχιστον, 1 Cor. iv. 3.

‡ 1 Cor. ii. 1.

ing will hardly allow. In a Word, we eminently see in *St. Paul*, perhaps beyond any other Writer in the World, *a good Man bringing out of the good Treasure of his Heart good Things* *, with a Kind of magnificent Negligence. His Works are like a Wilderness of beautiful and fragrant Plants, springing up promiscuously out of a happy Soil; and amidst all their seeming Confusion, producing, to a natural Taste, a finer Effect than if they were drawn out with a solicitous Care, set in the most regular Figures, and cut into a thousand artificial Forms.

Again, the Apostles, and their Fellow-Labourers in the Gospel-Ministry, were not governed by a View to the *Possessions* of the present Life.

These holy Men abhorred the very Thought of making the Church of Christ a Kind of Porch to the Temple of *Mammon*. The Circumstances in which they undertook their Work, were such as could leave no Room to suspect that they sought it only as a gainful Trade. On the contrary, at their very first setting out in it, *they left All*, that they might follow their Master. And tho' it may be objected with regard to some of them, that their All was little, yet they had at least Food and Raiment, and a Habitation which they could call their own; whereas, when they devoted themselves to the Ministry of the Gospel, one of them could say in the Name of the rest, *even to this Day we are hungry and naked, and have no certain Dwelling-place* †. And this was *St. Paul*, who seems to have resigned very great Prospects, which his liberal Education, his remarkable Proficiency and Zeal in the *Jewish* Religion, and the Degree of Favour which he had even in his younger Days with the greatest Men of his Nation, might fairly have given him. But *those Things, which were before Gain* to him, he *counted Loss for Christ* ‡: and when he had once devoted himself to his Service, his Actions as well as his Words plainly shewed, that he was *crucified to the World* by the Cross of his Redeemer. He could therefore appeal to the *Corinthians* ||, that his Conduct had proved

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* Matt. xii. 35. † 1 Cor. iv. 11. ‡ Phil. iii. 7. || 2 Cor. xii. 14.

he fought not *theirs*, but *them*; and when writing to the *Thessalonians**, could make an Appeal to God himself, that he had never used a *Cloak of Covetousness*. Nay, when leaving the *Ephesians*, amongst whom he had made so long an Abode, that his real Temper must have been discovered, he could assure them, and they themselves could testify the Truth of it, that he had been so far from *coveting any Man's Silver, or Gold, or Apparel, that his own Hand had ministered to his Necessities* †; and that, in order to prevent his being burdensome to them, even for the Necessaries of Life, he had sometimes added the Labour of the Night to that of the Day.

Nor did these holy Men arrogate to themselves any *secular Power*, or pretend to any Authority over the Civil Liberties of Mankind.

Grotius supposes this to be the direct and principal Meaning of the Text; *We preach not ourselves as Lords, but proclaim Christ Jesus alone under that Character*. And this undoubtedly is included in the Phrase, though I can see no imaginable Reason for such a Limitation as he would lay upon it. These primitive Pastors of the Church, according to that excellent Advice of *St. Peter* (so peculiarly forgotten by those who have contended for the Honour of being his only Successors) did not behave as *Lords over God's Heritage* ‡; and though they insisted upon it, that what they wrote by a divine Revelation and Direction, should be received as *the Commandment of Christ* §, yet *Paul* himself expressly renounces all Claim to a Dominion over Mens Faith: thereby confessing himself not to be the Master of the Family, but merely a Servant in it, who desired to be regarded by them no farther than he could prove that he spake in a greater Name than his own. *Let a Man, says he* ||, *so esteem of us as Ministers of Christ, and Stewards*

* 1 Thess. ii. 5. † Acts xx. 33, 34. ‡ Dr. Latkom's elegant and judicious Discourse on this Clause of my Text, at the Ordination of Messieurs *Gregory* and *Dodge*, will abundantly supply the Deficiency of these brief Remarks of mine upon it; and thither I do with great Pleasure refer the Reader. § 1 Pet. v. 3. || 1 Cor. xiv. 37.

Stewards of the Mysteries of God, of whom the great Thing required is, *that we be found faithful* to him whose Commission we bear. Nor did they ever pretend that this extraordinary Character of Messengers from Heaven gave them any Claim to secular Power on Earth; they assumed no Authority in *Temporals in order to Spirituals*; and they were not penetrating enough to understand the Doctrine of the *two Swords* *, with which many have since been so fond of meddling, I fear to their own wounding, as well as to the Dishonour of the Christian Name, and the Destruction of many of their Fellow-Creatures. *The Weapons* of the Apostle's Warfare were not carnal, but spiritual, as it was necessary they should be, in order to the bringing every Thought into Subjection to the Law of Christ †. Which leads me to pass on from this negative Part of their Character, to observe, that as they did not preach themselves, so as to make their own Reputation, or Interest, or Dominion the End of their Labours; so,

2. They faithfully devoted their Ministry to the Service of Christ.

We preach Christ Jesus the Lord; which plainly intimates, that they made Christ the great Object of their preaching, and that they endeavoured to speak of him in such a Manner, as to promote his Empire over the Hearts and Consciences of Men.

They made Christ the great Subject of their preaching.

So they declare, *we preach Christ crucified, though to the Jews a Stumbling-Block, and to the Greeks Foolishness* ‡. At *Corinth* in particular, curious as it was, the Apostle declares, *I determined to know, i. e. to make known, and insist upon nothing among you save Jesus Christ, even that crucified Person* §; with whatever Scorn and Contempt such a Subject might be treated. And therefore it is observable, that *preaching Christ* is sometimes used as a comprehensive Expression for all that the Apostles taught. Not that *Paul* or his Brethren neglected the great Doctrines of Natural Religion, which are so evidently

* Luke xxii. 38.

† και τῆτον εἰσαυξημενον, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

‡ 1 Cor. v, 24.

§ 1 Cor. ii. 2.

dently the Foundation of the Gospel itself, that it is perfect Madness to pour Contempt upon them. We might in Reason conclude, as we find it to have been Fact, that when they came amongst Gentile and idolatrous Nations, they began with asserting the Being and Attributes of the only true God, the Universality of his Providence, and that Certainty of a State of future Retribution, which is so naturally connected with it. All this they taught; but they did not stop here, for they well knew that it was their Duty to make these Things the Plan on which to raise that glorious Superstructure which Christianity hath built upon them. They served God with their *Spirit in the Gospel of his Son*, and therefore proclaimed the Glory of the Father, as reflected from the Face of Christ Jesus the Lord.

They established the Truth of his Deity, the Mystery of his Incarnation, the Necessity of his Atonement, the Perfection of his Righteousness, the Riches of his Grace. They described him as living on Earth an Example of universal Goodness, as dying on the Cross a Sacrifice for Sin, as rising from the Dead, and ascending into Heaven, and as reigning there the Lord of universal Nature, and *Head over all to the Church* *. You cannot but know, that these are their darling Topicks on which they most copiously insist in their Sermons and Writings which are transmitted to us: and if *St. Paul at Athens* † seems to touch more sparingly than usual on these important Doctrines, it is to be considered, that we have only the Beginning of a Discourse, in which the Rudeness of the Philosophers interrupted him, before he could proceed to open and establish those Doctrines which were peculiar to his Character as an *Embassador of Jesus*. And I am persuaded, that whoever impartially peruses the Epistles of that great Apostle, and observes not only his direct Arguments, but his lively and pathetick Digressions on this glorious Subject when it comes in his Way, will not only see that *Paul* was delighted with it, but will himself be disposed to wish that every Christian Minister may copy after this great Original. Especially when it is considered,

That

* Eph. i. 22.

† Acts xvii. 22—31.

That he and his Brethren preached Christ in such a Manner as might most effectually establish his Empire over the Hearts and Consciences of Men.

We preach *Christ Jesus the Lord*, i. e. We preach him under the Character of the great Lord, the Ruler and Governor of his Church. They very well knew, that the Design of Christianity was not merely to amuse the World, but to reform it; and that its sublimest Speculations were received and admitted in vain, if the Life were not regulated, and the Heart subdued by the Gospel. Therefore do they on all Occasions inculcate it, that *God had exalted Christ to be a Prince* as well as a *Saviour* *; had ordained, and even *sworn in his Holiness, that every Knee should bow unto him* †. These good Men did not think it enough to declare the Grace of the Gospel, and then leave it to the Spirit of God, by his own immediate Agency, to draw the proper Consequences relating to Duty; but they expressly draw those Consequences themselves, and enter into a very large and particular Detail of those Duties. They insist upon it with great Spirit and Earnestness, as a *faithful Saying, that those who have believed in God, should be careful to maintain good Works, and direct succeeding Ministers to affirm it constantly* ‡. They declared, that it was the very Purpose for which the *saving Grace of God had appeared unto all Men, to teach them to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly* §. They urge Christians therefore to *yield themselves to God as alive from the Dead, and to employ their Members as Instruments of Righteousness* ||. *Beseeching them by the Mercies of God to present their Bodies as living Sacrifices, holy and acceptable to God, which was indeed their most reasonable Service* †. Nor did they think it beneath the Honour of the Evangelical Ministry, sometimes to insist on Arguments taken from the Terrors of the Law. *Knowing those Terrors, they laboured to persuade Men by them; they affectionately warned them, that the Ground, which under Divine Cultivation, brought forth nothing but Briars and Thorns, was nigh unto cursing, and its End*
was

* Acts v. 31. † Rom. xiv. 11. ‡ Tit. iii. 8. § Ibid. ii. 11, 12. || Rom. vi. 13. † Ibid. xii. 1.

was to be burned * ; that to those who did not obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ, there remained a certain fearful Expectation of Wrath, and fiery Indignation, which should devour them, yea, that they should be punished with everlasting Destruction, from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power †. This was the Apostolick Method of preaching Christ, so warning every Man, and teaching every Man, as that they might, through ‡ the Divine Blessing, most probably hope to present every Man perfect in Christ; that having their Fruit unto Holiness, their End might be everlasting Life.

You see I have generally expressed these Things in Scripture-Language, that the Illustration and Proof might advance together. And if we desire to approve ourselves faithful in the same Cause, we must conduct our Ministrations thus, and must also imitate these good Men in the third Particular of their Conduct, which alone now remains to be considered from these Words : which is,

3. That they endeavoured to serve their great Master, by the most humble and affectionate Condescension to those that were committed to their Care.

So far were they from lording it over their Brethren, that, according to the Example and Command of Christ himself, they owned themselves the *Servants of All* : nor was it merely an empty Compliment, for their Actions spoke it as well as their Words ; they exercised great Humility and Condescension towards all, and they did it for Jesus sake.

They exercised great Humility and Condescension towards all their Brethren, not excepting even the meanest of them.

To this Paul frequently exhorts others : *Mind not high Things, but condescend to Men of low Estate* §. *In Love serve and be subject to one another, and let each esteem others better than himself.* Thus he advised, and thus he acted ; and his Brethren, no doubt, behaved like him. They well knew their Calling as Christians, and plainly saw, that not many Mighty, not many Noble, were called, but that

* Heb. vi. 8. † 2 Thess. i. 8, 9. ‡ Col. i. 28. § Rom. xii. 16.

that God had chosen the weak things of the World to confound the Mighty; that he had chosen the Poor in this World, rich in Faith, and Heirs of a Kingdom of eternal Glory *.

And if God would stoop thus low, they were cordially willing to do it. They could discern a Dignity in a Child of God, and an Heir of Glory, which shone through all their Poverty and Meanness in their Dress, and outward Appearance; inconsiderable Circumstances, which could not prevent these holy Men from *honouring them that feared the Lord* †, though they might want some of those Decorations which the vilest of Mankind may wear, and perhaps to their greater Infamy.

St. Paul was a memorable Instance of this amiable Temper; though by his Education fit for higher Company, and from his early Years accustomed to it, he did not disdain the meanest of the People, and was not only easy of Access to them, but visited them at their own Dwellings, and carried his Instructions and Consolations *from House to House*, even to those where he could expect no Entertainment, but such as arose from religious Converse, Society in Worship, and a Consciousness of being useful to the Souls of Men. And it is worthy of our Notice, that in Subserviency to this great Design, this holy Man was a very affectionate Friend to their temporal Interests; and that to such a Degree, as to be far from imagining that he had done his Part, when he had exhorted his Hearers to contribute liberally to the Supply of their indigent Brethren. Most instructive in this View, is the Address he makes to the Presbyters or Bishops of the Church of *Ephesus*; in which, appealing to them, that they *themselves knew that his own Hands had ministered to his Necessities, and those that were with him*; he adds, *I have shewed you that, so labouring, you ought to support the weak; and to remember the Words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive* †.

The same true Greatness of Soul which engaged him cheerfully to contribute out of his small Stock, for the Relief of those that were yet more necessitous than himself, disposed him with great Condescension and Tenderness

* 1 Cor. i. 26, 27. James ii. 5.

† Psa. xv. 4.

‡ Acts xx. 34, 35.

derness to bear the Infirmities of his People, and in many Instances to sacrifice his own Taste and Humour to theirs. *Who was weak, and he was not weak? Who was offended, and he did not burn* * with Desire to remove the Offence? When his Converts behaved with too much of the Peevishness and Perverseness of Children, he did not haughtily chastise them; but rather chose tenderly to expostulate with them, and if possible to love them out of their Follies. He put on not only the Boweis of a Father, but the Indulgence of a Nurse towards them; *We were, says he, gentle amongst you, even as a Nurse cherisheth her Children, and ready to have imparted to you, not only the Gospel of Christ, but our own Souls or Lives also, i. e. to have died, as we lived, for your Service, because you were singularly dear to us* †.

This was the governing Temper of St. Paul, and it carried him through some Circumstances which required great and resolute Self-denial; *He became all things to all Men, if by any means he might gain some sincere Converts to the Gospel.* And in particular, *to the Jews he became as a Jew, that he might gain them, i. e. he voluntarily laid himself under all the Restraints of the Mosaic Law, tho' he knew it was now abolished, that he might as a Christian Apostle convert the Jews.* And this he carries so far, as to declare his Readiness, not only to forbear those Kinds of Food which the Law of Moses pronounceth unclean, but to give up all animal Diet, and subsist intirely on Vegetables, rather than he would grieve and offend his Brethren, i. e. the feeblest Christian. *If Meat, says he, make my Brother to offend, I will eat no Flesh while the World standeth.* Thus, though the Apostles were free from All, they nevertheless voluntarily became the Servants of All ‡, and indeed condescended to do, and forbear many things, because disagreeable to their Christian Brethren, which few hired Servants would have done or forborn out of Regard to those who were properly their Masters. But let us not fail to remember that

They did all this for the sake of Christ and his Gospel.

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* 2 Cor. xi. 29.
19, 20.

† 1 Thess. ii, 7, 8.

‡ 1 Cor. ix.

Ourselves your Servants for Jesus Sake. It is certain, that such Condescensions as we have been describing, are either great or mean, according to the Principle from whence they proceed. Ambition can creep, that it may soar; and sooth, that it may afterwards insult: but the Apostles stooped, that they might raise others; and pleased, that they might profit. We, says St. Paul, please all Men to their good for their Edification. This was their great Concern, that *whether they eat or drank, or whatever they did, they might do all to the Glory of God* *. This was their earnest Expectation and their Hope, that in all things Christ might be glorified in them, *whether by their Life or their Death* †. They sacrificed not only their Humour and their Ease, but Life itself, to the great Purposes of pleasing and serving the blessed Jesus; and Paul spake the Sentiments of them all, when he said, *Neither Bonds nor Imprisonments move me; nor do I count my Life dear unto me, that I may finish my Course with Joy, and the Ministry I have received of the Lord* ‡. But while I insist on such Expressions as these, I do in part anticipate what I am to offer under the second Head. Where I proposed,

II. To consider what were the Principles by which they were animated to so noble a Temper and Conduct.

I the rather enter into the Survey of them, as we shall find they were not only suited to the Age and Circumstances of the Apostles, but ought also to have a very great Influence upon us, whom God has favoured so far as to *count us faithful*, putting us into something of the same Ministry with them, which can never be comfortably and honourably fulfilled, but by those who govern themselves by the like Maxims and Principles. They were undoubtedly influenced by an affectionate Love to the blessed Redeemer, a pious Zeal for the Glory of God in the Salvation of Souls, and a prudent Regard to their own present and future Happiness. And if these great Motives have their due Weight with us, we shall not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves the Servants of his People for his sake.

1. The

* 1 Cor. x. 31.

† Phil. i. 20.

‡ Acts xx. 24.

1. The Apostles were engaged to the Conduct we have described, by a most grateful Affection to the blessed Redeemer.

That dear Name is *precious* to every believing Soul, and how precious it was to these holy Men, almost every Page of their Writings will declare. Divine Grace had deeply humbled them under the Conviction of their own Guilt and Weakness, and then taught them to view the Lord Jesus Christ as *made of God unto them Wisdom and Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption* *. They knew the Grace of the Son of God in descending, and living, and dying for their Salvation; and in passing through all the most dreadful Scenes of suffering which Imagination can suggest, with a Love to them, which all those *Waters could not quench, nor the Floods drown*. And believing this, they could not but speak in his Cause, they could not but desire to spend and be spent in his Service. On this Principle therefore doth Paul vindicate those Ardours of Zeal, which a profane World censured as Enthusiasm and Madness. *If we are besides ourself, it is to God, for the Love of Christ constraineth us while we thus judge* †, and approve the Argument in the coolest Moments of Reflection, *that if one died for all, then were all dead*; for had they not been in a State of Condemnation and Death, they would not have needed such a Ransom. *And he died, that we, who live only in consequence of his dying Love, should not henceforth live to ourselves, but to him that died for us, and rose again*. And we may assure ourselves, that while their Souls were thus drawn with the *Cords of a Man, and the Bands of Love* ‡, they saw a peculiar Beauty in the Condescensions of so great a Personage and so dear a Friend, which inclined them with Pleasure to trace his Steps, in making themselves the Servants of others for his sake, who took upon him *the Form of a Servant* ||, though he were *Lord of all*.

And ought not these Considerations, my Brethren, to have a constraining Force upon us? Was it for the sake of the Apostles alone, that the blessed Jesus stooped so low, and bore so much? Did he not *love us, and give himself*

* Cor. i. 30.

† 2 Cor. v. 14.

‡ Hof. xi. 4.

|| Phil. ii. 20.

*self for us**, and was not the News of our Salvation contained in those glad Tidings which he brought from Heaven, which he proclaimed on Earth, publishing them with long continued Labour, and at length sealing them with his Blood? Have not we our Lot amongst his People; nay, I will add, are we not distinguished from most of the rest of them, by his Favour, in that he hath committed to our Trust his glorious Gospel, the important Cause that lay so near his Heart, the great End of his Toils and his Sufferings? And where is our Gratitude, where is our Fidelity, where is our common Integrity, if we can forget such Engagements, and lose our Concern for that Gospel, in a mean Solitude about our own Applause, or Interest, or Dominion? I trust, my Brethren, it will never so be lost. I am persuaded, through Divine Grace, there are those amongst us, whose Bosoms glow with such undissembled Love, that we can truly say, we reckon the Title of Servants of Christ, and of the Church for his sake, a thousand times more honourable than to be called, and to be, the Lords of the whole World; that we had rather approve ourselves the faithful Interpreters of his Laws, than see assembled Nations bowing down before us, and with the profoundest Submission receiving Law at our Mouths.

2. The Apostles were animated to the Conduct we have been reviewing, by a pious Zeal, for the Glory of God in the Salvation of Souls.

They well knew, that the Grace of the Father was the original Source of all the Blessings they received by the Interposition of the Son, and their Hearts were so subjected and united to God, that they could not fail of being tenderly concerned, that being *bought with such a Price*, and maintained by such a constant Emanation of divine Favour and Bounty, they might *glorify God with their Bodies and their Spirit*, which they owned to be *the Lord's* †, by so many important Claims.

And they must farther infer from the complete All-sufficiency of the divine Being, that the only Way whereby we are capable of glorifying him, is by promoting the Display of his Attributes; which are most nobly

* Gal. ii. 20.

† 1 Cor. vi. ult.

nobly illustrated in the Perfection and Happiness of his rational Creatures; especially their final and eternal Happiness. It plainly appears from the whole Strain of the Apostles Writings, that those holy Men were deeply penetrated with the Views of an invisible World: and as it was their great Concern for themselves, that their own Souls *might be given them for a Prey* *; so Sentiments of Compassion and Humanity joined with those of Piety, to engage them to wish and labour the Salvation of others.

They certainly knew, however others might forget it, that every human Creature hath in its Breast an immortal Soul, which must survive not only the Dissolution of the Body, but the Wreck of this lower World; a Soul that by its original Constitution was capable of shining in the Image of God, and the Glories of Paradise, when the *Sun* should be *turned into Darknes*, and the *Moon into Blood*. They were likewise sensible, that these precious Souls were naturally in a very dangerous State, and by Sin stood exposed to everlasting Darknes, Despair and Ruin. And this appeared to them such a lamentable Sight, that they could not but *weep* over those whose *End* would so probably be *Destruction* †. And when they saw them going on in a gay Insensibility of Danger, and a proud Confidence, on the very Borders of Hell, it *cut them to the Heart*, and put an Eagerness and Pathos into the Manner of their Address, which nothing but such an infinite Concern could have given. They were attempting to *recover those out of the Snare of the Devil, who were led Captives by him at his Pleasure* ‡; to *turn Men from Darknes to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God* §, that, instead of meeting all the Terrors of his Wrath, and sinking into eternal Destruction, they might receive the *Forgiveness of their Sins, and an Inheritance amongst his sanctified People*. And while this was the View in which they regarded them, who can wonder, that they did as it were *travail in Birth for their Conversion* §? Who can wonder if it appeared to them even an inhuman thing, to be more solicitous about soothing Mens Ears, or gaining an Influence over Mens temporal

* Jer. xlv. 5.
 || Acts xxvi. 18

† Phil. iii. 19.
 § Gal. iv. 19:

‡ 2 Tim. ii 26.

temporal Concerns, than saving their Souls? As it would indeed be a more cruel Kind of Folly, than for a Physician to be more careful that his Bill were elegantly written, than that the Life of his Patient should be saved by the Suitableness of the Prescription.

I must farther add, in order to complete the Argument, that the Apostles well knew, that nothing was so likely to save the perishing Souls of Men, as the great Doctrines of the everlasting Gospel; nothing so like to recover them, when fainting and dying, as the vital Saviour of a Redeemer's Name; which is indeed the *Power of God to the Salvation of every one that believeth* *. This engaged them, in this Manner, to *preach Christ Jesus the Lord*; and I hope, my Brethren, we shall never imagine, that our Wisdom can find out another more effectual Way. I hope we shall never practise so dangerous a Complaisance to the Unbelievers of the present Age, as to wave the Gospel, that we may accommodate ourselves to their Taste; which if we do, we may indeed preserve the Name of Virtue, but I fear we shall destroy the Thing itself; lose it in our Congregations, and probably in our Hearts too. For, I confess, it seems to me much more probable, that the Doctrines of natural Religion alone should be blessed as the Means of reforming Heathens, who never heard of Christianity, than that they should have much Effect upon those who under the Profession of it, slight its most glorious Peculiarities; as if the Revelation of Jesus were a mere Incumbrance, which, while we own it to be true, we might nevertheless forget, without great Danger, or much Inconvenience. But if we imbibe the Spirit of the Apostles, and make their Conduct the Model of ours, we may cheerfully expect that Presence of God with us, in consequence of which the great Ends of our Ministry may be answered, to the Reformation of Mens Lives, and the Salvation of their Souls.

How glorious a Hope! how rich a Recompence for all the Fatigue, for all the Condescension, for all the Self-denial which our Office may require! Most forcibly doth St. *James* express the Importance of the Thought, if one Man be the happy Instrument of gain-
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* Rom. i. 17.

ing another to the Cause of Truth and Holiness, *let him know*, let him pause upon it and reflect, *that he who converteth a Sinner from the Error of his Ways, shall save a Soul from Death**, an immortal Soul! And how much is comprehended in those few Words? We are sometimes perhaps ready to envy the Opportunity which the great Men of the World have to promote the Happiness of others, and it is the most generous, and indeed the only rational View in which Riches and Power can be desired. But let us remember, my Brethren, such is the Nature of an immortal Soul, that to bring it into the Way to eternal Life, is a greater Good than any merely temporal Blessing, which can be conferred upon the greatest Number of Men for the longest Duration in the present World. And it is most certain, that the Moment will at length come, when the Sum of Happiness which hath actually been enjoyed by every particular Soul, that we have led into that blessed World, will be greater than what the most uninterrupted Peace, Liberty, and Plenty could have given to the most numerous Nations, in a hundred, or a thousand, or ten thousand Years. Let so sublime a Thought animate our Pursuit, and make us willing *to spend and be spent* in such a Service †.

3. The Apostles well knew, that by such a Conduct as we have now been surveying, their own present and future Happiness would be most effectually secured.

They seemed indeed to sacrifice their present Interest, and in many important Instances they did so; yet surely they found a rich Equivalent in the Consciousness of such a Temper, and a Prospect of that Reward which would through Grace attend it.

The Pleasures of *Gratitude* and *Humanity*, are a thousand Times superior to that which can arise from gratifying the Senses, or even from Improvements in Science. I hope all that hear me this Day, know the Delight of serving a Friend whom we highly esteem and love; many of us, I question not, do particularly know how agreeable it is to find some Opportunity of expressing our cordial Sense of those Favours, which it is impossible for us fully to repay. Let us judge by that, how delightful it must be to these good Men, when
their

* James v. 20.

† 2 Cor. xii. 15.

their Hearts were full of the most lively and penetrating Sense of a Redeemer's Love, to see themselves in such a Situation, as that their whole Lives should be spent in serving his Interest, and every Day of them should do something to promote it.

And the Influence which their Labours had upon the *Happiness of Mankind*, must also add a most delightful Relish to them. Our Nature is so constituted by the wise and gracious Author of it, that some Degrees of Pleasure inseparably attend every Attempt for the real Improvement of any Part of his Creation, even the meanest. 'Tis pleasant to view a Spot of Ground, which from a barren and useles Wild has been manured and cultivated, planted and adorned by human Industry, so that it is reduced to a fruitful Garden or Field; and he who hath laboured to effect it, reviews it with double Satisfaction. It is much more delightful to have been instrumental in forming and cultivating the Mind, and reducing those who were once little better than Savages to Discipline and Arts, to the Improvements and Elegances of Life, whereby they may as it were be broken into Men; but surely the Apostles must with incomparably greater Satisfaction look round about them, and see whole Regions inlightened by the Rays which they had diffused; thousands of their Fellow-Creatures recovered from Darkness and Ignorance, Superstition and Vice, and formed to wise, regular, noble Sentiments, subjected to God, united to Christ, and conducted into the Ways of Peace and Life by their Means. Accordingly, I doubt not, but you have often observed in how sublime and pathetick a Manner *St. Paul* expresseth himself on this Occasion, in the Name of his Brethren as well as in his own, in the Progress of this Epistle*. *We approve ourselves*, says he, *the Ministers of God*, in all the various Circumstances through which we pass, *in Honour and Dishonour*, treated indeed by the World as *Deceivers*, yet conscious to ourselves that we are *true*, and the great Patrons of Truth; as obscure and *unknown* to a proud and insolent World, who affect to overlook us with sovereign Contempt, yet *well known* even by the happiest Tokens to those blessed Souls who

are brought home to God by our Means; *as dying daily, yet behold we live*, through the singular Interposition of our great Lord for our Preservation; *as sorrowful* on account of various Calamities that surround us, and *yet in Spirit always rejoicing*, because though we appear in the World *as poor* in these Things, *yet we are making rich* in Grace and Glory. Blessed Leaders in the Army of Christ! Who would not emulate such a Character and State? Who would not wish for your Hardships and Trials, might his Supports and Success be proportionable to yours? Such were the Pleasures they found in *preaching Christ Jesus the Lord*; and undoubtedly their generous Minds delighted to do it in the condescending Manner we have described. To converse with their Flock in such a free, easy, obliging Way, as their Brethren, as their Servants for Jesus sake, on the Foot of equal and respectful Friendship, suited their Taste and their Temper much better than all the Homage, and all the Revenues, which secular Power could have given, and secular Terror could have extorted.

I only add in the Conclusion of this Head, that the Apostles were influenced to such a Conduct by *a Regard to their own eternal Interest*.

That great important Concern which swallowed up all others in their Mind, and with which nothing here seemed by any Means worthy to be compared. *Paul himself did not think it unfit to reflect, and to say, A Necessity is laid upon me, and woe unto me if I preach not the Gospel* *. He well knew, that if such Vigilance was expected from a *Jerusalem* Prophet, that the Souls who perished by his Neglect should be by God *required at his Hand* †, the Danger of such a Neglect under the Christian Dispensation, would be yet greater in Proportion to the clearer Degree of Evidence with which *Life and Immortality was brought to Light* ‡. He therefore, and his Associates in this important Work, made it their Care, as himself expresseth it, *to watch for Souls as those that must give an Account*, and were exceedingly solicitous, that they might do it *with Joy and not with Grief* ||. They looked on their Converts
as

* 1 Cor. ix. 16.
• xiii. 17.

† Ezek. iii. 18.

‡ 2 Tim. i. 10.

as those who should be their *Crown and rejoicing in the Day of the Lord* * ; and their delightful Companions in the Glories of the heavenly World. And when, conscious that through the divine Assistance they had fought the good Fight, and finished their Course, and kept their Fidelity, they were humbly bold to look forward with chearful Expectation as well as Desire, to that *Crown of Life which the Lord had laid up for all his faithful Servants, that love his Appearance* †. Such may our Hopes be, my Fathers and Brethren, and such our Triumphs in the near Views of Death and Eternity. Our Days are passing away apace, and no secular Powers or Advantages can prolong them; nay, perhaps, were we in the Number of the richest and greatest of those that call themselves the Ministers of Christ, Life might run out only so much the sooner, while on the one Hand the Baits of Luxury, and on the other, the Cries of the Oppressed, might concur to shorten it. When this Scene of Vanity is closing, when we are to exchange every Ornament for the Dress of Death, and all the Amusements and Cares of Mortality, for the Solemnities of the eternal State; in that awful Hour, I say, it will be no Grief of Heart to us, that we have chosen in all Humility to serve Christ and the Souls of Men, rather than to make our Names great, and our Families wealthy. And when we come to appear in the Presence of that great Redeemer, who hath been Witness to all our Conduct, and all our Designs, we shall really find that we have lost nothing by whatever we have sacrificed to his Cause and Interest. The Applause of Thousands is but an empty Sound when compared with that of *Well done, good and faithful Servant* ‡, and all the Honours and Possessions which the greatest Princes could bestow, would be *lighter than Vanity, when laid in the Balance with that unfading Crown of Glory, which every faithful Minister may expect, when Christ the chief Shepherd shall appear* ||.

I have dilated so much on these pleasant and copious Topicks, that I have hardly left myself Time,

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III. So

* 1 Theff. ii. 19.

† 2 Tim. iv. 8.

‡ Mat. xxv. 23.

|| 1 Pet. v. 4.

III. So much as to mention the Reflections which may naturally arise from what we have been hearing. You will easily apprehend they are such as these.

How greatly is the Truth of Christianity confirmed by the Character of those who were first employed in the Publication of it; who gave the greatest Evidence that can possibly be imagined of their being intirely devoted to the sacred Cause of Truth and Piety, and expressed, as we have heard, the most disinterested and self-denying Zeal in the Service of both.

How happy is it for the Christian Cause, that these original Monuments are still preserved, and that we are not left to form an Idea of its Ministers merely from the general History of succeeding and distant Ages, or by the Canons and Decrees of the greatest Part of Ecclesiastical Councils; which are commonly drawn up with so different a Spirit, that, were we to judge by them alone, Charity would have inclined us to hope, that those who called themselves the chief Successors of the Apostles, had never heard of the Character of those holy Men; but had rather formed their Conduct, and even their Maxims too, I will not say by the *Jewish*, but by the *Heathen* Priesthood.

Nevertheless let us bless God, that in the midst of so general a Depravation, there have been in all Ages, and particularly in our own, a select Remnant, who have not defiled their Garments, nor prostituted their sacred Character and Office to those *Idols of Jealousy*, which have been so shamefully erected even in the House of the Lord. Persons, so far as I can judge, of all Denominations, both of established and separate Churches, at Home and Abroad, who have been, and are in their respective Spheres, *burning and shining Lights*; Men of God, who however differing in Opinion, in Discipline, or in Worship, have agreed to *love the Lord Jesus Christ in Sincerity*, to bow their Hearts and Souls to the Obedience of his Laws, to value the Souls committed to their Care, serving them in Humility and Love, candidly excusing the Frailties of their Brethren, praying,
that

that *wherein they were otherwise minded*, than Reason and Scripture directed, that *God would in his own Time and Way reveal it unto them*, and in the mean Time labouring, that *whereunto they had already attained*, they might walk by the same Rule, and might mind the same Thing*.

Let us daily bow our Knees in the most importunate Supplications to the God of Grace and of Peace, that this happy Number may be increased; and as he is from Time to Time laying those in the Dust, who were once the Joy of our Assemblies, and the Glory of their Profession, let us tenderly feel, let us deeply lament the Desolations of his Sanctuary †. And let us earnestly pray, that he would raise up in all the Churches a Generation of faithful and laborious, serious and spiritual, candid and evangelical Ministers, that *instead of the Fathers there may be the Children* ‡, by Means of whom a People that are yet to be born may see the Salvation of our God in its genuine Glories.

And this, in Connection with the Subject before us, might also lead us farther to reflect, how important a Part of an Education for the Ministry it is, to endeavour to lead young People into the Knowledge of this *Jesus*, whom their Office obligeth them to preach and to serve. Polite Literature is not by any means to be neglected, nor will it be despised by any but those who know not

G 3 what

* Phil. iii. 16.

† *N. B.* This Sermon was preached a few Days after the Death of that great Man of God, the truly reverend and excellent Mr. DAVID SOME of *Harborough*, whom God was pleased to favour with a serene and chearful Exit, suited to the eminent Piety and Usefulness of his Life. His dying Command hath silenced the Attempt which some of his surviving Friends would gladly have made, to embalm his Memory for the Instruction of those that are yet to come; but I am well satisfied, that, considering how very generally he was known, he has left a most honourable Testimony in the Hearts of Thousands, that he was one of the brightest Ornaments of the Gospel and the Ministry which the Age hath produced; and that all who had any Intimacy with him, must have esteemed his Friendship amongst the greatest Blessings of Life, and the Loss of him amongst its greatest Calamities. He died *May 29, 1737*, in his 57th Year; and surely I have never seen greater Reason to cry out, *My Father, My Father!* the Chariots of *Israel*, and the Horsemen thereof.

‡ Psal. xlv. 16.

what it is, yet surely it is not *the one thing needful*. The sacred Scriptures are the grand Magazine whence the most important, and therefore I think by far the greatest Number of Academical Lectures are to be drawn. And they who are honoured with a Charge of so great Importance to the Church, should surely be concerned, that those of the rising Age, in whose Hands this invaluable Treasure of the Gospel is to be deposited, may not rest in a cold speculative Acquaintance, either with the Evidences, or Contents of it; but may feel its vital transforming Power, and speak of this great Redeemer as of one on whom they have themselves believed, and whom *their own Souls* do most cordially love.

But I must wave the Prosecution of these copious Reflections, to conclude with two which are yet more immediately the Concern of those who attend the Gospel-Ordinances; and which I would particularly recommend to you my Friends of this Society, who are now, through divine Providence, so well settled *with a Workman that needs not be ashamed*, and one whom you so highly and justly esteem.

Think how solicitous you should be to know and acknowledge Christ Jesus as your Lord.

I know you think it your Happiness often to hear of him, O let it not be in vain. Own his Authority in your Lives as well as your Assemblies, or those who have most frequently preached him to you, will be the swiftest and severest Witnesses against you in that dreadful Day, when all that have not bowed to his Scepter must fall by his Sword.

And, to add no more, think also how willing you should be to use the Assistance of your Ministers, as your Servants for Jesus sake.

Do not neglect to attend on their Ministrations, and thereby shut out Wisdom and Piety at its first Entrance. Do not increase their Burden by any unkind Usage, lest, by weakening their Spirits, you may injure yourselves, and disable them from doing you that Service, in which they are cheerfully spending their Lives, though perhaps they apprehend they are thereby shortening them.

And, once more, be not unwilling to use a proper Freedom with them in your religious Concerns. **Officiously**

ciouſly to pry into the Secrets of Families and Perſons, is a Meannefs which a generous Man will ſcorn ; and particularly to know them is a Burden, and often a Snare too, which a wiſe Man will gladly decline : but ſome Knowledge of your ſpiritual State and Experience is neceſſary to our knowing how to addreſs you, and to addreſs God on your Account. Nor can you expect ſuch ſuitable Aſſiſtance from your ſpiritual Phyſicians, as might otherwiſe be hoped for, if you will not communicate to them ſome Particulars of your Complaints.

On the whole, my dearly Beloved, *fulfil you our Joy**, and let it be your great Care ſo to receive our Meſſage, and ſo to improve it, that it may be the Delight of our Souls now to proclaim the Honours of our Redeemer amongſt you, as your Servants for Jeſus ſake, and that the more tenderly we love you, the more abundant Satisfaction we may find in our preſent Labours, and our future Account. *Amen.*

* Phil. ii. 1.



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PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS
ON THE
CHARACTER and TRANSLATION
OF
E N O C H,
IN A
S E R M O N
PREACH'D

At Welford, in Northamptonshire,

March 9, 1737-8.

On Occasion of the much lamented DEATH
of the late Reverend

Mr. JOHN NORRIS.



GEN. V. 24.

*And Enoch walked with God; and he was not,
for God took him.*

THE Apostle gives it in Charge to the believing *Hebrews*, that they should remember those who had presided over them, and had spoken to them the Word of the Gospel, well knowing it would be one sweet and powerful Engagement, to follow their Faith, especially when they considered the End of their Conversation*.

I persuade myself, that it will be a very easy Matter for you, my Friends, to remember that dear and faithful Servant of Christ, who, for so many Years †, had the Pastoral Care of you, guiding you, at once, in the Integrity of his Heart, and in the Skillfulness of his Hands ‡. You who have grown up, and as to some I may add, have grown old too under his Ministry, will surely find the Recollection, notwithstanding all the Sorrow that must now attend it, both too edifying and too delightful to be neglected. You must, no Doubt, find some Memorials of him, in various Places and Circumstances of Life; but none more numerous, and none more pleasing than your Bibles will afford you. How many awakening Exhortations, how many comprehensive Precepts, how many precious Promises have you, from Sabbath to Sabbath, heard him unfold? How many in-

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structive

* Heb. xiii. 7.

† N. B. Mr. Norris died Feb. 8, 1737-8, in the 63d Year of his Age, having been near 38 Years Minister at *Welford*.

‡ Psal. lxxviii. 72.

structive and amiable Examples have you not only heard, but seen him illustrate! It was the Care and Joy of his Life, to form himself on those great Models; and beholding them in the Glass of Scripture, he was *changed into the same Image*. In those Originals therefore you will often trace him, and in which of them is not the Resemblance beautifully conspicuous? Yet perhaps in few of the Miniatures which are there drawn, it is more remarkably so, than in the Account given of *Enoch*. *He walked with God, and he was not, for God took him*. As soon as you heard me read the Words, you with Pleasure saw how well they express'd both the distinguished Piety of your late Minister's Character, and the Ease and Suddenness of his Removal from us.

It is impossible for me to express the tender Sympathy, with which I undertake this melancholy Office, which my honoured Father was pleased to assign me. But I will attempt to break through the Difficulty, and to suppress the Fulness of my Heart, so far as it would obstruct what I have to say, in humble Hope, that, through the Divine Blessing, that which was the great End of *his* Life and Labours among you, may in some Measure be promoted by this Discourse, occasioned by his Death. And, I am perswaded, nothing will so nobly support your Hearts under this sad Separation, or so effectually secure and promote the Pleasure of your future Meeting with him, as a diligent Care to *be Followers of him*, as he was a Follower of *Enoch*, and all the Saints in that holy Course of walking with God, which is now to be the Subject of our Meditation. And that you may be both directed and animated in it, we will,

First, Explain the View given us of *Enoch's* Life and Character. *He walked with God*.

Secondly, Consider the happy Close of this pious Course. *He was not, for God took him*.

When I have handled these Heads as fully as the Time will admit, I shall,

Thirdly

Thirdly, Conclude with some Practical Reflections, and an Address peculiarly suited to that awful Providence, which hath brought me among you this Day.

And, permit me to remind you, that your serious Attention to what shall now be spoken, is one Part of the Respect which you owe to the Memory of that worthy and excellent Man, in whose Place I stand.

First, Let us attentively survey the Account which is here given us, of the Life and Character of *Enoch*.

It is said, that he *walked with God*; a Phrase which the same sacred Historian useth concerning one of *Enoch's* Descendants, *i. e. Noah*. He was a just Man, and perfect in his Generations, and *Noah walked with God**: and when it is said of other good Men, that they walked *before the Lord*, it seems to be an Expression much of the same Import, and implies, that in the main Series of their Lives they maintained a firm Persuasion of the Being and Perfections of God, and of the other important Principles of Religion; and that in Consequence of this they were careful to behave as in the Divine Presence; and on the other Hand, that they were honoured with some gracious and comfortable Tokens of the Divine Acceptance and Favour: in a Word, that there was a mutual Friendship established and exercised between God and them. Blessed Character, and happy State! May we be formed to it, and improv'd in it, while we more particularly review it in this Instance of *Enoch*.

1. When it is said that *Enoch* walked with God, it evidently implies, that he had a firm Persuasion of the Divine Being and Perfections, and the other important Principles of true Religion.

Of this the Apostle expressly assures us, and argues it from the Account here given of him. *He had before his Translation this Testimony, that he pleased God; but without Faith it is impossible to please him; for he that*
someb

* Gen. vi, 9.

cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him*.

Enoch had undoubtedly this Faith, by which he believed, that the Worlds were made by God, and that he is the great Supporter of all. He certainly traced him in his Works of Creation and Providence, and consider'd him both as the greatest and the best of Beings. He was firmly persuaded of his immutable Existence, his almighty Power, and unsearchable Wisdom; and he also consider'd him as the wise, the righteous, and gracious Governor of his rational Creatures; the Father, the Guide, and the Portion of his People. Without these reverential and these fiducial Regards, what Foundation or what Encouragement could there have been for his walking with God?

On these Principles *Enoch* would easily infer the Certainty of a future State of Rewards and Punishments; considering how little the present Administrations of Providence bear the Face of a final Retribution. We are also assured by St. *Jude*, that he, by Divine Revelation, prophesied of the Judgment Day †, and may from that Hint probably conjecture, that other important Articles of Religion might in such an extraordinary Way be discovered to him. We may especially conclude, that being thus divinely instructed in the Certainty and Pomp of Christ's second Coming, he was not left entirely ignorant of the Purposes of his first Appearance. And no doubt *Adam*, who was for the last 300 Years of his Life, contemporary with *Enoch*, would not fail to acquaint him with that first important Promise relating to *the Seed of the Woman* ‡, as the noblest Support to the Hopes of a guilty Creature.

'Tis indeed impossible for us to determine, how far his Views of the *Messiah* reached; but it is highly congruous to the rest of his Character, to conclude, that he traced every Intimation of this glorious Deliverer with Pleasure, and joyfully accepted him so far, as he was made known, as the great Medium of his Reconciliation to God, and Converse with him.

2. In

* Heb. xi. 5, 6.

† Jude 14.

‡ Gen. iii. 15.

2. In Consequence of this Persuasion of the great Truths of Religion, *Enoch* made it his Care to behave as in the Divine Presence.

He walked with God, *i. e.* he habitually conducted himself as one that was with God. And as it is said of *Moses*, *he endured and acted as seeing him who is invisible* *. It may be worth our while, more particularly to consider, how this would influence his secret, his domestick, and his publick Conduct.

We may assure ourselves, that it had a great Influence upon him in Secret, not only to restrain him from secret Sins, but to excite him to the Discharge of those secret Duties, which a present Deity so reasonably requires, and which they that have a suitable Sense of his Presence cannot omit. This certainly led him to spend many an Hour in devout Retirement, Meditation and Prayer: and we may reasonably conclude, that the good Man was never less alone than when he was alone. He probably never made nearer Approaches to Heaven, before his Translation thither, than when he had got rid of other Cares, other Amusements, and other Company; that he might be all at Leisure for his God.

It is also very evident, that this Sense of the Divine Presence, must have influenced *Enoch* in his domestick Life. Short as the *Mosaick* History of this Holy Man is, we learn from it, that he was the Master of a Family, and stood in the Relation of a Husband and a Parent; and which is something remarkable, we do not find that any of the Patriarchs married younger than he; for his Son *Methuselah* was born in his 65th Year; which, considering the Age of Men in the antediluvian World, must be the Bloom of his Father's Youth. With this Family he lived 300 Years, governing himself, no doubt, by a Resolution like that of pious *Joshua*, *That he and his House would serve the Lord* †. His Care would be like that of *Abraham* in After-ages, *To command his Household after him to keep the Way of the Lord*.

He would probably often call them together to join in Sacrifice and Prayer; when perhaps his Children, as

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* Heb. xi. 27.

† Josh. xxiv. 17.

we read of *Job's*, were remembered, according to the Number of them all. He could not but be solicitous to train them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord*, that they might learn to know the God of their Fathers, and be inclined to serve him with a perfect Heart and a willing Mind †.

And he would be sure to enforce all his Precepts by a good Example. A Soul so habitually near to God, and so constantly sensible of his Presence, must be open to all the tenderest Sentiments of Humanity and Benevolence. He would of Course study to make every Body about him easy and happy, and, like your venerable and beloved Pastor now with God, would wear a constant Smile on his Countenance, which he probably saw reflected from the Face of every Child and Servant in the Family. Happy were they that resided in it, for surely they might have continued there from one Century to another with growing Improvement and Delight.

And could we have traced *Enoch* into publick Life, we should undoubtedly have found that Part of his Character agreeable to the rest. Like *Jesus*, He went about doing Good ‡, his Head still full of wise Schemes, and his Heart overflowing with benevolent Affections; so that whatever Advantages his Rank and Circumstances gave him, were faithfully employed for the common Good. We may conclude, that such a Person was approved by Men, as well as accepted of God §, that, when the Eye saw him it blessed him, and when the Ear heard him it gave Witness to him ||.

There is great Reason to believe, that his Lips as well as his Hands sed many; and so much the rather as he was a Prophet commissioned by God to teach the People, and to bring them some extraordinary Revelations from him. Thus we read in Words which I hinted at above, *That Enoch the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold the Lord cometh with Myriads of his Saints, or Holy ones, to execute Judgment upon all; and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly Deeds which they have impiously committed, and of all their hard*

Speeches

* Eph. vi. 4. † 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. ‡ Luke x. 38. § Rom. xiv. 18. || Job xxix, 11.

Speeches which ungodly Sinners have spoken against him *. From whence it plainly appears, that he lived in a very degenerate Age, when Impiety and Immorality abounded, when insolent Sinners, as in our Days, *set their Mouths against the Heavens, and gave their Tongues an unbridled Licence of walking through the Earth* †. But he bore his undaunted Testimonies to the Truth of God in the midst of all their Opposition and Contempt. He resolutely *set his Face like a Flint*, as he well knew that in such a Cause *he should never be ashamed* ‡. His Heart, humane and tender as it was, could not but be warmed with a generous Indignation at the Dishonours which were done to the Divine Majesty, and *knowing the Terrors of the Lord, he endeavoured to persuade Men* §. We would hope his Endeavours were not intirely in vain, but that through the Concurrence of Divine Grace, he was the happy Instrument of stemming the Torrent for a while, or at least of recovering and preserving a few, who might be the Companions of his Walk with God here, and are now his Associates in Glory.

Such a governing Care to approve the main Series of his private, domestick, and publick Conduct to the Being in whose Presence he always knew himself to be, must surely be comprehended in the Phrase before us; and it will be pleasant to consider,

3. That the Expression farther intimates his being honoured with correspondent Tokens of the Divine Acceptance and Favour.

Enoch *walked with God, and can two walk together, except they be agreed* **? It plainly implies, that he lived in a State of Friendship with God; or as the Apostle expresseth it, even before his Translation, *had a Testimony that pleased him. Thou meetest, saith the Prophet, him that rejoiceth and worketh Righteousness, even such as remember thee in their Ways* ‖. Thus did Enoch remember God, and thus was he visited by him. *The high and lofty one who inhabiteth Eternity, who dwelleth in the high and the holy Place, condescended to dwell with this holy Man, as he was humble, and of a contrite Spirit* †.

Publick

* Jude 14, 15. † Psal. lxxiii. 6. ‡ Isa. l. 7. § 2 Cor. v. 7. ** Amos iii. 3. ‖ Isa. lxiv. 5. † Ibid. lvii. 15.

Publick Assemblies for Divine Worship were, no doubt Seasons of delightful Converse with God; and *Enoch* would on that Account honour and love them, whoever might forsake them, whoever might despise them. And in his House and his Retirements, his Journeys, and his Converse with his Friends, he had God still with him. *He walked in the Light of God's Countenance*, and was surely looking up often in a Day, often in an Hour, and saw by Faith the most delightful Sight on this Side Heaven, or even in Heaven itself, the smiling Face of a reconciled God and Father. He felt the gentle Elapses of the *Divine Love shed abroad on his Heart by the Spirit given unto him* *, which, no doubt, though under a darker Dispensation, *witnessed with his Spirit, that he was a Child of God* †, and an Heir of eternal Glory.

As Piety was the Source of all his social and personal Virtues, the Fragrancy of it, as a sacred Perfume, would mingle itself delightfully with all his social and personal Enjoyments, and heighten them to a Degree unknown to those who have not thus tasted *the Joys, which a Stranger intermeddleth not with*. In every advantageous Circumstance of Life he saw and observed the Hand of the Divine Bounty, and discerning also the Interposition of the same Providence in all his Afflictions, (for Afflictions he undoubtedly had) he not only submitted to them in humble Silence, but cordially acquiesced in them all, as the Means which infinite Wisdom and Goodness had chosen to carry on his own kind Designs, for his final everlasting Happiness.

And such universally are the Ways, and such the Supports and Pleasures of those that walk with God. *Happy the Men that are in such a Case; yea happy the Men whose God is the Lord* ‡; happy they by whom he is thus constantly owned and regarded, honoured and enjoyed. I persuade myself, that after such a Description, I need not insist largely on the Dignity, the Security and the Delights of such a Life, especially as it is to be the Business of my second general Head.

Secondly,

* Rom. v. 5. † Ibid. viii. 16. ‡ Psal. cxliv. 15.

Secondly, To consider the happy Close of this pious Course. *He was not, for God took him.*

For the farther Illustration of which, you will observe,—— That he was early and suddenly removed from our World.—— That he was taken to dwell with God.—— And that he was received to that happy State in a miraculous and unparalleled Way. All these Particulars evidently appear from the Account which *Moses* gives of this important Fact, as illustrated by the Writers of the New Testament.

1. *Enoch* was early and suddenly removed from our World.

He was not, i. e. He was no longer here. You may perhaps wonder that I should speak of his *early* Remove, when you recollect that he was then 365 Years old. But you will not blame the Expression, when you consider the long Lives of Men in those antediluvian Ages, to which this Period bore but a small Proportion. As his Son *Methuselah* lived 969 Years, so his Father *Jared* attained to 962 Years; and therefore, being 162 Years old at his Birth, continued in the World 435 Years after *Enoch* had left it; whose Age at the Time of his Translation answered to about the 31st or 32d Year of Life at present, which you know is just the Vigour and Prime of it. But he had undoubtedly lived much in a little Time, and had done more for God before he had reached what was then accounted the Meridian of Life, than many who had out-strip'd him in Age by several Centuries. On this a gracious God excused him from the Trouble of passing through a longer Pilgrimage, and of drooping under the Burthen of declining Years. And sure so wise and good a Man would have been thankful for the Favour, though it had not been bestowed in so extraordinary a Way; especially as this Removal was not only early, but sudden too.

This Suddenness the Words do beautifully express, *He was not, i. e.* he disappeared at once, as Riches sometimes do when *they take their Wings, and fly away, as an Eagle towards Heaven.* On which Account they are called *Things that are not* *; the Apostle renders it,

* Prov. xxiii. 5.

he was not found †; perhaps intimating, that some diligent Search was made after him, as after *Elijah*, when in a very distant succeeding Age he was in an extraordinary Manner received into Glory.

Let us pause a little on this delightful Thought. What a sudden Transition this good Man had from Earth to Heaven! *He was not, for God took him*: he probably rose in the Morning in perfect Health, and went forth with his usual Composure and Sweetness of Temper to the appointed Duties of the Day. And while he was perhaps conversing with his pious Friends, which was the Case with *Elijah*, or while, like *Christ*, he was praying with and for them, or engaged in some other Act of social Worship, he was suddenly called away. No tedious Illness, no sad Farewell to those that were at Home. This happy Man was in the Way of his Duty one Moment, and in the Regions of Immortality the next. *He was not, for God took him*; which farther implies,

2 That *he was taken to dwell with God*.

He had walked with him in this *House of his Pilgrimage*, yet still his Faith and Hope had been waiting for a more noble and more perfect State, and *that Hope did not make him ashamed*. Having guided him by his Counsels, *God received him to Glory*. And this was to him the Crown of all his Honour and Joy, that he was received to God. Divine Grace had long since taught him to say, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none on Earth that I desire beside thee †*: and God treated him as a Friend that loved him, and was beloved by him. As if he had not been satisfied with visiting him below, he called him to dwell above. *He shewed him the Path of Life, and conducted him to his Presence, where there is Fullness of Joy; and to his Right Hand, where there are Pleasures for evermore §*.

And that holy Soul, which hath been trained up for Heaven by so long a Course of Devotion and Virtue, would find itself most happily attuned and connaturalized to the World to which it was received. He changed his Place indeed, but his Employments and Pleasures were in the main the same. He still *walked*
with

† Heb. xi. 5. † Psal. lxxiii. 25. § Ibid. xvi. 11.

with God, but with a steadier Face, more unwearied Ardor, and more exquisite Delight. How gladly would he have obey'd this Divine Call to that World, though Death in its most dreadful Forms had stood to meet him in his Passage thither. But through the peculiar Favour of God to him, we are informed,

3. That he was received to this Happiness in a miraculous, and till that Time an unparalleled Way.

For his sake God was pleas'd to create a new Thing on the Earth, and to permit a Child of *Adam* to enter the Gates of his Glory, without taking the Road appointed to the best of Men in the Course of Nature, in passing through the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

I cannot say that we could with any Certainty have inferr'd this from the Words of *Moses* alone. *He was not, for God took him.* That Phrase might have been interpreted of a sudden Death: as *Rachel* is said to lament, because *her Children were not* *. And *Job* expressed his Apprehension of immediate Death, by saying, *Thou shalt seek me in the Morning, and I shall not be* †. Now had *Enoch* passed out of Life thus, it might have been said that *God took him*, as *Asaph* speaks of being received into Glory ‡. And our Lord promises his Apostles, who were to go the Way of all Flesh, that he would come and receive them to himself §. But *St. Paul*, who was guided by an unerring Spirit, which would sufficiently secure him from being imposed upon by any fanciful Comment, or precarious Tradition, has fix'd the Matter beyond all reasonable Doubt, by saying, *that thro' Faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see Death, and was not found, because God had translated him* ||.

This was a Case hitherto unequalled, nor hath the like happened even to the present Day, excepting only the Rapture of *Elijah*, and the Ascension of Christ.

We are at large told in the Book of *Kings* †, that the pious *Elijah*, who like *Enoch* had signalized his Zeal for God in a very degenerate Age, was favour'd with an extraordinary Remove like his. He was fetch'd up to Heaven by a Detachment of Angels, who brought along with them a splendid Vehicle, which is called a Chariot

* Matt. ii. 8. † Job vii. 21. ‡ Psal. lxxiii, 24. § John xiv, 3. || Heb, xi. 5. † 2 Kings xi,

Chariot of Fire prepared for that Purpose, and which might possibly by some unknown Operation be the Means of purifying and refining the mortal Part of his Nature *, to such a Degree as was necessary in order to its inhabiting that Kingdom of God which *Flesh and Blood cannot enter, and which Corruption cannot inherit* †.

I speak also of the Ascension of our blessed Redeemer, as a parallel Instance, because, tho' he died, yet he rose again from the Dead, and continued a while upon Earth, eating and drinking, and travelling from Place to Place, as he had done in the Days of his Flesh; so that his Flight to the Regions of Glory was as miraculous, and might as properly be called a Translation, as if he had not died at all.

And in this Respect the Saints which are *found alive* at the general Judgment, shall be conformed to these great Examples. For we are expressly told by St. Paul, who mentions it as a Mystery till then kept secret, and now but imperfectly revealed, that *we shall not all die, but we shall all be changed, in a Moment, in the Twinkling of an Eye* †. And he illustrates it, when he tells the *Thessalonians* ||, that after the Resurrection of those *that sleep in Jesus, they who are alive shall be caught up with them in the Clouds to meet the Lord in the Air*, in order to our being for ever with him. Words with which we may justly comfort ourselves, and each other, for those Consolations of God are not small.

And it is exceeding probable this would have been the stated Manner of passing from Earth to Heaven, had not Sin made its fatal Inroads upon us, and Death enter'd in its Train. For nothing can be more certain than that, had not the increasing Numbers of Mankind been one Way or another thinned and diminished, Earth would several thousand Years ago have been too small to nourish, or even to receive its Inhabitants.

It would be great Presumption in me to pretend to describe the Change made in the Body of *Enoch*, by
this

* ————— Corpus mortale per Auras

Dilapsum tenues : ceu latâ plumbea Fundâ

Missa silet medio Glans intabelcere Cælo.

Pulchra subit Facies. OVID. Met. Lib. xiv. v. 824, &c.

† 1 Cor. xv. 50.

‡ 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.

|| Ibid. 51, 52.

this Translation, or to give an Account of the Circumstances that attended it; since the sacred Historian hath not thought fit to record them. I will not pretend to say how much Reason a learned and ingenious Writer of our own * might have to conjecture, that all the antediluvian Patriarchs whom *Moses* mentions, (except *Adam*, who was now dead, and *Noah* not yet born) might be assembled, perhaps with Multitudes more, to see this great Sight; yet I cannot think it passed without any Witnesses at all. When *Elijah* was to be taken up, it is very evident, that not only he himself had some Intimations of the Time and Manner, but that it was divinely revealed to the Prophets of *Bethel* and *Jericho*, as well as that *Elisba* was permitted to be an Eye-Witness of it. And when *Christ* ascended, it was in the Presence of all the Apostles †, *while he spake with them, and they beheld, and looked steadfastly upon him.* And there is the greater Reason to believe that something like this might be the Case with *Enoch*, because his Translation might probably be intended to answer many valuable and important Purposes, which required at least some competent Number of Witnesses, if not a large and publick Assembly.

So far as this important Fact was known, it would be the most glorious Testimony the World had ever received of God's Regard to singular and distinguished Piety. His permitting righteous *Abel* to fall by the Hand of his cruel and wicked Brother, might have been a *Stone of Stumbling*, and a *Rock of Offence*, and that Career of prosperous Tyranny and Violence, with which the Giants of those Ages were then filling the Earth, might have tempted Men to suspect that the *Lord had forsaken it.* This no doubt emboldened *ungodly Sinners* in their *hard and impious Speeches*, as well as their *ungodly Deeds.* But when *Enoch*, that holy Prophet, who had so long been the Object of their prophane Mockery and Derision, was thus singled out from the whole Race of Men, as the Friend of God, and taken to dwell with him, it would evidently appear, there was a *Reward for the Righteous, and a God who judged in the Earth.* ‡

It

* Dr. Hunt, of Div. Rev. p. 43.
lviii. 11.

† Acts i, 9, 10.

‡ Psal.

It would also be a sensible Demonstration of the Reality of an invisible World, and would, by a Train of easy Consequences, confirm Mens natural Apprehensions of the Immortality of the Soul, and of the Existence of some nobler Orders of Beings in the upper World, with whom wise and righteous Men are at length to be incorporated, as Members of the same blessed Society.

And as the Body of *Enoch* was thus translated, it would naturally appear an Intimation, that God had prepared a future Happiness for the Bodies of his People, as well as their Souls, and consequently that the Trophies of the Grave should at length be recovered, and the sleeping Dust of the Saints raised and animated anew. And a future State of Punishment for the Wicked, is so evident a Counterpart to this Doctrine, that few could be so stupid as not to infer it, from the Fact here under Consideration.

Such important Lessons as these might the World have learnt from the Translation of any Persons of distinguished Piety; but there were some peculiar Purposes to be answered by that of *Enoch*, considered not only as a Preacher of Righteousness, but as a Prophet too, and as one who had foretold the Coming * of the Lord with ten Thousand of his Saints, to take Vengeance on rebellious and impenitent Sinners; and a Day of Vengeance to them, must surely imply a Day of Reward, and Glory to those Men whom they had despised, reviled, and oppressed. Now if *Enoch* in his Life on Earth wrought no Miracles, as we find not that he did, his Ascension would be a most convincing Proof of his divine Mission; and indeed, as many of the Miracles of Christ also were, it would be a *Specimen*, as well as a *Seal*, of the Truth of the Doctrine which he taught.

On all these Accounts I think I may venture to say, the Translation of *Enoch* would be a more important Favour to others, than it was even to himself, and consequently it is reasonable to believe, that the same Goodness which induced the Divine Being to perpetuate the Memory of this Fact for the Instruction and

Encourage-

* Jude 14.

Encouragement of future Ages, would likewise induce him to make it so publick and visible, that there should be at least a few credible Eye-Witnesses to attest it*.

And thus, my Brethren, you have heard of the Piety of *Enoch*, and you have seen, as *James* expresses it, *the End of the Lord* †. I shall conclude,

Thirdly, with a few Hints, by Way of Improvement, which I shall leave you farther to prosecute in your own Meditations.

You will naturally fix on such Reflections as these.

1. How pleasant it is to think of this friendly Inter-course, which through a Redeemer is established between Heaven and Earth.

It is strongly illustrated in this great Instance, *Enoch walked with God, and God took him*. Is it not at once a delightful and a surprizing Thought? That the great Sovereign of univeral Nature, who humbleth himself to behold the Angels, when they stand around him, vailing their Faces, and covering their Feet in his Presence, should form such a Friendship with human, yea with sinful Creatures, that they may be said to walk with him; even they whose Guilt might cause them to flee from his Presence, like our fallen Parents, and from whose Pollutions he might justly turn away his holy Eyes with Abhorrence. Yet we see all these Obstacles overcome; and hear of it not as the Privilege of *Enoch* alone, but of all his true *Israel*, that he *will dwell in them, and walk with them, that they shall be his People, and that he will be their God* ‡.

VOL. I.

H

And

* I have taken no Notice of that singular Account which the ingenious Author of *the Essay on Div. Dispens. &c.* gives of *Enoch's* Translation; which he supposes was *his being taken to dwell with the Shekinah, in the terrestrial Paradise*. I have waved the Motion o' this, because it depends on a very precarious Conjecture, that the Shekinah had his stated Abode there; and also because were this to be allowed, since this Author doth not pretend to say, that *Enoch* was with the Shekinah in the Ark, (where he supposes that to have been during the Deluge) he must grant that he ascended into Heaven some Time before the Flood. So that I cannot see any End at all to be answered, by supposing his Translation was any Thing different from that Ascension.

† James v. 11.

‡ 2 Cor. vi. 16, 17.

And in Consequence of this, we are also raised to the blessed Hope of being at length *taken to him*, though not in so immediate a Manner, yet as surely, and at length as compleatly as *Enoch* was. A mortal Creature may say, *thou wilt guide me by thy Counsel, and afterwards receive me to Glory* *. Yea the lowest real Christian has the Security of his Word and Covenant, that he shall at last have a yet more solemn and more *abundant Entrance* administer'd to him into the Kingdom of his Father and his God †.

And whence are these Privileges and these Hopes, my Brethren? Let us often ask our own Hearts the Question, when we are enjoying God's Presence, and waiting for his Salvation. And let us answer it in those Words of the Apostle, *we that were once afar off, are brought near the Blood of Christ* ‡. By Christ hath God reconciled us to himself, by Christ have we now Access to him as our Father; and as Christ, who hath the Keys of Death and the unseen World, is the Person who is to call us from hence into that which is *within the Vail*; so he is at length to compleat the Purposes of divine Love to us, by *coming again*, and *receiving us to himself*, that we, like triumphant *Enoch*, yea, and with him too in that Day of his greatest Triumph, may in our intire Persons ascend to the Regions of immortal Holiness, and perfect Joy: let us labour continually to feel the Greatness of our Obligations to this blessed Redeemer, and with daily Dependance on his Atonement and Righteousness, his Intercession and Grace, let us, in every remaining Step of this Pilgrimage, be *walking humbly with our God* §.

2. How solicitous should we be that we may have our Lot, both in Time and Eternity, with those who, like *Enoch*, have walked with God?

I have now been describing the Character and Temper of a truly good Man, a Character common to all the Children of God, whatever their particular Denomination or Profession may be. But must I not reasonably fear, that some among you are so much Strangers to it, that

* Psal. lxxiii, 24. † 2 Pet. i, 11. ‡ Eph. ii, 13. § Mich. vi, 8.

that you find this an unintelligible Language? Let me address myself to such of you with a Word of Expostulation, and to all with a serious Exhortation. Oh, that it might penetrate each of our Hearts!

Why are you Strangers to walking with God? Is it an imaginary Thing, even this which Scripture so honourably records, which God himself so singularly owned, and through the Riches of his Grace rewarded too? Oh Sirs there was surely as much Reality and Solidity in it, as in the heavenly World, in which it ended.

And let Conscience answer; Is it not an honourable, is it not a pleasant Way of passing through Life? Do you think that while *Enoch* was thus employed, and entertained, he had indeed any Reason to envy the richest, the greatest, the most prosperous, or the most luxurious Sinner? Do you not in your Hearts believe that it must be a very comfortable Thing to converse daily with God as a Friend and a Father, to conduct ourselves before him in such a Manner as to be assured of his Approbation, and to be able to rejoice that he knows every most secret Thought of our Soul? Do you not think it must sweeten Solitude, to think of him as always near us, and increase the Pleasures of Society too, when our Converse with others is made subservient to our Communion with him? And above all, do you not really apprehend that Reflections on a Life like this would greatly soften the Approach of Death, and quite transform the very Appearance of it?

And I beseech you to consider that this is not a light Thought. However you may neglect God now, you must have one awful Interview with him; and if you do not, and will not *walk with him*, he will in another, and very different Sense of the Word, *take you*. He will arrest your fugitive Souls in the midst of these thoughtless ungrateful Wanderings, and your Spirits must return to God that gave them. Now doth not your own Reason, as well as the Divine Word, tell you, that there will be an unspeakable Difference between the Manner in which different Souls are received by him on that Return: a Difference between the Reception of those who have lived in a holy Friendship with him, and those who, like yourselves, have always been Strangers to

him; whose Language it hath in Effect been, "Let them walk with God that will, but I for my Part have other Company, and Pleasures, and Business to attend." Is there not an apparent Fitness that the former should be taken into a State of everlasting Nearness to God, and the latter driven to a perpetual Distance from him, whom they have chosen to forget and forsake? And with all your Self-partiality, would it not appear an Indecency and Irregularity in the Divine Administration, to treat such different Persons upon a Foot of equal Friendship?

See to it, my Friends, that you are not Self-condemned. See to it, that you do not pass a Sentence against your own Souls, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal Life. *Acquaint yourselves with God now, and be at Peace with him* *, lest he resent the Injury done to his offer'd Friendship, and turn away from you in the Day of your final Distress, with a righteous Disdain; for it is an everlasting, most obvious, but most important Truth, *that they who are far from God, shall perish* †.

Let me also address a solemn Exhortation to those that have experimentally known what such Converse with God means, and who by his good Spirit have been led into a holy Walk with him. Pursue it, I beseech you, with greater Resolution and Care; for, surely, it is well worth your Pursuit. I appeal to you, Christians, with Pleasure on this Head. Have not those been your most comfortable Days in which you have most constantly attended to it? Days which have pass'd with the greatest Delight, and which have been reflected upon with the greatest Satisfaction? I not this and that Place recommended to you, by the dear Remembrance, that you have walked with God there. This and that Book and Friend endeared, as having been instrumental in promoting that Converse? Say then whether it be not worth your while, with most attentive Reflection, to concert Measures for improving and cultivating this Divine Friendship? Whether, when you have fixed upon them, it will not be your Wisdom diligently to pursue them, though some considerable Difficulties may be in
your

* Job xxii. 21

† Psal. lxxiii. 28.

your Way? Let not any Estrangedness grow between God and your Souls, but review the various Branches of *Enoch's* Character as your own Model, if you would live with Joy, and die with Courage. Let your Conduct be such, especially in Secret, and then we may reasonably conclude, that your domestick and publick Behaviour will not be much unlike it. And then you may enter into the Spirit of our next Reflection, which is all I shall add.

3. With how much Pleasure should we look up after those holy Souls, who, having *walked with God* upon Earth, are now *taken by him* to an heavenly Abode!

Can any of us apprehend, that if the nearest Relatives of *Enoch* were Witnesses of his Translation, they beheld it with weeping Eyes, or sent out a Gale of Sighs or Peal of Groans after him; how tenderly soever they loved him, and how much soever of the Support or Delight of their Lives might seem to depend on his Continuance with them? Or if their Fondness thus prevailed over their Reason and their Faith, can we imagine that their ascending triumphant Friend would have approved of such a Conduct? Would he not rather have beheld it with a Mixture of Compassion and Displeasure; if Displeasure could have been felt in so happy a Circumstance? But we will rather hope, that they hailed his Flight to the Paradise of God, and bore it away with them, as a long and a powerful Cordial, under all the Sorrows and Distresses of Life, that *Enoch* was so comfortably and so honourably delivered from them, and secured by adamantine Walls from every Invasion of Sorrow and of Sin; yea, from the Sight of those Crimes and Miseries which had formerly tormented his righteous and tender Spirit.

And why should not we in like Manner congratulate our dear deceased Friends, who are not any longer here with us, because God hath taken them? You will perhaps have a ready Answer, and immediately say, *Enoch* was translated, but the Friends we lament are dead, and our Tears flow from that Consideration. But let me farther ask, Is there not a Passage to the Presence of God through the Valley of the Shadow of Death? And do we not firmly believe they have found that Passage?

In some Cases, especially in a Case like this now before us, we should think it a Kind of Impiety to doubt of it. And if so, methinks there is not so much Difference between the Temper with which we should regard the deceased and translated Saints, as we may be ready at first to imagine.

'Tis true the Persons of whom we now speak have dropp'd their Bodies in the Grave; but that is no Pain to them, nor any such important Loss, as that for their sakes we should greatly regret it.

If we saw them after the Labour of a fatiguing Day, or after a long Fit of painful and languishing Illness, fallen into a gentle Slumber, and knew that their Minds were, during that Interval, entertained with the Visions of God, like those which the Prophets saw, and raised to sublime and elevated Devotion, beyond what they had ever before felt, should we mourn over them because their Senses were locked up, and they did not, for that Time, see the Light of the Sun, nor hear such poor Conversation as ours? Should we not rather rejoice and be tenderly solicitous to guard their sleeping Moments, and watch that nothing might break in upon them, and call them down to Earth and Vanity too soon? And are not their Slumbers now as sweet, and are not their Visions as bright and glorious? What, though they do not breathe? What, though their Blood does not circulate, and the Curtains of the Grave be drawn around them? Is there so much in these Circumstances, to give us Anxiety and Distress?

Oh but you will say, we should have a secret Hope that our sleeping Friends would awake again, and renewing the interrupted Converse, relate to us what had passed in that Interval; and we could with Pleasure wait Weeks and Months in Expectation of that. Nay, but shall we not ourselves e'er long awake, if we are Christians indeed? If we are *walking with God*, shall we not e'er long be taken by him, not to the Amusements of a pleasing Dream, but to those solid substantial everlasting Pleasures, which his Saints above are drinking in with unutterable Delight.

Lord *we are hoping for thy Salvation*, may we in the mean Time be *doing thy Commandments* * ! while we walk

* Psal. cxix. 166.

with thee, we will not complain of the Length or the Roughness of the Way; nor will we be inconsolable for the Loss of the most pleasant Companion, or most able Guide. *For thy Name's Sake do thou lead us and guide us* †, and we will wait thy Call to enter into thy Rest.

Such were the Sentiments and such the Temper of that truly reverend and excellent Person, whose Death was the Occasion, the very mournful Occasion of my appearing this Day amongst you; on whose Character it would be easy for me to dilate much more largely than my Time will now admit, or than I judge it proper to do in a Funeral Discourse, where Flattery is so often introduced, that the Simplicity of most obvious Truth is ready to be suspected. I shall only say in a few Words, that what I said of *Enoch* in the first Head of my Discourse (excepting only what was peculiar to his Circumstances as a Patriarch and a Prophet) is as what, by long Observation, I had seen in Mr. *Norris*. And I appeal to those of his Family, and to you his People, whether there was not, in almost every Sentence, a visible Resemblance, and whether it might not very properly be repeated here with a mere Alteration of the Name. So evident was it that he walked closely with God, and firmly believing the great Doctrines both of Natural and Revealed Religion, made it his constant Care to behave as in the Divine Presence, and liv'd under the sensible Tokens of Divine Acceptance and Favour; which diffused over his Heart, and even over his Countenance, an habitual Joy, which is no where to be found on Earth, but in Christians of such distinguished Attainments in Piety.

But, though I must not allow myself to dwell on this pleasing Subject, I hope I may be permitted publicly to acknowledge the Sense I have of the Favour of Divine Providence to me, in leading me so early into the Acquaintance of this excellent Person, and blessing me with so great a Share of his Friendship; with which I was honoured from my first Entrance into the

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Ministry, and with his singular Humanity and Condescension, Wisdom and Piety, have render'd exceeding delightful and improving to me in all the succeeding Years of Life.

And surely I should be greatly deficient in the Duty of this Day, if I did not solemnly charge it upon you frequently to recollect your Obligations to the Divine Goodness, in giving you so able and so tender a Shepherd, and in continuing him amongst you for so long a Time with such cordial Love, that repeated, unanimous, and earnest Solicitations from the most considerable Congregations in the neighbouring Counties *, could not prevail upon him to remove from you. So evident was it that he took the Oversight of you, *not by Constraint, but willingly, not for filthy Lucre, but of a ready Mind* †.

It may eminently be said of you, my Friends, in a spiritual Sense, that *you have been fed with the finest of the Wheat*, as the pure and uncorrupted Truths of the Gospel have been preached amongst you, with Plainness and Seriousness, and in the Spirit of Love. Your Minds have not been amused with useless Subtleties and barren Speculations: you have not been vexed with *Strifes of Words unprofitable and vain*, nor grieved with passionate Investives against your Brethren of any Denomination: Investives which are never more criminal than when delivered in the Name of the Lord, and which too often turn the Food of Souls into Poison, and *that which should have been for their Welfare into a Trap*. This good Man brought out of the good Treasure of his Heart good Things ‡. His generous and benevolent Soul overflowed with Sentiments of Candour and Love, and he was never more in his own Element, than when he was telling you that the *Kingdom of God is not Meat or Drink, but Righteousness and Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost* §. And I firmly believe, that in the eight and thirty Years of his Ministry among you, he never delivered a Sermon, or a Sentence, inconsistent with that great Principle.

I join

* Particularly *Birmingham* and *Nottingham*.

† 1 Pet. v. 2.

‡ Matt. xii. 35. § Rom. xiv. 17.

I join with you in lamenting that none of those elaborate and judicious Discourses which he delivered among you, from Sabbath to Sabbath, are, or can be, published to the World. For though it is certain, that his graceful and venerable Aspect, and his easy yet lively Manner, gave a peculiar Beauty to them, as delivered by himself; yet, when I consider how judiciously his Thoughts were selected, how methodically they were disposed, and with what Propriety, Elegance, and Spirit, they were expressed, I am well assured, they would generally have been esteemed a rich Addition to that great Number of Practical Writings, with which our Age and Country is already blessed, and with which I hope it will still abound.

But I trust, my Friends, it is not in vain you have heard those Discourses which you cannot review. I know they fell as soft as Showers of Snow on the Ear of his Hearers; and I hope they also penetrated your Hearts, and left permanent and fructifying Effects there, which will not pass away like Snow before the Sun. *Let your profiting then appear unto all Men.* And so much the rather, as you have had the Advantage of seeing his Precepts illustrated by the most prudent, inoffensive and amiable Behaviour. You have seen him providing *Things honest and honourable in the Sight of all Men.* You know how gentle, how benevolent, how chearful, and how useful his Conversation was. How open his Hand and his Heart were to every Office of Friendship, to every Work of Charity. Go ye therefore, and do likewise.

As for what he was in the domestick Relation of Life, I had almost said, I wish it be not too long, but I will rather say, too tenderly remembered. The Loss of a Husband so constantly obliging, so affectionately sympathising, so well furnished as a prudent Guide, and a pleasant Companion, and so well disposed for the Offices of both, will, I fear, be too deeply felt. May the Sense of it be tempered with those divine Consolations, which he was so eminently fit to administer, but which have not surely lost their Value, and will not, I hope, lose their Relish, though no longer administer'd by him! May the Children, which were dear to him as his own,

never forget with how much Diligence he instructed them, with how much Importunity and Constancy he prayed for them, and with what Tenderness he watch'd over all their Interests! May they ever behave answerably to those Advantages, that the numberless Petitions which have been put up for them, may descend in the richest Blessings on their Heads!

I know, my Friends, that the Loss must sit heavy on all your Hearts, and as to those with whom I have personally conversed, since this Breach was made, I have heard your Lamentations, and seen your Tears. But remember, I beseech you, how much you owe to the divine Goodness in giving you such a Minister, and such a Friend, in continuing him among you, with such Vigour of Health and Cheerfulness of Spirits, for so many Years, a burning and shining Light; I may add, even in the Decline of Life, growing brighter and brighter. And though his Removal, while his Capacities of Usefulness were to the last so great*, must be very affective to you, yet I cannot forbear saying, that you have some peculiar Reason to be thankful for the *Manner and Circumstances* of his *Death*.

Nature was not rack'd with tormenting Pain, nor worn out by a tedious consuming Illness; but the good Man grew a little drowsy towards the Evening of his long Day, and having *serv'd his Generation according to the Will of God*, gently fell asleep, as he was going from one Apartment of his House to another; and all the Business and Struggle of dying was over, in less Time than could have serv'd him to get up the Stairs, as he was attempting to do. 'Tis a delightful Thought that God *dismiss'd his Servant* in so peaceful a Manner, that his Death so much resembled a Translation, and *he was not, for God took him*.

I doubt not, but every one of us is ready to say, "so may I live, and so may I die!" But while we live here, if we have any Regard to our own Comfort, or the

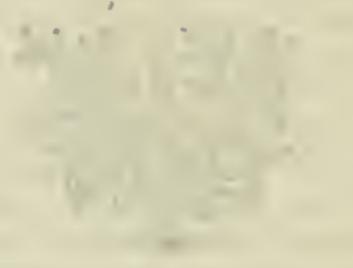
* 'Tis observable that Mr. *Norris* preach'd the last Sabbath he lived, and concluded the publick Service with a copious, lively and affectionate Prayer for his People, which could not have been more suitable if he had known he was then taking his last Farewell.

the publick Good, it must grieve us, to see our Breaches thus multiplied upon us, to see the Lights of the Sanctuary extinguished, and his People here, and in so many neighbouring Flocks, even at the very same Time, *left as Sheep, having no Shepherd.* Yet I must hope the *great Shepherd of Israel* will continue to feed you, and *as the Residue of the Spirit is with him,* will raise up a suitable Supply. To him I most cordially recommend you and all my other Friends, who are mourning your Losses and their own. And under all that Burthen of Care and Sorrow, in which my Share is so peculiarly apparent, would exhort you to say, and join with you in saying, * *The Lord liveth, and blessed be our Rock, and let the God of our Salvation be exalted.*

* Psal. xviii. 46.



1870
The first of the year
was a very cold one
and the snow lay
on the ground for
many days. The
frost was very
severe and the
wind was very
strong. The
people were
very much
concerned
for the
crops. The
government
sent out
troops to
protect the
crops. The
people were
very much
relieved
when the
troops arrived.
The crops
were saved
and the
people were
very much
grateful.
The
government
was very
kind.
The
people were
very much
grateful.
The
government
was very
kind.



A
S E R M O N

Preached at

WELLINGBOROUGH, in *Northamptonshire*,

November 9, 1738.

Which was observed as a Day of

F A S T I N G and P R A Y E R,

On Account of the late

D R E A D F U L F I R E there.

W I T H

An H Y M N proper to the Occasion;

T O

THE HISTORY OF THE

ROYAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

FROM THE YEAR 1660 TO 1702

BY JOHN VAUGHAN

ESQ; OF THE SOCIETY

IN TWO VOLUMES

LONDON

Printed by W. Stansfeld

at the Royal Society

in the Strand

1727

TO THOSE

INHABITANTS of *Wellingborough*,
at whose Request this Sermon is pu-
blished.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

THE Composition of laboured and polished Discourses on Occasions of solemn Humiliation before God, seems to me to have an Absurdity yet greater than an exact Elegance of Dress at the Funeral of a Friend. When therefore I appeared among you, on your late Fast Day, I was solicitous about little other Preparation, than what arose from a View of human Nature, a deep Feeling of the several Circumstances of your Affliction, and a serious Concern to deliver what might be approved of God, as suited to the great Purpose of your Assembling, and subservient to your Edification by the awful Providence which occasioned it.

With these Sentiments I spoke to you out of the Fulness of my Heart, and the Countenances of many of you testified, that you heard me in the Fulness of yours. When you surprized me with your unexpected Request, that the Sermon might be printed (which some of my reverend Brethren that heard it had before intimated as their Desire) I knew not how to deny it you, though I had excused myself to them; lest I should seem wanting in a due Concern to keep alive upon your Minds any good Impressions which might have been made by it: and on farther Consideration I was the more willing to comply, as such melancholy Accidents (though blessed be God, not in an equal Degree) frequently happen, especially in populous Cities, and I do not recollect many single Sermons which so directly lead to the religious Improvement of them. I therefore set myself, as well as I could, to recollect what I had said, and have endeavoured to preserve the same Freedom in writing which I used in speaking. I have laboured, as much as possible,

to write from the Life. *The Ruins of your Town, the Distress of your Families, and the Mixture of Hope and Fear attending the present Situation of your Affairs, have been as it were before my Eyes, and on my Heart in almost every Sentence: and I have frequently intermingled these Meditations with earnest Prayers to God, that he so would lead me into the secret Recesses of your Souls, that what you before heard, and will now read, may be like a Nail fastened in a sure Place.*

The Trouble of writing this Discourse in Short-hand, and afterwards correcting the Transcript, is so little a Matter as hardly to deserve your Thanks. Would my other Engagements have allowed of more, I should have submitted to it with Pleasure. I only beg that you, and others in your Circumstances, into whose Hands it may fall, will read it attentively, and that each of you will consider what Conscience hath to say to the plain Admonitions it contains; and if you feel your Hearts warm'd anew, endeavour immediately to improve those good Affections, that they may produce holy Resolutions, and yield the peaceable and substantial Fruits of Righteousness; that it may appear you have not suffered so many Things in vain.

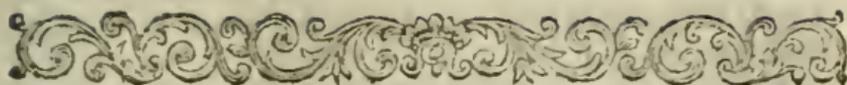
These are my most hearty Prayers for you. I hope you will in Return excuse the Defects of a Sermon, which might have been more accurate, had it been less sincere; and will also pray, that I may be animated and cheered under the various and almost incessant Labours, to which Providence calls me, by seeing the World around me growing the wiser and better by them, and may finally be accepted of Him, whom it is my highest Ambition to serve and please: for whose Sake I am

Your very affectionate Friend,

NORTHAMPTON,
Dec. 30, 1731.

and faithful humble Servant,

P. Doddridge.



AMOS IV. II.

I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a Firebrand pluckt out of the Burning; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.



WE are assembled this Day (I hope many of us with sensible and penitent Hearts) to lament *the Burning which the Lord hath kindled* *. You have wisely set apart this Portion of Time as a Season of solemn Fasting and Prayer, that you may *humble yourselves under God's mighty Hand* †, as those that hope he will exalt you in due Time. But what is that Humiliation which he requires, and will accept? Is it merely for a few Hours *to bow down your Heads like a Bulrush* ‡? Is it merely to give us your bodily Presence in this Place of Worship, and hear the Words that are spoken in God's Name to you, or in your's to him? Nay, I will add, is it merely to feel some transient Emotions of the Mind, in the Reflection of a Providence, which has left behind it such deep Memorials, as Nature itself may teach those to retain, whom Grace doth not teach to improve them? Sirs, if your assembling this Day be indeed a rational and a religious Action, you come to enquire *wherefore* it is that God hath *called to contend by Fire*, as *Amos* expresses it §: you come that the Voice of the Rod may be more distinctly explained,

* Lev. x. 6.

† 1 Pet. v. 6.

‡ Isa. lviii. 5.

§ Amos vii. 4.

explained, in the Name of him *who has appointed it* *; and, in one Word, agreeable to the Language of my Text, that you may be engaged to return to the Lord that smiteth you.

I could wish you had among you such an Interpreter, as might be *one among a Thousand*, to declare to you his *Righteousness* †, and his Will, in such a Manner as might most effectually lead you to comport with it. But since the Office of addressing you on this Occasion is devolv'd upon me, I shall endeavour to shew that you have at least consigned it to one who is tenderly concerned for you, and therefore will not, and indeed cannot have the Heart to amuse you with a studied Form of Words; but will endeavour, in the plainest and most faithful Manner, to advance some important Instructions and useful Reflections, suited to the sad Occasion that calls us together. And though some of those Hints, like the Providence that introduced them, may seem *not to be joyous, but grievous* ‡, I hope they may afterwards yield *the peaceable Fruits of Righteousness*.

It is a great Instance both of the Wisdom and Goodness of God, that he has chosen to teach us, not only by Precept, but Example; in which Respect it may properly be said, as well as in the other, that *he has set before us Life, and Death* §. *The Hearts of Men* in all Ages are *fashioned*, in a great Measure *alike* ||; and from observing the Temper and Conduct of the *Israelites* in particular, in those various and remarkable Circumstances, in which they are represented, we may learn more of the Corruption of our Nature, and draw more obvious Lessons of religious Instruction, than perhaps from the History of any other Nation whatsoever. One can hardly imagine a Circumstance, either of Prosperity or Distress, to which there is not something in their Case, which has an apparent Correspondence; and it is evidently so in particular, with Reference to the Event spoken of in the Words of my Text. God had been exercising them with a Variety of Judgments, and at Length, as that was one of the greatest, he gives
a Com-

* Micah vi. 9. † Job xxiii, 23. ‡ Heb. xii, 11. § Deut. xxx, 15. || Psal. xxxiii, 15.

a Commission to the devouring Flames to break out, and spread Ruin and Desolation in their dreadful March. Thus far their Condition and yours agree; and would to God, that it might rest there, and that with Respect to you, who are *as Brands pluckt out of the Burning*, there might be no Room to add, *yet have ye not returned unto me.*

In handling the Words, I shall,

First, Consider their Contents; and,

Secondly, Attempt the practical Improvement of them, with a proper Regard to your present Circumstances. Yet affecting as they are, and suitable as the Tenour of the Discourse may be, I am sensible it entirely depends on the Divine Blessing and Grace, to make it successful; to that therefore I humbly recommend what I am about to say, and intreat you to lift up your Hearts to God, that he may give you the seeing Eye, the hearing Ear, and the understanding Heart.

I. I shall *first*, as plainly and briefly as I can, consider the original Meaning and Contents of these Words, *I have overthrowen some of you, as God overthrow Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a Firebrand pluckt out of the Burning; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord:* In which Words you will naturally observe,

1. They are reminded, that it was the Hand of God, which had lately kindled a Fire among them.

I have overthrowen some of you, as God overthrow Sodom and Gomorrah. I doubt not but these Words are to be understood, in a proper and literal Sense, of *Fire*, and of Fire kindled in the common Methods of Divine Providence.

They are to be understood of *Fire* properly so called. It is true, sometimes any of God's Judgments are compared to *Fire* *, that being, as you too well know, a most dreadful and irresistible Calamity, when it breaks out among the Dwellings and Possessions of Men. Thus
does

* See Psa. xcvi. 3. Isa. xxx. 33. lxvi. 15, 16. Jer. iv. 4. xxi. 12. Lam. ii. 3, 4. Ezek. xxxvi. 5. Amos v. 6. Nah. i. 6.

does the Wrath of God, whenever it is kindled, rage and flame. Thus does it bear down all before it, and turn the most pleasant Objects into Heaps of Ruin, Desolation, and Horror. But here, I apprehend, it is to be taken for *proper Fire*, because it stands distinguished from several other Kinds of Judgments, *Jer. 7, & seq.* from Drought, Blasting, and Mildew, from the Palmer-worm, and the Pestilence; and it is very remarkable, that it brings up the Rear, as one of the most terrible of all.

I scruple not to add, that *Amos* speaks of Fire kindled by the common Method of Divine Providence. It is indeed said, he overthrew them, *as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah*, which, you know, was by Fire and Brimstone, rained down upon them in a miraculous Manner; but there is no Reason to take the Words thus strictly, or to suppose that such a terrible Tempest of Fire and Brimstone had actually fallen upon the Cities of *Israel*. That had been an Event of so great Moment and Importance, that probably the sacred History would have been full of it, and succeeding Prophets would often have referred to it, as more memorable than even the Calamity of *Sodom*, as such a Visitation on God's People would certainly have been; whereas there is an entire Silence elsewhere, with relation to any such Judgment. And I am sure it is impossible to infer it from hence, because the Overthrow of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* was proverbially used for any very dreadful Calamity*, and might with peculiar Propriety express any Devastation that was made by *Fire*, though kindled in a common Manner.

As for the Fires here mentioned, it is possible some of them might have been kindled, by what Men in their common Forms of Speech call some unhappy Accident; and Draught, and Winds, and other Circumstances might concur, to spread that Conflagration, which at first arose from a little Spark, or some trifling Instance of Negligence. Others of these Fires might be kindled by a cruel Enemy: for tho' *Joash*,

* Deut. xxix. 23. Isa. i. 9. xiii. 19. Jer. xlix. 13. l. 40. Zeph. ii. 9. Matt. x. 15.

the Father of *Jeroboam the Second*, in whose Days *Amos* prophesied, was in the main a prosperous and successful Monarch, yet being engaged in frequent Wars with his Neighbours, it is not improbable that the Frontiers of his Country might sometimes suffer by them. And we are particularly informed of a *Syrian War*, which had happened some Years before; for we are told, that in the Days of *Jeboabaz*, *the Anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the Hands of Hazael King of Syria, and Benhadad his Son, all their Days **, and he oppressed Israel all the Days of *Jeboabaz †*. And since this *Hozael* carried his Inhumanity so far, as to dash even their Children in Pieces, and to rip up their Women with Child, it is no Wonder also, that he should set their strong Holds on Fire; as we are expressly assured that he did ‡.

But whatever was the Occasion of the Conflagration, whether the Cruelty of Enemies, or Negligence, or Accidents, you plainly see, that God claims it to himself, as his own Deed, that he had overthrown them; agreeable to the general Principle which is laid down in this very Prophecy, as what every Man's Conscience must bear Testimony to, that there is *no Evil in the City, that the Lord hath not done §*. And it is a most evident and important Truth, discovered and attested even by natural Religion, that all the Efficacy of second Causes is owing to the continual Operation of the Supream. He appointed Fire and Water to be, in their various Natures, useful to Mankind; and when he pleases, he can turn both into a Scourge. Thus when the Rains descend, and the Floods beat down the Fruits of the Field, and overwhelm Houses, with their Inhabitants, it is he that breaks up the Fountains of the Deep, and opens the Windows of Heaven ||. And when the Flames break out with Impetuosity, and the fiery Deluge spreads itself abroad, it is the Breath of the Lord that kindles it **, and keeps it up; nor does one single Spark rise or fall without his providential Interposition

* 2 Kings xiii. 3. † ver. 22. ‡ Ibid, viii. 12. § Amos ii. 6.
|| Gen. vii. 11. ** Isa. xxx. 33.

tion and Guidance. An Observation to be applied to all the other Events of human Life, and which the sacred Scriptures every where inculcate, with a Plainness and Spirit suited to its Importance, for the Conviction of those ignorant wretched Creatures, who live *without God in the World* *.

2. The Prophet farther leads them to reflect on their own Preservation from the Flames, as an Instance of Divine Mercy.

Ye were as a Firebrand pluckt out of the Burning : this plainly intimates, how narrow an Escape they had from the Extremitie of Danger to which they were exposed : and so the Expression is elsewhere used, *Zech. iii. 2.* where *Jerusalem* is represented by the same Similitude ; *Is not this a Brand pluckt out of the Fire ?* It implies, that they were just ready to be consumed ; that the Flames were beginning to take hold of them ; that *the Smell of Fire had*, as it were, *passed upon them* †, and they were scorched and blackened with it ; but yet they were saved, and *their Lives* at least given them *for a Prey* ‡. There may perhaps be some remote Reference to the Case of *Lot*, who, when God was about to overthrow *Sodom*, and he loitered in it, was thus delivered ; *for the Lord being merciful unto him, the Men laid hold of his Hand, and brought him out of Sodom* §.

Again, as the Prophet argues from their Preservation, as well as their Calamity, to enforce their Obligations to return to God, we may infer, that he intended to represent that Preservation likewise as his Work. Whatever accidental Engagements, whatever prudential Conduct, might have been the Means of it, still it was to be acknowledged, that there was the gracious Hand of God in it, which prevented their being destroyed with their Habitations. And we lose more than half of the Sweetness and Advantage of all our Deliverances, if we do not see and adore the gracious Providence of God in them, and are not thereby engaged in his Service. Which leads me to add,

3. It is also intimated in the Text, that the Design of this afflictive Providence was, to bring them to thorough Repentance and Reformation.

Yet

* Eph. ii. 12. † Dan. iii. 27. ‡ Jer. xxi. 9. § Gen. xix. 16.

Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord; plainly implying, that this what might, humanly speaking, have been expected, and what was by God intended in the Dispensation. This gives us a most easying and important View of the Nature of true Repentance, it is a *Return to God*. All Sin is an Alienation of the Heart from the Service of God, to which we are under ten thousand natural Obligations, all highly increased by the Revelation God has made of himself to us. Now the very Essence of true Repentance consists in a *Return to God*; in a deep Acknowledgment of our Guilt in going astray from him, and casting off the easy Yoke of his Commands; and in renewed Resolutions of devoting ourselves, for the future, more entirely to his Service. That external Reformation, which arises from other inferior Motives, is by no Means worthy of the Name of Religion. It may indeed be human Prudence; it may be Compassion to others, who might suffer by our Irregularities: but till God is regarded, yea supremely regarded in it, we cannot reasonably suppose, that God will regard us; which he intimates, when he complains concerning the *Israelites*, that *they returned, but not to the Most High* *.

Again, the Text further implies, that this Overthrow by Fire had, in its own Nature, a Tendency to promote such penitent and religious Sentiments, and that it was their Duty to consider it in this View. And indeed, whatever awakening Judgments befall Men, it is their Wisdom and Duty thus to regard them. *The Lord crieth, and the wise Man will hear his Voice: Hear ye the Rod, and him that hath appointed it* †. And thus God is represented, as sending very terrible Calamities on the *Israelites* in this very View; *In their Affliction they will seek me early, saying, Come, let us return unto the Lord; for he has torn, and he will heal us; he has smitten, and he will bind us up* ‡. And it is a most important Truth, that he does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men §: which abundantly justifies the Goodness of God, in all those penal Evils with which our World abounds.

Life

* Hof. vii. 16.

† Mich. vi. 9.

‡ Hof. v. ult. vi. 1.

§ Lam. iii. 93.

Life is to be considered as a State of Discipline, and our heavenly Father has Recourse to the Rod, that it may give Wisdom to those, who are too giddy, or too stubborn to learn it by gentler Methods. Thus did God call to the *Israelites*; thus is he calling to you; and may his Grace prevent the Necessity of joining with the Prophet, when,

4. He complains that they had not fallen in with the the Design of those awful Providences, but still continued an unreformed and impenitent People.

Yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord, notwithstanding this Judgment, and all the others with which it was introduced. And this Charge is advanced no less than five Times, within six Verses. Though I have given you Cleanness of Teeth in all your Cities, and Want of Bread in all your Places; though I have withheld the Rain from you; though I have smitten you with Blasting and Mildew; yea, though I have sent among you the Pestilence, after the Manner of Egypt; your young Men have been slain with the Sword, and the Stench of their Camps hath come up into your Nosetrils; and though, to compleat all, I have overtrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a Firebrand pluckt out of the Burning; yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.* Thus the awful Majesty of Heaven complains, that they had been chastised, and delivered in vain. And indeed, when we come to examine into their History, we find the Complaint but too just. Could it be said *they returned to God, when they sold the Righteous for Silver, and the Poor for a Pair of Shoes; when they trod down the Head of the Poor in the Dust of the Earth; when they added Whoredom, and Incest, to all their other Iniquities; and with mingled Rapine and Impiety, lay down before their idolatrous Altars, on Clothes which (expressly against the Law) they had taken for Pledges, and drank in the House of their false Gods the Wine of those whom they had unjustly condemned †.* Yet this is the Account that God himself gives of the State of Things among them, in the preceding Chapter, even he who had

* Amos iv. 6—11.

† Ibid. ii. 6—8.

had been Witnesses to their Sins, and *had sworn* by himself, that he *would not forget any of their Works* *. So evidently does it appear, that the human Heart may harden itself against the most dreadful Dispensations of Divine Providence, and, like *that King Abaz*, even in its Distresses may *trespass yet more against the Lord* †; unless the secret Influence of his Grace be joined with the Stroke of his Rod, and while he is *chastening* them thereby, he *teaches them out of his Law* ‡. There is a *reprobate* kind of *Silver*, which will not be purged even by *Fire*, when *the Bellows are burnt, and the Lead consumed, the Founder will yet have laboured in vain* §.

Thus I have laid before you those Particulars in the Text, that appear to me most remarkable and instructive. And tho' I doubt not but you have anticipated me in your own Reflections, yet I hope you will now permit me,

II. To attempt the more particular Application of these Things to you, of whom it may with such evident Propriety be said, *God has overthrow some of you, and ye were as a Firebrand pluckt out of the Burning.*

And here let me solemnly intreat and charge you,—that you acknowledge the righteous Hand of God in what has befallen you,—that you reflect on the Mixture of Mercy, that has attended this awful Providence,—that you make it your earnest Prayer, that the Dross of Sin may be purged away by it,—and that you long retain upon your Hearts a permanent Sense of these important Lessons, which you have seen in so strong and so affecting a Light.

1. Let me intreat you to acknowledge the righteous Hand of God in this Calamity which has befallen you.

Let me address you in those Words of the *Psalmist*, *Be still, and know that he is God* ||. Be affected with the Sense of his Interposition, and confess the Righteousness of it. Assure yourselves, Sirs, that it is not only a general Truth, that, as we before observed, all second Causes (and *Fires* among the rest) operate only by the Divine Concurrence, and Efficacy, but that it is applica-

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cable

* Amos viii. 7. † 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. ‡ Psal. xciv.
 ‡ Jer. vi. 29. 30. || Psal. xlvi. 10.

cable to the present Occasion. It was the Hand of the Lord that kindled your Fire, and his Breath that fanned it into such a terrible Blaze. The Wind, you say, drove it upon some of the most considerable Parts of your Town; but under whose Command is the Wind? and why did it not blow towards an opposite Quarter, so as to bear it the contrary Way, where it would soon have died for want of Fuel? Or why did it not sleep in an entire Calm, which might have given you an Opportunity of extinguishing the Burning with little Trouble and Damage?

It was *his Hand*; and let it also be remembered, it was a very *righteous Hand*. Know, that God is just in all that he has brought upon you, nay, in all this *he has punished you less than your Iniquities deserved* *. I mean not to insinuate by this, that you of this Town are *greater Sinners* †, than those that are round about you; or that any Inference is to be drawn, as to the Character of particular Persons, or Families, from their Share of this Calamity, whether more or less. I would not by any such partial and uncharitable Censure, *add Grief to your Sorrow* ‡. Nor would it be reasonable to do it; for in such Providences as these, *all Things come alike to all, and there is one Event to the Righteous, and the Wicked* §. But this I confidently say, that all the Sufferers that hear me this Day, how clear soever they may have been from scandalous Crimes, nay, however worthy in their Character, or however useful in their Station, have Reason to acknowledge, that there are *with them, even with them, Sins against the Lord their God*, sufficient to justify this, and more than this: yea, such will be most ready to say, *It is of the Lord's Mercies that we are not consumed* ||: justly might he have delivered us over to *Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish* **, to the Rage of everlasting Burnings, and the Darkness of perpetual Despair: we *lay our Hands on our Mouths* ††, and our Mouths in the Dust, and cry out guilty before thee. And while you are thus owning God's Justice, let me exhort you,

2. To

* Ezra ix. 13.
lxv. 3.

† Luke xiii. 3, 5.

‡ Jer.

§ Eccles. ix. 2.

|| Lam. iii. 22.

** Rom. ii. 8, 9.

†† Judg. xviii. 19.

2. To attend to the Mixture of Mercy, which has appeared in this memorable Providence.

Let me call you this Day to see it, and own it, and to mingle Songs of Praise with your Tears. Think not, I beseech you, your Case worse than it really is; but acknowledge the Goodness of God in every mitigating Circumstance that attends it. Most certain it is, most evident to every one that is but a Stranger among you, to every wayfaring Man that passes by your Dwellings, *that in the midst of Judgment God has remembered Mercy*: why else is not your whole Town consumed? why had some of you Houses standing, in which to receive your suffering Brethren, and Stores remaining, out of which to relieve them? Let me address myself to those of you in particular, who were in the near Neighbourhood of Desolation; to you, that were in a literal Sense like *a Brand pluckt out of the Burning*, freed from the Flames, that were raging near you, perhaps, I may add, that were devouring all around you; to you, whose Houses stand in the midst of the Ruins, as Monuments of God's peculiar and distinguishing Goodness: now does he demand your Sacrifice of Praise; and see to it that you retain an abiding Sense of the Mercy, and of that consequent Claim which he has to distinguished Services from you.

But let me address myself to those, who, tho' perhaps their Houses were reached, had Opportunities (as I know very many of you had) of saving some considerable Part of your Goods; or to those who had Estates, and Substance elsewhere, out of the Reach of those Flames, perhaps sufficient for the comfortable and honourable Support of your Families; perhaps, after all this Diminution, far more than you were possessed of some Years ago. Permit me, Sirs, to tell you, that it would be very criminal Ingratitude, to think so much of what you have lost, as to forget your remaining Mercies; permit me to say, that you have Reason, as it were, to weep-over those Floods of Tears, which you have so profusely shed: *To faint thus in the Day of Adversity*, argues *your spiritual Strength to be small**; and perhaps may discover such an Attachment to the Enjoy-

ments of this present Life, as may awaken a serious Mind to more afflictive Doubts, lest your *Portion* is here, or your *Gods* are *taken away* *.

But what shall I say to those of you, who have lost your all; your Houses, your Goods, your Furniture, your Clothing; and are turned out naked and destitute, to seek your Bread you hardly know where? I do from my Heart condole with such of you; I have felt your Affliction myself, and, as I have had Opportunity, recommended it to the Consideration of others; but you must give me Leave to remind you, that even in your Case there is a Mixture of Mercy: why else are you living among us this Day? Is it not something, that *your Lives* have been given you *as a Prey*? Is it not to be acknowledged as a gracious Circumstance in Providence, that the Fire did not break out in the Night, and surround you while you were sleeping in your Beds, so as to cut off, perhaps, the Possibility of your own Escape; or at least to oblige you, in your first surprize, to fly for your own Lives, incapable of assisting those, that were dearest to you? What if when you had a little recovered yourselves from your Consternation, and come to examine the Ruins, you had found among them the Bones of a beloved Child, or of a Friend, who had been to you as your own Soul? There had been a Wound indeed, the Scar and the Pain of which, you must probably have carried to your Graves. But your present Losses are much less deplorable: for, not to say how much *the Spirit of a Man* may *sustain* † these Afflictions; not to plead, what good Sense, and much more Religion may do, towards reconciling Men to some of the Inconveniencies of Poverty; it is to be remembered, that God may change the Scene? Hope at least is remaining, and that not an improbable Hope. God has supported you thus far, and already carried you thro' the most helpless and destitute Days of Life, that you ever saw, or probably will see. Your Brethren, your Neighbours, your Friends, and Benefactors, whether nearer or more remote, have pitied you; and Pity alone, much more with those substantial Expressions of it, is some Balm to

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* Judg. xviii. 24.

† Prov. xviii. 14.

our Sorrows. Let me call you this Day thankfully to acknowledge the Wisdom and Goodness of the Great Author of our Beings, who has thus made Man the Guardian of Man; who has implanted this tender Feeling in the human Mind; so that on the Sight of any remarkable Distress of our Fellow-Creatures, we are moved by a most powerful, but amiable kind of Instinct, to open our Hands, yea, to draw out our Souls to them. Happy Provision of the God of Nature and of Grace, which makes the Possessions of the Wealthy and Prosperous a perpetual Bank for the Support of the Distressed; and opens, as it were, amidst Heaps of Desolation, the sweet Fountains of Benevolence on one Hand, and of Gratitude on the other! These Things call for your Acknowledgment; and you are to remember, that all those Supplies are ultimately derived from God, which, from his additional Goodness, he chuses to send you by the Hands of your Fellow-Creatures. And I would hope, he will go on to do you Good, and will so *turn your Captivity*, like that of *Job**, that your present Suffering may serve to add a greater Relish to succeeding and growing Prosperity. At least with regard to the true Christian, there remains another more secure, as well as more important Hope; that the Soul may be enriched by what impoverishes the Body, and that *these light Afflictions, which are but for a Moment, may work out a far more exceeding, and eternal Weight of Glory†*: which if you desire, then,

3. Make it your serious Concern and earnest Prayer, that the Dross of Sin may be purged away by this Burning.

By this, said *Isaiah* the Prophet, (speaking of very terrible Judgments, which God sent among the *Israelites*,) by this shall the Iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the Fruit to take away his Sin‡. Surely then it is meet to say unto God, *I have born Chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I know not, teach thou me; if I have done Iniquity, I will do no more§*. So may it be with you, and you will be unspeakable Gainers by

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this

* Job xlii. 10.

† 2 Cor. iv. 17.

‡ Isa. xxvii.

this Loss; Gainers in the true Comfort and Happiness of the Remainder of Life, and much more in the future State.

In Pursuit of this blessed End, let me, my Friends, this Day solemnly call you to *search and try your Ways**, and to examine what is that *accursed Thing*, which may have occasioned this *Trouble and Distress*†. I cannot do you a kinder Office, than to assist you in the Enquiry. Give me Leave therefore to suggest a few Reflections; by which I would not be understood to mean any Thing personal, for indeed I cannot intend it; most of you are Strangers to me, nor have I Reason to suspect peculiar Evil of any; but an Acquaintance with human Nature in general, will very naturally lead me, in the present Circumstance, to turn your Thoughts inward, that you may *accomplish a diligent Search*‡. Wherefore has God visited you? Wherefore has he *written these bitter Things against you* §?

It may be some of you have indulged yourselves in a *luxurious Way of Living*; and therefore God has stript you of those Things, which have been the Instruments of it. You have, perhaps, taken a secret Pleasure and *Pride in gay Dress*, or affected a Magnificence of *Furniture*, beyond your Rank; and therefore God has consumed your Ornaments, and turned you out almost naked and bare. Or you have, perhaps, been addicted to *Riot and Intemperance*, squandering away your Substance, and destroying your Health, and it may be, your Reason, with the Abundance of good Things God had given you. Just is he then in taking them away; for it is a thousand times better, that intoxicating Liquors should be employed, (as they have been here) even to quench the Flames, or that the choicest Dainties should be burnt up, and your Money perish with them, than that your Reason should be impaired, your Health destroyed, and your Families reduced by continued Extravagance.

Perhaps there are some of you that have been accustomed to make a kind of By-Word of *Hell and Damnation*, to scatter about in Rage, or mere Wantonness,

Oaths

* Lam. iii. 40.
lxiv. 6.

† Job vii. 11, 25.

‡ Psal.

§ Job xiii. 26.

Oaths and Imprecations; which in a professed Christian is blasphemous Impiety, and which even an Atheist must own, to be at best but boisterous and unmannerly Nonsense. And if so, justly has God executed upon you that Denunciation against *him that sweareth*; justly has he *caused his Curse to enter and remain in the midst of your House, and consumed it, with the Timber thereof, and the Stones thereof**.

Or possibly, in other of your Houses, *the Fire of Contention* has before been kindled; Contention between the Members of the same Family, or between Neighbour and Neighbour; while a clashing of secular Interests with some, or the Diversity of Religious Persuasions and Practices with others, have led you to forget the common Ties of Brotherhood and human Kind, and to burn with mutual Animosity and Wrath. Justly has God written your Sin in your Punishment, and joined you as Companions in Suffering and Distress; which must surely teach you a better Temper, if you are not quite incorrigible.

But among those of a more peaceable Disposition, are there none, that are conscious to themselves of *dishonest Gain*? no *Merchant, or Trader*, that has held *the Balances of Deceit in his Hand* †, and has allowed himself to keep (as the Scripture expresses it) *a Weight and a Weight, a Measure and a Measure* ‡, to buy by the one, and to sell by the other? None, that have *gone beyond and defrauded their Brethren* §, and practised Arts by which they would have thought themselves to have been greatly injured, if they had met with them from others? If such there be, that (as the Prophet expresses it) have *coveted an evil Covetousness to their House* ||, let them not wonder, if God has verified the Words of his Servant, so that *the Stone has cried out of the Wall, and the Beam out of the Timber has answered it***. And so will it be with those, who may attempt to found their rising Houses in Falshood, and to cement them with Perjury. And if any have already done it, by giving in, even upon Oath, unjust Accounts of their Losses,

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let

* Zech. v. 4.

† Hos. xii. 7.

‡ Deut. xxv.

1, —16.

§ 1 Thess. iv. 6.

|| Hab. ii. 9.

** ver. 11.

let them *be sure, their Sin will find them out* *, and their unrighteous Gain, the Plunder of their Fellow-Sufferers, will be *Bitterness in the latter End*.

But to insist no longer upon this Head, it is very probable there are some, whose Conscience would not allow them in such Methods as these, who yet may accuse themselves of having been formerly, in their most prosperous Days, *backward to Actions of Bounty and Charity*; some, in whom the Words of Solomon are fulfilled, *They have withheld more than is meet, and it has tended only to Poverty* †. It may be, when compassionate Objects have presented themselves, or been recommended to you, your Hearts, instead of being opened and warmed, have rather been contracted; and you have been ingenious in finding out Excuses, for not bearing your Part in such Expences. And now, all that you have spared and saved by such a mean and unworthy Temper is gone, and perhaps, thro' the righteous Judgment of God, has carried away with it a great deal more: while the generous and compassionate Christian has at least had this Satisfaction, that a Part of his Substance is laid up in the Bank of Heaven, and secured far beyond the Reach of any unhappy Accident; for nothing is indeed so truly, and so surely *our own*, as what we have laid out on such charitable Occasions. And I shall have Reason to congratulate you upon your present Loss, if having felt Affliction yourselves, and experienced the compassionate Assistance of others, you melt into more humane Sentiments, and knowing the Heart of Sufferers, be for the future more ready to relieve them, and more *abundant in every good Word and Work*: and happy for you will it be, if *the Lord purge away your Dross, by the Spirit of Judgment, and the Spirit of Burning* ‡, so that you come forth from this Furnace as *Silver seven Times purified*, and take the Divine Image in brighter and fairer Characters. It has been often observed, that Places which have suffered by a kind of general Conflagration, rise more beautiful out of their Ashes. But there will be much greater Reason to congratulate you, if by this Means your Tempers are refined; if the Vain become Grave, the Luxurious Tem-

perate,

* Numb. xxxii. 23.

† Prov. xi. 24.

‡ Isa. iv. 4.

perate, the Prophane Religious, the Contentious Meek, the Fraudulent Upright, and the Sordid Liberal. And sure I am, that with such an Alteration, you would be happier in a Cottage of Clay, than you could have been before in a House of Marble and Cedar. And that this happy End may be answered, let me exhort you, once more,

4. That you endeavour to retain upon your Hearts a lively Sense of those important Lessons, which you might, as it were, read by the Light of these Flames.

There are many very instructive Truths, which God has often spoken to you from his Word, and by his Ordinances, which yet might, with some more sensible Demonstration, be learned from such a Scene of Providence. And I doubt not but those that are truly wise, and who have set themselves with strict Attention to reflect on what has passed, have prevented me in some of these Meditations. Let me for a few Moments, however, recall them to your Minds, and suggest them to those, who have been either too indolent, or too perplexed, to form them for themselves.

I shall only mention Two, which comprehend a great many more.—How vain are worldly Possessions, when compared with spiritual and eternal Blessings!—And how unutterably dreadful is the Divine Displeasure, by which Fires will be kindled so much more terrible than these!

You have seen here the Vanity of worldly Possessions, and the superior Value of spiritual and eternal Blessings; and therefore labour to preserve a Sense of it.

You had often before read that Expostulation, *Wilt thou set thine Eyes upon that which is not? for Riches certainly make themselves Wings, and fly away as an Eagle towards Heaven* *. But perhaps you never saw those Wings spreading so wide, and rising in so rapid a Flight; you never saw so many Families undone in an Hour, the Worth of so many Hundreds and Thousands of Pounds dissipated in the Air, and borne away by the Wind in blazing and smoking Columns. You could not, when you came to look over the Ruins, distinguish

between the Ashes of the most precious of your Goods, and the poorest Refuse of them; but they were mingled together, like the Dust of the Dead. So vain is Wealth, and so uncertain is our Confidence in Riches! Thus all our Goods, and our Houses may perish. And though our Lands may seem a more lasting Possession, yet, as you have seen, Flames may devour the Product of them, either before, or after it is gathered in: and our Lives themselves, yet frailer than almost any Thing else, may fail us in a Moment. This you have seen with your Eyes; and forget it not; but charge it on your Conscience, to observe the infinite Difference between these transient Enjoyments, and spiritual and eternal Blessings. Those Treasures are not liable to such Accidents: as *neither Moth nor Rust can corrupt, nor Thieves break through and steal them* *, so neither can Fire break out and consume them. It is a known Story of *Bias* the Philosopher, that, when in Danger of Shipwreck, he saw others concerned about their Goods, which were like to be lost, even if they escaped with their Lives, he said, in Consciousness of superior Worth, and therefore superior Happiness, *I carry all my Treasure with me*. And so can the Christian say. The most valuable Treasure is that, which by Divine Grace is laid up in the Heart, or, to speak with more strict Propriety, in the Soul itself; so that should devouring Flames surround the House, even the Tabernacle of Clay, or any other overwhelming Calamity demolish it, the Heaven-born Inhabitant would escape with all its Riches, and borrow Wings from the Tempest itself, to bear it on to eternal Blessedness.

Once more, reflect, how unutterably dreadful the Wrath of God is, by which Fires will be kindled much fiercer than these.

Our God, says the Apostle, *is a consuming Fire* †; and it is a Representation which God himself has made, when describing his Displeasure against Sin, *Who, says he, would set Briars and Thorns against me in Battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together* ‖. You have

* Mat. vi. 20.

† Heb. xii. 29.

‖ Isa. xxvii. 4.

have seen a *burning Town*, and have found it, perhaps, an Object of Terror beyond all your Imagination. But remember, Sirs, the Day is approaching, when you must see a *burning World*: for the Day of the Lord will come, and that as a *Thief in the Night*; in which the Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat; the Earth also, and the Works that are therein, shall be burnt up*. And though, long before that Time, the Grave will have received you, and you will have no Portion any more in all that is done under the Sun †; yet you yourselves must be called forth, and shall arise, to be Spectators of that august Solemnity: and you shall all behold the Day, when the Sun shall be turned into Darkness, and the Moon into Blood ‡; when the Stars shall fall from Heaven, and the Powers thereof shall be shaken §; when the Heavens shall be rolled together as a Scroll, and all their Host shall fall down, as the Leaf falleth off from the Vine, and as a falling Fig from the Fig-tree ||; when the Streams shall be turned into Pitch, and the Dust into Brimstone †, and all the Beauties of Nature and Art shall be sunk into Rubbish and Chaos. Happy Men, who shall then be able to lift up their Heads with Joy, knowing that their compleat Redemption draweth nigh**; and who according to the Promise of that God, who amidst all the Convulsions and Revolutions of Nature is still the same, look for new Heavens, and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteousness ††.

But let it be remembered, that all this Pomp is to usher in that Day of Judgment, which shall be a Day of Perdition to ungodly Men ††: for a Fire shall then be kindled in God's Anger, which shall burn even to the lowest Hell, when it has consumed the Earth with its Increase, and calcined the very Foundation of the Mountains §§. And in this View, let the Sinners in Zion be afraid, and let Fearfulness surprize the Hypocrites; for who can dwell with the devouring Fire? who can lie down in everlasting Burnings |||? Yet this, you well know, is the Doom of every

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* 2 Pet. iii. 10. † Eccles. ix. 6. ‡ Joel ii. 31. § Mat. xxiv. 29. || Isa. xxxiv. 4. † ver. 9. ** Luke xxi. 28. †† 2 Pet. iii. 13. †† ver. 7. §§ Deut. xxxii. 22. ||| Isa. xxiii. 14.

impenitent Sinner; a Doom, to be pronounced by the Lips of *Christ* himself, in Words which he has already uttered and recorded, that, by weighing their Terror, we may be roused from our Security, and be alarmed to escape it; *Depart from me, ye Cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels* *. Nor can you imagine the Sentence shall be pronounced in vain, or that all the confederate Nations of the Condemned shall be able to ward it off. But who can sustain the Terror of its Execution! What, if, while your Habitations were in Flames, and you were endeavouring to escape for your Lives, a Host of armed Enemies had cut off your Retreat, and forcibly driven you back to the Fire? You cannot bear the Thought; the Horror of it strikes you to the Heart, and Nature shudders at it. But will it not be infinitely more terrible, when Legions of Angels with irresistible Power urge you on, and the Wrath of God like an overflowing Torrent sweeps you away into *the Lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone* †? Wretched Creatures, that are yet obnoxious to such a Destruction! Weep not, Sirs, if this be the Case, for your Houses and Goods consumed. Weep not for your Substance wasted, and your Families undone. You have a far juster Cause for deep Lamentation. Mourn over your perishing Souls. Say not, We will recover our Affairs as fast as we can, by renewed Application to worldly Business; and much less presume arrogantly to say, *in the Pride and Stoutness of your Hearts, The Bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn Stones: the Sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into Cedars* ‡! Remember, that *Pride goes before Destruction* §; and amidst all the most pressing Cares and Hurries of Life, let it be still considered by you, there is one great Concern, that even now demands a more attentive Regard; that you may see from the Wrath to come, to *Jesus*, who is appointed to deliver from it ||. Think not of repairing your Losses, and of settling your Affairs here; but let me rather say to each of you, as the *Angel* to *Lot*, while he lingered in *Sodom*, (perhaps from too great a Regard

for

* Matt. xxv. 41. † Rev. xx. 8. ‡ Isa. ix. 9, 10. § Prov. xvi. 18. || 1 Thess. i. 10.

for the Goods he was to leave there) *Escape for thy Life; look not behind thee; escape to the Mountain, lest thou be consumed* *. I must be insensible of the Worth of Souls, and most regardless of the great End of my Office, if I were not willing to digress much farther than I have now done, to give so necessary a Caution. May Divine Grace make it effectual to awaken those, who, if their present Stupidity continue a while longer, must feel those Flames, which they will not see!

But I trust, my Brethren, there are those of you, whom *God has pluckt as Brands out of the Burning*, in the noblest and most important Sense of these Words, and who have sought, and found your Shelter, from this most terrifying Prospect, in the Grace of the Gospel-Covenant. Whatever your other Circumstances are, be thankful for this most gracious Interposition: let your Losses and Sorrows sit light on your Hearts, while *God has appointed Salvation itself for Walls and Bulwarks* †. But still be sure that you maintain that active Zeal, and continued Watchfulness, which suits your Obligations to God, and your Expectations from him; and *seeing that you look for such Things, be diligent, that you may be found of him in Peace* ‡. In the mean Time, encourage yourselves in the Lord your God §, well knowing, that if the Foundations of the Earth were to shake, and the Arches of Heaven to burst asunder, it becomes the Soul, that is supported by its God, to stand the Shock with intrepid Courage; as being assured, that nothing can finally crush and overwhelm him, who is covered by the Shield of the Almighty; and that *the Trial of the good Man's Faith, which is far more precious than that of Gold which perishes, though tried in the Fire, will certainly be found to Honour and Joy at last* ¶.

Such may the Event of all your Trials be! So may Divine Grace animate every Heart that hears me! so may it visit all who have been Sufferers by the Loss, or shared in the Alarm, though they share not with us in the Devotions of this Day! May the compassionate Eye of God regard you, and your Habitations! may his
Provi-

* Gen. xix. 17. † Isa. xxvi. 1. ‡ 2 Pet. iii. 14. § 1 Sam. xxx. 6. ¶ 1 Pet. i. 7.

Providence cement, strengthen, and adorn them; for *except the Lord build the City, they labour in vain that build it* *! May the *Candle of the Lord shine on your Tabernacle* †, and his Spirit enlighten and renew your Souls! May Peace and Prosperity, Friendship and Religion, always flourish in this Town and Neighbourhood! And in a Word, may God so compassionate your Calamity, as to give you *Joy for Mourning*, and *Beauty for Ashes* ‡; that those who have lamented over you, may rejoice with you; and that at length you may share the Security and Joy of *the City of God*, even *the Heavenly Jerusalem* §, where no Flames shall be felt, but those of Love, and no Sound heard, but the Accents of everlasting Triumph and Praise! *Amen.*

* Psal. cxxvii. 1. † Job xxix. 3. ‡ Isa. lxi. 3. § Heb. xii. 22.

P O S T S C R I P T.

THE following H Y M N, though not considerable on any other Account, was judged so suitable to the Occasion, that many of my Friends united in their Request, that it might be printed with the Sermon, after which it was sung: I was the more willing to comply with it, lest the Multiplication of incorrect Copies should make it yet more imperfect than it is. But hardly any Thing was ever farther from my Thoughts, than the Publication, either of this, or of the Discourse itself.

T H E H Y M N.

I.

ETERNAL GOD! our humbled Souls
 Low in thy Presence bow:
 With all thy Magazines of Wrath,
 How terrible art Thou!

II. Fann'd

II.

Fann'd by thy Breath, huge Sheets of Flame
Do like a Deluge pour;
And all our Confidence of Wealth
Lies moulder'd in an Hour.

III.

Led on by Thee, in horrid Pomp,
Destruction rears its Head;
And blacken'd Walls, and smoking Heaps,
Thro' all our Streets are spread.

IV.

Deep in our Dust we lay us down,
And mourn thy righteous Ire;
Yet bless that Hand of guardian Love,
Which snatch'd us from the Fire.

V.

Oh that the hateful Dregs of Sin,
Like Dross, were perish'd there;
That in fair Lines our purer Souls
Might thy bright Image bear!

VI.

So might we view with dauntless Eyes
That last tremendous Day,
When Earth, and Seas, and Stars, and Skies,
In Flames shall melt away!



THE
NECESSITY
OF A
General REFORMATION,

In order to a well-grounded Hope of

SUCCESS in WAR;

Represented in a

S E R M O N

PREACHED

At *Northampton*, Jan. 9, 1739-40.

The Day appointed by His MAJESTY for
Publick Humiliation.

TO THE HONOURABLE

COL. JAMES GARDINER.

S I R,

I Am far from thinking, that I pay any Part of the Debt which I owe to your most engaging Friendship, by presenting you with this plain Discourse; on the contrary, I am sensible, that by your permitting me to inscribe it to you, that Debt is increased: but Obligations to so much Goodness as I have experienced in you, sit so easily and so pleasantly upon me, that no Objection arises from that Quarter. And it has this Claim to your Patronage, that many of the Thoughts are as much yours as mine; having been talked over between us with a great deal of Freedom. I know, Sir, they are such as make a very deep Impression on your Heart, and such as you strenuously labour to promote among those who have the Happiness of being under your Command; and I am confident you will think it no Reproach to you to avow them in the most publick Manner, as your whole Life always speaks your steady Regard to those Principles on which they are built.

I heartily congratulate you, Sir, and I congratulate the Publick, on the visible Effects of your resolute and courageous Zeal for Religion, in the remarkable Sobriety and Regularity of those to whom your Influence most directly extends; and I doubt not, but it has extended much farther than the Company, or even the Regiment, to which you stand peculiarly related. Were our Officers and our Soldiers in general such, I am perswaded it would soon appear, how much Righteousness exalteth a Nation; and that He who is Wisdom to the pious Counsellor, would also be Strength to them that turn the Battle from our Gates to those of the Enemy: so that our Commanders,
like

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like the Hero who has furnished me with my Motto, might well give it for their Word, GOD OUR ALLY AND OUR GENERAL.

To all the Prayers which I have been offering for my Country in the Progress of that Discourse of which I now beg your Acceptance, permit me to add this one more, That to whatever Services you may be called in its Defence, that God, whom you serve, in all may continually watch over you for Good, and prolong to many future most honourable and important Years, a Life so faithfully devoted to Him. My Heart reveres you too much, to permit me to tell the World, so immediately in your Presence, the high Sentiments it entertains of you; and I am (with an Affection, which is, perhaps, too ready to forget the Formalities of a publick Address, in the Tenderneſs of private Friendſhip,)

My Dear COLONEL.

Your most Faithful,

most Obliged,

and most Obedient

Humble Servant,

NORTHAMPTON,
Febr. 25, 1739-40.

P. Doddridge

DEUT. XXIII. 9.

When the Host goeth forth against thine Enemies, then keep thee from every wicked Thing.

THE Acknowledgment of that God, in whose Hand our Breath is, and whose are all our Ways *, is a Duty in its Obligation so evidently reasonable, in its Exercise so delightful, and in its natural Consequences so variously advantageous, that one would hope it should be the prevailing Temper among Men; a Temper which should run through the most agreeable and secure Scenes of Life, since that Agreeableness and Security is the Effect of Divine Care and Goodness. Nevertheless we too generally see, that in this Respect Men are lulled asleep by those gentle Gales of Prosperity, which waft them on towards a Haven they desire; but when cross and contrary Winds arise, and beat upon them, the Noise, the Motion, the Danger of the Tempest often awakes them, and engages them, like the *Mariners* in the Ship with *Jonah*, to call every one upon his God †. I would hope indeed, that I am now addressing to many, who have made *Prayer* the Business and the Joy of their prosperous Days; and such may with peculiar Pleasure and Confidence have Recourse to it in Circumstances of Extremity, if God should be pleased to lead us in such Circumstances. In the mean Time, I doubt not, but it is with great Readiness that such Numbers of you have obeyed the

* Dan. v. 23.

† Jonah i. 5.

the wise and pious Call of our Sovereign, to assemble this Day, “ That we may humble ourselves before Almighty God, in order to obtain Pardon of our Sins ; and may in most devout and solemn Manner send up our Prayers and Supplications to the Divine Majesty, for averting those heavy Judgments which our manifold Sins and Provocations have most justly deserved, imploring his Blessing and Assistance on our Arms, and for restoring and perpetuating Peace, Safety, and Prosperity to us.”

Christian Princes have seldom omitted on such Occasions as these, to give such Calls to their Subjects ; and they have instructive Precedents for it in Scripture. They might learn it from the Conduct of pious *Jehoshaphat*, who, when numerous Nations were conspiring against him, *set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a Fast throughout all Judah, that they might gather themselves together, to ask Help from him* *. Yea, the Hint might be taken even from the Behaviour of the *King of Nineveh*, who, when the Prophet had so solemnly declared in the Name of God, that his Country should be destroyed, *arose from his Throne, and laid aside his Robe, and covered himself with Sackcloth, and sate in Ashes* †, at the same Time causing a most rigorous Fast to be proclaimed through *Nineveh*, by his own Decree, and that of his Nobles ; an Abstinence, in which, the more forcibly to impress the Minds of Men, *the Beasts* were also to share, and *neither to feed, nor drink Water* ; and those of them which had appeared in that luxurious City in the most sumptuous Trappings and Decorations, were in the sad Procession, like their Masters, to be *covered with Sackcloth*. With such low Prostration was the whole Nation, as one Man, to *cry mightily unto God*, to avert his Displeasure : but it is worthy of our Remark, that the Light of Nature and Reason taught that Prince also to add, in his royal Mandate for a general Humiliation, *Let them turn every one from his evil Way, and from the Violence that is in their Hands*.

Now as Obedience to the Government, and Love to the Publick, must engage every faithful Minister to labour

* 2 Chron. xx. 3, 4.

† Jan. iii. 6,—8.

bour to address his People this Day, on such a Subject, and in such a Manner, as he judges most suitable to its great Design; I thought it my Duty to fix my own Meditations and yours, on *the absolute Necessity of National and Personal Reformation, in order to a well-grounded Expectation of Success in War.* This the *King of Nineveh* inculcated, as you have heard; and *Moses* also had long before solemnly urged it, in the Words of my Text; *When the Host goeth forth against thine Enemies, then keep thee from every wicked Thing.* And surely every one's Conscience will tell him, how fit it is, that, after we have been pouring out our Confessions and our Supplications before God, we should attentively reflect upon such a Charge as this, lest future *Iniquities*, aggravated even by the Humiliation of this Day, should prove our speedy, and our final Destruction.

You see the Words contain a very plain and intelligible Admonition to *Israel*, of the peculiar Care with which they should guard against any unreformed *Wickedness*, when (like *Great-Britain* at this Day) they were engaging in *War*: and they are a Charge, not only to the *Soldiery*, in such Circumstances as these, to abstain from Rapine, Cruelty, and Debauchery, as well as from any superstitious Regard to those Idols, which they might meet with in the Camps and Cities of their Enemies; but also to the *People* in general, to be careful, that they did not, by any Impieties or Immoralities at Home, bring down the Curse of God upon their Arms, and blast the Success even of the most righteous Cause.

Before I proceed to a more particular Consideration of the Words, I will very readily allow, they might have some peculiar Weight, when considered as addressed to the *Israelites*; for they had God in a very extraordinary Manner present among them; as *the Ark*, often called *the Footstool of his Throne*, was now in the Midst of their Camp; and, when it was not, there were other *holy Instruments* committed to the Charge of the *Anciented of the Field*, by which God was to be consulted, and his Presence acknowledged. Upon this Account we find, in the following Words, they are urged to keep themselves, not only from moral, but also from
ceremo-

174 *The Necessity of a general Reformation,*

ceremonial, and even natural Pollution; that the Order, Decency, and Cleanliness of their Camp might be an habitual Expression of their Reverence for that God, who condescended to appear among them as their General, and their King: *For the Lord thy God walketh in the Midst of thy Camp;— therefore shall it be holy, that he see no unclean Thing in thee, and turn away from thee* *.

It may also be proper to recollect upon this Occasion, that the *Israelites* were under something of a peculiarly equal Providence; and consequently might expect Victory or Defeat, as they were obedient, or disobedient to the Divine Command, with a Certainty greater than is common to other Nations. For though indeed it is probable, that, in a Series of Years, the Prosperity or Calamity of a Nation will be proportionable to its general Virtues or Vices; yet the peculiar *Covenant* which God had made with *Israel*, not only seems to have engaged him to a more immediate Retribution, but likewise extended itself to all those peculiar *Institutions*, which they as a separate Nation were under. Therefore does he particularly tell them, that *if they did not observe to do all his Commandments and Statutes, he would cause them to be smitten before their Enemies; they should go out against them one Way, and flee seven Ways before them* †; thereby strongly intimating, (and indeed with the utmost Reason) that the presumptuous Violation of any ceremonial or positive Precept would be attended with fatal Consequences; of which, you well know, the Defeat brought upon the whole Army of *Israel* for the *Sin of Achan*, in secreting the accursed Thing, was an early and very memorable Instance; as well as the Severity, with which that Crime was punished, on the Offender, and his Family ‡. And it was indeed a merciful Method which God took, to preserve *Israel* in an external and visible Adherence to the Religion and the *Institutions* he had founded among them, thus immediately to animadvert upon them by his chastising Providence, whenever they deviated from it, though in Circumstances otherwise indifferent; and it may be in those, in which human Policy would have dictated

* Deut. xxiii. 14. † Ibid. xxviii. 15, 25. ‡ Josh. chap. vii.

dictated a very different Conduct, had not a Divine Command interposed: which, by the Way, is particularly apparent in the Effect of *multiplying Chariots and Horses*, which were always a Curse, instead of a Defence to *Israel*, how useful soever they might have been to other Nations; because God had required them to employ *Infantry* alone, as that by which (the more immediately to shew his Interposition) he would save them, when they depended upon him.

I pretend not therefore to maintain from these Words, that we are concerned in them, just in the very same Manner and Degree, that the *Israelites* were; yet I doubt not but I shall be able,

I. To prove, that we are highly concerned in this *Caution* which is given to them. And then,

II. I shall endeavour to illustrate it, by the mention of some particular *Evils*, against which, in our present Circumstances, we are peculiarly obliged to guard. After which,

III. I shall conclude with some Inferences from hence, further suited to the Occasion of this Day's most solemn Assembly.

I. I am to prove, that we are all much concerned in the *Caution* that is here given; and that as ever we, or any other Nation, would reasonably expect Success against our Enemies, it is necessary that *when we go forth against them, we should keep ourselves from every wicked Thing*.

You will remember, I pretend not to assert, that the Event of every Battle, or of every War, will always bear an exact Proportion, either to the Justice of the Cause, or to the Virtue and Piety of those that are engaged in it. Indeed the Event of some Wars, especially towards the Beginning of the Reformation, wherein the Sufferers were Persons of the most excellent, and the Victors of the most hateful Characters, is too sad an Evidence to the contrary*. I am very ready to allow,

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that

* I hardly know a more memorable Instance of this, than in the Success of that perfidious and ungrateful War, which the Emperor

Chariots

that in some Instances, to form the Hearts of his People to more eminent Attainments in Goodness by Scenes of Distress, or for other Reasons to us unknown, God may determine Events otherwise : yet I think I may very safely venture to affirm, that we can never form any just Expectation of continued Success and Prosperity in our Military Affairs, unless there be a zealous Concern about a Reformation in our Manners ; and unless national Piety and Virtue be our earnest and governing Care. And this may sufficiently appear, if we consider, on the one Hand, that the Divine Favour can only reasonably be expected by those, who are careful to *keep themselves from Evil* ; and on the other, that Prosperity in Military Affairs does evidently depend on the Divine Favour. Both these Considerations are so plain, that they might almost be admitted as self-evident ; though in order to impress them more deeply upon our Minds, I shall spend a few Words upon each.

1. The *Divine Favour* can only reasonably be expected by those, who are solicitous to *keep themselves from moral Evil*.

I might introduce what I have further to say on this Head, by observing, that the moral Perfections of God seem evidently deducible from his natural ; for to suppose otherwise concerning him, would be indeed to suppose him worse than even the very vilest of Men, who, if they act unrighteously, where they know what is reasonable and fit, do it as tempted by some Self-interest ; a Temptation, to which an Almighty Being cannot possibly be obnoxious, Now the Consequence from his being perfectly holy and righteous himself, to his loving
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Charles V. undertook against those two pious and worthy Princes, *John Frederick*, Elector of Saxony, and *Philip*, Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel ; in which the Emperor was supported by a considerable Number of Spanish and Italian Forces, who marked their Way through Germany with unheard of Cruelties ; and particularly, (as the Landgrave himself asserts in his Manifesto) *cut off the Hands and Feet of little Children, to testify their Hatred against the Protestant Religion, which their Parents professed. Pueris ipsis & Infantibus rescare Manus atque Pedes, odio nimirum Doctrinæ.* Sleid. de Stat. Relig. lib. xviii. p. 71.

the like Character, and having the contrary, in his reasonable Creatures, is so plain, that the *Apostle* appeals to every one's Conscience to bear Witness to it: *What Fellowship, says he, hath Righteousness with Unrighteousness? or what Communion hath Light with Darkness?* It must then be granted, that as the righteous Lord loveth Righteousness, and his Countenance beholds the Upright †; so his Face must be set against them that do Evil, that sooner or later he may cut off the Remembrance of them from the Earth ‡. Wicked Men have Reason therefore to be afraid of his Judgments: and they have especial Reason to fear them, who, like the Inhabitants of Great-Britain, have been favoured with the clearest Knowledge of his Will, have received the most eminent Deliverances from him, and have for a long Series of Years been preserved in Peace and Prosperity; while at the same Time, that they have called themselves his People, they have acted in a visible Contrariety to their Profession, and thereby brought proportionable Dishonour upon his Name. This is a Case greatly to be feared in every Condition, and it is especially worthy of our Consideration in our present Circumstances; because

2. It is most evident, that the *Success of Military Affairs* does entirely depend upon the Divine Protection and Favour.

This is a well known Maxim of the Word of God; and considering the natural Pride of our Hearts, it was fit that it should be deeply inculcated. It is therefore repeated again and again; and it is observable, that it comes most frequently from the Pen of *David*, who was himself so courageous a Warrior, and so illustrious a Conqueror. *No King, says he, is saved by the Multitude of an Host; a mighty Man is not delivered by much Strength: A Horse is a vain Thing for Safety; neither shall he deliver any by his great Strength: Behold, the Eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, to deliver their Soul from Death* §. And we shall have Occasion hereafter, to mention many other Passages equivalent to these.

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* 2 Cor. vi. 14. † Psal. xi. ult. ‡ Ibid. xxxiv. 16. § Ibid. xxxiii. 16,—19.

It would indeed be thus, if the Success of Battle was always proportionable to the Number, Strength, and Skill of those respectively concerned in it; for all the Strength, and all the Skill of Creatures is derived from God, and is supported by him. But we find in Experience, as well as in Scripture, that Events often arise, in which it evidently appears, *that the Battle is not to the Strong, nor the Race to the Swift* *; and Circumstances happen, in which, with some Allowance for the figurative Expression, *One chases a Thousand, and Two put Ten Thousand to Flight* †.

Much of the Success of Military Actions depends upon *the Weather*, which almost the whole World acknowledges to be apparently at the Divine Disposal, and to be quite beyond any human Alteration or Controul. Wind and Rain, Cold and Heat, have been the Destruction of Thousands, who imagined themselves most secure of Victory and Success, even in *Land Engagements*. Much likewise depends upon a Variety of little Accidents; and especially, with Respect to the *Discernment* of those that command, and the *Alacrity* of those who engage. Now God at Pleasure takes away *the Spirit of Princes*, and dejects *the Men of Might*, so that they are not able to *find their Hands* ‡. He sometimes diffuses among mighty Armies a *Spirit of Discord*, so that confederate Forces desert, or destroy one another §; or perhaps sends a *sudden Panick* upon them ||, and then, be their Forces ever so numerous, the Entrance of Fear is the Beginning of a Defeat, in which Numbers, instead of helping, only croud, and bear down, and trample on each other. It is evident to all acquainted with History, that, by such Incidents as these, small Numbers have been rendered victorious, even almost beyond their Expectation, and have stood astonished at their own Success.

This is a Remark peculiarly applicable to *Naval Preparations*. Their Prosperity most evidently depends on the most uncertain Elements, the Winds and the Waves; and he that *gathers the Winds in his Fist* †, can with

* Eccles. ix. 11. † Deut. xxxii. 30. ‡ Psal. lxxvi. 5, 12.
§ 2 Chron. xx. 22, 23. || 2 Kings vii. 6, 7. † Prov. xxx. 4.

with infinite Ease pen up the most gallant *Fleets* in their Harbours, and waft over to defenceless Ports, in the very Neighbourhood of them, invading Enemies in Transports by no Means a Match for the fine Navies, on which the Sovereign of the Sea has laid his Embargo. Yea, at his Command *the Ships of Tariffs* shall be dashed in Pieces *with an East Wind**, and their Bulk and Strength only serve to give each other the more violent Shocks, and to spread the wider Ruin. This is a Thought especially worthy our Attention, who have in so many Instances, within the Memory of Man, owed the Preservation of our domestic Peace, and probably it may be added, even that of our Religion and Liberty. to the Interposition of *the Wind* in our Favour. A Circumstance, which our Enemies themselves have recorded with Surprize, though we are, alas, too insensible of it †.

We see then how incontestibly it appears, that the *Prosperity of our Arms* entirely depends upon the *Divine Favour*: and indeed the Truth of this is so evident, that dissolute as the Generality of Mankind are, there are few of them entirely unimpressed with it. It is certain, that many of those Vices, which tend to provoke God, do at the same Time render Men's Circumstances desperate, their Spirits mean, and their Constitutions weak. Riot and Debauchery unbrace the Nerves; and in Proportion to the Degree in which they are indulged, render the Glutton, the Drunkard, and the Whoremonger, incapable of sustaining those Hardships, which would be comparatively easy to those, who had been

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long

* Psal. xlviii. 7.

† Not only the Story of the *Spanish Invasion*, and that of the Arrival of the *Prince of Orange*, our great Deliverer, in 1688, are memorable Instances of this; but also the *Invasions* afterwards attempted, either by *King James the Second*, or *the Pretender* and his Agents; of which I cannot recollect any one that has not been defeated chiefly by *Winds*, and those such as we ourselves could have wished. And as I think that *Father Orleans*, in his *History of the English Revolutions*, mentions some of the former Instances, with particular Regard to this Circumstance; so I know the Author of the late *Duke of Berwick's Life* remarks it as to some of the latter, in some Passages which struck me so agreeably in reading, that I am sorry I have not now an Opportunity, either of inserting, or referring to them.

long trained up under the Discipline of Abstinence, Sobriety, and Industry. But, besides all this, Guilt of every Kind naturally makes Men Cowards; whereas conscious Integrity and Uprightness is a Kind of impregnable Armour, which secures the Heart from Fear, even in the Midst of Danger. This *Solomon* well knew, and therefore says, *The Wicked flee when no Man pursues; but the Righteous are bold as a Lion* *. And indeed that Man, who apprehends himself under the Guardianship and Defence of Divine Providence, may well be courageous; and when he can say, *The Lord is my Light, and my Salvation*, he may justly add, *Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the Strength of my Life, of whom shall I be afraid? Tho' an Host should encamp against me, my Heart shall not fear; tho' War should rise against me, in this will I be confident* †: for he has all the Reason in the World to be assured, that God will either shield him from Danger, which in the most perilous Action he can easily do; or if he suffer him to fall by it, will open him a Passage to eternal Glory, by the Wounds he may receive in a righteous Cause. Whereas the Man who is condemned by his own Heart, cannot easily flatter himself so far, as inwardly to imagine, that he is not condemned by that God, who is greater than his Heart, and knoweth all Things ‡. Nor can he always forget how entirely he is in the Hand of that tremendous Being, whom his Disobedience has made his Enemy: and it is no Wonder if *Death* appear terrible, when he has so much Reason to fear, that *Hell* will follow it §; for tho' it is an easy Thing to jest with its distant Terrors, it is not so easy deliberately to brave them, when they seem to approach. You may therefore observe, that, in order to lay Conscience asleep, politick Men have often contrived to blow up a wicked So'diery with an Apprehension, that what they might want in the Regularity and Virtue of their Behaviour, they had in the Goodness of their Cause, or in the Orthodoxy of their Belief; that a Persuasion of the Piety of their Cause, might at least be a Balance to the Impiety and Licentiousness of their Characters: yea, they have,

* Prov. xxviii. 1.
 § Rev. vi. 8.

† Psal. xxvii. 1, 3.

‡ 1 John iii. 20.

it may be, consecrated their Cruelties as an Atonement for their Debauchery. What Artifices have been used to this Purpose, and by whom, it is by no means my present Business to enquire; but I look upon it as a sort of Testimony, borne often by the worst of Men to the Importance of some religious Hopes in military Affairs; as it does, on the other Side, appear from what was before said, that these Hopes can only be reasonably entertained by those, who are disposed to a thorough Reformation of their Lives, or, in the Language of the Text, to *keep themselves from every wicked Thing, when their Host goes forth against the Enemy.*

But in order to render these general Reflections more useful, by bringing them to a Point, permit me, in the *second Place,*

II. To hint at some of those *Evils*, which we should, in our present Circumstances, be particularly careful to guard against.

And here I must in the very first Place, mention that, in which all the other Particulars, which might occur on this Occasion, are in Effect contained, as in their fatal Cause; and observe,

1. That “a profane Contempt of that Divine Revelation, with which God has favoured us,” is one great *Evil*, that should be carefully avoided.

As I cannot, so I hope I need not, be large in shewing, how admirably the whole Tenor of the Word of God, and especially the *Gospel* of our *Lord Jesus Christ*, which we all profess to believe, is calculated to promote a general Reformation in Mankind; and how certainly it will promote it, in Proportion to the Degree in which it is cordially received. It indeed most powerfully tends, not only to regulate the Life, but to awaken and impress the Conscience; not only to controul those evil Actions, which, tho’ detrimental in some Measure to Society, may not be cognizable by human Laws, but also to suppress, and even eradicate, those irregular Affections and Passions, from which such Actions proceed. We can therefore wish nothing better to

our Country, than this *Gospel*, this *glorious Gospel of the Blessed God**, may be universally considered, embraced, and obeyed: and I am persuaded, nothing would have an happier Aspect upon our publick Affairs, than that we should all labour to our utmost to promote its Establishment, and its Influence over the Minds of Men.

We have the more Reason to be concerned about it, as perhaps there is no *Christian Nation* under Heaven, in which bolder and more mischievous Assaults have been made upon Revealed Religion, than among us: and tho' it has so friendly an Aspect on the Comfort of Individuals, and the Happiness of Society, the Licentiousness of some, and the Pride of others, has engaged them to unite against it, as against a common Enemy, and to treat it with a Contempt, equal to that Veneration it might justly have demanded. This is indeed the natural Consequence of that *Liberty* which we enjoy, not only of thinking for ourselves, which none can prevent, but of freely professing our own Sentiments: a *Liberty* so honourable to human Nature and to Truth, and on many Accounts (as I have elsewhere shewn †,) so profitable, that I think no wise Man could wish it were restrained. Yet the more freely we assert it, the more careful should we be by all rational and Christian Methods to prevent its Abuse, and to guard against those bad Consequences, which, good as the Thing itself is, are almost inseparable from it.

Let all who believe the *Gospel*, take heed how they trifle with it; and let all who have any Scruples concerning it, make their Enquiries into its Evidences with all possible Diligence, Humility, and Impartiality; which if they do, they will undoubtedly end in a more established Belief. And let us all, according to our Abilities, exert ourselves for its Defence; not only by pleading its Cause by Arguments, so far as we have an Opportunity in our respective Places to do it; but also by bearing our Testimony to its Importance, as well as its Truth; and above all, by labouring to the utmost to make our Lives a continued and prevailing Apology for it,

* 1 Tim. i. 11.

† Sermon on *Persecution*.

it, which they will be, if they are steadily governed by its holy Dictates.

To excite us to the greater Care on this Head, let it be remembered, that nothing is more highly displeasing to God, than the Contempt of that Revelation which he has sent. They that *despised Moses's Law*, found it so to their Cost; for when *they mocked the Messengers of God, and despised his Words, and misused his Prophets, the Wrath of the Lord rose against his People, till there was no Remedy; and he brought an invading Enemy upon them, who slew their young Men with the Sword, in the House of their Sanctuary, and had no Compassion upon young Man, or Maiden, old Man, or him that stooped for Age**: and we cannot expect, that the Effects of his Displeasure will be less terrible, if we will not *reverence his Son*. It is owing to his wonderful Patience, that we have not long ago been made a Monument of his Wrath, and *punished for these Iniquities*, as remarkably as we have been *known by him* beyond most of the other Nations of the Earth †. Our Guilt on this Head makes it more necessary to add,

2. "The luxurious Abuse of the Favours of Divine Providence, which have in so long a Peace been flowing in upon us," is another *Evil* to be guarded against, if we would reasonably expect Success in War.

I am now speaking to many, who know, more particularly than I myself do, how plentifully our *Land has yielded her Increase* for many succeeding Years; insomuch that we have been able to relieve the Necessities of Neighbour Nations, out of our own redundant Stores: a Providence, which has not only prevented Corn from growing a Drug at Home, but has been an Occasion of bringing into the Nation no contemptible Return of Riches for a considerable Time. Besides this, whatever particular Difficulties may have attended some Traders, our Commerce in general has long been in a flourishing Condition. Very considerable Estates have been raised; and it is neither to be wondered at, nor blamed, that those who have found their Wealth increasing, have thought proper to live in a more liberal, and elegant,

* 2 Chron. xxxvi 16, 17. † Amos iii. 2.

and some of them in a more magnificent Manner, than before. But I fear, that, in many of those who have thus been distinguished by the Blessings of Divine Providence, this Indulgence has grown up into Luxury and Extravagance, and to a Neglect of every honest and industrious Employment, whereby God might have been honoured, and the publick Interest promoted; Care and Labours, from which the wealthiest and the noblest of Mankind are by no Means to think themselves excused; nay, by which they are rather to be proportionably distinguished.

I fear also, that the Taste for Pleasure and Grandeur, which has prevailed so much in Persons of plentiful Circumstances, has been too eagerly and vainly imitated, by those whose Estates and Families would have required another Kind of Conduct. This, in great Measure, may have been the Cause of the many Bankruptcies, whereby such who have dealt largely, and have affected to deal much more largely than they ought, have frequently drawn down many others, and those, perhaps, more industrious and deserving Families into Ruin with themselves. While others, in various Employments, have been obliged to have Recourse to mean Artifices, to shoar up a sinking Credit for a while, till all those Props have at last only made the Ruin the greater, and the more unpitied; and all this to the unspeakable Reproach of Religion, which has sometimes been vainly pretended to by those, whose Conduct has been most contrary to its essential Precepts. Indeed, to speak freely, I can by no means think, the great Affectation of Ornament in Dress, and Magnificence in Living, which is the expensive Taste of the present Age, can bode well to the Publick. *The Sins of Sodom, Pride, and Idleness, with Fulness of Bread**, have long been in the Midst of us; and if they are not reformed, they must, both by their natural Consequence, and by the righteous Judgment of God, involve our Nation in Destruction. We have long been *made to eat the Increase of the Field, to suck Honey out of the Rock, and Oil out of the flinty Rock*: we have been fed *with the Fat of Kidneys of Wheat*, and drank *the pure Blood of the Grape*; till,

* Ezek. xvi. 49.

till, like *Jeshurun*, we have waxed fat and kicked * : and therefore, as the Guilt has been ours, it will be but righteous, if the Condemnation should be ours too ; and a Fire should be kindled against us in God's Anger, that should burn even to the lowest Hell, that should consume the Land with its Increase, and set on Fire the Foundations of the Mountains †. It becomes us therefore, if we would avert the deserved Judgments of God, to set ourselves, as in his Presence, to examine seriously how we are using the Talents he has graciously lent us ; and instead of profusely wasting both our Time and our Stock in vain Indulgences, to apply ourselves with honest Industry to the proper Business of our Calling ; and by a prudent Frugality at Home, to lay a Foundation for a liberal Contribution to the Poor. So are we most likely to regain the Strength and Honour of our Nation, which Luxury must infallibly enervate and disgrace ; and to draw down the Blessing of God upon our Affairs ; as well as to provide some Resource for future Supplies, if our present Preparation should be (which God forbid) unsuccessful, or the War should be prolonged till the Burthen grow much more sensible, than it can at present be. Again,

3. " Too great a Confidence in our own military Strength and Preparations," is another *Evil* from which we should be especially solicitous to keep ourselves, in such a Conjunction of Affairs as this.

Through the abundant Goodness of God, the Armaments of *Great-Britain*, both by Sea and Land, have, so far as I can recollect, in most Instances, since the Beginning of the present Century, been attended with Success ; and in some Circumstances that Success has been glorious and remarkable. These being then the latest Facts, and Facts of so pleasant a Nature, are apt to strike our Remembrance very strongly ; and are now recollected with so much the more Pleasure, as the last of them was attended with equal Honour to *Great-Britain*, and Shame and Disappointment to *Spain* †. But

K 6

I fear

* Deut xxxii. 13.—15. † Ver. 22.

† I suppose few need to be told, that I refer to that glorious Expedition to *Sicily*, in the Year 1718, which was conducted with so

I fear, that (to allude to the expressive Language of the Prophet,) because *we have often caught our Enemies in our Net, and gathered them in our Drag,* we are fallen into the absurd Impiety of *sacrificing to our Net, and burning Incense to our Drag* *. And tho' it is to be sure a pleasant Thing, to see our Nation engaging in this necessary War with Ardour and Cheerfulness; and the apparent Righteousness of our Cause may indeed encourage our humble Hopes; yet I cannot forbear saying, that I fear, that great Eagerness which in many Instances has been shewn on this Occasion, has proceeded from a Forgetfulness of God, and a proud Confidence in ourselves; as if Victory were chained to our Chariot-Wheels, and the Winds, so often indeed lifted our Banners, were always to blow according to our Directions; as if the Artillery of our Ships were as unconquerable, as that of Heaven itself, and we could at Pleasure *send forth our Thunder, and scatter our Enemies, and shoot out Lightnings, and discomfit them.*

But let it be remembered, that *Pharaoh* stood on the very Verge of Disgrace and Destruction, when he said, *I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the Spoil; my Lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my Sword, and my Hand shall destroy them* †. Yea, let us remember in general, that *Pride goes before Destruction, and an haughty Spirit before a Fall* ‡. I can wish no happier Omen, than that we should learn the Language and Sentiments, which that martial Hero, whom we mentioned before on a like Occasion, so often inculcates upon his People; that we may say with him, *In the Name of our God we will set up our Banners* §; *thro' thee we will push down our Enemies; thro' thy Name we will tread them under, that rise up against us; for I will not trust in my Bow, neither shall my Sword save me* ||. Tho' some trust in Chariots, and some in Horses, *we will remember the Name of the Lord our God* **; for *God delights not in the Strength of the Horse, neither takes he Pleasure in the Legs of a Man* ††, so that his Victory should be proportionable to their Strength,

and

much Spirit, Prudence, and Bravery by Admiral Byng, afterwards Viscount Torrington.

* Hab. i. 15, 16. † Exod. xv. 9. ‡ Prov. xvi. 18. § Psal. xx. 5. || Ibid. xlv. 5, 6. ** Ibid. xx. 7. †† Ibid. cxlvii. 10.

and their Agility : and therefore, tho' in some Cases *the Horse* may prudently be prepared against the Day of Battle ; yet still must it be acknowledged, that *Safety is of the Lord* *. *He breaks the Bow, and cuts the Spear in sunder, he burns the Chariot in the Fire* † ; *Salvation belongs to the Lord ; his Blessing is upon his People* ‡ . We have indeed no Warrant to expect a miraculous Interposition of God in our Favour ; and it would be Folly and Wickedness, in a Dependance upon that, to neglect any necessary Methods of Defence : but still it is to be remembered, that (as we proved under the former Head) the Success of all is from above ; and that it is, on the whole, thro' God alone we can do valiantly, and he it is that must tread down our Enemies § . This we are solemnly acknowledging in the Devotions of this Day ; and God grant, that it may fix on our Minds that pious Humility, which, as it is perfectly consistent with the firmest Valour, has in some very remarkable Instances been a Prelude to the most glorious Success.

Let me add, but this once more,

4. " Too keen a Resentment for Injuries received from our Enemies, growing into a malignant Hatred against them," is another *Evil*, which we should be peculiarly solicitous in our present Circumstances to avoid.

It is certain indeed, that some of those Violences, which have been offered us, have been attended with Circumstances of such Barbarity and Contempt, as cannot but awaken a strong Indignation ; and the Genius of *Britons* can very ill brook such Kind of Treatment. Yet permit me to say, that it would be unjust to charge the whole *Spanish* Nation with such Enormities, as have been committed by some, probably in the Number of the most Abandoned among them. Humanity is not the Growth of one particular Climate, but a happy Inheritance divided among the various Inhabitants of the Earth ; and I doubt not, but it teaches many among them to abhor the Villainies of their Countrymen. But if not, be that Reproach to our Enemies ; and may it never

* Prov. xx, 31. † Psal. xlvii, 9. ‡ Ibid. iii, 8. § Ibid. cviii, 13.

never fall upon us, that we have delighted in the unnecessary Misery of our Fellow-Creatures, and have resorted to Cruelty for Cruelty. We are indeed to wish, that Injustice may be so chastised, as that for the future it may be suppressed; but God forbid, that we should thirst for Blood and Ruin, or take Delight to think of the Sufferings of any, how ill soever they may have deserved of us!

War, in such Circumstances as ours, is the rigorous and severe Work of Justice, and must be done: but methinks a humane Heart consents to it with some sensible Regret, and will sometimes bleed to think, that those benevolent and brotherly Cares, that ought to fill the Heart of one Man for another, and of one Nation for another, should be turned into Thoughts and Schemes of Destruction; and give Place to Contrivances, how Men may be slaughtered, and Cities laid waste, and the Beauties of Nature and Art ravaged and defaced.

It would indeed be a partial and short-sighted Tenderness, if potent Nations should on these Principles suffer themselves to be injured and insulted by every foreign Bravo; till at length they sink into Contempt, and yield up themselves, or their Dependants, a tame and helpless Prey to Injustice and Cruelty. A Neglect of the proper Methods of Self-Defence would leave them chargeable before God and Man with the Calamities resulting from it: yet still it becomes them, in the Vindication of their just Rights, to guard against that savage Fierceness, which forgets that Enemies are Men*. It becomes us rather to wish, they may be brought to Reason by the least destructive Methods; and that what they in the mean Time suffer, may be a profitable Lesson to others, and on the whole to themselves.

I apprehend these Admonitions not unseasonable, and having enlarged so far upon them, shall omit some other Heads, which might easily be connected with them; and shall,

III. Con-

* *Viri boni est, initia Belli invitum suscipere, extrema non libenter persequi. Sallust.*

III. Conclude this Discourse with some general Reflections.

Now such as these will probably present themselves to most of your Thoughts; and no doubt, you have anticipated me in some of them.

1. Let us be deeply humbled before God for the *Evils* that are to be found among us.

Let us lie down as it were in the Dust, in his sacred Presence, when we consider that with us, even *with us*, there are so many crying Abominations to be found, notwithstanding all that God has been pleased to do for us. Let us be humbled before him, not only for the Sins of our Princes, and Nobles, and Priests, and People; but more especially under a Sense of our own Guilt, and of what we have added to the Divine Displeasure, by Offences, if not in their Kind peculiarly enormous, yet at least in their Circumstances most highly aggravated. Let us borrow the Expressions of humble Contrition, which were used by God's antient People, and each of us say with *Ezra* *, *Oh my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my Face to thee, my God; for our Iniquities are increased over our Head, and our Trespass is grown up unto the Heavens: Since the Days of our Fathers have we been in a great Trespass unto this Day;—and behold, we are now before thee in our Trespases; and we cannot stand before thee, because of this.* Let us say with *Jeremiah* †, *We lie down in our Shame, and our Confusion covereth us; for we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our Fathers, from our Youth even to this Day, and have not obeyed the Voice of the Lord our God,* Let us say with *Daniel*, when he set his Face unto the Lord God, to seek him by Prayer, and Supplications, with Fasting, and Sackcloth, and Ashes ‡, *O Lord, the great and dreadful God, we have sinned, and have committed Iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy Precepts and thy Judgments:—O Lord, Righteousness belongs unto thee, but unto us Confusion of Faces, as at this Day,—to our Kings, to our Princes, and to our Fathers, because we have sinned against thee;—neither have we obeyed the Voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his Laws,*
which

* *Ezra* ix. 6, 7, 15.
ix. 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 19.

† *Jer.* iii. 25.

‡ *Dan.*

which he set before us by his Servants the Prophets:—
 Nevertheless, O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, O Lord
 bearken and do, defer not for thine own sake, O my God;
 for thy People are called by thy Name.

Nor let this be Words alone, but the deep-felt Sentiments of our Hearts. Let us call to Remembrance our manifold Engagements to God, on the one Hand, and our Transgressions against him, on the other; and acknowledge in the Abasement and Bitterness of our Souls before him, that it would be *a righteous Thing in him*, to bring Destruction upon us in its most painful and dreadful Forms, to infatuate all our Counsels, to blast all our Undertakings, to sink our Navies in the Midst of the Sea, to cause our own Hearts to melt, and our Hands to fail, while those of our Enemies were strengthened for our Ruin! Let us humbly acknowledge, that he would be *just in all that came upon us*, if this *pleasant Land*, in which we have enjoyed so great Plenty and Prosperity, should become a *Desart*; or if we should see those Possessions, for which we ourselves have laboured, or which have been transmitted to us from our Forefathers, plundered by Strangers, or even inherited by Enemies. And while we are confessing this, let us endeavour by earnest and importunate Prayer to avert these deserved Judgments, and wrestle with God *not to destroy his People**; but to *give us that Help from Trouble*, without which we shall find, that *vain is the Help of Man* †.

Let these Thoughts, which I hope are impressing our Minds in the Solemnities of this Day, be carried along with us into our secret Retirements; let us spread them before God in our Family-Devotion, and let them have a becoming Share in our Private Worship. And if we desire that these Supplications and Prayers may not be an Abomination to a holy God, let us

2. Be very solicitous to exert ourselves to the utmost, to promote a Work of general Reformation, according to the various Stations in which Providence has placed us.

Our Care in this Respect, if it be earnest and sincere, will begin with *ourselves*; and we should now particularly

* Deut. ix. 26.

† Psal. cviii. 12.

larly consider ourselves, as solemnly called by God to *search and try our Ways*, that we may *turn again to the Lord* *. In Obedience to that Command, let us, as it were, call a Court in our own Consciences, and impartially *judge ourselves*, as those that are shortly to be *judged of the Lord*. Whatever is criminal, whatever is even suspicious in our Temper and Conduct, let us endeavour to regulate it by the certain Rules of Religion, and bring all our Sentiments and Actions to its unerring Standard. Let us not only *cease to do Evil*, but *learn to do well* †; labouring to the very utmost, to prevent any Reproach to our Profession, and to reflect a Glory upon it. Could every one be engaged to this, all would be well; nay, should it grow the prevailing Temper, we might reasonably hope, that *the Innocent would deliver the Island*; yea, that it should be preserved *by the Purenests of their Hands* ‡.

And this will naturally engage us to a proper Care of those committed to our immediate Charge. It will, no doubt, have an happy Influence upon *Heads of Families*, to stir them up to *walk before their Houses in a perfect Way* §; and so to govern, as well as instruct their Domesticks, that none under their Roof and Care, may *make themselves vile*, without being restrained by proper Discipline ||. This would, under God, (who very seldom denies a Blessing to such pious Endeavours) have a happy Tendency to secure to our Country a Race of virtuous and pious *Youth*, whose Behaviour might wipe off the Stain, which the Sins of their Fathers have thrown upon it; out of Regard to whom God might deal so much the more graciously with us, while they were growing up for publick Service, and might say of our Nation, as in another Case, *Destroy it not, for a Blessing is in it* **. And, to conclude all,

3. Let us, from what we have now been hearing, be excited earnestly to *pray* for those, who, by reason of their more publick Stations in Life, may be capable of doing more than ourselves, to promote the Work of National Reformation.

And

* Lam. iii. 40.

† Isa. i. 16, 17.

‡ Job. xxii.

30.

§ Psal. ci. 2.

|| 1 Sam. iii. 13.

** 11a.

And here our *Magistrates* justly claim the first Share in our Remembrance. Let us earnestly pray, that Divine Grace may possess their Hearts with a Sense of the Importance of their respective Offices, and of the strict Account they must another Day render for the Manner in which they have discharged them.—Let us especially pray for our *gracious Sovereign*, who is calling us to these Prayers, and joining with his People in Humiliation before the *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*. Let us pray, that *the Lord may bear him in the Day of Trouble*, that *the Name of the God of Jacob may defend him*; that He may *send him Help from his Sanctuary, and strengthen him out of Zion* *! That *the King may joy in the Strength of the Lord, and in his Salvation may greatly rejoice* †! That as he is thus publickly declaring his *Trust in the Lord, thro' the Mercy of the Most High he may not be moved*; but that *God's Hand may find out all his Enemies, and his Right Hand may find out those that hate him* ‡! That *his Glory may be great in God's Salvation, and increasing Honour and Majesty may be laid upon him* §! I am persuaded, there is not a Heart that does not answer *Amen!* May the Father of our Country hear, that his Enemies are humbled Abroad! May he see his People united, and reformed at Home! Yea, may God *make him most blessed for ever* ||; that in the future, and infinitely most important World, they that have been here protected by him in War, and cherished in Peace, may see him as much distinguished by Celestial Glories, as he now is by Earthly Dignities!—May all our *Counsellors* be wise; and all our *Judges* faithful! May our *Legislators* enact good Laws; and *inferior Magistrates* vigorously execute them! And may all our *Rulers*, from the highest to the lowest, be themselves Examples of universal Goodness! May they *scatter away all Evil with their Eyes* **, and make it ashamed by their Presence! May they resolutely reform the *People, who generally of all others need it most, their own Domesticks and Dependants!* And may they have that inward Veneration from all about them, which nothing but

* Psal. xx. 1, 2.

† Ibid. xxi. 1.

‡ Ver. 7, 8.

§ Ver. 5.

|| Ver. 6.

** Prev. xx. 8.

but a Character for real Religion can give, even to the greatest and wisest of Mankind.

Let us pray likewise for our *Military*, as well as our *Civil Officers*; that they may exert themselves, with a Bravery so well becoming their Character, to *drive out Wickedness*, that most dangerous Enemy, from our *Camps* and *Navies*, which it has so boldly invaded; yea, where it has by so long a Custom claimed a kind of Right to pitch its Tent, and to set up its Banners. This will indeed be a very hard Conquest, considering the Circumstances in which Persons generally enter on such a Life, and the great and dangerous Leisure which it gives them, in a Time of long Peace, of corrupting themselves, and each other. Yet the extensive Power, which is annexed to superior Officers in every *Regiment*, and *Company*, may give them great Advantages for serving their Country, by regulating the external Behaviour of those under their Command; and human Authority can pretend to regulate nothing more. They may, for Instance, be restrained from the open *Violation of the Sabbath*, and called to an Attendance upon publick Worship, under one Form of it or another; and a great Check may be given to that *Lewdness*, *Debauchery*, and *Profaneness*, in which not a few of them vie with each other, as if they were the distinguishing Honours of their Order. I look upon it as a great Ornament, Honour, and Blessing to our Land, that many of our *Officers* are very amiable Examples of Virtue and Piety, and know how deficient even the Character of a Gentleman is, when notoriously wanting in either. And we in these Parts have had many Opportunities of observing, how good an Influence the Inspection of such Persons has upon the *inferior Soldiery*, to secure the Regularity and Decency of their Behaviour. Let us earnestly pray, that *the Lord of Hosts*, whom we are intreating to *cover the Heads* of our Warriors *in the Day of Battle* *, may more generally inspire the Hearts of those that lead them forth with *his Fear*, and excite them, however it may be censured by the Abandoned and Profane, to exert themselves to the utmost, to form their Troops to the Discipline

* Psal. cxi. 7.

cipline of Virtue, as well as of War. It is what the Credit of their Profession, and I will add, the Safety of the Publick requires. And I must take the Liberty particularly to say, that when my Ears are at any Time wounded with those detestable *Imprecations*, which are in many Places so common among our *Soldiery*, and which are, I think, an infallible Proof of a Character thoroughly bad, I am ready to tremble with the sad Apprehension, lest their Guilt should turn back their Weapons of War; and lest God should suddenly send them, from the Points of their Enemies Swords, or the Mouths of their Guns, that DAMNATION which they have so wantonly invoked on themselves, and each other.

We are under yet more apparent Obligation, to pray for *those, that preside in religious Assemblies* of all Denominations; that God would *clothe his Priests with Salvation*, as what will have a most important Influence to *make his People joyful and happy**. May their Hearts and Hands be *united* in that good Work which is committed to them! May God deliver them from the Shame and Folly of employing the solemn Seasons of publick Worship, in *reproaching their Brethren*, and animating the Hearts of professing Christians against each other! An Enormity, which, I think, is in our Day generally driven out with a just Contempt; unless perhaps, it be yet sheltered among a very few, whom great Ignorance, or greater Wickedness, has reduced to this wretched Expedient, as a kind of *Forlorn-Hope*. May a better Temper universally succeed; and however Christian Assemblies may differ in some of their Forms of Worship, yet as they agree in the Essentials of it, may their Ministers agree in pursuing the same great End; and as they all have one Errand, may their Language, in the main, be one! May they all speak with Plainness, with Seriousness, and I will add, with that Authority too, which nothing but conscious Integrity and Goodness can give! Not even *amusing*, and much less *fring* the Minds of Men, with Matters of *doubtful Disputations*; but rather exerting themselves to the utmost for that one plain, but glorious Purpose,

of

* P^{sa}. cxxxii. 16.

of reforming Men's Tempers and Lives upon the Christian Plan!

For promoting the Efficacy of such Labours as these, we should earnestly pray, that all who are employed in them, may be Examples of distinguishing Piety; and that God would be *like a Refiner's Fire*, to *purify the Sons of Levi* *. For while any gross Immoralities are observable in their Conduct, they will wound Religion like a two-edged Sword; as their Hearers, by a Perverseness and Inconsistency very natural to the Licentious and Profane, will look upon it as a Sanction at once for despising their Persons, and imitating their Vices. *Ministers of all Denominations* claim our Prayers on these Heads; and peculiarly those of *Established Churches*; where, as the temporal Emoluments are generally greatest, there is of Course more to invite unworthy Persons to offer themselves to the Ministry.—Nor ought we to forget, in our Prayers at such Seasons, those wise, learned, and pious Men, whom our Governors may from Time to Time think fit to raise to the *most exalted Stations among the Clergy*, and to invest with a Dignity and Authority, which tho' no Part of their Ministerial Office, is capable of being improved to great Advantage. It is devoutly to be wished, that they may use their great Influence and Power, to exclude those that are unworthy, from that important Trust, as Persons whom they cannot suppose *to be called by the Holy Ghost to take it upon them*; and that they may preside over the Doctrine and Behaviour of those committed to their Care, in such a Manner, as may render both, most edifying to those who attend their Instruction. By these pious and zealous Endeavours an Establishment will flourish, and separate Interests decrease. But what Folly and Iniquity were it, so much as secretly to wish, that one Limb might grow by the Distemper of the Body, or one Coast be enriched by the Wreck of the publick Navy!

Once more, let us on the Principles on which I am now insisting, earnestly pray for *those, who have the Care of educating Youth intended for publick Stations*. Let us pray for all the *Universities of Great-Britain*, and for

* Mal. iii. 2, 3.

for more private *Academies* and *Schools*; which, according to the Manner in which they are regulated, will either be the Blessing, or the Calamity of our Country. May those, that are so trained up for one important Employment or another, and especially those intended for the *Ministry of Christ's Church*, be formed to extensive Knowledge, and above all, to the Knowledge of the Gospel! May they be regulated by proper Discipline, that Habits of Virtue may be formed, as well as Principles of Science and Truth imbibed! May those, to whom God has committed the high and laborious, tho' honourable, Charge of presiding over such Societies, ever remember how much they have to answer for, to God, and to their Country! May they cultivate these Plantations with that Assiduity; may they watch over them with that Caution; and I will add, may they weed them with that Prudence and Resolution, which in Concurrence with those Influences from Above, on which all depends, may render them like a *Field which the Lord has blessed*, and a *Garden which he continually cares for!* There may the rising Hopes of future Generations flourish, and those Plants be reared and spread, which in due Time may beautify our Land, and refresh and nourish its Inhabitants!—And may God so guard our Religious and Civil Liberties from Generation to Generation, that in this respect, as well as the other, the Inhabitants of our favoured Island *may sit every Man under his Vine, and under his Fig-tree, and have none to make him afraid**. May not the Study and the Arts of Peace, among us at least, be interrupted by the Noise of War; may not our Ears hear the Tumult of Battle, nor our Eyes see the miserable Spectacles it produces! Only by Report, may we learn the Success of our Fleets, and our Armies Abroad; till we at length hear, that the Contention ends in a safe and honourable Peace!

And let it not be misinterpreted, as unworthy a *British* and a *Christian* Heart, to add, Let us *pray for our Enemies*; for that haughty Nation, which despises our Prayers, and has treated us with so much Injustice and Contempt. May they be sensible of the Injury they have

* Mic. iv. 4.

have done us, and of the Afront they have, by every Act of Injustice and Cruelty, offered to the Majesty of Heaven, the Father of Nations, and the Guardian of Men; whose penetrating Eye sees thro' the Frauds which may cover Treaties, and before whose Tribunal those Criminals must be arraigned, who are too great, or too distant, for the Reach of human Justice! May *Spain* have no Reason to glory in those vain Refuges, to which the idolatrous Principles of their unhappy Church teach them to fly! May they be disposed to give, and we to receive, all reasonable Satisfaction! And oh that, if it were the Will of God, their Eyes might be opened to see the Delusions of *Popery*, which they support in all its Darkness, and Rigour, and Terror! Oh that they might be so happy, as to understand the Guilt of those Murders, which they are committing in the injured Name of the most merciful *Jesus*! May their *Princes*, and their *Priests*, see how much it is for their own Interest on the whole, whatever the Principles of carnal Policy may dictate, to divest themselves of those Spoils of Innocence, and Ornaments of Superstition, which, gaudy as they seem, may mark them out as the Objects of Divine Vengeance! The Day will assuredly come, when *the Cry of the Souls under the Altar* shall be heard*; and there is hardly a Nation under Heaven, that has more Reason to dread it, than that with which we are now contending: for none have been more eager, and none more resolute and inexorable, in treading out the first Sparks of Truth, when it began to kindle among them, and in adding *the Blood of the Martyrs* to all their other Pollutions †.

In

* Rev. vi. 9, 10.

† I doubt not but many of my Readers will know, that I here refer to what happened in *Spain* quickly after the Reformation; which we learn particularly from *Paramus*, an Inquisiter, and another *Papish* Writer of Note, as quoted by Dr. *Ceddes*, in the First Volume of his inestimable *Traacts*, pag. 447, & seq. viz. That the *Spanish Divines* sent by the Emperor *Charles the Fifth*, and his Son *Philip the Second*, into *Germany*, *England*, and *Flanders*, to convert the *Protestants* in those Parts to the *Roman Faith*, were themselves converted from *Popery*; and as they were Persons of great Learning and Piety, returned into their native Country full of Zeal for its

Refor-

In what Rigour that diabolical Engine of Mischief, *the Inquisition*, is still established among them, you need not be told; but tho' its Foundations are laid deep as Hell, the Hand of God can overthrow them. He can shake the firmest Arches of the Dungeon, and lay open all that laboured artificial Darkneſs to the full Luſtre of Truth and the Goſpel. May he *haſten* that happy Time, when *he will do it*; that Day, when the all-uniting Religion of the Bleſſed *Jeſus* ſhall exert its genuine Influence, and cement the divided Kingdoms, that now call themſelves *his Church*, in holy Friendſhip and fraternal Affection! that happy Day, when inſtead of preparing the Inſtruments, and ſtudying the Arts of Deſtruction, *they ſhall beat their Swords into Plow-ſhares, and their Spears into Pruning-hooks*; when *Nation ſhall not lift up Sword againſt Nation, neither ſhall they learn War any more**; for *the Earth ſhall be full of the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea †!*
Amen.

Reformation; but were immediately ſeized by the merciless *Inquiſition*, and together with many illuſtrious Converts, which were the firſt Fruits of their Miniſtry, were cruelly ſacrificed on Scaffolds, and at the Stake. Dr. *Geddes* has preſerved an Account of ſome of the glorious Leaders in that Army of *Martyrs*, which, ſhort and incompleat as it is, deſerves an attentive Peruſal.

* *Iſa. ii. 4.*

† *Iſa. xi. 9.*



A
Friendly LETTER
TO THE
PRIVATE SOLDIERS,
IN A
REGIMENT of FOOT,
Which was one of those engaged in the
Important and Glorious
BATTLE of *CULLODEN*.



A

Friendly LETTER

TO THE

PRIVATE SOLDIERS, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

April 16, 1747.



HOPE you will excuse whatever Freedom may attend this Address, as it proceeds from sincere Respect and Affection. I look upon a brave Soldier with great Esteem. He is the Guardian of his Country; and every one who is a Friend

to it, ought under that Character to honour him, and love him: and they in particular, who were, as you have been, the happy Instruments in the Hand of God, of delivering us from the worst of Enemies, and of cutting off great Numbers of those Traitors and Rebels who would have left us nothing worth fighting or living for, have a peculiar Claim to our Regard.

You, *Gentlemen*, to whom I now write, had your Part in the Labours and Dangers of that glorious Day; and blessed be God, you were preserved in it; preserved, I hope, to be a further Blessing to your Country. Divine Providence has now (as the Date reminds me) lengthened out your Lives to another Year: and I should be very ungrateful, if I did not

wish, that your Years may be happily multiplied, and that God may reward and bless you with present Prosperity and future Happiness. But to pretend to wish this, and not to endeavour to promote it, were unworthy the Profession of a *Christian*. I cannot therefore allow myself to be silent on an Occasion, in which I am sure both are nearly concerned.

Give me Leave to speak plainly to you. It is the Character of a brave Man, to love to hear the Truth without Reserve or Disguise: it is the Character of an honest Man and real Friend, to speak it. I had ten Times rather commend, than blame: but as Circumstances at present stand, I will do so much Violence to my own Inclination, as plainly and boldly to tell you, I am extremely grieved to see, that so many of you have so little Sense of the Goodness of the Blessed God your Protector, and that you take no greater Care to secure his Favour, upon which your Safety and Happiness both for Time and Eternity does so evidently depend.

You will however observe, that I charge nothing that is amiss upon the whole Body of you. I have the Pleasure to be informed, that there are some among you of a very worthy Character, who seem to have a Sense, not only of Decency and Morality, but of true Religion; and I hope, that such will always meet with the distinguished Respect and Encouragement which they deserve. No single Man among you therefore would have been charged, nor consequently injured, if I had mentioned the *Name* of your *Regiment*, or the *Town* in which you are now quartered: but out of Tenderness to you, I forbear this; and suppress *my own Name*, as of no Importance in the present Address. And with this Precaution, which (if you think at all) you must see proceeds from great Respect, I will now go on to tell you as plainly as possible, what it is that offends and grieves me; and what, if God may bless this weak Attempt, I sincerely desire to be the Instrument of reforming.

The Evil, which I have most immediately in View, is, that you do in such an open, contemptuous, and indeed

indeed outrageous Manner, *profane* the great and glorious *Name of God*, and mock at his most awful Judgments. I write to you in the Warmth and Anguish of my Heart, under a very late and lamentable Instance of this; which is one, among many others. In walking out, not an Hour ago, a few Yards from my own House, I have heard one Company of you *swearing* on the Right Hand, and another on the Left. I have heard the same abominable Language from the Windows of the Houses where you are quartered: and it often reaches me, and wounds my Ears, as I sit in my Study.—You are calling upon *God* to *damn you*;—to *damn your Souls*;—to *damn your Blood*:—and this is your Language to each other; the Wish, you are forming for Friends, as well as Enemies. My Heart burns with Indignation, and melts with Compassion at the same Time, while I hear this foolish, this detestable Language. I know, that to *reprove* you as I pass by you in the Streets, would be more likely to provoke and exasperate, than to reform you: and therefore I do humbly and meekly, yet earnestly beseech you, to hear me a little, while I address you in this Manner, that *I may deliver my own Soul* at least; and that, if it be possible, I may contribute towards *delivering yours*.

Permit me therefore to ask you, *Sirs*, Do you *believe* there is a *God*? and that there is such a Thing as *Damnation*?—If you do not, how absurd is it to talk of it, and to wish it to yourselves and each other?—If you do, as I dare say you do, let me beseech you to consider, who this *God* is; and what is *Damnation*.

Do you not indeed know, that *God* is the Greatest and Best of all Beings? That he made you? That he preserves you every Moment? That he gives you Breath, while you use it thus to his Dishonour? And have you never been told, or have you forgot, that he said once from the Midst of the Flames, while the Mountain was trembling, and a whole mighty Army were ready to die with Fear; “*Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his Name in vain?*” Have you not often heard this? And have you not

often said, on hearing it, "Lord have Mercy upon us, and incline our Hearts to keep this Law!" How monstrous then is it, thus insolently to break it continually, almost with every Breath? Who are you, that dare thus boldly to *provoke God Almighty* to his Face? Can you possibly imagine, that you are *able to resist him*? If you were ten thousand Times as many as you are, could he not bring you in a Moment all down together to the Dust of Death, and to the Flames of Hell?

Let me ask you again, Do you know, what *Damnation* is? Did you ever consider, what it signifies? Why, *to be damned*, is to be pronounced *accursed* by God, in the great Day of Judgment. It is, for God to say to a poor Creature, *Depart from me accursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* It is, to be plunged into that *Lake, which burns with Fire and Brimstone*, and burns for ever, *which is the second Death.* It is, to go to that Place, where Christ tells us, *the Worm never dies, and the Fire is never quenched.*—And do you indeed wish this to yourselves? Do you think, you could bear it? Poor Creatures! How have I seen some of the strongest and boldest Men in our Army ready to faint, when they have been hung up, perhaps not for an Hour, by one Hand, while their Foot has stood upon a *Piquet*? Can you not then bear that trifling Punishment? And can you bear *Damnation*? If you cannot, why do you call for it?—Could you wish it to the worst Enemy you had in the World? Surely you could not do it deliberately. And yet, you wish it to *your Friends*; you wish it to *yourselves*.

Take heed, *Sirs*, take heed: you wish it in the Presence and Hearing of God; of that God, who can send it upon you. And let me tell you, your *Oaths* and *Curses* are all set down in the *Book of his Remembrance*: he cannot possibly forget one of them; and he will *bring you into Judgment* for them. And *what will you do* in the Day of that Judgment? The *Laws of Man* you despise? the *Laws* of your King and Country; tho' you pretend a great deal of Regard for your King, and for the Nation. You trample upon their Authority every Day? and your Fellow-Subjects have not
Courage

Courage and Virtue, to attempt to bring you to Justice for it. But do you think, that therefore you shall trample on the *Law of God*, and go unpunished? Take heed, *Sirs*, as you value your Souls, take heed. He may execute his Justice upon you, much sooner than you think of it.

You *drown your Senses in Liquor*. Often I see that likewise, with the greatest Concern; tho' to be sure, *this* and your *Swearing* escape the View of your *Officers*, or they would not bear it. But reflect again, can it escape the Observation of the Great and Blessed God? And will it be any *Excuse* before God, that you *added Sin to Sin*? That when you dishonoured him, and *profaned his great and terrible Name*, you also dishonoured your own Nature, and made *Brutes* of yourselves? Will it not rather provoke God so much the more?

Oh *Sirs*, by the Grace of God set yourselves immediately to *repent and reform*.—Do it, while there is Room to do it. You may perhaps be *called abroad* in a few Months, and whole Ranks of you may be mowed down at once by the Artillery of the Enemy; or *Distempers at Home* may be as fatal. And what will you do, when your separate Spirits come to stand before God, and you must answer to him for all this Wickedness? For all this *unprofitable Wickedness*, which you have committed upon no Temptation? Which with Respect to *Swearing* is so evidently the Case.

Sirs, the Hour is certainly coming, when it will be *too late* to think of Repentance and asking Pardon. But I hope, it is not too late now: God is gracious and merciful; that God, whom you have so often affronted, and challenged to damn you. He is a *God, forgiving Iniquity, Transgression, and Sin*. If you now humble yourselves before him, if you seek his Pardon thro' Christ, and seek his Spirit and Grace to teach you to forsake Sin, and to love and practise your Duty, *there is still Hope concerning you*.

It is the Business of *this Letter*, seriously to exhort you to do it. I know, *your Hearts are hardened* by the Practice of Sin: but if you are a little alarmed, by what I have now been setting before you, perhaps God may

soften them. Yea, he will surely do it, if you earnestly, and seriously, and resolutely ask it.

I have *no Interest* at all, in representing these Things to you. I am *at some Expence* to do it. It proceeds entirely from a real Regard to the *Honour of God*, and the *Salvation* of your own Souls; and indeed I may say, from a Regard to *your own Reputation* too. For this is a most mean and infamous Practice; quite below your Character, as *Gentlemen*. And accordingly I must here remind you, that I have never heard *your Officers* fall into such Language; nor heard it commonly reported of them, that they use it. No, they are sensible, that it belongs, not to *Gentlemen*, but to the lowest and vilest of the People, to the *very Dregs* and Refuse of Mankind. The Wretches who die by the Hand of the *Hang-man*, have generally been accustomed to *such Language*, as that of which I now desire to cure you; and perhaps, it is by the Judgment of God upon them for *Swearing* and *Cursing*, that they have been left to commit *other Crimes*, for which they die, and are *made a Curse*. This Consideration might, methinks, teach you to *scorn it*: but the others, that I have urged, are of infinitely greater Importance. Your Souls, *your immortal Souls*, are as it were *murdered* by these hellish Weapons, with which you pierce yourselves thro' every Hour, or almost every Minute. Adore the Divine Goodness, that you have not been *taken at your Word*; and that Experience, *dreadful Experience*, has not taught you, to know what *Damnation* is. I pray God, that it never may. I pray God, to bless this plain, affectionate, and well intended *Letter*, as the Means of *doing some Good* on some of you. And if *this Evil* can be cured, there will be more Room to hope, other happy Consequences may follow Reformation in this Respect.

But while I am thus speaking to you, let me add a few Words more, to intreat you to a religious Observation of the *Lord's-Day*, to a careful Attendance upon the Publick Ordinances of God, and to a Readiness to receive good Instructions from any one, who will be charitable enough to give them you. But above all let me urge you, to *pray to God*, that he would pardon you,

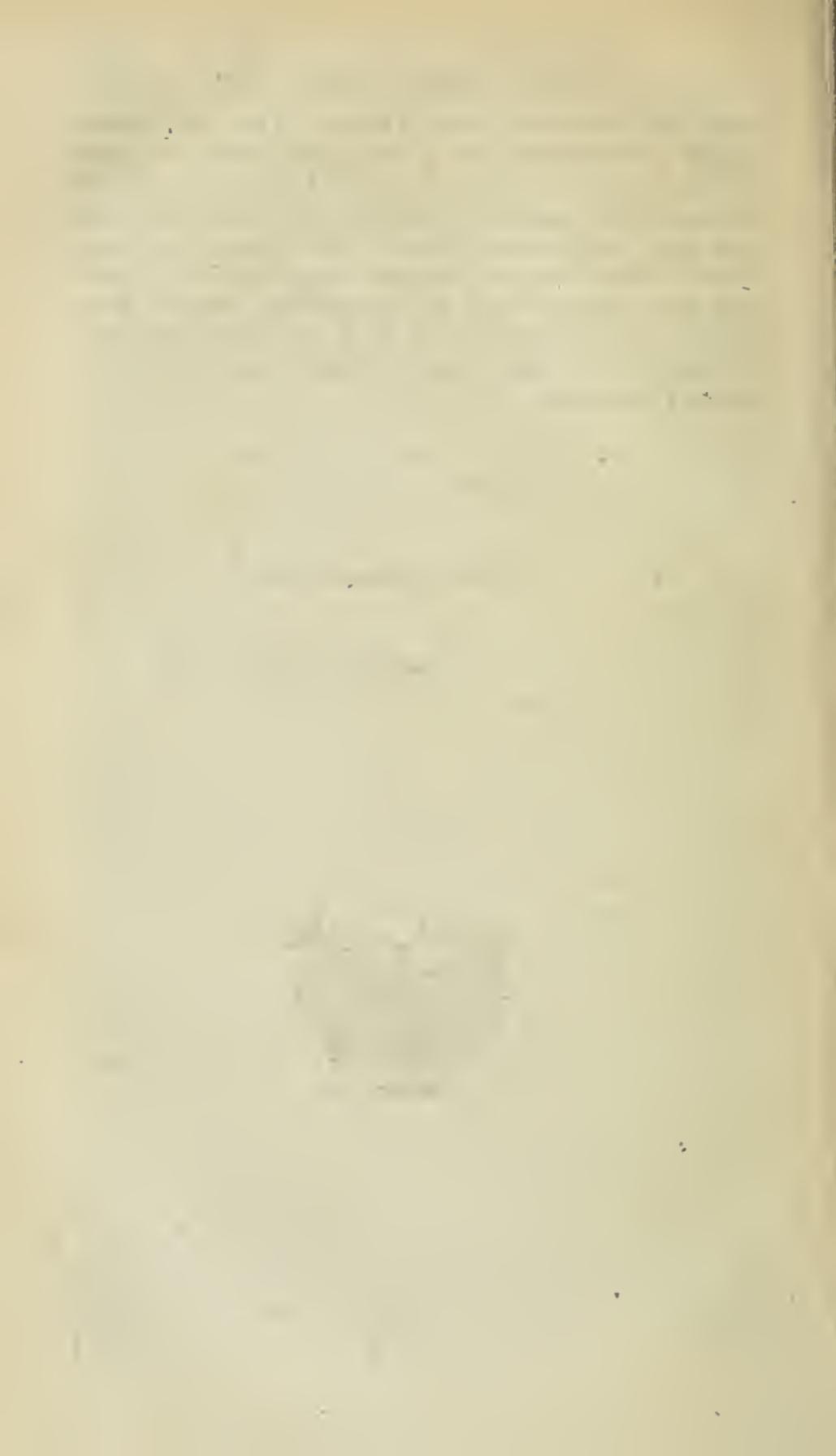
you, and teach you better Things. Yes, *Sirs*, having called upon him so often *to damn your Souls*, now begin to cry to him to *save them*: and rest not, till that Cry be answered; as, if you persevere in the Request, you will find, it most certainly will. God grant, that it may be so! And that as you have been in one Respect, you may each of you be in another, like a *Brand pluckt out of the Burning!* It is, I am sure, the earnest Desire, and by the Grace of God it shall be the frequent Prayer, of,

GENTLEMEN,

Your affectionate Friend,

and faithful Servant, &c.



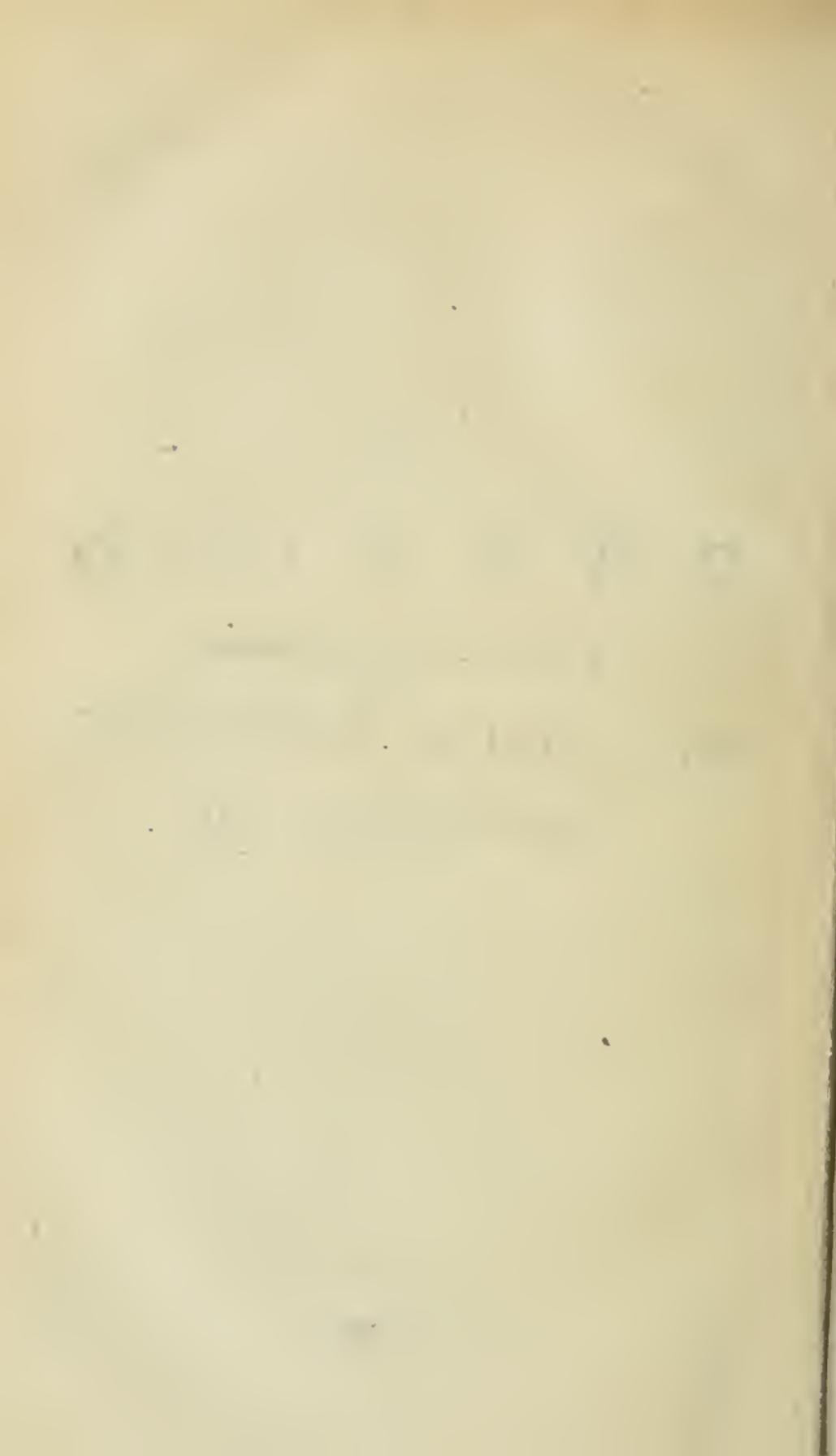


A N
O R A T I O N

At the Grave of the Reverend

Mr. JOHN NEWMAN,

Spoke on JULY 31, 1741.





The Substance of what was delivered at the Interment of the Rev. Mr. NEWMAN, July 31, 1741; with the Addition of some Particulars, which there was not Time then to introduce.



AS we advance from one Stage to another in the Journey of Life, we grow still more familiarly acquainted with its various Afflictions. And this is the Constitution of a wise and gracious God, who is thus training us up for that World, where we shall be above the Need of Sorrow, and so for ever above the Reach of it. In the mean TIME, our heavenly Father doth not *leave us comfortless*; and blessed be his Name, *his Consolations are not small*. On the contrary, they are most important, as well as various, and so accommodated, both to the Weight, and to the Variety of our Distresses.

We are now an Assembly of Mourners, gathered together around the Grave of a very worthy and excellent Person. Some of us have lost one of the most affectionate of all Parents; others a wise, watchful, and diligent Pastor; and all that knew him to any Degree of Intimacy, so faithful, and so tender a Friend, that we must be strangely happy, if we find a great many like him, in this imperfect impoverish'd World. But there are Comforts in the Word of God, suited exactly to such a Case as this, and expressly designed to teach us, that we should not *sorrow as those who have no Hope*, for the Removal of such as, like him, *sleep in Jesus*. God would have us cheared in such a touching Circumstance; and that the Comfort may be administered in the

the most proper and effectual Manner, he puts Words into our Mouth upon such an Occasion, that we may not be at a Loss, even when our own are swallowed up: many Words, which have been thro' succeeding Ages, ever since they were written, the Joy of dying and surviving Christians, in whatever Circumstances they might die or survive. And these Consolations are, indeed, like some Kinds of rich Perfume, which retain their Fragrancy from one Age to another: but with this glorious Difference, that whereas those cordial Productions of Nature gradually lose their Sweetness, tho' by slow Degrees, these Consolations rather grow more and more powerful, as the great Objects of that Hope which they administer come nearer and nearer to us.

Attend to them therefore with Faith, and you must surely, if you are indeed Christians, attend with Pleasure. Let the most pained Heart, tho' contracted with the most distinguished Share of Sorrow on this mournful Occasion, open itself to these Comforts; and let the dejected weeping overflowing Eye, be raised to meet so glorious a Prospect. *For I say and testify to you by the Word of the Lord, as spoken to us by that illustrious Apostle St. Paul, that the pious Dead are not perished; but that if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, we have all imaginable Reason to depend upon it, that such as sleep in Jesus God will bring with him: For the Lord Jesus Christ himself shall descend from Heaven with a Shout, with the Voice of the Arch-Angel, and with the Trump of God; and the Dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we also, i. e. these of us Christians, who in our different Generations are all but one Body, who remain alive, shall be caught up together with them, to meet the Lord in the Air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort ye one another with these Words.*

Lift up your Heads, oh! ye mourning Christians, to survey more distinctly this delightful Prospect. Lift them up with Joy, for your Redemption, and that of your now lamented Friends, most assuredly draweth nigh.

The Grave is continually multiplying its Triumphs; and with how many of its affecting Trophies are we here surrounded! we die by the righteous Sentence of God against Sin, against the first Sin of the common Founder

der of our Race: *But as by Man came Death, by Man comes also the Resurrection of the Dead; and as we are bearing the Image of the earthly Adam, and shall ere long like him return to our Dust, we shall also bear the Image of the heavenly.*

It does not surely seem an incredible Thing to any of us, that God should raise the Dead. And if it seem not incredible, it cannot possibly be thought inconsiderable: especially when we reflect on the glorious Manner, in which the Resurrection of the Just is to be accomplished. Our Lord Jesus Christ will see to it, that it be done; yea, he will himself be present at it: it shall be done by his express Care, Command, and Power. *The Lord himself will descend from Heaven on this Account, while all his celestial Attendants shall shout forth their Joys on the illustrious Occasion. And the first Thing which he does upon that Descent, even before he takes any visible and distinct Notice of the Saints then alive, will be to call out of their Graves those that sleep in him: as if he were impatient of that Bondage in which their Bodies had been detained, and had a declared Enmity against that Destroyer. Oh Death, says he, with a majestick Indignation, I will be thy Plagues! Repentance shall be hid from mine Eyes. I will not leave thee one of my Servants to triumph over: however obscure in Life; how long soever forgotten in the Dust; I will redeem all my Israel, and not a Hoof shall be left behind.*

And, oh let us consider in what Forms they shall appear: *He will change these vile Bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his own glorious Body, according to that mighty Power whereby he is able to subdue all Things unto himself: Then shall be brought to pass the Saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in Victory: not the least Trace of it remaining in all the redeemed World: nothing by which it could be known, that any one of all the Thousands and Ten Thousands of God's Israel had ever been for one Moment under its Power. Glorious Display of the Royalty and Magnificence of God's Love to his People! That tho' it be not in itself absolutely necessary to their Happiness; yet the meaner Part of their Nature shall be rescued from the Abasements of the Grave,*

Grave, and not only recovered, but beautified, invigorated, and adorned!

Nor is this to be merely the Triumph of one publick and solemn Day. 'Tis added, as the Crown of all, *so shall we ever be with the Lord!* And let it be remembered, that it is said, not of the Apostles alone, or of those, who (like our Reverend Father, whose Remains we now attend) have borne sacred Offices in the Church, and honoured God in them by distinguished Services; but it is said of every true Believer, and was intended to include us, on whom the Ends of the World are come, who are, so far as our Character answers our Christian Profession, as dear to Christ, as if we had lived seventeen hundred Years ago, and ministered to him, or to his Apostles. And how much is implied in this? We shall be with Christ! Glorious Hope, worth dying for! Who, that indeed loves him, does not say in his Heart, even now, with all these solemn Ensigns of Death before his Eyes, *I desire to depart and to be with Christ: And let the Worms destroy this Body,* and let the Tomb press it down: may but my enlarged Spirit soar up to him, tho' corporeal Delights, and Creature Converse were to be known no more! But you will remember, we are to be with the Lord in our compleat Persons, and in one compleat Society too: and what is the Crown of all, and affords, in a few Words, if I may so speak, a Kind of infinite Delight, *we shall be FOREVER with him.* Nothing shall ever separate us from him; nothing imbitter, nothing interrupt, so much as for a Moment, the Pleasure of our endeared Converse with him.

And now I will appeal to you, my dear Friends, who are most painfully wounded by this sad Stroke; and to whom all the tender Names of Father, and Pastor, and Friend, are grown Sounds of sorrowful Memorial, in Proportion to the Degree in which they were once delightful; yet I will appeal even to you, if these are not *good and comfortable Words*, fit for an Apostle to write, and for God himself to dictate to his mourning Children. It appears from what I have been saying, that it is well with our dear departed Friends who sleep in Jesus: they are *scaled up among God's Treasures*: They
enter

enter into Peace, they rest in their Beds; and they shall rise from them in the Morning of the Resurrection, not like Lazarus, with his Grave Clothes about him; but dress'd in the Robes of Glory and Immortality. And if this were all that could be said with Relation to them, were it not to found Reason and a lively Faith much, were it not abundantly enough to vindicate the Kindness of God's Dispensations towards them, tho' they might seem for a short Moment (while they lie in the Dust) as under his Rebukes? were it not enough to awaken our Congratulations rather than our Condolances. Yet to increase the Pleasure, with which we look after these beloved Objects, now removed from our Sight, we are farther told, (and it is by no Means to be forgotten) that even now, while *absent from the Body*, they are in an important Sense and Degree *present with the Lord*; and so present, that their most intimate Converse with him on Earth was, in Comparison with this, but Absence from him. It is then well with them indeed; and it shall be well with us too, if we are Christians; so soon, so certainly, so intirely well, that I wonder at the Weakness of our Minds, that they should be so much depressed with this short Separation: for these very Scriptures assure us, we shall meet with them again; for they and we being with the Lord, we must be with each other. What a delightful Thought is this! when we run over the long Catalogue of excellent Friends, which we rashly say we have lost, to think each of us, *I also shall be gathered to my People*; to those whom my Heart still owns under that Character, with an Affection which Death could not cancel, nor these Years of Absence erase. Nature takes a fond Kind of Pleasure in the secret Thought, that with the Regard to some of them, our Coffins shall in a little Time stand by theirs, and our Dust must be mingled in the same Grave. Poor trifling Comfort! as if Dust could tell where it was, and with what it was mingled. But the Gospel assures us, that *if we be Followers of them, who through Faith and Patience do now inherit the Promises*, our Spirits shall ere long join with theirs, in the Services and Pleasures of the heavenly World. And how far will this be beyond all that Pleasure with which on Earth we have taken sweet Counsel

together,

together, and gone to the House of God in Company! And it also assures us, that, at last, we, who have taken our Parts in the sad Procession of Mourners, that conveyed them to this House of Darknes and Silence, if we indeed believe in him who is the Resurrection and the Life, shall also have our Place in that bright Procession, in which Christ shall lead them on to the Gates of Glory, in that Day, when he will say, in a yet more important Sense than he did in the Day of his Agony, and with his expiring Breath, "*It is finished: the Purposes of my dying Love are compleatly accomplished, and my People are what I always intended they should at last be, and always rejoiced in the Views of making them.*"

Only let us all suffer the Word of Exhortation, and make it our Care, that seeing we look for such Things, we receive *Christ Jesus the Lord, and walk in him.* It is a terrible, but most certain Truth, that there are many who wear the Name of Christ now, whom he will at last disown, and *will say to them, depart from me, I know you not whence you are.* It is most certain, we must be united to Christ by Faith now, and conformed to him in true Holiness, or we shall have no *Part or Lot in this Matter.* Let us therefore *gird up the Loins of our Mind,* let us renew our Resolution, and our Watchfulness, and so *hope to the End, for the Grace that shall be brought unto us at the Revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he shall administer to all his faithful Servants an abundant Entrance into his heavenly Kingdom.* Amen.



THE
EVIL and DANGER
OF
Neglecting the SOULS of MEN,
Plainly and seriously represented,
IN A
S E R M O N

Preached at a
MEETING of MINISTERS,
At KETTERING, in *Northamptonshire*,
October 15, 1741.

TO THE
 ASSOCIATED PROTESTANT
 DISSENTING MINISTERS,
 IN THE
 COUNTIES of *Norfolk* and *Suffolk*,
 Particularly

Those with whom the AUTHOR had an Interview
 at *Denton*, *June* the 30th, 1741.

GENTLEMEN,

My Reverend FATHERS and BRETHREN, and much
 esteemed FRIENDS,

THE condescending Respect, and endeared Affection,
 with which you were pleased to receive me, in my
 late Visit to your Parts, and the very great Satis-
 faction which I found in your Company at *Denton*, and else-
 where, have left a very delightful Memorial on my Heart,
 and have impressed those unfeigned Sentiments of Gratitude
 and Esteem, which it would be painful to suppress. Most
 gladly therefore do I take this Method, in a few Words, pub-
 licly to avow them: and I sincerely congratulate the happy
 Societies, respectively under your Care, who steadily enjoy
 the Benefit of those valuable Labours, a little Taste of which
 gave me an exquisite Pleasure, beyond what it is possible for
 me fully to express.

Newer-

Nevertheless, desirous as I am of erecting some little Monument of thankful Friendship, I should not have attempted it by inscribing this plain Sermon to you; unless the Subject of it had been such, as peculiarly suited your Perusal; and, if I may be permitted to say it, amidst all its Imperfections, your Patronage too.

No doubt, many of you, Gentlemen, remember, that after the publick Worship at Denton was over, on that memorable Day, which I shall always number among the most delightful of my whole Life, you were pleased, toward the Evening, to indulge me in the Liberty of a private Conference, in which I laid before you some Hints of a Scheme, which I was then forming for the Revival of Religion in our Parts; a Scheme, which you were pleased, in the general, to approve, and, in several Particulars, to ripen, by your prudent and valuable Counsels.

Greatly encouraged by the Sanction which your Concurrence gave to the Plan; and also by that which it received from the Approbation of some of the most eminent of the London Ministers, of different Denominations, to whom I had an Opportunity of communicating it on my Return Home; I proposed it in general to my reverend and worthy Brethren in these Parts, at a Meeting of Ministers, which was held here at Northampton, about the Middle of August. The Proposals were, in the general, very well received; and it was agreed to take them into a more particular Consideration in a Conference, at our next Assembly, to be held at Kettering, on Thursday, the 15th of October.

To that Conference, Gentlemen, the Sermon with which I now present you, was introductory; and the Result of it was, that the Heads of the Scheme I had concerted with you at Denton, with a few other Particulars which had not then occurred to my Thoughts, were unanimously approved; and we are taking proper Measures for carrying them into Execution. And, as this Discourse may fall into the Hands of some, who may be curious to know what the Particulars were; and as I bore them so frequently in my Thoughts, through many Passages of my Sermon, I shall take the Freedom here to give an Account of them, though, I doubt not, but the most material of them are fresh in your Memories.

It seemed most agreeable to the Deference due to the reverend Assembly, to propose the Scheme in the Form of Queries; on which the following Resolutions were formed, Nemine contradicente.

I. *That it may tend to the Advancement of Religion, that the Ministers of this Association, if they have not very lately done it, should agree to preach one Lord's Day on Family Religion, and another on secret Prayer; and that the Time should be fixed, in humble Hope that concurrent Labours, connected with concurrent Petitions to the Throne of Grace, might produce some happy Effect.*

II. *That it is proper, that Pastoral Visiting should be more solemnly attended to; and that greater Care should be taken in personal Inspection, than has generally been used. And that it may conduce to this good End, that each Minister should take an exact Survey of his Flock, and note down the Names of the Heads of Families, the Children, the Servants, and other single Persons in his Auditory, in order to keep proper Memorandums concerning each; that he may judge the better of the Particulars of his Duty with Regard to every one, and may observe how his Visits, Exhortations, and Admonitions, correspond to their respective Characters and Circumstances.*

III. *That consequent on this Survey, it will be proper as soon as possible, and henceforward at least once a Year, to visit, if it be practicable, every Head of a Family under our Ministerial Care, with a solemn Charge to attend to the Business of Religion, in their Hearts, and Houses, watching over their Domesticks in the Fear of the Lord, We, at the same Time, professing our Readiness to give them all proper Assurances for this Purpose.*

IV. *That it will be highly expedient, immediately, or as soon as may be, to set up the Work of Catechising in one Form or another, and to keep to it steadily for one half of the Year at least: and that it is probable, future Counsels may ripen some Scheme for carrying on this Work, in a Manner which may tend greatly to the Propagation of real, vital, Catholick Christianity, in the rising Generation.*

V. *That there is Reason to apprehend, there are, in all our Congregations, some pious and valuable Persons, who live in a culpable Neglect of the Lord's Supper; and that it is our Duty, particularly to inform ourselves who they are, and to endeavour, by our Prayers to God, and our serious Addresses to them, to introduce them into Communion; (to which, I question not, we shall all willingly add,) cautiously guarding against any Thing in the Methods of Admission, which may justly discourage sincere Christians of a tender and timorous Temper.*

VI. *That it is to be feared, there are some, in several of our Communion at least, who behave in such a Manner as to give just Offence; and that we may be in great Danger of making ourselves Partakers of other Mens Sins, if we do not animadvert upon them: and that if they will not reform, or if the Crime be notorious, we ought, in Duty to God, and to them, and to all around us, solemnly to cut them off from our Sacramental Communion, as a Reproach to the Church of Christ.*

VII. *That it may, on many Accounts, be proper to advise our People, to enter into little Bands, or Societies, for Religious Discourse and Prayer; each consisting of Six or Eight, to meet for these good Purposes once in a Week, or a Fortnight, as may best suit with their other Engagements and Affairs.*

VIII. *That it might be adviseable, if it can be done, to select out of each Congregation under our Care, a small Number of Persons, remarkable for experienced Prudence, Seriousness, Humility, and Zeal, to act as a stated Council for promoting Religion in the said Society: and that it would be proper, they should have some certain Times of meeting, with each other, and with the Minister, to join their Counsels, and their Prayers for the publick Good.*

IX. *That so far as we can judge, it might, by the Divine Blessing, conduce to the Advancement of these valuable Ends, that neighbouring Ministers, in one Part of our Land and another, (especially in this Country,) should enter into Associations, to strengthen the Hands of each other by united Consultations and Prayer: and that Meetings of Ministers might, by some obvious Regulations, be made more extensively useful than they often are: in which View it was farther proposed,*

proposed, (with unanimous Approbation,) That these Meetings should be held at certain Periodical Times:—That each Member of the Association should endeavour (if possible) to be present, studying to order his Affairs so, as to guard against unnecessary Hindrances:—That Publick Worship should begin and end sooner, than it commonly has done on these Occasions:—That each Pastor preach at these Assemblies in his Turn:—That the Minister of the Place determine who shall be employed in Prayer:—That after a moderate Repast, to be managed with as little Trouble and Expence as may be, an Hour or two in the Afternoon be spent in religious Conference and Prayer, and in taking into Consideration (merely as a friendly Council, and without the least Pretence to any Right of authoritative Decision) the Concerns of any Brother, or any Society, which may be brought before us for our Advice:— And finally, that every Member of this Association shall consider it as an additional Obligation upon him, to endeavour to be, so far as he justly and honourably can, a Friend and Guardian to the Reputation, Comfort, and Usefulness of all his Brethren in the Christian Ministry, near or remote, of whatever Party and Denomination.

X. *That it may be proper to enter into some farther Measures, to regulate the Admission of young Persons into the Ministry.—The Particulars here were referred to farther Consideration: but, so far as I can judge, the Plan proposed will be pretty nearly this:—That if any Student, within the Compass of this Association, desires to be admitted as a Preacher, he apply to the Ministers at one of their periodical Meetings; when, if they be in the general satisfied, that he is a Person of a fair Character, in Sacramental Communion with a Christian Society, and one who has gone through a regular Course of Preparatory Studies, they will appoint three of their Number, to examine more particularly into his Acquaintance with, and Sense of the great Doctrines of Christianity, as delivered in the Scripture, and into the Progress he has made in Literature, the Views with which he professes to undertake the Ministry, and in general, his Aptness to teach: in order to judging of which, it may be proper, that a Theological Thesis be exhibited in Latin, and a popular Ser-*

mon, composed by the Candidate, be submitted to the Perusal of the Examiners : that if they, in their Consciences believe, he is fit to be employed in the Christian Ministry, they give him a Certificate of that Approbation, which he may be desired to produce at the next General Meeting, that his Testimonials may be signed by all the associated Ministers present, and he solemnly recommended to God by Prayer.

Thus, Gentlemen, you have a View of the Scheme, as it now lies before us, and as every Article, except the last, (not yet considered among us) was approved at Kettering, at the Time above-mentioned, I will take Leave to add One Particular more, which has since occurred to my Thoughts, and which I here submit to your Consideration, and to that of my other reverend Brethren, into whose Hands this may fall, especially those of our own Association.

XI. Qu. *Whether something might not be done, in most of our Congregations, towards assisting in the Propagation of Christianity Abroad, and spreading it in some of the darker Parts of our own Land? In Pursuance of which it is further proposed, That we endeavour to engage as many pious People of our respective Congregations as we can, to enter themselves into a Society, in which the Members may engage themselves to some peculiar Cares, Assemblies, and Contributions, with a Regard to this great End. I will not swell this Dedication with the Particulars of that Scheme, which has been formed to this Purpose; but rather chuse to insert at the Bottom of the Page a Copy of such an Association, which I am endeavouring to introduce among my own People, and which several have already signed. 'Tis a feeble Essay; and the Effects of it in one Congregation can be but very small: but if it were generally to be followed, who can tell what a Harvest such a little Grain might at length produce? May God multiply it a thousand-fold *!*

Excuse

* We whose Names are subscribed, being moved, as we hope and trust, by a real Concern for the Propagation of the Kingdom of Christ in the World, have determined to form ourselves into a Society for that End, on the following Terms.

I. That we purpose, as God shall enable us, to be daily putting up some earnest *Petitions* to the Throne of Grace, for the *Advancement*

Excuse me, my reverend and dear Brethren, that I have detained you so long with these various Particulars; and permit me to conclude this Address, with beseeching you to join with me in humble Prayer to him, who knows the sincere Regard to the temporal and eternal Happiness of his Creatures, by which the plain Things of this Dedication and Sermon are dictated, that he may honour both with his Blessing. If any Parts of the Scheme here laid before you, have not indeed that Subserviency to the great End proposed, which they are imagined to have, it would be a peculiar Pleasure to me to be better informed: yet I must take the Liberty to say, Those must be strong Arguments, which will prevail against the Experience of the happy Effects, which have for some Time, in my own Congregation, attended those, alas, too imperfect Attempts, which I have made to carry them into Execution. But if they are, as I assuredly believe, calculated to revive the languishing Interest of real Religion, may your Advice, my honoured Friends, in Concurrence with that of my worthy Brethren in these Parts, and with the serious Expostulations contained in the ensuing Discourse, prevail

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of the Gospel in the World, and for the Success of all the Faithful Servants of Christ, who are engaged in the Work of it, especially among the Heathen Nations.

II. That we will assemble, at least Four Times a Year, in our Place of publick Worship, at such Seasons as shall by mutual Consent be appointed, to spend some Time in solemn Prayer together on this important Account: and we hereby engage, that we will, each of us, if we conveniently can, attend at such Meetings; unless such Circumstances happen, as to lead us in our own Consciences to conclude, that it will be more acceptable in the Sight of God, that we should be employed in some other Business elsewhere.

III. We do hereby express our Desire, that some Time may be then spent, if God give an Opportunity, in reviewing those Promises of Scripture, which relate to the Establishment of our Redeemer's Kingdom in the World; that our Faith may be supported, and our Prayers quickned, by the Contemplation of them.

IV. It is also our Desire, that whatever important Informations, relating to the Progress of the Gospel, be received from the various Parts of this Kingdom, or from Foreign Lands, by any Members of the Society, they may be communicated to us at our General Quaterly Meetings: and the rest of us make it our Request to our Minister, that he will, where he can with Convenience do it, keep up such Correspondences; that we may be more capable of judging, how far God answers our Prayers, and best of his other Servants, in this Regard.

on others to make the Trial of them, which surely they will not repent in the nearest Views of Eternity.

I persuade myself, Gentlemen, that in the Midst of those various Cares and Labours for the Publick Service, to which, weak as I am, Divine Providence has called me, you will sometimes be repeating for me those suitable and pathetic Petitions, which you were pleased, at Denton, and elsewhere, during my late Interviews with you, to offer on my Account; Petitions, which I never recollect without a most sensible Pleasure, and by the very Remembrance of which I find myself animated to this very Day. On my Part, dear Brethren, be assured of all the most affectionate good Wishes, which sincere Esteem, and grateful Friendship can inspire. May that Spirit of Grace and Supplication, the happy Effects of which I so delightfully observed in those of you, on whom I had then an Opportunity of attending, be in a still richer Abundance poured forth upon you all! May you open your Mouths boldly to declare the Mysteries of God, as faithful Witnesses to the Truth and Purity of his Gospel,

in

V. We further engage, that on these Days of general Meeting, every one of us will, as God shall be pleased to prosper us, contribute something, be it ever so little, towards the carrying on of this pious Design; which shall be lodged in the Hands of a Treasurer, to be chosen at the First Meeting, to be disposed of by him, and Four other Trustees, then also to be appointed, in such a Manner as they shall judge most convenient, towards supporting the Expence of sending Missionaries Abroad; printing Bibles, or other useful Books, in Foreign Languages; establishing Schools for the Instruction of the Ignorant; and the like.

VI. That the Pastor for the Time being, if One of the Society, be always One of those Trustees; and that Four more be annually nominated by the Society, at the First Meeting after New-Year's Day, with a Power of choosing their Treasurer out of their own Number; and that the Accounts of the former Year be then laid before the Society, or before a Committee appointed to examine them.

VII. That Members, after the First Meeting be admitted by the Consent of the Majority of the Society present, at some stated Meeting; and that if any Member think fit to withdraw, he signify that Purpose to the Society, or to One of the Trustees.

VIII. That brief Minutes be taken at every Meeting, of the Business dispatched, the Persons admitted, the Contributions made at it, &c.

To these Rules we subscribe our Hands, heartily praying, that God may quicken us, and many others by our Means, to greater Zeal in this, and in every good Word and Work; and that joining in Spirit with all those, who in one Place or another, are devoting their Lives to the Advancement of the Gospel, we may another Day partake of their Joy.

in the Midst of a degenerate and back-sliding Age! May you teach, not only publickly, but from House to House! May a truly primitive and scriptural Discipline, which it is our Privilege, that amidst all our Discouragements we are able, not only to pray for, but to exercise, be impartially maintained! And in Consequence of all this, may you have the Pleasure to see your Assemblies flourishing! May you feel your Hearts daily cheered and animated, by the visible Success of your Labours! and may there be no Contention among you, unless it be who shall exert himself with the most exemplary Prudence, Zeal, and Love, in the Prosecution of so good a Work! May each of you, in the Sphere which Providence has assigned him, be a burning and a shining Light! And may the Lustre of your fervent and active Piety awaken (if any of them slumber) our Brethren of the Established Clergy, to guard against that Growth of the Dissenting Interest, which must otherwise be the probable Consequence of such Measures! May they all emulate the most faithful and zealous among us, in the Purity of their Doctrine, in the Seriousness and Spirituality of their Address, in the Vigilance of their pastoral Inspection, in their tender Care to train up the rising Generation for God, and above all, in the distinguished Sanctity of their Lives! This will unite our Hearts in such mutual Esteem and Affection, that even while in different Communions, we shall treat each other like Brethren and Friends, and Fellow-Labourers in the Vineyard of Christ; far more endeared by our common Love to our Divine Master, and the Souls he has redeemed, than alienated by our different Apprehensions, as to the particular Mode by which that Interest is to be promoted. The Question between us will not then be, "How much may we lawfully impose?" and "How much may we lawfully dispute?" But on the one Side, it will be enquired, "What may we waive?" and on the other, "What may we acquiesce in, from a Principle of mutual Tendernefs and Respect; without displeasing our common Lord, and injuring that great Cause of original Christianity, which he has appointed us to guard?" Thus may the Flames of undissembled Love purge away our Dross, and cement us into one Mass; where the Union will be the closer, in Proportion to the Degree in which the Metal is the nobler, and the more refined! And thus may it

cause those Fetters to fall off, under the Weight and the Streightness of which, however they may have been gilded over, the worthiest Persons that wear them must secretly groan! We are praying and waiting for that happy Day, which, whenever it appears, will be the glorious Earnest of the Revival of the Protestant, and of the Christian Cause. In the mean Time, may each of us have a pleasing Conscience, that we are labouring to promote it; or at least that while we are waiting for the Appearance of the great Physician among us, we do not, by our own Rashness, exasperate those Dilempers, which in his Absence we cannot heal! A Wish, and a Care, in which, I am sure, you will concur with,

GENTLEMEN,

Your most affectionate Brother,

and faithful and obliged

Humble Servant,

NORTHAMPTON,
Febr. 1, 1741-2.

P. Doddridge.

P R O V.



PROV. XXIV. 11, 12.

If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto Death, and those that are ready to be slain: If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not: Doth not he that pondereth the Heart, consider it? and he that keepeth thy Soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every Man according to his Works?



THE Interviews of the *Ministers of Christ* will always be pleasant, in Proportion to the Degree, in which they are animated by Divine Grace to think, and act, worthy of their honourable Relation to him, and to each other. We in these Parts have great Reason for Thankfulness, that we have so long known, by happy Experience, *how good and how pleasant a Thing it is, for Brethren to dwell together in Unity* *. And it is with peculiar Joy that I reflect, we are met this Day, not only to express and cultivate our mutual Affection; but also, by our united Counsel, to *strengthen each others Hands* in the Work of our God, and to concert Measures for the more effectual *Revival of Religion*, in the several Places where Providence has especially

* P.sal. cx:ciii. 1.

cially assigned it to our stated Care. *As Iron sharpeneth Iron, so a Man often sharpens the Countenance of his Friend* *. Most gladly would I, this Day, since I am called to address you on so solemn and important an Occasion, contribute my utmost to *whet* your Spirits and my own; and to awaken us all to that Zeal for the Service of our common Master, which will render the various Duties of our Office abundantly delightful, and our Reward in Heaven proportionably great. Oh that what I have now to say might be *like Goads*, to penetrate all our Minds, and *like Nails*, securely fastened in our Memories and our Hearts, *given forth from the one great Shepherd* †! May all the *Instruments*, with which he is furnishing us in our Pastoral Work, be wisely and faithfully employed; and may *the Master of Assemblies* this Day be excited to use them, with greater Skill, and Diligence, in his Service!

And as for you, my Brethren, in more private Stations of Life, I perswade myself you will hear me patiently and candidly: for though but little of my Discourse will be immediately addressed to you, 'tis *your Cause* I shall be pleading in the Whole of it. You will therefore, I hope, be often lifting up your Hearts to God for the Success of it; and will also be considering, what Intimations of your own Duty you may collect, from what I am to address to those of a more publick Character. For though the Words of my *Text* may, with peculiar Propriety, be applied to the *Ministers of the Gospel*, they were at first spoken with a much more general View; nor is there one Soul in the Assembly, who may not consider them as directed by God *to him*, as truly as if his own Name were prefixed to them. *If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto Death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, or (as it might be rendered) though thou mayest say* ‡, *Behold, we*
know

* Prov. xxvii. 17.

† Eccles. xii. 11.

‡ It is well known, that the Particle *א* often signifies *although*. Thus our *Translators* very justly render it in several Places: See *Exod. xiii. 17. Josh. xvii. 18. 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. Ezek. xi. 16. Hab. iii. 17.* And if they had done so in several others, they would have
express'd

know it not : Doth not he that pondereth the Heart, consider it ? and he that keepeth thy Soul, doth he not know it ? and will not he render to every Man according to his Works ?

For the Explication of which Words, with all becoming Deference to the superior Judgment of some before whom I speak, I would offer these *Three* plain and obvious *Remarks*.

1. That the *Omission*, which is here charged as so displeasing to God, tho' immediately referring to Mens *Natural Lives*, must surely imply, that the *Neglect of their Souls* is much more criminal.

The *Text* strongly implies, that we shall be exposed to Guilt and Condemnation before God, by *forbearing to deliver them that are drawn unto Death, and those that are ready to be slain*. This must directly refer to *innocent Persons*, brought into visible and extream Danger by some oppressive Enemy, either by the sudden Assault of a private Person, or by some unjust Prosecution under Forms of Law ; and may particularly extend to Cases, where we have Reason to believe, a capital Sentence has been passed in consequence of *false Witness*, detected before Execution is done * : when Cases of one Sort or the other occur, we may consider *Solomon* as requiring, just as his Father *David* had done, that we should by such Interpositions, as suit the Case in Question, and that Station in which Providence has fixed us, *defend the Poor and the Fatherless*, or those who are *oppressed*, as *Orphans* often are ; that we should *do Justice to the Afflicted and the Needy* ; and should endeavour to *deliver the*

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Poor

express'd the Sense and Connection of the *Original* much more plainly. Compare *Gen. viii. 21. Psal. xiv. 6. xxv. 11. Isai. xxxviii. 18, 19.*

* It was allow'd among the *Jews*, that if any Person could offer any Thing in Favour of a Prisoner, after Sentence was pass'd, he might be heard before Execution was done : and therefore it was usual, (as the *Misebna* shews) that when a Man was led to Execution, a Cryer went before him and proclaim'd, " This Man is now going to be executed for such a Crime, and such and such are Witnesses against him ; whoever knows him to be innocent, let him come forth, and make it appear." *לכ מן שרדע לרוכח יבא ילמד עליו. Lib. de Ord. Damnerum, Tractat. de Synedris, cap. vi. § 1. אפד Surenhus. Tem. iv. pag. 233.*

Poor and the Needy, and to rid them out of the Hand of the Wicked *. And tho' this may expose us to popular Clamours, we should adopt the heroick Resolution of *Job*, not *fearing a great Multitude*, nor permitting the *Reproach of Families to terrify us*, so as to keep Silence, and not go out of the Door †. One would hope, such Attacks as these seldom happened under the peaceful and equitable Reign of *Solomon*: but as Violence and Fraud are in some Degree the Product of all Climates and Ages, he had, no Doubt, in some Instances observed them ‡; and had remarked a culpable *Negligence* in those, who ought to have interposed to have delivered the Victims from such an undeserved Stroke; on which Account, he judged it necessary to enter his solemn Protest against an Indolence and Cowardice, so detrimental to Society, and so offensive to God, the great Guardian of it.

Now you will please to observe, that *delivering* Persons reduced to such extream Danger in the Circumstance I have described, would generally be an Act of Charity attended with great Danger, or with great Trouble. And if the *Neglect* of that be (as you see it is) represented as *highly criminal*, it must be a much greater Offence to suffer any to perish, for Want of either Food, Shelter, or Harbour, in Circumstances where a Person is able, by a little Trouble, Expence, or Care, to preserve their *Lives*. And we may argue, by a Consequence yet stronger than this, that it must be a much more heinous Crime than either, by any *Neglect* of ours, to permit the Ruin of *Mens Souls*, without endeavouring their Recovery, when they are, as it were, drawn away to the extreamest Danger of *Eternal Death*, and are

* P^sal. lxxxii. 3. 4.

† Job xxxi. 34.

‡ It appears by several Hints in *Solomon's* Writings, that the gay, extensive, and luxurious Manner of living, which (tho' directly contrary to the Genius of the *Jewish* Religion) was introduced in his Days, had its natural Effect in producing frequent *Thefts*, *Perjuries*, *Robberies*, and *Murders*, and, which was worst of all, abominable *Corruption* among *Magistrates*, and great *Iniquity* in *Judicial Affairs*. Compare *Prov.* i. 10.—19. iii. 29. iv. 16, 17. vi. 12,—14. xii. 5, 6. xvii. 15. xviii. 5. xxi. 7, 28. xxii. 22, 23. xxiii. 10, 11, 20, 21. xxiv. 15, 23. xxviii. 15, 17, 20, 21. xxix. 4, 10. *Eccles.* iii. 16, 17. iv. 1, 2. v. 8.

are ready to be slain by the Sword of Divine Justice. For if *Temporal Life* should be thus tenderly regarded, and Expence or Danger should be chearfully met in the Defence of it, judge you, Sirs, as in the Sight of God, how much more precious the *Redemption of the Soul* is, which will soon cease, even for ever *.

Nay, I might go yet farther, and draw an Inference, if it were necessary, from that humane and charitable Precept of the *Jewish* Legislator †: *If thou meet thine Enemies Ox or his Ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again: If thou see the Ass of him that hateth thee, lying under his Burthen, wilt thou forbear, or, (as it might be rendered) wouldst thou refrain, to help him? or couldst thou be so cruel as to harbour a Thought of it? No, thou shalt surely help with him; i. e. thou shalt go, if it be necessary, and join thy Strength with that of thine Enemy, to raise the Beast from the Ground.* Now if God not only regards the *natural Life* of a Man, but if he thus appears to care for Oxen, and for Asses, how much more must he require us to reduce wandering Souls, and to do what we can to raise them, when press'd under the *Burthen of Sin*, and in Danger of being crush'd into eternal Misery?

2. The *Text* seems to suppose, that Men would be ready to excuse themselves for this Neglect.

'Tis true indeed, that at the first Sight of a miserable Object, we naturally find a strong Impulse to endeavour to relieve it. Our Hearts do, as it were, spring in our Bosoms, and urge us forward to exert ourselves on such an Occasion; which seems to be intimated by that Word, which we render *forbear*, which often signifies to check, restrain, and hold back a Person from what he is eager on doing †. But the *Wise Man* intimates, there may be Danger of suppressing these generous Sallies of

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* Psal. xlix. 8.

† Exod. xxiii. 4, 5.

† It is in the *Original* נִחַם, and the same Word is used to express the *Restraint* put on the Passion of Abimelech for Sarah, Gen. xx. 6. on the Revenge of David, when insulted by Nabal, 1 Sam. xxv. 39. and on the martial Fury of David's Party, when pursuing the Rebels under Absalom, 2 Sam. xviii. 16. Compare Job xvi. 6, *Psal.* cxi. 26.

the Soul on the first View of the Object; of suffering our Charity to cool, and then of searching out Apologies for our Inactivity. You may be ready to say, *Behold, we knew it not.* “ I did not particularly see the Danger; I did not, however, apprehend it to be so extreme: or, I did not know the Innocence of the Person in Danger; or if I did believe it, I knew not how to deliver him. I did not think the Interposition of such a Person as I, could be of any Importance in such an Affair. I was sorry to see Innocence overborn, and Weakness oppressed; but I was myself too weak to contend with the mightier Oppressor; too poor, too ignorant, or too busy, to meddle in an Affair, where those who were much my Superiors were concerned, and had determined the Case. I had no Obligations to the Person in Danger; I had no Concern with him, nor any Thing to do to embarrass myself with his Affairs.”

If these *Excuses* be just, it is well. God requires Impossibilities from no Man; nor does he expect, that Persons should rashly throw themselves upon Difficulties and Dangers, when there is no such rational Prospect of doing Good, as may balance the Hazard. Nevertheless the *Text* supposes,

3. That these *Excuses* might often be *over-ruled*, by an Appeal to Men's Consciences as in the Sight of God.

Doth not He that pondereth the Heart, consider it? and he that keepeth thy Soul, doth not he know it? As if he should have said, “ 'Tis an easy Thing to excuse Omissions, so that a Fellow-Creature shall have nothing to reply; but whoever thou art that readest these Words, I charge thee to remember, that it is comparatively a very little Matter to be judged of Man's Judgment; he that judgeth thee is the Lord*: and he pondereth the Heart: he weighs, in a most accurate Ballance, all its most secret Sentiments. I therefore cut off all Chicane and trifling Debate at once, by placing thee in his Presence, and laying open thy Conscience there. Thou canst answer me: but canst thou answer
“ the

* 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4.

“ the Heart-searching God ? Does not He, the great
 “ *Father of Spirits*, see, in every Instance, how inferior
 “ Spirits conduct themselves ? Does he not precisely
 “ know the Situation, in which thy Heart was at the
 “ very Moment in question ? Thou sayest, *thou knewest*
 “ *it not* : but He is Witness, whether thou indeed *didst*,
 “ or *didst not* know it. And he also sees all the Oppor-
 “ tunities and Advantages, which thou hadst for know-
 “ ing it ; all the Hints, which might have been traced
 “ out, to open a more explicite and particular Know-
 “ ledge ; every Glimpse which thou hadst, when thou
 “ wast (like *the Priest*, when he spied at a Distance the
 “ wounded Traveller) *passing by on the other Side* *, and
 “ perhaps affecting to look the contrary Way.”

Nor was it in vain, that the *Wise Man* renewed his
 Exposition in a different Form. *He that keepeth thy*
Soul, doth not He know it ? As if he had said, “ Consider
 “ God, as *keeping thine own Soul* ; as *holding it in Life* † ;
 “ as *preserving thy Spirit* by his continued *Visitation* ‡ ;
 “ and then say, Oh thou that *neglectest the Life* of thy
 “ Brother, whether He must not be highly displeas’d.
 “ with that *Neglect* ? May He not reasonably expect,
 “ that while He, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, con-
 “ descends to become thy Guardian, thou shouldst learn
 “ of Him, and be, according to thine Ability, and in
 “ thy Sphere, a Guardian to the whole human Race,
 “ and shouldst endeavour, in every Instance, to ward
 “ off Danger from the *Life*, from the *Soul* of thy Bro-
 “ ther ! ”

And that these Thoughts may enter into the Mind
 with all their Weight, ’tis added once more, in this
 pointed Form of Interrogation, *Will not He render to*
every Man according to his Works ? “ I appeal to thine
 “ own Heart, Is he not a Being of infinite *moral*, as
 “ well as *natural* Perfections, and will He not, as *the*
 “ *Judge of all the Earth*, do right § ? Would He not
 “ have remembered, and rewarded, thy generous Care
 “ for the Preservation of the miserable Creature in
 “ Question ? And, on the other Hand, will he not
 “ reckon

* Luke x. 31. † Psal. lxxvi. 9. ‡ Job x. 12. § Gen. xviii.

“ reckon with thee for such a Failure? Human Laws,
 “ indeed, cannot punish *such Neglects*: but the supream
 “ Legislator can, and will do it. Think of these
 “ Things, and guard against such fatal *Negligence* in
 “ every future Instance: think of them, and humble
 “ thyself deeply before God, for every past Instance, in
 “ which such Guilt has been incurred.”

You easily perceive, from this Explication of my *Text*, that (as I hinted above) I might very properly make it the Foundation of a Discourse “ on the *Care of Souls* in “ general,” addressed to Persons of all Ranks and Professions in Life; especially to *Parents**, and *Masters*, and *Heads of Families*: and *they* will indeed have an evident Share in what I am to say, and therefore I would bespeak *their* particular Attention to it. But considering the Occasion of our present Assembly, and also considering how much of *their Fidelity*, in the Performance of *their Duty*, will probably, under God, depend upon the Exhortations, Instructions, and Assurances, they receive *from us*, I shall chiefly address these Things to *you*, my reverend *Fathers* and *Brethren* in the *Ministry*; and intreat your patient and candid Attendance, while I speak to you with all possible Plainness and Seriousness, as in the Name and Presence of our Common Master.

God is my Witness, that I mean not to insinuate the least disrespectul Thought with Regard to any one of you. Indeed I have not the least Temptation to it, for I can say, with equal Integrity and Pleasure, that I believe *few* of *your Profession* in the *Christian World*, (glorious as that *Profession* is, and happy as it is in many that adorn it) are more constant, more upright, or more zealous, in the Course of their *publick Ministry*. I repeat it with great Chearfulness, that I am inwardly persuaded, *few* of the *Servants of Christ* are, or in any modern Age have been, more faithfully solicitous to declare to their People *the whole Counsel of God*; or to enforce their publick Exhortations, by the silent, but powerful Eloquence of a blameless, a holy, an exem-

* I have argued the Matter at large with them in my *Sermons on Education*.

exemplary Life. And of this, I assuredly believe, *you* have a Testimony in the Consciences of all around you, and even of Multitudes who are not the stated Attendants on your Labours; and who perhaps, in such a Case, are under some Temptations to err on the severe, rather than on the candid Extream. So that in this Respect, I could chearfully say, *Would to God, that all your Brethren in the Christian Ministry, throughout the Nation, and the World, were even as you!* Nevertheless, permit me to say it without Offence, (for I say it in the Fear of God, and with the sincerest Deference and Friendship to you) I am afraid, the extensive and important Obligations of the *Ministerial Office* are not generally considered, and remembered *among us*, as they ought. I apprehend, much more might be done for the Honour of God, and the Good of Souls, than is commonly done, I will not say, by those careless and profane Wretches, who undertake the tremendous Charge merely for the Sake of worldly Emoluments; by those whom the Plainness of Prophetick Language calls *Dumb Dogs, that cannot bark, and greedy Dogs, that can never have enough* *; but even by those, who in the main have a Principle of true Religion in their Hearts; by those, who keep up the Exercise of publick Worship in a regular and honourable Manner, and appear not only irreproachable in their Conversation, but, if considered as in private Life, *bringing forth the Fruits of Righteousness*. The learned, the wise, the virtuous, the pious *Minister*, is, I fear, often *negligent* of a considerable Part of his Trust and Charge; and thereby fails *to deliver*, as he might, *those that are drawn unto Death*, and perhaps are just *ready to be slain*. To awaken our Spirits therefore from that Insensibility in this Respect, into which they are so ready to fall, and so to improve the present Opportunity, that *the Man of God may be perfect* †, and *thoroughly furnished to every good Work* which our Office requires, I shall take the Liberty,

I. Briefly to consider, what *Excuses* we may be most ready to offer, for *neglecting the Souls of Men*.

II. Sc-

* Isa. lvi. 10, 11.

† 2 Tim. iii. 17.

II. Seriously to represent the great *Evil* of that *Neglect* in the Sight of *God*, notwithstanding all those *Excuses*: After which,

III: I shall add a few Hints by way of *Reflection*, as the Time may admit.

And if a Consciouſness of my own past *Neglects*, and an Ignorance of Circumstances in the Congregations of *my Brethren*, lead me to suppose some *Deficiencies* greater than they really are, and to give any *Cautions*, which their Diligence and Zeal render unnecessary, with Regard to some that hear me, they will, I hope, *forgive me this involuntary Wrong*. I am far from the Thought of charging any particular Person, and ground most of the *Remarks* I now present, on what is obvious in the Temper of Mankind, and on those Infirmities of human Nature, to which the best of Men are obnoxious, however by Divine Grace they may be conquered in a few of the most eminent for Fidelity and Zeal.

I. I am to consider, what *Excuses* we may be ready to make, for *neglecting* to do our utmost for the *Salvation* of *Mens Souls*.

Now I imagine one of the first Thoughts, which may present itself to our View upon such an Occasion, may be this :

1. That we *do something considerable* for that Purpose :

And particularly, that we take Care for their Instruction in *Publick*; *reading the Word of God* to them, when they are assembled together in his House; explaining, and enforcing it, in our *Expositions* and *Sermons*; presenting *Prayers* and *Praises* to God, in their Name; and, at proper Seasons administering the *Sacraments*, in such a Manner as we judge most agreeable to the Institution of our *Lord Jesus Christ*.

And so far indeed, it is well: and a most wise and gracious *Constitution* of our blessed *Redeemer* it is, that such *Ordinances* should be administered, on solemn stated Days, and by Men appropriated to that Employment; in Consequence of which, such *Knowledge* is dispersed, as may be, and undoubtedly is, through the Divine
Blessing,

Blessing, effectual for the *Salvation* of many Souls. So that *Ministers* cannot go through the *external* and *publick Services* of their Function, without giving their *Hearers* some great and valuable Advantages, far beyond what the Professors of any *other Religion* can find in the Rites of their various, and generally absurd, and superstitious Worship. And I am not afraid to say, that this would make the *Christian Ministry*, even in the Hands of ignorant, careless, and vicious Men, a *Blessing* to the Nation where it is settled, so long as *Reading the Scriptures*, and almost any Kind of *Prayers*, in an intelligible Language, make a Part of Divine Service in their Assemblies. Much more then will it be so, in the Hands of wise, sober, and religious Men, tho', through human Frailty, they are much less zealous and active, than it were to be wished they were, or than they ought to be.

But while we are thus pleading our Diligence and Care in the Administration of *publick Ordinances*, it will be Kindness to ourselves, seriously to ask our own Hearts, at least, *how they are administered*. 'Tis (as I have elsewhere hinted) a very important Trust, to have the Management of Mens religious Hours committed to us; their Seasons of *Social Worship* being, comparatively, so short, and so infinitely momentous. Methinks we do almost, as it were, *put our own Lives in our Hand* while we undertake it, and may justly tremble on the View of that awful Account which we are to give for it.

I hope, Sirs, we have the Testimony of our own Consciencs before God, that we do not, on these solemn Occasions, content ourselves with cold Essays on mere *Moral Subjects*, however acute, philosophical, or polite; nor make it our main Business, in our *Sermons*, to seek the Ornament and Elegance of Words, the Refinements of Criticism, or the nice Arrangement of various complex and abstruse Argumentations. When we speak, in the Name and Presence of God, to immortal Creatures on the Borders of Eternity, I hope we entertain our *Hearers* with plain, serious, and lively Discourses, on the most important *Doctrines of Christianity*, in their due Connection, and their Relation to each other, in such a Manner, as we, on mature Consideration,

sideration, do verily believe may have the most effectual Tendency to bring them to God through *Christ*, and to produce and promote in their Hearts, through the Divine Blessing, the great Work of *Regeneration* and *Holiness*. I hope and trust, that *God is our Witness*, and that the *People* of our Charge are *Witnesses*, that not one of those that diligently attend on our *Ministry*, tho' but for a few succeeding Sabbaths, can fail to learn the *Way of Salvation*, as exhibited in the *Gospel*; and that we speak of it, as those that are *in earnest*, and do from our very Souls desire to answer the great *Ends* of our *Ministry*, in the Prosperity of the *Redeemer's Kingdom*, and the eternal Happiness of those invaluable *Souls* whom he has committed to our Care. Otherwise we may incur great and fatal Guilt, tho' *publick Worship* be constantly and decently carried on, and tho' a reasonable Proportion of Time be employed in it, with numerous and attentive *Auditories*; to whom we may be *as the lovely Song of one that has a pleasant Voice**, while in the Ears of God, for Want of that fervent *Charity* which should dictate and animate all, we are but *as sounding Brass, or as a tinkling Cymbal*†.

But granting, as I would willingly suppose, and as with Relation to you, *my Brethren*, I do firmly believe, all these Reflections can be answered to Satisfaction: here is indeed *a Part of your Duty* honourably performed, and an *important Part* of it too. But is *that Part*, tho' ever so *important*, to be substituted for the *Whole*? The diligent Inspection of our Flock, *Pastoral Visits*, the Observation of the religious State of *Families*, *Personal Exhortations*, *Admonitions*, and *Cautions*, by *Word or Letter*, as Prudence shall direct, the *Catechising Children*, the promoting *religious Associations* among the *younger* and the *elder People* of our Charge, and the strict and resolute Exercise of *Discipline* in the several *Churches* over which we preside; are these *no Parts* of our *Office*? Will we say it with our dying Breath, will we maintain it before the *Tribunal of Christ*, that they did not belong to the *Christian Ministry*? And if not, will our Care in *other Parts* of it, be allowed as a sufficient *Excuse* before him, for our total *Omission* of *these*?

We

* Ezek. xxxiii. 32.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

We have preached, and prayed, and administered the Sacraments. *These Things we should indeed have done*; and when we had taken the Care of Congregations upon us, we could hardly avoid it; but surely our own Consciences will now, or hereafter, tell us, that *we ought not to have left the others undone* *. But we may perhaps for a while elude the Conviction, by pleading,

2. That the Care of *particular Persons* more properly belongs to others; and especially, to *Heads of Families*, who have more Opportunities of being serviceable to those under their Charge, and indeed have the most immediate Concern in them.

It certainly does. But does it belong to *them alone*? Or if it did, do not *they* belong to *us*, and to *our Care*? And is it not the Part of every *superior Officer* of a Society to see to it, that the *Subaltern Officers* be careful and diligent in the Discharge of their Duty? And in this Case, are we to take it for granted, that in our respective Congregations *Heads of Families* are of course so? That they *pray in their Families*; that they *read the Scriptures*, and other *good Books* there, especially on the Evening of the *Lord's Day*; that they *catechise their Children*, and solemnly press upon *them*, and upon their *Servants*, the serious Care of *practical Religion*? Are we roundly to conclude, without any farther Enquiry, that all this is done; and done in so diligent, and so prudent a Manner? And that there is no Need of any particular Exhortations, Instructions, or Admonitions from us? Would to God, there were *any one Congregation* in the whole Kingdom, of which this might reasonably be presumed to be the Case! But if it were indeed so, would not our Concurrence with these wise and pious *Heads of Families*, in so good, but so difficult a Work, encourage and strengthen them to prosecute it with greater Chearfulness and Vigour? Would it not quicken, both their Cares, and their Endeavours? And might it not, by the Divine Blessing, promote the Success of them? Might it not gain on the Minds of *Children* and *Servants*, to see that we did not think it beneath us, tenderly to *care for their Souls*? And might not our tender and condescending Regards to them in
private,

* Matt. xxiii. 23.

private, while it convinced them how well we meant them, render our *publick Labours* more acceptable and useful to them? Now we well know, that the *Children* and *Servants* of the present Generation, are the *Hopes* of the next; as they are probably those, that in their Turns will be *Parents* and *Governors of Families*; whose *Children* and *Servants*, when they arise, will one way or another feel the happy, or unhappy Consequences, of our *Fidelity*, or *Neglect*? And when such Affairs are in Question, shall we allow ourselves to plead,

3. That we have so much *other Business*, and such various Engagements of a different Kind, that we cannot possibly attend to these Things.

But give me Leave, *my Brethren*, to observe, that the Question here, is not, whether we can find out *other agreeable Ways* of filling up our Time? But whether those *other Ways* are more *important*, and whether that *different Manner* of employing it, be more *acceptable* in the Sight of God, and will turn to a better Account in that Great Day, when our Conduct is to be finally reviewed by him? We must indeed have our Seasons of *Recreation*, and our Seasons of *Study*: but it will easily appear, that no Regards to either of these will vindicate, or excuse our *Neglect* of the *private Duties* we owe to our *Flock*, in giving *Diligence* to know their *State**, and being careful to *teach* them, not only *publickly*, but *from House to House* †.

Recreation, to be sure, can afford *no just Apology* for *neglecting* it; since to follow this Employment prudently, might be made a *Kind of Recreation* from the Labours of a sedentary and studious Life. *A grave and severe Recreation!* you will perhaps say. *Grave* indeed I will acknowledge it to be; but not therefore to a serious Mind less *delightful*. So much of those two noblest and sweetest Exercises of the Soul, *Devotion*, and *Benevolence*, would naturally mingle with these pious Cares and tender Addresses, as would *renew the Strength* which had been exhausted in our studious Hours, and *the Manly*, shall I say, or rather *the Godlike Joy* it would administer, would quite discountenance that which we find in the gay Indulgences of a *humorous* and *facetious*.

Con-

* Prov. xxvii. 23.

† Acts xx. 20.

Conversation; tho' I see no Necessity of forbidding *that*, at proper Intervals, so far as its Chearfulness is consistent with Wisdom and Religion. And I am sure, that if we can turn our Seasons of *Recess from Study* to so profitable an Account, as would be answered by the *Duties* which you know I have now in View, it will be a most *happy Art*, well becoming one, who is truly prudent, and would therefore *husband his Time* to the best Purposes for *Eternity*; in which View it is evident, that the smallest Fragments of it, like the Dust of Gold, or Jewels, are too valuable to be lost.

The great Proportion of Time to be given to our *Studies*, will, no doubt, be urged, as a yet more material *Excuse*. But here it is obvious to reply, that a prudent Care in the *Duties* I am now recommending, is very consistent with our employing a great deal of Time in *Study*; and particularly, with our giving it, what I hope we shall always learn to value and redeem, our *Morning Hours*, to which some of the *Evening* may also be added. And if these will not generally suffice, give me Leave to ask, what are those important *Studies*, that would thus ingross the *Whole of our Time*, excepting what is given to *Devotion*, and to what is generally called *Recreation*?

I have had some little Taste of the *Pleasures of Literature* myself, and have some Reason to hope, I shall not be suspected of any Prejudice against it; nor am I at all inclined to pass those contemptuous Censures on the various Branches of it, in which *Ignorance* and *Sloth* are often, with strange Stupidity, or with yet stranger Assurance, seeking, and it may be finding, a *Refuge*. But on such an Occasion I must freely say, I fear many Things, which employ a very large Portion of our retired Time, are studied rather as *Polite Amusements* to our own Minds, than as Things which seem to have any apparent Subserviency to the Glory of God, and the Edification of our Flock; and, consequently, I fear, they will stand as *Articles of Abatement*, if I may so express it, in our final Account; and when they come to be *made manifest*, will be found *Works that shall be burnt*, as being no better, in the Divine Esteem, than

than *Wood, Hay, and Stubble**, how beautifully soever they may have been varnished, or gilded over.

Let me here, in particular, address myself to *my younger Brethren*, with a Frankness which may be to *them* more excusable, while I urge them to a *Christian Self-Denial* upon this Head, where perhaps it may be, of all others, the most difficult. I do not apprehend Persons of your approved Character to be in Danger of any other Kind of *Luxury and Intemperance*; but there is, if you will permit me so to call it, a Sort of refined *Intellectual Luxury*, with Regard to which *I am jealous over you*, lest you should be seduced into it, or rather lest some of you be already insnared by its specious Charms.

I would not, *my young Friends*, be so severe and cruel, as to desire you should be confined from that high and elegant *Entertainment*, which a Person of Genius and Taste will find in the masterly Writings of the *Ancient Orators, Historians, and Poets*; or in those polite and elegant Pieces, which our own, and other *modern Languages*, may afford; from which the *wise Man*, and the *Christian*, will learn many Things of solid Use, as well as Matters of most delightful Amusement. Neither would I pretend to forbid some *Mathematical and Philosophical* Researches, into which you are initiated in your *Academical Course*, and with which you will do well to retain and improve your Acquaintance in the Progress of Life, both to strengthen your *Rational Faculties* by that strenuous Exercise, and to improve your *Knowledge of the Works of God*, which will appear *great, wonderful, and delightful*, in Proportion to the Degree of Sagacity and Diligence with which they may be searched out †. But 'tis one Thing to *taste* of these poignant and luscious Fruits, and another to *feed and live* upon them:—One Thing to make the most noble and substantial Parts of them our *Entertainment and Refreshment*; and quite another to make their circumstantial Curiosities the *chief Business* of our Study, and the *favorite Subjects* of our most attentive Enquiry. That true Greatness and Elevation of Mind, which the Gos-

* 1 Cor. iii. 12, 15.

† Psal. cxi. 2.

pel is so admirably calculated to produce, would teach us a much *sublimier Science*: and if for the Sake of these *little Things*, we neglect to pray for those whom God hath committed to our Care, to enquire into their Religions State, to pursue them with suitable Applications and Addresses, the Time will come when we shall assuredly own, that we *dearly purchased* the most refined Pleasures they could possibly give us: not to say, how much greater and nobler Pleasure we even now resign, while our Duty is neglected. Oh, *my Brethren*, let us consider how fast we are, as it were, *passing through* this dying Life which God has assigned us, in which we are to manage Concerns of infinite Moment; how fast we are *passing on* to the immediate Presence of our Lord, to give up our Account to him. You must judge *for yourselves*; but permit me to say, that *for my own Part*, I would not for ten thousand Worlds be *that Man*, who when God shall ask him at last, how he has employed most of his Time, while he continued a *Minister* in his Church, and had the Care of Souls, should be obliged to reply, “ Lord, I have restored
 “ many corrupted Passages in the *ancient Classicks*, and
 “ illustrated many which were before obscure; I have
 “ cleared up many Intricacies in *Chronology*, or *Geogra-*
 “ *phy*; I have solved many perplexed Cases in *Alge-*
 “ *bra*; I have refined on *Astronomical Calculations*; and
 “ left behind me many Sheets on these curious and
 “ difficult Subjects, where the *Figures* and *Characters*
 “ are ranged with the greatest Exactness and Truth:
 “ and these are the Employments, in which my Life
 “ has been worn out, while *Preparations for the Pulpit*,
 “ or *Ministrations in it*, did not demand mine imme-
 “ diate Attendance.” Oh, Sirs, as for the *Waters*
 which are drawn from *these Springs*, how sweetly soever they may taste to a curious Mind that thirsts for them, or to an ambitious Mind which thirsts for the Applause they sometimes procure, I fear, there is often Reason to *pour them out before the Lord**, with Rivers of penitential Tears, as the *Blood of Souls* which have been
 for-

* 2 Sam. xxiii. 16, 17.

forgotten, while these Trifles have been remembered and pursued †.

Nor am I without my Fears, that a great Deal of *Studious Time* is lost, in an *over-artful Composition of Sermons*, and in giving them such Polish and Ornament, as does not conduce to their Usefulness, nor any Way balance the Labour employed in the Work. If we do not diligently watch over our Hearts, *this* will be an *Incense*, offered to *our own Vanity*, which will render *our Sacrifice* less acceptable to God, however *we* and *our Hearers* may be delighted with the Perfume. Greater
Plain-

† Since these Papers have been prepared for the Press, I have happily met with the Reverend Mr. *Leechman's* excellent *Sermon, On the Temper, Character, and Duty of a Minister of the Gospel*, preached before the *Synod of Glasgow and Air, April 7, 1741*; which, so far as I am capable of judging, on an attentive and repeated Perusal, is one of the most masterly Performances of the Kind, which ever fell into my Hands. I am an entire Stranger to the *Author*, but hope *this Sermon*, extorted (as I am told) from an excessive Modesty, by the earnest Importunity of his Brethren, will meet with such just Regard, as may encourage him to enrich our Age and Language with many *other Discourses*, in the Spirit and Manner, which he has there so admirably described and exemplified. I am sure my *Reader* will be pleased with the following *Specimens*, which I could wish deeply transcribed on every Heart, and especially on my own. “ A just Sense of the important *Relations* we stand in “ to our respective *Flocks*, and a genuine *Feeling* of that tender *Affection* which is due to them, won't allow us to hesitate one “ Moment, Whether *that Part of our Time* is most worthily employ'd, which is taken up in doing real Offices of Friendship among them; or *that Part of it*, which is spent in perusing the “ finest Writings of the greatest Genius that ever appeared in the “ World, or in polishing any little Compositions of our own. Is “ the arranging of Words, the beautifying of Language, or even “ storing our own Minds with the Divinest Sentiments, an Employment of equal Dignity and Importance in itself, or equally pleasant on Reflection, with *that* of composing Differences, or extinguishing Animosities, searching out modest and indigent Merit and “ relieving it, comforting a melancholy Heart, giving Counsel to a “ perplex'd Mind, suspending Pain by our Sympathy and Presence, tho' it were but for a Moment, suggesting to an unfurnish'd “ Mind proper Materials for Meditation in the Time of Distress, or “ laying hold of a favourable Opportunity of conveying valuable Instructions, and religious Impressions, to a Mind little susceptible of “ them on other Occasions? There is no Need of saying any Thing “ in Confirmation of this: it was the glorious Character of *Jesus*, “ that *he went about doing good.*” *Pag. 23, 24.*

Plainness and Simplicity of Speech might often be *more useful* to the Bulk of our Auditory, and perhaps *more acceptable* too; and on the whole, it might be at least *equally beautiful*. For all that are not *Children in Understanding* know, that there is a *natural* and manly Kind of *Eloquence*, arising from a deep Sense of the Subject, and an ardent Love to the Souls of our Hearers, which is, of all others, the most to be desired and esteemed. And tho' such Discourses may be attended with some *little Inaccuracies*, and may want something of the *Variety* which exacter Preparation might set on; yet surely, where a *Habit of Speaking* is formed by proper Application, and the *Materials of a Sermon* are well digested in the Mind, it will rise above a reasonable Contempt. And if where exacter Preparation is made, a Care to preserve those *Niceties of Composition* deaden the Manner of the Delivery, and take off either its Solemnity, its Vigour, or its Tenderness, I cannot but apprehend it as injurious to the Character of the *Orator*, as to that of the *Christian*. The most celebrated *Speakers* in *Judicial Courts*, and in *Senates*, have, in all Nations and Ages, pursued the Method I now recommend; and the most acceptable *Preachers* have successfully attempted it. On the whole, permit me to say, it would be a fatal Thing, to *barter away the Souls* of our People, for the highest and justest Reputation of *Speaking well*; yet I fear there are many, who in this View do it *for nought*, and have not in any Sense *increased their Wealth by the Price* *. But perhaps, after all, the most plausible *Excuse* may be *that*, which I have reserved for the *last* I shall now mention, *viz.*

4. That the Attempts I am proposing might *displease those* that attend upon our *Ministry*; upon which Account it may seem, both with Respect to *them* and *ourselves*, a necessary Precaution of *Prudence* to decline them.

This is *the Lion in the Street* †; which, *slothful* as we too naturally are, we often plead for staying within Doors, when our Duty calls us Abroad on these charitable Errands: But I hope, on a nearer Approach it

V O L. I.

N

will

* Psal. xlv. 12.

† Prov. xxvi. 13.

will not be found so fierce, or so invincible, as a timorous Imagination paints it.

Methinks, *Brethren*, we make a very unfavourable Representation of the *Temper and Character*, not to say, of the *Breeding and Understanding* of our People, when we so readily take it for granted, they will be *displeas'd* with us, for addressing those Exhortations to them *in Private*, which they seem so desirous of receiving from us *in Publick*. Let us ask our own Consciences, would they *all* be displeas'd? If not, the *Displeasure* it might give to *some*, can be *no Excuse* for neglecting it with Regard to *others*. And are we indeed so miserable, as to be situated among *whole Congregations*, in whom *Ignorance, Pride, and Profaneness* prevail to such a Degree, that a *Minister*, who would be welcome among them, if he came only as a *common Visitant*, should be look'd upon with Contempt or Indignation, when he came expressly as a *Friend to their eternal Interests*, and would step a little out of the common Way for their Salvation? If this were really our Case, who would not say with the Prophet, *Oh that I had in the Wilderness a Lodging Place of Way-faring Men*, tho' it were but such a wretched Cave, as Travellers find in a Desert, *that I might leave my People, and go from them; for they be all an Assembly of treacherous Men* *!—of treacherous Men indeed, if while they call themselves *Christians and Protestants*, yea, and profess to separate from their Brethren on religious Principles, they should think themselves *injured and affronted* by the Exhortations of their *Ministers*, while they would *warn every Man, and teach every Man in all Wisdom, that they might present them perfect in Christ* †. But blessed be God, bad as the World is, there is no Room to imagine *this* to be the Case, or any Thing like it. Perhaps while we are delaying, and coldly deliberating about it, many lively *Christians* under our Care are earnestly praying, that *God may put such a Thing into our Hearts*: And should we attempt it, I doubt not, but they would *receive us as an Angel of God, or even as Christ himself* ‡; their Love to us would be more abundantly confirmed, and their Heart cemented
in

* Jer. ix. 2.

† Col. i. 28.

‡ Gal. iv. 14.

in closer Bonds than they have yet known. And many others would at least own, that we acted in Character, and maintained a more apparent Consistency of Behaviour, if the Affair were properly conducted.

Did we indeed pretend to controul them in the Management of their *Temporal Affairs*, or to exercise a lordly *Dominion over their Faith* and their Conscience, they might justly be displeas'd: Or did we craftily demand, that they should lay open to us the Secrets of their Breasts in *Confession*, their Suspicions were pardonable, and their Resentments reasonable. But it must be great Malice or Folly, to suspect any Design of that infamous Nature, from our *visiting them as Pastors*, with pious Exhortations, and affectionate Prayers, as those who are concerned for them, and their Children, and Servants, that *their Souls may prosper and be in Health* *. A Solicitude for the *Health of their Bodies* is esteem'd Friendship and Gratitude, and Enquiries concerning it seem but common Decency: And can it offend them, to find we are solicitous about *that Welfare*, which is infinitely more important, and, by Virtue of our Office, our peculiar Charge?

Yes, you will say, in one Instance it will displease: For when we are oblig'd to *blame any Thing* which we see amiss in them, *their Pride* will naturally take Fire on such an Occasion; and perhaps those, whom we have thought our best Friends, will *become our Enemies*, if we will venture to *tell them* such disagreeable Truths †, as Fidelity may extort in some Circumstances. This is, after all, *the main Difficulty*; and as I cannot wonder if it impress our Minds, I pray God to forgive the Perverseness of those, that make it so great. Yet surely it is possible to *manage Reproof* so, as that, in most Instances, it shall *oblige*, rather than *provoke*. If we tell our Hearers of their Faults *privately*; and if we do it with Tenderness and Respect: If we shew by our *Manner of speaking*, that what we say proceeds from an humble Fear, lest we should displease God, betray his Trust, and injure their Souls by the Neglect: If at the same Time our *Behaviour to them* be, as it surely should be, constantly *obliging*: If we do our utmost, to

* 3 John ver. 2.

† Gal. iv. 16.

Truth and Justice will permit, to guard and shelter their Character in the World; and bring our Complaints of them, to none but themselves: Bad as the World is, I believe few will quarrel with us upon this Account; but we shall see, as *Solomon* observed, that *he who rebuketh a Man, will afterwards find more Favour, than he that flattereth with his Tongue* *.

But supposing the worst that can happen, that *Folly* and *Wickedness* should prevail so far, over all the tender and prudent Address of the *Friend* and the *Pastor*, as to render us *Evil* for so great a *Good*, and *Hatred* for so generous, and so self-denying an Instance of *Love*, how could that *Hatred* be expressed? Seldom in any more formidable Manner, than by withdrawing from our *Ministry*, and discontinuing what they have done for our *Support*; for the *Revilings* of Persons of such a Character, can seldom hurt any but themselves. Now I hope, *Brethren*, we shall always retain so much of a *Manly*, not to say a *Christian Spirit*, as to chuse to retrench some of our Expences, to forego some of the *Entertainments of Life*, to cast ourselves and Families on *Providence*, or even, if it were necessary, to subsist in an honest and creditable *Poverty*, by the daily Labour of our own Hands; much rather than meanly to crouch to such *haughty Sinners*, and sacrifice *Duty, Honour, and Conscience*, to the *Arrogance* of their *petulant Temper*. Let us *fear God* as we ought, and we shall find nothing to *fear from them*; but should be willing to imitate the *Fidelity and Courage of the Baptist*, tho' the *Wrath of a King* might be provoked by it, and *Imprisonment or Martyrdom* might be its Reward.

I hope, such Considerations as these may effectually obviate the *Excuses*, which *Indolence* or *Corwardice* may be ready to form, for our *Neglect of Men's Souls*; especially when we go on,

II. To consider the great *Evil* of that *Neglect*, as it appears in the Sight of *God*, notwithstanding all these *Excuses*, or any of the like Kind, with which we may endeavour to palliate it.

But

* *Prov. xxviii. 23.*

But who can fully represent it, as it appears to his capacious and all-penetrating View? What human Mind can conceive the Infinite Evil? It is not, Sirs, a Subject, on which to display the Wantonness of Wit, or the Colourings of artificial Harangue: A terrible Kind of Solemnity attends it, and I attempt the Display of it with Fear and Trembling. If it *seems a light Matter* to us, to *forbear to deliver those that in this Sense are drawn unto Death, and them that are thus ready to perish*, consider, my Brethren, and Oh may my own Conscience always consider,—what *the Death of the Soul* is;—how many wretched Souls are continually *dying around us*;—what gracious *Provision* God has made to *prevent it*;—and what peculiar *Obligations* we are under, to labour to the utmost for the *Preservation* of their Lives.

1. Let us think, “what *the Death of the Soul* is.”

The Apostle *James* intimates, that it is a Thought of great Importance, when he says, *He that shall turn a Sinner from the Error of his Way, shall save a Soul from Death**: As if he had said, do but reflect what *that* is, and you will find your Success is its own Reward. We well know, that to *save a Soul from Death*, is not merely to prevent the Extinction of its Being, tho’ even *that* were much; but to prevent its positive, its lasting, its eternal Misery. ’Tis to prevent its being *slain* by the pointed and flaming Sword of the Divine Justice.

’Tis a tragical Spectacle, to behold a Criminal dying by human Laws, even where the Methods of *Execution* are gentle; as, through the Lenity of ours, they generally are amongst us: And I doubt not, but it would grieve us to the Heart, to see any who had been under our *Ministerial Care*, in that deplorable Circumstance. But Oh, how much more deeply must it pierce our very Souls, to see them *led forth* to that last dreadful *Execution*, with those of whom *Christ* shall say, *As for these mine Enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, bring them forth, and slay them before me*†! Oh how will it wound us, to hear the *Beginning* of those *Cries* and *Wailings*, which must *never end*! How

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shall

* Jam. v. 20.

† Luke xix. 27.

shall we endure the Reflection, "These Wretches are *perishing for ever*, in part because I would not take "any Pains to attempt their Salvation!" And is this so strange a Supposition, that some once under our *Ministry* may then *perish in our Sight*? Would to God, that it were less probable! But, on the contrary, let us

2. Consider, "how many *Souls*, precious and immortal as they are, seem to be continually *dying* "around us."

Are there but *few*, that miscarry? Let *Peter* inform us, when he says, that *the Righteous scarcely are saved**. Yea, let our *Lord* himself inform us, when he says, *Strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way, that leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it; whereas wide is the Gate, and broad is the Way, that leadeth to Destruction, and many there be that go in thereat*†. We grieve to see *Epidemical Distempers* prevailing around us; we are ready, as Providence calls us, to *visit the Sick* and the *Dying*; and could take little Pleasure in our own Health, if we did not endeavour to succour them, as we have Opportunity. But let us look round, and see, whether *that Distemper*, which threatens the *Death of Souls*, be not *Epidemical* indeed. With all the Allowances, which *that Charity* can make, which *believeth all Things*, and *hopeth all Things*‡, which it can with any Shadow of Reason *hope* and *believe*; must we not own, there are *Marks of Eternal Death* on *many*? And that there are *many more*, in whom we can see nothing which looks like a *Token of Spiritual Life*? So that the best we can say of them is, that possibly there may be some *latent Sparks* of it concealed in the Heart, which as yet produce no Effect to the Honour of their Profession, or the Benefit of the World. In the mean Time, Sinners are spreading the *Infection* of their Infidelity, and their Vices, far and wide; as if, like some *illustrious Wretches* that have been miscalled *Heroes*, they accounted the Destruction of Numbers their Glory. Can we behold such a *Contagion* spreading itself even in the *Christian Church*, which ought to be healthful as the Regions of Paradise, and not bitterly lament

* 1 Pet. iv. 18.

† Mat. vii. 13, 14.

‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

lament it before God? Or can we seriously lament it, and not endeavour its Redress? Especially when we consider,

3. "What gracious *Provision* God hath made to "prevent their Death."

Is there not indeed *Balm in Gilead*? Is there not a *Physician there**? Even this glorious *Gospel* of the blessed God, whose *Efficacy* we have so often heard of, and seen? And shall they yet *perish*? Adored be the Riches of Divine Grace, we know, (and 'tis infinitely the most important Part of all our Knowledge) that there is a rich and free *Pardon* proclaimed, to all that will sue it out, and accept the Benefit in a proper, that is, a grateful Manner; for cordial *Acceptance*, and real *Gratitude*, is all it demands. One would expect, the *Tidings* should be as *Life to the Dead*: But we see, how coldly they are received; how shamefully they are slighted; how generally, yea, how obstinately, they are rejected. And what is the Consequence? Refusing to *believe on the Son of God*, they shall not see *Life*, but the *Wrath of God abideth on them* †, with an additional Weight of *Vengeance*, as it well may. Now is not this enough to make our very Hearts bleed, to think, that immortal Souls should *dye* under the *Gospel*; yea, *dye* under aggravated Guilt and Ruin? So that instead of being any Thing *the better* for this delightful Message of Peace and Grace, they should be for ever *the worse* for it; and have Reason to wish, throughout all Eternity, they had never seen the Faces, nor heard the Voices, of those that brought it, but had been numbered among the Sinners of *Tyre and Sidon*, of *Sodom and Gomorrah* ‡.

If we do not, on the express Authority of *our Lord*, believe this to be the Case with regard to *impenitent Sinners* under the *Gospel*, we are not *Christians* of the lowest Class. But if we do believe it, and are not affected with it, so far as to endeavour their Recovery, I see not how any Regard to our own Temporal Interest, or that of others, can entitle us to the Character, either of *Prudence*, or *Humanity*; even tho' we had not been distinguished by a *publick Office* in the *Church*,

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but

* Jer. viii. 22. † John iii. 36. ‡ Mat. x. 15. xi. 22.

but had pass'd thro' Life in the Station of the Obscurest among our *Hearers*. But 'tis impossible I should do Justice to my Argument, if I do not urge,

4. The Consideration of "the peculiar *Obligations* we are under, to endeavour the *Preservation of Souls*, not only in Virtue of our *Experience as Christians*, but of our *Office as Ministers*."

If we were only to consider our *Experiences*; as we are *Christians*, if we have any Thing more than the empty Name, that Consideration might certainly afford us a very tender Argument, to awaken our *Compassion* to the *Souls* of others. We know what it is ourselves, to be upon the Brink of *Destruction*, and in that sad Circumstance to obtain *Mercy*; and shall we not extend *Mercy* to others? We have looked to *Jesus*, that we might live; and shall we not point him out to them? We have tasted that the Lord is gracious; and shall we not desire to communicate the same happy *Relish of his Grace* to all about us? He has magnified the Riches of his *pardon-ing Love* to us; and shall we not, with *David*, resolve, we will endeavour to teach *Transgressors his Ways*, and labour to promote the *Conversion of Sinners unto him**? Even now is he keeping our *Souls*: His *Visitation preserves our Spirits* †; and, as it is by his *Grace* that we are what we are ‡, 'tis by having obtained *Help from him*, that we continue unto this Day §: And shall his *Grace*, daily bestowed upon us, be in vain †? And shall not we have *Compassion on our Fellow-Servants*, as our Lord continually hath *Pity on us* §?

But our *Office*, as *Ministers*, compleats the *Obligation*, when we consider the *View* in which the *Word of God* represents that Office, and the *View* in which we ourselves have received it.

As for the former of these, we are all acquainted with those *Representations*, and it is greatly to be wished, for our own *Sake*, and that of our *People*, they may be very familiar to our *Minds*. Let us often listen with becoming *Attention* to the blessed *God* as speaking to us, in those *Words* which he once addressed to the Prophet *Ezekiel*, that faithful approved *Servant* of the Lord;

* Psal. li. 13.

† Job x. 12.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 10.

§ Acts xxvi. 22.

§ Mat. xviii. 33.

Lord; Son of Man, 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 Evil Way TO SAVE HIS LIFE; the same wicked Man shall dye in his Iniquity, but HIS BLOOD WILL I REQUIRE AT THINE HAND*. And with apparent Reason may the Centinel be punished, for the Desolation which the Enemy makes, while instead of watching he sleeps.

We are elsewhere represented as Men of God †, as Soldiers of Jesus Christ ‡, as made Overseers, or Bishops, by the Holy Ghost ||, as Under-Shepherds in Subordination to Christ, the great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls §: And ought not the Thought, gentle as it is, to awaken us to a diligent Inspection over the Sheep he has committed to our Care? Otherwise, we are but Images of Shepherds; as it is represented in those lively and awful Words of God by Zechariah**, which methinks might strike Terror and Trembling into many, who in the Eye of the World may seem the happiest of their Brethren: *Woe to the Idol Shepherd, that leaveth the Flock: The Sword of Divine Vengeance, which by his Negligence he has justly incurred, shall be upon his Arm, and upon his right Eye; upon that Eye, which should have watched over the Flock, and that Arm, which should have been stretched out for its Rescue; so that he shall be deprived of those Capacities he abused, and be made miserable in Proportion to that Abuse; for his Arm shall be clean dried up, and his Right Eye shall be utterly darkened.*

Such we know are the pathetick Views, which the Scripture gives us of our Office, and of the Guilt and Danger attending the Neglect.

I might, if my Time would admit, farther urge the Views, with which we have ourselves received it, and engaged in it. Most of us, when we undertook the Pastoral Charge, solemnly recorded our Vows before God; "that we would endeavour, with all Diligence" and Zeal, to attend to the Services of this holy Func-
"tion;

* Ezek. iii. 17, 18.

† 1 Tim. vi. 11.

‡ 2 Tim.

ii. 3. || Acts xx. 23.

§ 1 Pet. ii. 25.

** Zech. xi. 17.

“*tion*; that we would *be instant in Season, and out of Season**, and labour to discharge the *private*, as well as *publick Duties* of the *Ministerial Life*.” These *Vows of God* are upon us; and every *Ordination* of any of our *Brethren*, at which we assist, adds a farther, and solemn *Obligation* to them. Let us therefore take the greatest *Care*, that we do not *deal deceitfully, and unfaithfully*, both with *God, and Man*. For it is most evident, that though the *Neglect* of immortal *Souls* is *very criminal* in every rational *Creature*, it is most of all so *in us*, who have so deliberately, and so publickly, undertaken the *Charge* of them.

It would indeed, in this *Case*, not only be *Crucity* to them, but the basest *Treachery* and *Ingratitude* to our great *Lord*, who has lodged such a *Trust* in our *Hands*; a *Trust*, which evidently lies so near his *Heart*. Having *redeemed* his *People* with his *own Blood* †, he commits them to our *Care*; and having acquired to himself the most tender *Claim* to our *Love* that can be imagined, he graciously requires this *Evidence* of it, that we should *feed his Sheep, yea, his Lambs* ‡; so putting our *Office* in the most amiable and gentle *View*, and bringing in every *Sentiment* of *grateful Friendship* to excite our *Diligence* in it.

However we may regard it, I doubt not, but our *blest Redeemer* considers it, as the greatest *Favour*, and *Honour*, he could have conferred upon us; that being returned to his *Throne* in the *Heavens*, he should *chuse us* to negotiate his *Cause* and *Interest* on *Earth*, and should consign over to our immediate *Care* that *Gospel* he brought down from *Heaven*, and those *Souls* which he died to *save*; and that he should make it the delightful *Labour* of our *Life*, to follow him in his *own Profession* and *Employment*, to be of all our *Fellow-Creatures*, his most immediate *Representatives*, and, in humble *Subordination* to him, *Saviours of Men*. Does not the very *Mention* of it cause our *Hearts* to glow, with a fervent *Desire*, and generous *Ambition*, of answering *so high a Confidence*? Could any one of us endure the *Thought* of *betraying it*?

How

* 2 Tim. iv. 2.

† Acts xx. 28.

‡ John xxi. 15, 16.

How could we, in that Case, *lift up our Faces before him*, when we shall, as we certainly must, *see him Eye to Eye* *. Yes, my Brethren, let us every Hour recollect it; our Master will, ere long, come, and reckon with us †: He will render to every Man according to his Works, as my Text expresses it in exact Harmony with the Language of the *New Testament* ‡. And which of us would not then wish to *appear before him*, as those that have been faithfully attached to his Cause, and have distinguished themselves by a Zeal for his Service? Shall we then, any of us, repent of our *Activity* in so good a Work? Shall we wish, that we had given more of our Time to the Pursuit of *Secular Interest*, or the *Curiosities of Literature*, and less to the immediate Care of Souls? Oh, my Brethren, let us be wise in Time. We have but *one Life* to spend on Earth; and that a very short one too: Let us make our best of it; and lay it out in such Kind of *Employments*, as we do verily believe will give us *most Satisfaction* in the *closing Moments* of it, and when *Eternity* is opening upon us. 'Tis easy to form plausible *Excuses* for a *different Conduct*: But our own Hearts and Consciences would answer us, if we would seriously ask them, what *that Course of Life* in the *Ministerial Office* is, which will then afford the *most comfortable Review*, and through the Riches of Divine Grace the *most pleasing Prospect*.—I should now proceed,

III. To the farther *Application* of these Things, in some *Practical Inferences* from them:

But what I have already said, has been so copious, and so practical, as not to leave Room to pursue such *Inferences* at large.

You have all, I doubt not, prevented me, in reflecting on the Reason we have to *humble ourselves deeply* in the Presence of the blessed God, while we remember our *Faults this Day* ||. I do not, indeed, at all question, but that many of us have set before our People *Life and Death* §; and have, in our *publick Addresses*, urged their Return to God, by the various Considerations of *Terror*, and of *Love*, which the *Thunders of Mount Sinai*, and

* Isa. lii. 8. † Matt. xxv. 19. ‡ Matt. xxi. 27. Rom. ii. 6. Rev. xxii. 12. || Gen. xli. 9. § Deut. xxx. 15.

and the *Grace of Mount Zion*, have taught us. We have, on great Occasions, *visited them*, and entered into some *serious Discourse* with them; and have *often*, and I would hope, more or less *daily*, borne them on our *Hearts* before God, in our Seasons of devout *Retirement*. Blessed be God, that in these Instances, we have, in any Degree, *approved ourselves faithful!* It must give us Pleasure in the Review. But, Oh, why have not our *Prayers* been more frequently presented, and more importunately enforced? Why have we not been more serious, and more pressing, in our *private Addresses* to them, and more attentive in our *Contrivances*, if I may so express it, to *catch them* * in the *Net of the Gospel?* Let us ask our own Consciences, this Day, as in the Presence of God, if there be not Reason to apprehend, that some, who were once our *Hearers*, and it may be our *dear Friends* too, have *perished through our Neglect*; and are gone to Eternal Destruction, for *Want of our* more prudent, more affectionate, and more zealous *Care for their Deliverance?* In these Instances, *my Brethren*, though it is dreadful to say it, and to think it, yet it is most certain, that *we have been, in part, accessory to their Ruin*; and have Reason to say, with trembling Hearts, and with weeping Eyes, *Deliver us from Blood-guiltiness*, from the Blood of these unhappy Souls, *Oh God, thou God of our Salvation* †! And we have Need, with all possible Earnestness, to renew our Application to the *Blood and Righteousness of a Redeemer*; not daring to mention *any Services of our own*, as Matter of Confidence in his Presence; how highly soever *others* may have esteemed them, who candidly look on the *little we do*, and perhaps make more charitable *Excuses* for our *Neglect*, than *we ourselves* can dare to urge before God. Let the Remembrance of these Things be for a *Lamentation*: And while they are so,

Let us seriously consider, *what Methods* are to be taken, to prevent such Things for the Time to come.

They that have *perished*, have *perished for ever*, and are far beyond the Reach of our *Labours*, and our *Prayers*. But Multitudes to this Day surround us, who

* Luke v. 10.

† Psal. li. 14.

who stand exposed to the same Danger, and on the very Brink of the same Ruin. And besides these *dying Sinners*, who are the most compassionate Objects, which the Eye of *Man*, or of *God*, beholds on this Earth of ours; how many *languishing Christians* demand our Assistance? Or, if they do not expressly demand it, appear so much the more to need it? Let us look round, *my Brethren*, I will not say, upon the *Nation* in general, but on the *Churches* under our immediate Care; and say, whether the *Face of them* is such, as becomes the Societies of those, whom the *Son of God* has redeemed with his own Blood; and of those, that call themselves the *Disciples*, and *Members*, of a once crucified, and now glorified *Jesus*? Is their whole *Temper* and *Conduct* formed upon the Model of his *Gospel*? Are they such, as we would desire to present them before the Presence of his *Glory*? What is wanting, cannot be numbered; and, perhaps, we may be ready, too rashly, to conclude, that what is crooked, cannot be made straight*. Nevertheless, let us remember, 'tis our *Duty* to attempt it, as prudently, as immediately, and as resolutely as we can. Many admirable *Advices* for that Purpose our *Fathers* and *Brethren* have given us; particularly *Dr. Watts*, in the *First Part* of his *Humble Attempt for the Revival of Religion*, and *Mr. Some*, in his *Sermon on the same Subject*: Excellent Treatises, which reduced into Practice would soon produce the noblest Effects.

That those important *Instructions* may be reviewed, and accommodated to present *Circumstances*, with such *Additions* as those *Circumstances* require, we are, this Day, having united our *Prayers*, to unite our *Counsels*. I will not anticipate what I have to offer to your *Consideration* in the more *private Conference*, on which we are quickly to enter. To form proper *Measures*, will be comparatively easy: To carry them strenuously into *Execution*, will be the great Exercise of our *Wisdom* and *Piety*: May proportionable *Grace* be given to animate us, and to dispose them that are committed to our *Care*, to fall in with us in all our Attempts, for the Honour of *God*, and for their *Edification* and *Comfort*!

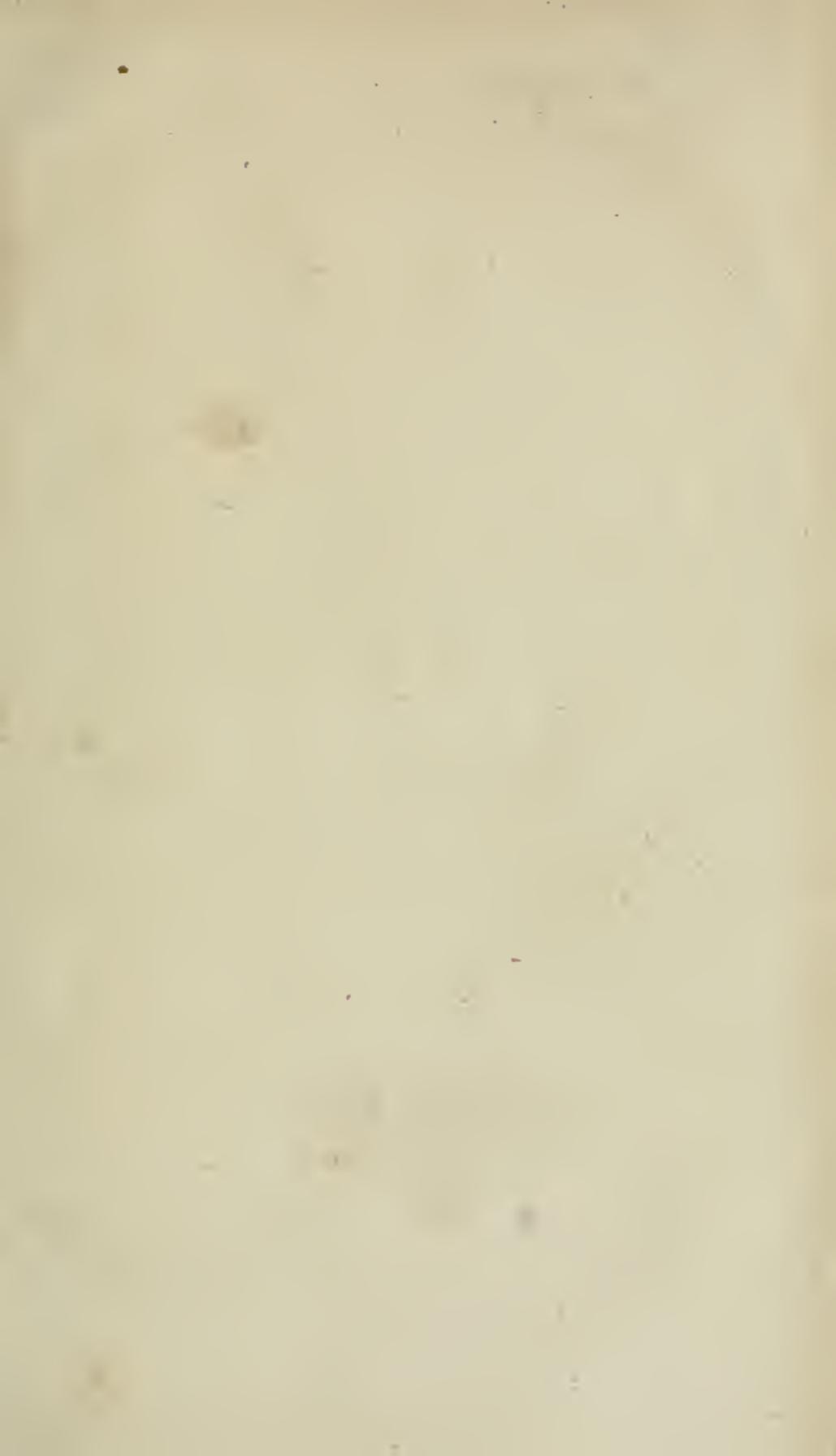
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* Eccles. i. 15.

We shall esteem it, *my Friends*, a very happy *Omen*, if *your Hearts* be *with ours* on this *Occasion*; and if *you* help forward so good, and so necessary a *Design*, by *your Prayers* to *God for us*. If *you* are sincere and affectionate in them, we may humbly hope, that he, of *whom we ask Wisdom*, will graciously *impart it to us*; and may assure ourselves, that *you* will not only *bear with us* in the plainest *Addresses to you*, which *Fidelity* may oblige us to make; but will *add all the Weight* of your *Countenance and Interest*, to support us in *our Applications to others*, whether *publick or private*. And I have a chearful *Confidence*, that all *will not be in vain*; but that he, who thus powerfully awakens our *Minds*, will so *succeed our Labours*, that many, whom we find under a *Sentence of Condemnation*, and *ready to perish* by it, will receive *the Forgiveness of their Sins*; will be recovered to a *Spiritual and Divine Life*; and, as the happy *Consequence* of all, will at length be fixed *with us*, and *with you*, in the *Regions of Everlasting Security and Glory*. *Amen!*

The END of the FIRST VOLUME.





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