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SERMONS

AND

DISCOURSES

ON THE
Following SUBJECTS,

V I Z.

On the Errors and Imperfections of Christians.	On the Obligation of the Professors of Christianity to celebrate the Lord's-Supper.
On the Nature of Christ's Kingdom.	Devotional Exercises relating to the Lord's-Supper.
The Duty and Advantages of Secret Prayer.	The Regulation of Diversions.
Two Essays on Prayer.	
On the Nature and Design of the Lord's-Supper.	

By the Reverend Mr. HENRY GROVE,
of TAUNTON.

V O L. II.

L O N D O N:

Printed and Sold by JAMES WAUGH, at the
Turk's Head in Gracechurch-street.

M D C C X L V I I.



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OF THE
SECOND VOLUME.

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THE
Friendly Monitor;
OR THREE
SERMONS,
Pointing out Some of those
Errors and Imperfections
IN THE
CONDUCT
OF
CHRISTIANS,

By which they lessen both
THEIR OWN REPUTATION
And THAT of
RELIGION.
1728.





T H E
P R E F A C E.



EXT to the knowledge of God in Christ, the knowledge most desirable, and of the highest importance to us, is the knowledge of ourselves. Neither of these without the other can be complete, or serve any valuable purpose. The ground of which inseparable connection between the knowledge of God, and of man, are those necessary relations which the Beings themselves have one to the other. For how can we act conformably to these relations, if we have not first a good understanding of our own nature, and of the nature and will of our great Creator?

The knowledge which every man is concerned to get of himself, is either more general, or particular. The general knowledge of a man's self, is attained by the consideration of those things in which all men agree, without the least distinction betwixt them; such as the dignity of the human nature in its primitive state, the corruption of it by sin, the hopeless state of guilt and impotence in which we lie, without the Grace of God justifying, and sanctifying us. This knowledge is of absolute necessity. The other knowledge of ourselves, which is more particular and private, consists in an intimate acquaintance with our own distinguishing character, our state and condition in a religious capacity, our prevailing inclinations, our attainments and defects, what there is commendable in us, and worthy to be cherished, and what that is otherwise. Now tho' we cannot say of this knowledge, as of the former, that it is essentially necessary, yet we may say, that it is apparently useful, how apt soever one might be to conclude the contrary from its being so generally neglected.

Who that loves himself, in the right manner, would not willingly correct every thing that needs correction in his notions, or temper, or conduct? And improve whatever deserves, and is capable of improvement? Were it only on this reflection, that the greater his spiritual perfection is, the greater will be his self-enjoy-

enjoyment; and the fewer his slips and frailties, the fewer will be his disgusts, and the less occasion he will have to blame and condemn himself? And when to this argument of self-love, we further add that which is drawn from the love of God, and our neighbour, how observant should we be of our behaviour; how careful to remark, and how ready to mend, the least errors, tho' they are but as motes in the eye, that may render us less capable of glorifying the one, and edifying the other. When we attend to these things, we shall think it a little surprizing, that, with regard to a great many Christians, as long as they keep themselves from essential errors, and gross faults, it is the least part of their care, how they shall reform the defects of their temper, and model their conversation so, as to conquer the prejudices, and gain the favourable opinion of those, who are strangers, and enemies to serious Religion. By this means, it often happens, that the infirmities and follies of the Man very much obscure the graces of the Christian, and weaken their influence.

A great part of the following Sermons, tho' not composed for such an occasion, nor, as some will be apt to think, very well fitted to it, was preached at Lyme in Dorsetshire, April 23. 1728, before an Assembly of Ministers; the Person, who was to have performed that part, having failed them. They were so well pleased with the subject, as not only to excuse

the defects of the Sermon, but to join in a request that it might be made more publick; adding this reason for it, which I own is one of the strongest they could have used with me, "that such a Discourse was needed, and might " be of some service."

I am very sensible it is an ungrateful work I have here undertaken. But if any find themselves touched, I hope they will consider the goodness of my intention, and, for the sake of that, pardon the liberty I have used. I have endeavoured to handle each case with all the tenderness consistent with plain dealing; nor is it, God knows, to upbraid any, that I shew them their imperfections; or from a fond conceit of my being without fault myself; but out of a sincere regard to Religion, which I should be glad to see appear with greater advantage in the lives of good men. That the Sermons here offered to the publick may contribute to this important end, the Author commends them to the divine blessing; and intreats those, into whose hands they shall come, laying aside all prejudice, to read them with a resolution of making them as useful to themselves as they can.





S E R M O N I.

On the Errors and Imperfections of
Christians.

R O M. XIV. 16.

Let not then your good be evil spoken of:



O difficult a thing is it to persuade people to change old customs, tho' for much better, that of the *Jews*, who embraced *Christianity*, the greater part, like the servant that loved his master, and would not go out free, were not very willing to accept of the the liberty offered them by the Gospel, from the heavy yoke of ceremonial institutions.

tions. It required some time to wean them from their prejudices in favour of the Religion they had been bred up in; by which means it came to pass, that in the Christian Church (which consisted of converts of all sorts, from *Heathenism*, and *Judaism*, of stronger, and of weaker, judgments) there was, from the first plantation of it, a diversity of opinions and usages; some adhering to the distinction which the law had made between meats and days; others paying no manner of regard to it, as rightly apprehending it to be abolished by Christ. So the *Apostle* observes in the beginning of this Chapter, that while *One believeth he may eat all things; another who is weak, eateth herbs; that is, he will take up with a dinner of herbs, rather than touch any kind of food, forbidden by the law. One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike.* ver. 2 and 5. In this difference of sentiments, the duty of the contending parties lay in two things; *First*, in forbearing all rash and uncharitable reflections upon each other; and *Secondly*, in following after the things wherewith they might one edify another. They were not only to consider things in their intrinsic nature, but in their circumstances; and to consult the interest of souls, and of Religion. See the 3d, the 13th and 19th verses. This latter part of the advice did more particularly concern such as, having
just

just notions of Christian Liberty, laboured not under those mistakes and scruples which perplexed and entangled others. They knew that *all things are lawful*, which were so before the law of ceremonies made them otherwise; but ought not to forget, that *all things are not expedient*. They were not to abuse their liberty by an unseasonable ostentation of it, to the hurt and offence of their christian brother. *Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died.* ver. 15. Do not be the occasion of another man's turning apostate to Christianity, or acting against his conscience, rather than deny thyself in so small a matter; reconcile him by *arguments*, if thou art able, to thy innocent freedoms; but if thy *arguments* convince him not, let not thy *example* be a stumbling-block to him; either by tempting him to do what in his conscience he believes not to be lawful; or by provoking him, out of spite and resentment at thy behaviour, to forsake, or stand more loose and indifferent to, the profession of that Religion, which, you say, gives you those offensive indulgences. After which it follows, *Let not then your good be evil spoken of.* It is good that every man should be acquainted with *the liberty, wherewith Christ hath made him free, and that he should stand fast in this liberty*; but then, let him endeavour so to order his conversation and behaviour, as not to prejudice the common cause, and to give
any

any handle for speaking evil of a thing, which, rightly used, is very good. This is the connection and meaning of the Text. But without confining myself to this particular case, I shall, in discoursing on these words, make them as generally instructive as I am able, and to this end, lay down the following Doctrine.

It is the duty of all professing Christianity to be exceeding careful that what is good in itself do not, through some fault of theirs, pass under an ill name.

By *good* we are chiefly to understand that which is of a *moral* and *spiritual* kind; not merely *desirable*, which we call *natural good*, but *laudable*, and such as renders a person worthy of respect and commendation; the *good* of *virtue*, of *grace*, and *holiness*; the *good* that consists in the conformity of the temper, or actions and behaviour, to the law of Reason, and the rules of the Gospel, to the divine nature, and the human.

In handling this subject, I shall, *First*, somewhat largely open, and explain the Doctrine; and then, *Secondly*, prove and enforce it by some proper considerations.

I. I shall open the Doctrine under these two heads, *namely*, as the duty relates to Christians in general; and as it more particularly affects those that *love the Lord Jesus in sincerity*.

I. I shall

I. I shall consider the advice, as it respects indifferently all the professors of the Gospel. And very necessary it is for all to be cautioned against furnishing occasion for *their good to be evil spoken of*. Give me leave to instance in some particulars.

1. *Christianity* is undoubtedly a very good thing; and a very good thing it is to make a publick profession of it; and yet, if Christians do not take care to live according to their Religion, they must expect, that both that, and their profession of it too, will be *evil spoken of*; the former unjustly, the latter with too much reason. From the very beginning there were those who disgraced the *Christian Name*, by sheltering their corruptions and immoralities under it. Whence proceeded such complaints as these. ^a *Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies to the cross of Christ.* ^b *Many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.* This, no doubt, did very much retard the progress of the Gospel, which, tho' in those times it was really wonderful, would have been more remarkable still, if they that came over to it had, with their old *errors*, more universally forsaken their old *vices* too. Christianity is too strict, too pure and divine a Religion, to be with-

^a Phil. iii. 18.

^b 2 Pet. ii. 2.

without enemies in such a world as this. While Christianity declares open war against the lusts and passions of men, these lusts will, in revenge, put them on observing whatever may be to the disadvantage of Christianity, and seems to justify them in their opposition to it; particularly, the wicked lives of all who call themselves Christians, and are not. “ These, (will they say) are faints of
 “ the earth; the generation that are pure in
 “ their own eyes; see the boasted efficacy
 “ of their Religion! They tell us of strange
 “ things accomplished by it; how it raises
 “ human nature, and transforms men into
 “ angels; but if they can produce no better
 “ proofs of it than the effects it hath in
 “ them, we must be excused if we think
 “ their Religion to be as human, or rather,
 “ to be as much a cheat and an imposture, as
 “ any of those Religions which they so se-
 “ verely condemn.”

Justin Martyr *, one of the first *Apolo-*
gists for Christianity, found himself obliged
 to take notice of the same objection. “ They,
 “ among us, that live not as they should, may
 “ have exposed the whole body of Christians
 “ to reproach; but (adds he) very unreason-
 “ ably, since you must be sensible that some
 “ who take the name and habit of Philo-
 “ sophers, do nothing that is worthy of their
 “ profession; either, therefore, the objection
 “ holds

* *Apol.* I.

“ holds against Christianity and Philosophy
“ both, or against neither.” But tho’ it be very unreasonable to make mens *personal* characters, how bad soever, an objection against their Religion, yet it is such an objection as nothing will effectually silence but greater care, in the professors of the Gospel, to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. And this is one principal cause why Christians, who live in heathen countries, or intermingled with heathens, can do no more good upon them by all their disputes, and discourses, finding them invincibly set against a change of their Religion on this very account*. For to what purpose should they embrace a *new* Religion, and continue the *same* men? If they do not grow worse. Indeed, as in this Nation the Christian Religion is established, and few openly profess to disbelieve it, there may not seem to be the like danger from the corruptions of Christians to the cause of Christianity itself: but then, if we consider the *sceptical* humour that prevails among us, and that nothing promotes it more than the little influence which Christianity hath upon the lives and tempers of men, we shall acknowledge it to be every one’s concern, who wishes well to his Religion, to be more watchful over his conduct. But, alas, what reason can we have to hope,
that

* *Perry’s* account of *Muscovy*, and the account of the success of the *Danish* Missionaries.

that men, who will not be deterred from a sinful course by considerations of their own guilt and danger, will be much moved by arguments taken from the credit of Religion! It is, however, fit that such persons should be told that what Religion loses of its esteem by the dishonour they do it, shall be charged to their account; and that together with the credit of Religion they forfeit their own much more; and cannot wonder if the pretences they make to Religion are treated with contempt and ridicule. A *wicked man* is a dishonourable character, but a *wicked professor* is much worse; nor must they think to maintain their reputation in the world, who do so much to sink the reputation of their most holy faith. As the sin of *° Eli's sons* was great in that *they caused men to abhor the offering of the Lord*, so through the just judgment of God it fell heavy on themselves; for *them that honour him, God will honour, but they that despise him shall be lightly esteemed.*

2. Zeal for that which is good, is a good thing, and yet is many times in danger of being *evil spoken of*; particularly, if it be an *ignorant* zeal, or not *impartial* and *uniform*. To be zealously affected for a thing, and hardly know *why*, or *for what*; to espouse a good cause, but without good reason; (which is not only very possible, but very common) and be able to say no more for the *truth*,
than

than the deluded people did for their *idol*, when they ^dcried out with one voice for the space of two hours together---*Great is Diana of the Ephesians*---to be led by such an ignorant zeal is the ready way to expose the best cause in the world; for if the cause be judged of by the imperfections of the persons embarked in it, (which is the usual method of proceeding) the truth itself will unavoidably suffer in such hands, and be reckoned destitute of all arguments to support it, because they that are warmest for it are able to produce none. Or, if it should so happen that the cause is never the worse spoken of for our ignorance, yet our zeal will; which every one will be ready to attribute to pride, or passion, or interest, or party-prejudice, or hazard; and to conclude, would have been the same, if education or accident had thrown us on the other side; by which means, the benefit of the example, which our zeal might otherwise have afforded, will be lost; and which is worse, zeal shall come to be regarded as no virtue, but made a term of reproach; as the word *Orthodoxy* hath been from much the same cause. We should therefore acquaint ourselves with the goodness of those things for which we express a zeal; that if they are excellent, we may discern their excellency: we should yield God and Religion a *reasonable service*, and have some

^d Acts xix. 34.

some just and sufficient ground for preferring one opinion and way to another. And as our zeal, though for that which is good, will pass under an ill name, if it be joined with ignorance, so will it too, if it be not *impartial* and *uniform*. A zeal that is restrained to some things, and overlooks others, which are of equal, or greater, goodness and necessity, will never gain us much reputation.

Thus some, who contend earnestly for the *truth*, shall have no concern at all for *peace* and *purity*, for *liberty* and *charity*. Their behaviour is turbulent, pragmatistical, and contentious, their conversation loose and scandalous, their principles narrow and rigid, and their temper fitted for persecution, if the name was not become so odious. Others, again, are mighty *advocates* for christian *liberty* and *charity*, and as great *strangers* to christian *holiness*. They list themselves on the side of liberty and charity, not so much out of love to these things, as indifference to the truth, or their being secretly of opinions contrary to those that are received. *Gallio's* notion of the quarrel between the *Jews* and the Apostle *Paul*, that it was only ° a *question of words and names*, is too much theirs in regard of the most momentous articles of Religion; and therefore, like him, they care for none of these things. Christianity is a consistent frame of doctrines and precepts;
and

and being so, we should endeavour to maintain the like constancy in our zeal for the several parts of it; not sacrificing some to others, and breaking one command for the sake of keeping another. It is, I confess, no easy matter to preserve the *golden mean* in *religious disputes*, and to hold the ballance so evenly betwixt truth on one hand, and peace and charity on the other, as to give all of them their due; but, difficult as this is, it is not impossible to those who are under the direction of the *Father of lights*, whose illuminations, in a dilligent and unbiaffed application to the means of knowledge and wisdom, they piously and constantly implore; and are acted by a spirit of sincerity, humility, and love, which they industriously cherish, and faithfully follow. Such as these *God will guide in judgement*, not only leading them into the knowledge of all necessary truth, but into the most proper methods of defending it. Which is a privilege they must not expect, who imitate a certain Bigot that I have read of. Being pressed by his adversary, and not able to answer his arguments, he promised to inquire after the truth with more care than he had done; but having beged of God to open his eyes, and discover the right way to him, he was, upon this single address, and without taking any further pains, filled with such an overflowing light and joy, as to determine

with himself, that he would never quit his former opinion. Worthy inquirers after truth, faith one, to think that God vouchsafes such large measures of his Spirit, in answer to a single prayer, as to qualify men to judge in the most difficult and important points without all danger of mistake!

3. The outward practice and appearance of any duty or grace is so far good; but, if attended with a manifest neglect of other essential duties, will certainly fall under censure. And can we think of no instances of this kind? Persons that make great pretensions to piety, but come miserably short in point of justice, and temperance? Or maintain a fair character, as to one, or both, of these latter, but appear to be utterly void of a spirit of piety? What shall we call the piety of the one sort, and the justice, and sobriety of the other? What is the former better than hypocrisy? Or the latter than worldly policy, common prudence, or a happiness of temper? The *Pharisees*, according to St. Paul's account of them, were the *strictest sect*^f of the *Jewish* Religion; they prayed long and often, and put on a shew of more than ordinary sanctity and mortification, insomuch that the common people were imposed upon by their dissimulation, and had as good an opinion of them, if that were possible, as they had of themselves.

And

^f Acts xxvi. 5.

And yet our Lord more than once joins *Pharisee* and *hypocrite* together, as if on one side they were terms equivalent, and every *Pharisee*, almost, was a *hypocrite*, though not every *hypocrite* a *Pharisee*. The reason was, that their extraordinary devotion was merely a cover to their cruelty, their oppression, and injustice. And very probably, the honestest and wiser part of the *Jews* had much the same notion of these men as our Saviour had, and knew how to distinguish what was only paint, and that none of the best, from real life. And it is not altogether unlikely that, as the sect of the *Sadducees* was directly opposite to that of the *Pharisees*, (one of them being as openly loose both in principles and practice as the other was professedly strict in both) so it owed its growth very much to it. The *Pharisees* were *hypocrites*, the *Sadducees* *libertines*; and what more common than for libertinism to be promoted and propagated by hypocrisy? The thing hath been usual, and is perfectly natural. Hypocrisy is such an odious thing, especially in Religion, that men fancy they can never get at too great a distance from it, and so, to avoid one extreme, run into another; and are, perhaps, secretly pleased to have so plausible an excuse for their contempt of *the form of godliness*.

If therefore we would have the world look on our piety as sincere and genuine, and with our own credit, would recover that of

Religion, and the duties of it, let us not wear our Religion only as people do their best clothes, on particular times and occasions; but bring it into our ordinary conduct, and make it the governing principle of our actions; let this animate and direct our conversation as the soul doth the body; with the duties of the *first table* let us join those of the *second*, and admit the moral virtues, if in no other quality, yet, as servants to wait on Religion, and fill up its train. The *Jews* were apt to lay such a stress on sacrificing as to think, however impure they were in their moral conversation, it was but to offer sacrifice and they should be clean; in opposition to which conceit of theirs it seems to be, that *Solomon* observes, ^ε *by mercy and truth iniquity is purged; and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.* And the *Prophet*, in answer to the question, ^η *wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? &c.* saith no more than this, *he hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.*

The same men attributed a strange virtue to saying many prayers, as if for every prayer they should have a certain number of sins struck off from the guilty score; wherein, they

^ε Prov. xvi. 6.

^η Micah vi. 6,—8.

they have a great many followers among the professors of Christianity. Such will do well to read and consider those words of the prophet, *When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear. Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, &c. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.* On the other hand, let not those who, not setting up for the character of godly persons, are free from the charge of religious craft, and dissimulation, boast too much of their moral virtues. They affect to be thought strictly just; and possibly, are so in their worldly trade and business; but are they *temperate in all things*? Perhaps they are both just and temperate; but shall we therefore praise them, and number them among the truly virtuous? We praise them not. As long as they are irreligious, it is not possible they should be sincerely virtuous; the outside of some virtues they may practise, but as to the substantial, vital part, are as entirely destitute of them, as they are of Religion and Piety. They practise no one virtue in obedience to the command of God, for then they would

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prac-

practise all; and wanting the fear, and love of God, they want the essential principle of all virtue, and the only thing that can preserve it in all assaults. Let the men of this denomination further reflect, that the persons, before mentioned, who attempt to divide *piety* from *mortality*, have not done the cause of *piety* a greater injury, than they by their naked, lifeless form of virtue, have done to *mortality*; so that while *piety*, in their account, is only the dress of a *Pharisee*, *mortality*, in return, is reckoned by others the accomplishment of a pagan; *grace* is supposed to be an enemy to *mortality*, and *mortality* to *grace*; though there be the strictest, and most inseparable, alliance between them; great numbers of combatants draw up on both sides, and engage with so much fierceness, as to give opportunity for a third sort to step in, that are equal enemies to Religion and Virtue, and destroy the foundations of both, by resolving them into opinion and custom, or interest and design.

4. It is good for every one to rely on Jesus Christ for salvation, the scripture having told us, that ^k *there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we can be saved.* But then this reliance must be in a way of *holiness* and *obedience*; or will neither be an honour to Christ, nor of any advantage to ourselves. And how deplorable

^k Acts iv. 12.

plorable then is it, that this presumptuous trust in Christ should be as common as a well-regulated trust is rare? Under a pretence of vindicating the doctrine of *free grace*, some have learned to discard *good works*. That *faith* justifies without *works*, is an opinion espoused by many good men, who, at the same time, have acknowledged that there is no being saved without them; on which account, we ought to make a wide difference between them and some loose Christians, who, that they may have peace, notwithstanding they go on in their evil ways, encourage themselves in the *merits* of Christ, and the *grace* of the Gospel; and venture to run the hazard of, what is called, a *death-bed repentance*, that is, of making their peace with God, by imploring his mercy, and committing themselves to the protection of their Saviour, with their last breath.

I shall not enter into any dispute with the former, but only desire them to consider, whether saying as they do, that the covenant of *grace* is *unconditional*, and *good works* are excluded not only as *meritorious* of justification, but, as having any influence at all towards it, hath not been the unhappy means of hardening some in their wicked courses; and whether, therefore, they ought to be so very fond of their scheme, in case there be any other which equally consults the honour of God's *grace*, without being liable to the

same abuse. To the latter, I shall not scruple to say, that no persons in the world reproach Christ, and faith in him, more than they do. They represent him as *a friend to publicans and sinners*, in much the same sense as the *Pharisees* accused him of being so; as if he delighted in such company, and had no zeal for the honour of God, and his law. There would be too much foundation for such a charge as this against our blessed Master, if there was any for that dependence which some have on the *merits* of Christ, who live in open contempt and violation of the commands of the Gospel. Supposing such men as these to have any real ground for their hopes, it must be said, that Christ is a friend of sinners, not because *he came to call them to repentance*, (in which sense he freely owns himself their friend) but even as sinners, whom he is willing to save *without* repentance; or upon such a repentance as is next to none. Whether they consider it or no, this is the plain language of their reliance on Christ in an unregenerate state. Our Saviour's words to the *Jews*, ¹*Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father; there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust: for had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me.* These words, I say, are with a little variation very applicable here. We need not accuse you to God, there is one that accuseth

¹ John v. 45, 46.

cuseth you, even Christ, in whom ye trust. You cannot trust more to your being the disciples of Christ, than the *Jews* did to their being the disciples of *Moses*, and yet their boasted zeal for the law of *Moses* would not justify them; nay, nor so much as prove that they truly believed in him. There is no doubt, but they believed the law of *Moses* to be divine; and why then does Christ upbraid them with the want of faith? The reason is, that not having a right notion of the law of *Moses*, which was intended as *a school-master to lead them unto Christ*, their faith was to all intents and purposes the same as no faith; which makes our Lord say, *Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me.* In like manner, we may address ourselves to those who glory in Christ Jesus, and talk much of their *faith* in him, while they take no care to keep his commandments, whatever you fancy, you do not believe in Christ, for if ye believed Christ, you would believe the necessity of a holy life, which his Gospel asserts, and insists upon, in so many places. What you call *your faith*, therefore, *is vain, and you are yet in your sins,*

I make no question but a great many have entertained dishonourable thoughts of the doctrines of *free grace*, and *justification by faith*, and of the *Christian Revelation* which teaches these doctrines, because of the ill
use

use that is made of them by multitudes professing the Gospel. They take it for granted that the doctrine of Christ's *satisfaction* for sin overthrows the necessity of holiness, and therefore reject it; as it is certain, they would have too much cause to do, was this its natural tendency; which is so far from being true, that there cannot be a more persuasive argument for our forsaking all sin, than that Christ, the Son of God shed his blood to expiate it. It is impossible, indeed, but *offences will come, but woe unto those men by whom the offence cometh.* And need I point them out? Must not the conscience of every wilful sinner, of every one that indulges his lusts, and yet will needs place confidence in the righteousness of Christ, tell him roundly, *Thou also art one of them?* It is owing to thee, and others like thee, that the Gospel hath suffered such contumelious usage.

I shall say no more of the several ways by which Christians, indifferently, may offend against the precept in the Text, but shall proceed,

II. To explain this duty, of behaving so that *our good be not evil spoken of*, as it particularly affects real Christians, or those that *love the Lord Jesus in sincerity.* All such are truly religious; this is essential to their character; and we know, that *pure undefiled*

undefiled religion before God is a good thing, the very best thing in the whole world. I am not now speaking of Religion as we find it in the Bible, where it shines, like the sun in the heavens, with an everlasting brightness, but as inwrought into the heart and soul. And here, Religion is an assemblage, or society of graces; lovely, if taken apart, most lovely and attractive considered in union. Religion is a conformity to the divine nature, an imitation of God in his moral perfections; that is, of the most amiable attributes of the most amiable and glorious Being. It was the happiness of man, in his first and best estate, that he was created in the likeness of God, and consequently, it must be a singular felicity to have this image or likeness restored, as it is in all the regenerate, though not in that perfection as it will be hereafter. The life of God in the soul, a vigorous principle of divine love, a rooted confirmed habit of holiness, an unaffected piety and goodness, an inclination to universal righteousness, a heavenly conversation; these are such things as no one will offer to speak against *directly*; the worst and most abandoned part of mankind would be ashamed to vent their hatred and spite in reproaches against these things themselves; and yet, they will with the greatest freedom inveigh against the persons in whom they are found. What the scripture

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ture calls *conversion, regeneration, grace, sanctification, religion*, and the like, they call, almost wheresoever they see it, folly, passion, ill-nature, hypocrisy, enthusiasm, superstition, pride, moroseness, and by a great many other such reproachful names. And how comes Religion to be thus evil spoken of? Is the *best* of things to suffer under some of the *worst* of names; especially when it hath a witness in every man's breast? We shall not mistake, if we say, that the root of this is *the enmity of the carnal mind against God*; which, because it dares not aim immediately at God himself, displays its rancour in persecuting his image, by *actions*, if they are in its power; if not, by opprobrious *words*. But then I must add, that good men themselves do too often afford a handle for this treatment, which would otherwise be so apparently the effect of envy and malice, that ill men would not so very often be guilty of it.

There are some, who we have reason to think are in the main upright, well-meaning Christians, that labour under considerable imperfections, which, tho' they do not make them forfeit their covenant-relation to God, and interest in him, have yet a most unhappy influence upon their character in the world. These the enemies of godliness gladly seize upon, and immediately to work they go, and make the most of them they possibly can,
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aggravating every slip, exposing every weakness, magnifying every defect, while they continue wilfully blind to those virtues which are intermingled with their blemishes, and with a good-natured and equitable judge, would compensate for them all. As a bad man is a spot in a publick society of Christians, so there are certain qualities and imperfections which are spots in the true Christian, and do very much stain, or hide, the beauty of his character. I shall reduce them under these four general heads---Some things that favour a little too much of Superstition and Enthusiasm----Indiscretions---Blemishes of a moral kind in their private conduct---and lastly, Defects in the social virtues.

1. There are sometimes found in good men certain things, which favour too much of *Superstition* and *Enthusiasm*. These spread such a cloud over their Religion, that the brightness of it cannot appear. Their friends, who have any thing of judgment and reflection, pity them for these weaknesses, and are heartily grieved for the prejudice they do the cause of Religion; while their enemies despise them, and their Religion too, and, having such an advantage given them, insult both in the most scornful manner. When Superstition is mixed with Religion, the almost unavoidable consequence is, that Religion shall be accounted, or at least treated, as Superstition. What-
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ever discovers a belief of God, and of superior invisible beings, but dark, and confused, and joined with absurd, extravagant, and ridiculous observances, altogether unworthy of God, unsuitable to his worship, and unbecoming that trust which we ought to repose in him, I call *Superstition*. Tho' real Christians (among us at least) can hardly fall into such gross Superstitions as gave beginning to *Atbeism* and *Mahometism*, yet there are lesser instances of the same temper, to which they are subject, and that have a bad effect on Religion, tho' not so bad as the former. Such as these following.

1. Having recourse to spells, and charms, and divinations, for the cure of bodily diseases, the discovery of things lost, or future; paying a mighty regard to omens; the observation of lucky, and unlucky days, and places, and the like. Superstition hath been the fruitful mother of many such idle practices, which Christians, for the credit of their Religion, not to say of their own understandings, should carefully avoid. All these things are among the relicks of Popery; we received them from the *Papists*, and they from the *Heathens*; so that if we trace them up to the beginning, we shall find that, on the father's side, the devil was the parent and inventor of them; and that these were some of the arts of his government, by which he kept mankind in bondage, stifled

led all sober rational sense of Religion, and led the deluded world in chains of ignorance to their own perdition. And therefore, was there no other argument that lay against them, yet for the *Author's* sake, we should *have no fellowship with these unfruitful works of darkness.* We may well call them *unfruitful*, for what fruit have we in them, but shame and sorrow? Shame, when we are made sensible of the folly of them; or sorrow and perplexity, as long as we continue to give them credit.

We are told by *Maimonides*, a learned Jew, that the application of any thing, or the use of any rite, for the production of any effect in plants, or bodies, where reason cannot discover the least shadow of a natural connection between the cause and the effects, their masters used to style, *the way of the Ammorites*; which they thought to be forbidden, *Levit. xviii. 3. after the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwell, shall ye not do; and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do, neither shall ye walk in their ordinances.* As for *Omens**, there is nothing so trivial, but a fancy, this way turned, will make it to be ominous; and as superstitious tempers are commonly fearful, the most slight occurrences, whether waking, or in our dreams, are received as messengers loaded with evil tidings. Such
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* See *Spencer of Prodigies.*

persons, indeed, are always in a dream, and fright themselves with their own imaginations, which have as little foundation in the reason of things, as those terrifying visions which fancy sets before us in sleep. By an endeavour to know *futurities*, we pry into things which God hath decreed to keep concealed. And when *secret things belong unto God*, what arrogance is it in us to attempt to wrest the knowledge of them from him? And what folly to think that what God hides, any of his creatures should be able to divulge? All nature must be silent, unless when instructed by the Author of nature to speak his mind. Nor are these things so harmless as may be imagined, being plainly enough included in that prohibition, which cannot be merely temporary, because not founded in reasons that are so---^m *Ye shall not use enchantment, nor observe times*---where the Hebrew word for using enchantment is thought likewise to import taking omens from the accidents that happen to us, as from sneezing, overturning the salt, from breaking the shoe-latchet, and such like things. And again, ⁿ *There shall not be found among you any one that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an inchanter*; that is, saith *Munster*, any one who inquires by signs or lots, whether it be proper to enter on a journey, or to begin an undertaking, as by the falling of a staff,

^m Lev. xix. 26.ⁿ Deut. xviii. 10.

staff, this way or that, the opening of a book on such and such words; and many other things of the same nature, which might be mentioned. And the word which we translate an *inchanter*, forbids the seeking the knowledge of any thing future by a curious attendance to any singular and unusual occurrence in common life. It is to be lamented that persons of a sober character should countenance these idle and groundless usages, to say no worse of them, which are of much the same species as those of which we have a solemn renunciation. ° *And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many also of them that used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men; &c.* The Christian Church found it necessary to condemn them, and the Fathers of the Church inveighed warmly against them, particularly, against what we may call *magical physick*, or the art of curing diseases by charms and amulets; tho' they sometimes seem to have disliked them as they were *pagan*, more than as they were *superstitious*, substituting christian spells in the room of those used by the heathens. For what is the believer's signing himself with the sign of the cross better, saying, *this is my armour, this my medicament*, which one of the Fathers gravely recommends?

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In short, to be influenced and governed by these superstitious imaginations, as some are, making them their rule, and building the quiet of their lives upon them, argues a weakness of mind, and makes others think less worthily of their *devotion*, for this very reason, as if that too were the effect of weakness and timidity. Let it be seen that we are free from those vain terrors, that the *scriptures* are our rule in matters of a religious concern, and our *reason* and *prudence* in other things. Our *reason* I say, and not our *imagination*, or *vulgar traditions*; that we have a firm belief of the Providence of God, and with a perfect composure of soul can trust ourselves and our affairs to its direction, neither amusing nor affrighting ourselves about things that have no foundation in Reason, and must therefore be confessed to owe all their authority to a superstitious fancy. Would Christians shew themselves to be men, and shake off the yoke that Superstition hath laid upon them in these, and other instances, they would soon recover a part of that reputation which Religion thro' their means hath lost.

2. Another instance of Superstition is laying a great deal of stress upon little things. I speak not this to dissuade any from a regard to the *least* things which they apprehend to be a part of Religion. I do not counsel them to despise them, because they

they are *comparatively* little. But then, they should have a care how they make them a part of Religion without good reason; and if they have reason to judge them so, should not therefore look upon them as of the essence of Religion, and of the utmost moment in it. The *Pharisees* would have been superstitious in *tithing mint, anise, and cummin*, altho' they had not neglected the *weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and truth*, supposing they had been as zealous for the one as for the other, and made them to belong equally to the foundations of Religion. Are there not some among the truly devout, that are fond of ceremonies to a degree of Superstition? And others, who, to avoid this sort of Superstition, run into another, by placing too much in the forbearance of all forms and ceremonies in the worship of God? Of each side men are not contented to think their own way the most perfect, but they would fain have the things about which they differ accounted matters of the last importance; and can hardly have charity for one another, or allow that God may have a favour for any but those of their own opinion. Some are so attached to a set of words and phrases, that all shall be deemed enemies to the doctrines of Christianity, who do not agree to express them exactly in the same manner they do. Perhaps they are words of hu-

man invention, the terms of a party, not of scripture, but being consecrated by time, they have a kind of religious veneration for them, and because they have been accustomed to them from their infancy cannot forbear making them a test of every one's foundness in the faith. Or supposing them to be taken from scripture, yet they may be misapplied, as to the meaning which they affix to them, or may be obscure and doubtful; for which reason it cannot be unlawful, and may be expedient, in some cases, to make use of others; since it is not at all credible that God hath confined us to the use of any words, when there is a manifest necessity that we should sometimes make use of other words to explain those of scripture. How common is it for persons to value themselves upon their non-compliance with the innocent customs of the world, in their habit and language; as if good breeding, and civility of manners broke in upon one or more the of Ten Commandments, and they should please God by being contrary to all other men? While others, forgetting what our Saviour hath said, that ^p *nothing which enters into a man defileth him*; and one of his Apostles, that ^q *every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if received with thanksgiving*; have the same abhorrence for *things strangled and blood*, as for the greater crimes mentioned together with

* Mark vii. 15.

q 1 Tim. iv. 4.

with them; not considering the difference in circumstances between us and the Christians of that time; and that even then, the Apostles were far from putting *fornication*, and eating ^r *things strangled*, on the same foot of unlawfulness; and the Christians, for whose sake they made this decree, as far from so understanding them.

The great things of Religion, the plain uncontroverted precepts are not a few, according to that of the Psalmist, ^r *thy commandment is exceeding broad*; and these are the things in which Christians should exercise themselves, and endeavour to excell. And as for lesser things, which they conceive to fall under a divine command, though they ought not to overlook them, or *break the least of God's commandments*, yet should they not strive for those disputable things, as for others that are on all hands agreed to be of very high moment and consequence. They who thus confound great things and little, plain and disputable, would do well to consider those words of the Apostle Paul. ^r *Meat commendeth us not to God; for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.* It is worth our observation, that the same Apostle saith this, who, in another place, tells us, ^u *he that doubteth is damned if he eat*, or rather is *condemned*

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Acts xv. 20.

^r Psal. cxix. 96.

1 Cor. viii. 8.

^u Rom. xiv. 23.

of himself, in doing what he cannot justify to his own conscience. From which two Places laid together we may form this rule, that tho' we must exactly follow the persuasions of conscience, in the most minute things, yet we must not imagine that these minuter things, in which good men themselves differ, are those that chiefly recommend us to the favour of God: we must not imagine, that we are really the better for them, or Christians, otherwise minded, the worse for not observing them. By bickering for lesser things with as much earnestness as for great, the professors of the Gospel teach the enemies of it to esteem the great things of Religion as little. And indeed, there is some danger that they themselves, if they happen to be convinced of their mistake, may go further than they should, and together with little things, be tempted to lay aside others that are greater, supposing that they may have been deceived in these latter, as well as in the former.

3. Were there the like occasion for it among us, as among some Christians, I should instance in mens practising unnecessary, and even hurtful rigours, as one of the bitter fruits of Superstition.—But of this in the next Discourse.





S E R M O N II.

On the Errors and Imperfections of
Christians.

R O M. XIV. 16.

Let not then your good be evil spoken of.

THE Doctrin laid down in the preceding Discourse was this.

It is the duty of all professing Christians to be exceeding careful that what is good in itself do not, through some fault of theirs, pass under an ill name.

In handling this Subject I proposed,

I. To open the Doctrin under these two heads, *namely*, as the duty relates to Christians in general; and as it more particularly affects those that *love the Lord Jesus in sincerity.*

1. I considered the advice as it respected indifferently all the professors of the Gospel.

I then passed on,

11. To explain the duty of behaving so that *our good be not evil spoken of*, as it particularly affects real Christians, or those that *love the Lord Jesus in sincerity*.

The imperfections of Christians I ranged under these particulars---Things that favour a little too much of Superstition and Enthusiasm---Indiscretions---Blemishes of a moral kind in their private conduct---Defects in the social virtues.

1. There are sometimes found in good men certain things which favour too much of *Superstition* and *Enthusiasm*. Such as the following.

1. Having recourse to spells and charms and divinations for the cure of bodily diseases, the discovery of things lost or future, the observation of lucky or unlucky days, and places, and the like.

2. Another instance of Superstition is laying a great deal of stress upon little things.

I now proceed.

3. Were there the like occasion for it among us, as among some Christians, I should instance in mens practising unnecessary and even hurtful rigours as one of the bitter
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fruits of Superstition. I should take notice of their emaciating the body, so as to render it more like the body of one whom God hath visited with some sore distemper, making his beauty to consume away like a moth, than of a person in health; of their scourgings, and other voluntary penances, forbearing all food for a long while together, and making it a point of conscience not to allow themselves in the use of any food that is pleasant. I might argue with them on the unreasonableness of such severities, since that can never be a duty which unfits us for other duties, nor can we at the same time be obliged to serve God with our bodies as well as our souls, and to use our bodies so hardly that they shall be disabled for this service. I might mind them, that this is being *righteous over-much*, and is often practised to compensate for being *over-much wicked* in other respects; a mortified countenance not always arguing a mortified heart, and well-disciplined passions; nor a shew of poverty in the life, true poverty of spirit. I might observe that such austerities, instead of ministering to devotion, extinguish the very life and spirit of it, by depressing the mind together with the body; that they have an ill effect on the tempers of men, to make them, morose, and sour, and uncharitable; that they reproach the goodness of God, present the world with a false idea of him, contradict

tradict that of the Apostle, that *God hath given us all things richly to enjoy*, and proceed on an utter mistake of Religion, the *instrumental* duties of which are, by them, set in the first place, and the *means* preferred to the *end*. These, I say, are some of the considerations, upon which I should enlarge, were I to speak in some places, and before some persons. But alas, I doubt there is but little occasion, among us, for admonishing men to spare themselves; they do it sure enough, and more than enough, without being advised to it. We seldom see among those who make conscience of their ways, any who carry the duty of mortification too far; it would be well if they carried it so far as they should. However, it may not be amiss to have just mentioned these things, that if any should be inclined to hearken to the dictates of Superstition, and to practise self-denials which God hath not commanded, (*which things, indeed, have a shew of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting, or pinching, the body*) or to question their own sincerity, or that of other Christians, because they do not live a life of such extreme mortification, they may by recollecting the little I have now said, and pursuing it in their own thoughts, be convinced that Superstition is at the bottom of such opinions and practices; and that by giving way to them they shall but make their Religion as
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lank and pining as their bodies, and provoke those that are no friends to serious godliness to brand it with the infamous name of Superstition.

The method in which we shall most consult our own comfort, and the credit of Religion, is by a sober, temperate use of bodily refreshments, joined with such occasional self-denials, as *conscience* persuades, and *prudence* regulates; by means of which the soul is preserved in greater vigour, and hath at once a freer enjoyment of itself, and more absolute command over the body. The great design of all the duties, and institutions of Religion, is to purify and exalt the spiritual part of man, to lessen the temptations of the fleshly part, and assist him in subduing them, to mortify sin, and to invigorate and strengthen gracious principles, to render men useful in this world, and to fit them for a better. And this being the great design of Religion, such a treatment of the body, and such measures in regard of its enjoyments, are most advisable, as best answer this design. And when mortification is thus conducted, it will be virtue that no good Christian need be ashamed of.

4. There is more Superstition than some good people are aware of, in indulging to a gloomy melancholy temper, from a misapprehension that it is most agreeable to Religion,

ligion, and what God most delights in. “ These are your religious persons (will the “ world say); their Religion hath made “ them mad; or they were half mad be- “ fore, and that hath made them religious. “ These are the ways of wisdom, as they “ will have it; and of pleasantness and peace, “ in which those that travel are utter stran- “ gers to pleasure, mere mopes, and sta- “ tues.” For the sake of Religion, there- fore, if not for their own, such dejected Christians should labour after a more serene and chearful habit of mind. What father would like to see his children, or what master his servants, go up and down, all the day long, pensive and mourning, as the manner is of some Christians? Would not persons unacquainted with the parent or master, in such a case, be ready to take up hard thoughts of them, and to pity those under their government? As *sorrow* is not the only passion belonging to the nature of man, so neither is it the only one that belongs to Religion. There is such an affection as *joy*, and such a duty as *praise* and *thanksgiving*; (else why are we commanded, *always, and in every thing to give thanks?*) and how this duty can be performed, as it ought to be, without this affection, I am not able to conceive. The same temper that disposeth for the exercises of praise and love and gratitude, which ought to be some
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of the chief and most constant employments of the Christian, must, I am sure, dispose him for a calm and pleasing enjoyment of himself, and of every thing else that can contribute to the true happiness of life. Nay, *joy* is not only what the Christian is obliged to, as it is the ground-work of praise, but is itself a distinct duty, and founded on a distinct command, ^a *Rejoyce evermore.* This *joy*, rightly explained, doth not refuse for its companion that *godly sorrow* for sin, which both by our blessed Lord himself, and by his Apostle hath the greatest encomiums bestowed upon it. On the contrary, mourning for sin, whether at the first entrance on the christian life, or in the progress of it, besides the satisfaction immediately accompanying it, is the great foundation of the pleasure which assurance brings with it, and of joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we receive the attouement. Such a *joy* as this I am pleading for, renders Religion more natural and agreeable to the religious person himself, and more amiable to the beholder. An air and deportment that shew a man to be easy in himself, and seldom fail of attending on a good conscience, where it is not under the restraint of wrong principles, will be most likely to gain converts to godliness; while the contrary demeanour, at the same time
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^a 1 Thef. v. 16.

that it betrays a superstitious and servile dread of the divine Being, will be apt to drive all but such as are of a sorrowful spirit from a way of life, that appears so dismal and unentertaining.

According to the *Jewish Masters*, a chearful composed frame of soul was one qualification for the *spirit of prophecy*; and is it not a very natural reflection which hath been made on this occasion, that what was a qualification for the *spirit of prophecy* cannot well be thought inconsistent with the *spirit of holiness*? The fruit of the Spirit is not only *love*, but *peace* and *joy*; which blessed fruit we cannot expect he should produce in us, as long as we do all that we are able to unfit ourselves for it, and refuse to be comforted. I will conclude this particular with observing, that an innocent pleasantness equally remote from a *light, frothy* carriage, and a *stupid, or pining, or sullen* melancholy, is what every Christian should strive to attain to, being in itself greatly desirable, and having a most friendly influence on our Religion, both in the speculation, and practice; preserving the *soundness of the judgment*, which will be one means of securing us from error, and making us more strong, and active, and vigorous, in the discharge of our duty.

5. Shall I propose it to be considered, whether the notions commonly received of
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the *Lord's-Supper* do not border too much upon Superstition? It is not my single opinion that they do, but of persons, not less eminent for their seriousness and devotion, than for their knowledge in divine things. Indeed the nature of this institution, as a *holy* festival, in which all present are supposed to have communion with one another, and with all saints, by mutual love, and with Jesus Christ, their common Lord and Head, by the participation of his Spirit, and by a living faith; together with that direction of the *Apostle*, that a man *examine himself*, and then eat of this bread and drink of this cup; these, I say, with some other arguments, that are well enough known, seem to restrain the right of communicating to such as make a credible profession of Christianity. For what have scandalous sinners, the openly loose and profane, whom the *Apostle Paul* pronounces ^b *the enemies of the cross of Christ*, to do, to meddle with an ordinance dedicated to the memory of this crucified Saviour, and intended for the peculiar consolation of his faithful friends and disciples? But still, as this sacrament hath the name of a ^c *feast*, though a feast to which none besides a select company are to be admitted, may we not carry our reverence for it *too far*? Or rather may we not mistake in the *nature* of the
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^b Phil. iii. 18.

^c 1 Cor v. 8.

reverence that we pay it? And is not this actually the case, as often as a secret terror possesseth us, in our approaches to it, and while we are receiving; incapacitating us for that holy delight in God, and cordial taste of his goodness, that confidence in the merits of Christ, that cheerfulness in his service, that flow of grateful affection on the remembrance of his dying love, and joyful expectation of his glorious appearance, which should ever accompany this blessed solemnity? In the primitive church the *Lord's-Supper* returned as often as the *Lord's-Day*; and the same writers, by whom we are informed of this, tell us further, that the more devout had their *daily communions*. But as the spirit of piety decayed, a false veneration for the ordinances of Christ was set up in the room of it; and that was made a mark of the church's mighty regard for an ordinance she had received from her Saviour, (I mean the *infrequency* of celebrating it) which really proceeded at first from the declension of her love to him, and zeal for his memory. What is it keeps so many from the Lord's-Table, who want not an inclination to come to it, nor, as charity would judge, the qualifications required to worthy receiving? What makes others scrupulously absent themselves, if they have been *hindered by the Providence of God* from spending the usual time in the exercises,

cises, of the closet and the church, that are preparatory to it? What is the reason of all this, but a wrong notion of this Sacrament, as if it was of a nature so much more sacred and awful than the other institutions of Religion, that people had better entirely neglect a plain and acknowledged command of their Saviour than run the least hazard of not observing it in the most worthy manner; and occasionally lose an opportunity of *shewing forth the death of Christ*, (though every such opportunity be *precious*, and may, for ought they know, be the *last*; and though in the temper and habit of their souls they are prepared) than omit, without any fault of their own, those rules of preparation which they have laid down to themselves? To the same leaven of Superstition, I doubt we are in part to ascribe those *unscriptural terms* which have been imposed in admission of church-members; as for instance, receiving in such a particular posture, and no other; laying before the church an account of those experiences which the persons presenting themselves for communion have had of a work of grace on their souls; that is, in short, doing things for which the imposers are not able to produce either the *command* or *example* of our Lord. The reason is, that out of their extraordinary respect for this ordinance, they are willing to do more to raise people's esteem of it,

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and to fence and guard it against intruders, than the Law-giver himself hath seen fit to do.

6. Ascribing to the *Spirit* of God what doth not belong to him, and is altogether unworthy of him, is a practice of very bad consequence. This is proper *Enthusiasm*, when men mistake the workings of their own minds, and even of their fancies and passions, for the immediate and extraordinary operations of the *Divine Spirit*. True, but weak Christians, such as have little judgment, or whose imaginations are too strong for it, are most liable to fall into this snare; especially, if they have a more than ordinary degree of pride in their natural temper, and this pride hath been cherished by false notions instilled into them in their education. There is without all doubt such a thing as *Divine Assistance*, to which every good man may safely lay claim, particularly, in the duty of Prayer. ^d *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*

However some have taken the liberty, very indecently, (that I may not say profanely)

^d Rom. viii. 26, 27.

fanelly) to ridicule the phrase of *Praying by the Spirit*, I can see nothing improper in it, if understood in a qualified sense, which I apprehend to be the sense of it in the 20th verse of *Jude's Epistle*; *Praying in, or by, the Holy Ghost*. He is stiled the *Spirit of Prayer and Supplication*; this is one great part of his office, to direct the people of God in framing those requests, for which the *Son*, as Mediator, procures a gracious audience. He irradiates the darkened mind, kindles and fans the holy fire; he fixes the attention, unites the heart, excites and maintains devout affections; nay, there is reason to believe he sometimes doth more than all this; my meaning is, that he brings things to remembrance which the Christian might otherwise forget, and leads the soul into a train of pious thoughts and meditations. Yet after all, we cannot be certain *when* he doth this; these operations of the *Spirit* not being easily distinguishable from those of our own rational faculties, which he imperceptibly guides, and influences. And when he doth it, it is not to encourage our sloth, but our diligence, and by way of blessing on our own previous endeavours.

In every age of the church such a dispensation of the *Spirit* as this may be allowed. Whether any thing more can, I very much question. I do not find the scripture affords

us any ground to look for it. And yet, some high-flown professors will talk in such a manner of their *Praying and Preaching, by the Spirit*, as implies the same immediate and miraculous communication of his gifts, as that promised by our Saviour to his Apostles; ^c *When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.* When they are called to officiate in the church, or in more private meetings of their fellow Christians, they would not be thought to disparage the assistance of the *Spirit* so much as to premeditate, and so many times utter such crude, unguarded, expressions (to say the least of them) as have not only exposed the way of *free Prayer* to contempt, but occasioned the making it a mark of fanaticism to talk much of the *Spirit's* assistance in Prayer, or any other duty. Can sober understanding Christians, that will give themselves leave to think the matter over a little, suppose that the *Spirit* usually dictates the particular thoughts, or at any time the very words and expressions; and this without any preparation and care on our part? Should Christians universally practise on such a notion as this, what wild work would it soon make? How little to the edification of the most piously disposed
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^c Mat. x. 19, 20.

would the offices of Religion be performed? And how much to the scandal and offence of others? It is very probable, that among other miraculous gifts which God was pleased to bestow on the Christian Church in the begining, this of *Prayer* was one; and that the Apostle *Paul* hath an eye to it, when he saith, ^f *I will Pray with the Spirit, and I will Pray with the Understanding also.* To *Pray with the Spirit*, was to Pray by a supernatural inspiration of the *Spirit*; as to *Pray with the Understanding*, was to exercise his own Understanding in Prayer, and to Pray so that those present might understand, and be profited by what was said. But since other miraculous gifts are ceased, I would fain know on what foundation they build, who contend for the continuance of this. I am very free to acknowledge the *Gift of Prayer*, provided it be not stretched too far; as it certainly is, when it leaves little or no room for distinction between the Prayers of *gifted* Christians at the first planting of the Gospel, and now that the Gospel hath been established for so many ages; and renders it needless to take any pains for our own improvement, to think or meditate before our Prayers, or to follow any rule and method in them.—So much for the *first head* of Imperfections, consisting of superstitious and enthusiastical weaknesses.

II. Very good Christians have their *Indiscretions*; and these such, as, together with themselves, to make their Religion less honourably thought of both in religious matters, and in their common affairs.

I. In religious matters it were to be wished some good men would exercise more *prudence* than they do. Our divine Master, in his first mission of the disciples, tells them, *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and scourge you in their synagogues.* If our Master himself be a proper judge, the characters of the *dove* and the *serpent* do very well agree together, and help out each other; notwithstanding which, some by their conduct seem to declare themselves of another opinion. With this counsel of our Saviour, we have the concurrence of his own practice and example, who, till his hour was come, would not put himself into the hands of his enemies, nor needlessly provoke them by too direct and publick an avowal of his being the Messiah, or Christ. It can be no part of *prudence*, every body will own, for a man to run himself upon inconveniences, which he may honourably decline; and if it be no part of *prudence*, I should think it is none
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* Mat. x. 16, 17.

of Religion; since Religion, which is a wise and reasonable thing, can never oblige us to any thing that is unreasonable and foolish; and whether it be any better to invite sufferings, when we are not called to them, and they will answer no valuable end, let any wise man judge. ^h *The prudent will keep silence in that time, for it is an evil time.* The Prophet thought that silence might sometimes be in season, and allows us to judge that such a season, when, through the iniquity of the times, we shall by speaking do ourselves more hurt, than we can propose to do others good. To those who neglect this caution we may say in the words of the royal preacher, ⁱ *Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise; why shouldest thou destroy thyself?* The advice of the Apostle should never be forgotten, ^k *Walk in wisdom towards them that are without, redeeming the time.* In your conversation with them, and demeanour towards them, you should be cautious how you give them any advantage against you by doing things which the wise and considerate will forbear. And there is the same, or greater, reason why Christians should walk in wisdom among *themselves*; consulting their common interest, and managing both themselves, and whatever controversies happen to arise among them, in such a manner, as not to weaken and ex-

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^h Amos v. 13. ⁱ Eccles. vii. 16. ^k Col. iv. 5.

pose the cause they espouse; that what is said of *Jerusalem* in a literal sense may be true of them in a moral, ¹ *Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together.* Hath not our Saviour further warned us against *throwing our pearls before swine, lest they turn again and rent us?* Mat. vii. 6. Which piece of prudence we overlook, when we reprove and advise persons, from whom we have no return to expect but hatred and ill language; as we are likewise guilty of great indiscretion, when we scatter our reproofs and admonitions without any consideration of time or place or manner, and talk religiously out of season. It is indeed very much to be lamented, that the duty of fraternal reproof is not more faithfully practised, and that useful and religious discourse, such as that recommended by the Apostle, *Eph. iv. 29.* is become so unfashionable. This is very true; but will not justify an indiscriminate use of these things; since the *wise man* hath observed, *there is a time for all things*; and it is the office of prudence to note and consult that time. We should never be guilty of a base and cowardly concealment of the truth, nor appear in any other garb than that of virtue and piety, in order to please the company, and be more conformable to the world; this would be an extreme of dangerous consequence to ourselves, as the other extreme, of making
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¹ Psal. cxxii. 3.

more shew than needs of our virtue and goodness, is differviceable to the cause of Religion, by provoking the envy and spite of ill men, or tempting them to censure us as proud and hypocritical, or as fantastical and silly.

2. Religion hath suffered by the *imprudence* of its followers in their ordinary conduct. There is an unlucky observation, (which, how true it is, I leave others to consider) that the most skilful in their several trades and professions are those that are least serious; and that your plain sober honest men are commonly but indifferent artists. The simple in a religious sense are charged with being the same in another that is not so creditable. It is pity it should be so; but so, I fear, it sometimes is. How unaccountable is the management of too many as to their worldly business? They seem to have no notion of forecast and design, nor to act by any rule. They blunder on in the dark, act hand over head, and, unless it be in the plainest cases, are continually making wrong steps, entangling and perplexing their affairs, and instead of advancing forward runing backward; not for want of natural capacity, which they are not answerable for, but of a little more thought and consideration. Certainly, when our Saviour tells us, that ^m *the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the chil-*

^m Luke xvi. 8.

children of light; his design was not to discourage any from being wise with respect to this world as well as the other. *Christian* prudence it is true demands the *first* place, and *moral* prudence the *second*, but *secular* prudence may be allowed the *third*. We should *seek first the kingdom of heaven*, and after that may mind other things. He that keeps a good conscience cannot be too prudent in common affairs. The best excuse, for the indiscretions and over-sights of good men in worldly things, is, that they are so intent on their higher concerns as to neglect those of a more trivial nature. They cannot at once be attentive to both. But why not? Industry in our worldly employments doth not clash with diligence in the work of our salvation; the same scriptures, which command one, command both; which they may find it of use to consider, who, to excuse their not being so careful as they should in their worldly callings, bestow more time than ordinary on the immediate care of their souls. And why then should prudence in one be any more inconsistent with prudence in the other? Yea, to how little purpose is industry in our common affairs without prudence? And how helpful is prudence in our common calling to the duties of our christian vocation? ⁿ *A good man sheweth favour and lendeth; he will guide his affairs with discretion.*

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ⁿ Pfal. cxii. 5.

By a prudent œconomy he will be able to maintain good works for necessary uses. In the government of their families, the education of their children, their conversation in the world, their traffick and negotiations with others, they should not only study to shew themselves upright, (though this should be their principal aim) but to be discreet too, that there may be no colour for that invidious reflection, that none but weak and shallow people are religious.—This is the *second head* of Imperfections, which eclipse the graces of God's people, and are the cause that their good is evil spoken of, namely, their *Indiscretions*.

III. The next are blemishes, of a *moral kind*, in their *private* conduct. Observe, I say *blemishes*, not gross and essential errors, which will not stand with sincerity.

I. Some are not so constantly and exactly *regular* as they ought to be, who, I would yet hope, are in the number of God's children. The freedoms they take cannot be justified, they discover too great remains of sensuality; the carnal principle is not so thoroughly mortified, nor vitious inclinations so perfectly subdued, but that they sometimes hurry them beyond the bounds of strict temperance and decorum, to the endangering of their good name and reputation, if not of their souls. The use made of such ex-
amples

amples by wicked men is to harden themselves in their evil courses, and to please themselves with a conceit, that tho' they are bad, yet not worse, but rather better, considering all things, than those who make greater pretensions to piety. "Where is the
 "mighty difference (say they) between your
 "godly people and us, saving that they set
 "up for something in Religion when they
 "are nothing, while we are willing to be
 "known for what we are, and to never
 "trouble ourselves to palliate our faults?"
 In this, no doubt, they slander you; since, whatever they say, there must be a visible difference between real Christians that walk least circumspectly, and the vicious part of the world:

But is not the charge so far true, that too many of those who profess an esteem for Religion, and do sincerely esteem and love it, live so negligently, indulge to their fleshly appetites more than becomes them, and drink more than they should, tho' not more than they can bear; enough to enflame their Passions, tho' not to extinguish their Reason? They do not preserve that just sobriety, that guard upon their appetites, that moderation with respect to corporeal enjoyments, which christian decency requires; by which means they render themselves less fit for divine converse, and spiritual delights; and not only so, but lay a stumbling-block in the way of others,
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and hurt, instead of edifying, them by their example. Ah, why will not professors be persuaded to greater caution and vigilance? They promise it from time to time; and why do they not perform, as well as promise and resolve? *Nature*, before it is spoiled by ill habits, is satisfied with little; let the world see that *Grace* can enable you to be satisfied with less. Temperance is reckoned among the fruits of the *Spirit*, ° *against which there is no law*. There is no objection lies against this virtue, every body is ready to praise and admire it in others; and where the power of godliness is, every body expects it. Indeed, temperance always goes along with godliness; the *Grace* that teaches one, teaches the other; ^P but not always in that degree, which is necessary to make godliness appear with its proper brightness and splendor. Convince the world that you have better pleasures, better in your own esteem, than those of eating and drinking, or any of the low and vulgar delights of sense, for which you reserve yourselves, and, which that you may be more capable of relishing, you exercise abstinence in others.

2. *Passions* not well-governed, are a great reproach to the person in whom they are observed, be he otherwise of never so great worth. Unguarded passions ruffle the soul, pervert the judgment, and obscure the graces
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° Gal. v. 23.

^P Tit. ii. 12.

of the *Spirit*; so that they are like the lights of heaven in a storm, which are hardly seen, or are no sooner seen than they are again snatched from the view. Religion shews to great disadvantage in such a temper. What foolish things do wise and good men throw out in their passions; and sometimes worse than foolish? Their friends blush, their enemies laugh, their character suffers, and they, when they come to be cool, are heartily ashamed to reflect on what they have said and done. And reason enough they should be so, to think that Christians should behave themselves so little like men; that they who have not only *Reason*, but *Grace*, to conquer their passions, should, with this double guard and assistance, be overcome by them. To what purpose have men *Reason* and *Grace*, if they do not use them? Wherein doth the strength of this divine principle, called *Grace*, appear? Have not some by the single force of moral wisdom, and resolution, done more towards the conquest of their passions, than these men with all the boasted aids of *Grace*? Thus, we must expect, the world will talk when we have opened their mouths. We cannot be surprized if they imploy the weapons we have put into their hands against Religion; which because it exerts but little power in us, at least visibly, will be concluded to have little or none in itself. O that Christians would set themselves to redeem
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the credit of divine *Grace*, which they have so much wronged by their violent inordinate passions! Let the strength of *Grace* be seen by its being stronger than the strongest of our passions; otherwise, men will be ready to question whether there is any such thing; or, at best, whether we are possessed of it: as, indeed, we shall have too much ground to question it ourselves.

The government of the thoughts and passions is one of the best marks of a supernatural power and ability; the former to a man's self, the latter both in regard of himself and others. There are other passions in which good men are subject to excess, besides anger, and by excess in which they lessen and sully their character. To be lifted up with a little worldly success, or vexed and put out of patience at a slight disappointment, to be transported with joy on small occasions, or plunged in grief, or held in suspense with restless hopes and fears; these are all of them arguments of a *little Mind*, and commonly too of *little Grace*. It is strange, that they who have so much greater things to mind, and are convinced of their greatness, should be extremely moved and disordered by little ones. There is one thing, particularly, which I have been sorry to have been a witness to in some Christians, and which every one should watch against in himself; and that is a fretful, peevish,

peevish, discontented humour. Have we gone no further in Christianity than this? We have yet then one principal lesson to learn, which is that of contentment, whatever our condition and circumstances may be. It is the unhappy temper of some to be always complaining, *μεμψιμοιστοι*, *Jude* 16. finding fault with their lot and portion. I need not say, this is unbecoming a Christian, when it is so indecent in any reasonable creature. Like generous liquors that are turned sour, even the Religion of such persons hath no pleasantness in it. O what an ornament is a meek, a quiet, and a contented spirit! It carries its own reward with it. Would we enjoy ourselves, or adorn our holy profession, let us exercise ourselves herein, to have our passions under controul, and obsequious to the dictates of *Reason* and *Conscience*.

3. Another very great blemish is *covetousness*, or the love of the world; which, tho' it never reigns in the regenerate, so as to be the predominant, determining principle, hath frequently too much power in them. The contest betwixt heavenly and earthly things is so far decided in every such soul, that heavenly things are preferred; but then the preference is not so absolute and entire as it might, and should be. All sincere Christians set their affections *chiefly* on things above, but not *only*; so far, alas, from that, that the world keeps possession of a considerable part,

part, as the *Canaanites* did of the promised land after the children of *Israel* were settled in it. Was the matter to be brought to a final trial, they, who love Christ in the lowest degree that is consistent with sincerity, would renounce all for his sake. Ah, why should not their love to their Redeemer be so superlatively strong as to discover its empire and dominion in every temptation, and in their most ordinary actions? Not only by parting with the world, when they can no longer keep it with a good conscience, but by using it aright while it is in their hands; by the moderation of their desires after it, and their delight in it? There is a vast diversity in mens natural tempers. Some are more generous, others more worldly; some despise riches, others are inclined to over-rate them. Where there is the former generous temper with the addition of God's *Grace*, it is a most happy and suitable alliance; they promote one the other, and act with greater strength and beauty because they act conjointly. The heavenly life, in souls so refined, advances apace. It is not ordinarily so in the other niggardly temper. Here *Grace* is so clogged and fettered, that its operations are hardly discernible. The love of God, and the love of the world are in a perpetual struggle. While one pushes the Christian forward, the other pulls him back; while one enlarges and raiseth the mind, the

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other contracts and depresseth it; and the soul, having its wings thus entangled and clipped, and its force and vigour abated, can take but short flights towards heaven.

Covetousness disgraces the most shining virtues, which, however extraordinary, are but little valued and regarded when joined with avarice; and quite conceals a common virtue. Could we but produce a good number of instances of those whose tempers led them to be covetous, but were so very much changed and exalted by *Grace*, that they could look down with contempt on things which they most admired and doated upon in their natural state; never neglecting their duty because it was expensive, or venturing upon the commission of a known sin, for any temptation the world could offer, and manifesting a perfect coldness and indifference in the pursuit of temporal riches, when compared with the fervour of their desires after things spiritual and divine; could we, I say, produce more examples of this kind, persons that knew nothing of Religion from their own experience, would have a much greater idea of it than they now have, and be induced to believe it came from heaven by its raising men thither. How can we think of this, and not be concerned to find such instances so exceeding rare? And that, by this means, Christianity hath but little reputation in the world, notwithstanding the excellency

cellency of its precepts, and the sublimity of its objects? The low groveling disposition of those, who pretend to be among its intimate acquaintance, is a considerable check to it. Wherefore, let all that go under the name of Christ's friends and disciples, impartially examine themselves in this point, and, if they find their hearts in any degree captivated by worldly affections, oppose them to the utmost of their power, and be sure not to do what will gratify and feed them. They should think with themselves, what judgment the world hath of them, and how great a slur their covetousness puts on the graces of God's Spirit in them.

4. The last blemish, I shall mention, in the private character of persons, on other accounts very valuable, is their doing *mean* and *dishonourable* things. Christians, who know the things that are excellent, should practise no other. Instead of which, there are those who descend so much beneath their character, as to do things, which for their baseness many unregenerate persons, from a native sense of honour and decency, would scorn to be guilty of. Now, methinks, it is pity that these two qualities of *goodness* and *greatness* of soul should be ever found asunder, when they would be such a heightening to the loveliness of each other's appearance. I confess all true greatness of soul implies goodness, and all goodness great-

ness; but besides the greatness that is inseparable from goodness, one would gladly see it united with such a magnanimity, or greatness and elevation of heart, as would inspire a man with a disdain of little ill-favoured actions. When the Apostle would have us ^a *provide things honest in the sight of all men*; ^b *to think of such things*; ^c *to walk honestly, as in the day*; (which sort of precepts do so frequently occur in St. Paul's Epistles) the original words have another meaning than what is commonly affixed to the word *honest* in English; signifying what is *comely, decent, venerable*, and the like. These are the things which the Gospel calls upon us to study and practise; and which they whose breasts are thoroughly tinged with its principles, and who have a clear discernment of the beauty and deformity, the dignity and meanness of actions, will not need many words to explain. Let us therefore avoid what hath a sordid appearance, as well as the appearance of what is plainly evil. Let us *walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called*; which we shall never do, in the due extent of that expression, by keeping ourselves from actions manifestly sinful and dishonest, unless we further add an abhorrence of those that are shuffling and sneaking. Let me consider, how will such an action look? Is it of good report? Will it conciliate esteem and love? Or does it
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^a Rom. xii. 17. ^b Phil. iv. 8. ^c Rom. xiii. 13.

tend to make me contemptible? A jest and a by-word to others? To gain me the name of a narrow-souled, creeping, interested wretch? One of low views, and designs? Of coarse sentiments? Addicted to tricks and artifices? And destitute of all ideas of what is handsome and praise-worthy, and of all ambition to excel in it? Let us not forget, that mean and base things are contrary to the *dignity* of the Christian profession, as well as things sinful to the *holiness* of it.—I have now done with the *third head* of Imperfections, being blemishes of a *moral kind* in the Christian's more *private* conduct.

IV. The disciples of Christ expose their *good to be evil spoken of*, when they are remarkably deficient in the *Social Virtues*. I mean not those which are essential to society, such as justice, and veracity, (for these no true Christian can want) but such as contribute to its well-being.—But of this, with what remains on this Subject, in another Discourse.







S E R M O N III.

On the Errors and Imperfections of
Christians.

R O M. XIV. 16.

Let not then your good be evil spoken of.

FROM these words I laid down the following Doctrine.

It is the duty of all professing Christianity to be exceeding careful that what is good in itself do not, through some fault of theirs, pass under an ill name.

In handling this subject I proposed, *First*, somewhat largely to open, and explain the Doctrine; and *Secondly*, prove and enforce it by proper considerations.

I. I was to open the Doctrine under these two heads, *namely*, as the duty relates to

Christians in general; and as it particularly affects those that *love the Lord Jesus in sincerity*.

I. I considered the advice as it respected indifferently all the professors of the Gospel.

I then proceeded,

II. To explain the duty of behaving so that *our good be not evil spoken of*, as it particularly affects real Christians, or those that *love our Lord Jesus in sincerity*.

The Imperfections of Christians I considered under the following particulars.

I. There are sometimes found in good men certain things which favour too much of *Superstition* and *Enthusiasm*.

II. Very good Christians have their *Indiscretions*; and these such as, together with themselves, to make their Religion less honourably thought of, both in religious matters and in their common affairs.

III. There are blemishes of a *moral kind* in their *private* conduct.

I now go on to the last particular of the Imperfections of Christians.

IV. The disciples of Christ expose their *good to be evil spoken of*, when they are remarkably deficient in the *Social Virtues*. I mean

mean not those which are essential to society, such as justice, and veracity, (for these no true Christian can want) but such as contribute to its well-being. Of which sort are these following.

I. The love of society being planted in our very nature, there is somewhat savage and unnatural in flying from it, and affecting a reclusé and solitary life. Solitude and society, retirement and conversation, have each of them, their advantages, and, when they take their turns, may yield as much comfort as profit. It is too evident to be denied, that good company is hard to be met with. But I would hope, there is some such, or at least some that is innocent; and, let it be but innocent, we ought not wholly to shun it. A wise man will find his account in it; nor should a good man stand aloof from it, or think it his duty to behave himself in it with shiness and reserve. What construction will people put upon such an aversion to society? Will they not be ready to attribute it to pride? Or, if they do not resolve it into pride, will they not derive it from some other cause, not much more for our credit?

Man is a sociable Being; and I dare affirm, they are under a great mistake who have a notion of the *new creature* as otherwise framed and inclined. Christianity was not intended to destroy any one principle truly

natural, but refine and improve every principle and inclination of this kind. Let men have *humanity* at their conversion, and there is no great danger of their losing it afterwards. *Evangelical virtue* is one of the most sociable things in the whole world; as appears from this single consideration, that it hath none of the seeds of animosity and division in it, which vice abounds with. We may call it *the universal magnetism of minds* that are in their proper and most natural state, or that secret quality by which they draw and embrace each other. The idea the scripture gives us of heaven is that of a society of pure and happy spirits; and tho' it is certain that none of our societies here upon earth can compare with that perfect model, yet no one ought therefore to renounce them any more than to renounce the thoughts of getting *Wisdom* and *Grace*, because, after all he can do, his attainments in both will be very incomplete. By secluding himself from human converse, a man will but get himself an ill name without meeting in his retreat with any thing that will make him amend for it. It is well, if he be not assaulted with temptations, which will be the more dangerous as they find him alone. There is something in the presence and company of Christian friends that cheers and enlivens the heart, helps a man to throw off any load that may hang upon his spirits, and dis-

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poseth him to travel on in the journey of life, and in his christian course, with more speed and alacrity. At worst, they that are fond of the life of hermits, and neither care to give or receive neighbourly and christian visits, having no prospect, as they think, of bettering themselves by them, should yet vouchsafe to associate with others, in order to better them, and restore conversation to its proper use and design.

I would not be mistaken, and therefore add, that much company, or company ill-chosen, is worse than none. When people are fond of cultivating a large acquaintance, perpetually taken up in entertaining or being entertained, in collecting and retailing news, rambling from place to place, from company to company, pleased to be any where rather than at home, imployed about any thing rather than in the business to which they are called, and to converse with any persons rather than themselves; not to mention the effect this must have on their temporal affairs, it is next to impossible they should improve in their knowledge of God and their own hearts; or that the other world should gain upon their affections, when their time is almost all devoured by the pleasures and avocations of this. And the consequence is not less fatal from a wrong choice of company; when the vain, the loose, the irreligious are, merely for their
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wit and humour, preferred to the wise and sober. If a man carries any sense of Religion, and relish of its pleasures, into such conversation, it will not be long before he loses it; for *he that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.*

2. It is a virtue of society to be *affable*, and *courteous*; and so is it of Christianity too, *be pitiful, be courteous.* And consequently, a supercilious haughtiness and stiffness of carriage, besides its disqualifying a man for society, must argue him not to be so compleat a Christian as he should be. Allowance must be made for temper, and inclination. In some, nature is more smooth and ductile; in others, more rough and unpolished. Creatures of different kinds scarce differ more remarkably from one another, in this respect, while this is stately and sullen, that tractable and gentle, than men do, though of the same species. However, though this may sometimes extenuate the matter, it will not amount to a justification. Other animals must retain the marks and characters which nature hath severally stamped upon them; nor are they answerable for any of their imperfections, because they cannot help them; while man hath so much power over his own mind, that he can, if he heartily endeavours it, cure himself of many of his infirmities; and, in lower instances

stances, either alter or improve his nature. In lower instances I say; as to which, by watchfulness over himself, and proposing such examples as are worthy of his imitation, he may, with time and custom, superinduce another nature more perfect than that which he brought into the world with him; as, by the *Grace* of God, such a change may be wrought upon him, as shall restore the image of God on his soul, and transform him into a new creature. Hear the Apostle's advice to the *Romans*, ^b *Be of the same mind one towards another; mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate; be not wise in your own conceit.* That part of the advice, which more immediately falls in under this particular, is that condescending behaviour which he recommends to them: and it is observable how he places it; just before is the precept, *not to mind high things*; just after, *not to be wise in our own conceit.* Which may probably intimate to us the root and original of an imperious lofty temper. Men either *mind high things*, and so do not regard those below them; or, *being wise in their own conceit*, they disdain them.

He that would be affable must be humble. By *affability* I mean a man's being free and open to his equals, and civil and obliging to the meanest of his inferiors; not sour and morose, not taking state upon him,

^b Rom. xii. 16.

him, not carrying it as if he did not see or hear them, or thought it a disparagement to bestow a look or a word upon them; like those of old, who fancied they should be defiled by mixing with the vulgar, to whom in their pride they would say---*Stand off, for I am holier than thou*---so these, Stand off, for I have more sense, or wealth, or power than you have. Such a carriage is displeasing in all, but doubly so in persons of a religious character; who, being the disciples of a meek and lowly Jesus, give great offence to the world, when they shew themselves in a guise so unlike their Master. An unaffected sweetness and civility of gesture and conversation, as it will cover great faults, so it will beautify and set off the meanest virtues, and render those that are truly great more eminently bright and conspicuous. When the master of a family, and such as bear the greatest sway in a neighbourhood, are good men, and withal kind and gentle and easy of access, it wonderfully endears them to those in an inferior rank, and adds a much greater weight to their counsels, their reproofs, and examples. I need not add, if superiors should not be haughty and over-bearing to those below them, inferiors should not be rude and ill-mannered to those above them; both these have a tincture of the same bad principle of pride and conceit; a quality which no advantage of fortune,

no superiority of gifts or station, will obtain pardon for; but is most offensive in persons of a mean and indigent condition. And when such as these who shew that they neither understand themselves, nor the rules of Christianity, as they should, and have no regard to the distinction which Providence hath seen fit to make between men, shall set up for something extraordinary in the Church of God, it is well if a part of that displeasure, which standers-by must conceive against them, doth not fall upon their profession.

3. Another social virtue, and a great ornament to Religion, is a *readiness to put the best construction upon the actions of others*; opposite to which is *ensoriousness*; which I have been grieved to hear so often laid to the charge of religious people. I am persuaded the matter is not so bad as the world represents it, who frequently call every signification of a man's dislike of the most open and scandalous faults by the name of *ensoriousness*. But still, I doubt, the accusation, though itself censorious in the main, is not without all ground. It is not the part of a good man to hunt after faults, especially when they come not within his province to note and correct. To judge *rashly* is but one remove from judging *falsely*. If the action hath a doubtful appearance, *charity*, which *thinketh no evil*, will incline

to the more favourable side. The Christian should not love to rake into the characters of others, but leave such dirty work to more proper hands, as a person well-bred would cleaning of the publick streets. He should not have his ear open to receive ill reports, much less his mouth to repeat them. Surely, no good man can delight in the sins and miscarriages of others; it is no sign or part, of his goodness, if he does; but a blot, and a reproach to him, that he should be guilty of that which a good-natured man, with very little other goodness in him, would abhor. And what a man doth not delight in how can he be fond to hear?

It is a barbarous custom, but too common, for people, when they are met together, to sit down and divert themselves with worrying the reputation of their neighbours; this is somewhat like the *beatben* custom of exposing men to the fury of wild beasts for the entertainment of the spectators. Persons of any judgment and knowledge can find other ways of spending their time, at once more innocent and instructive; and much more may Christians, who should rather take the part of advocates, where the case will admit of it, and represent both persons and actions in the best light they will bear; shewing themselves herein not unacquainted with that part of the description of *charity*, that it *believeth all things*.

Pru-

Prudence will restrain a wise man from making free with other mens good names, and *humanity* an ingenuous good-tempered man; and should not *charity* and *conscience* restrain the religious man? Hath he not sins of his own to mortify, and to confess and be humble for before God? And do not the sins of other men, where they come to his knowledge, challenge his compassion ^c for the guilty? I shall conclude with those words of the Apostle, which are better known than practised, ^d *Put them in mind to speak evil of no man.* Speak evil of no man, and hardly any man will speak evil of you; this at least is the surest way not to have your *good evil spoken of.*

4. A *compliant behaviour* in innocent things is what every Christian should study, both as a member of religious, and civil society. If every man will needs adhere to his own humour, and not be contented unless his way be followed, and his opinion take place, what agreement, or harmony can be expected? What endless disputes must ensue? One man having the same right to insist on his fancy, as another upon his. And thus, instead of joining amicably in pursuit of those ends for which they enter into society, they will spend a great part of their time and zeal in contending for superiority one over another. Supposing

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a man

^c 1 Pet. iii. 8. Jude 22.^d Tit. iii. 2.

a man to be wiser than others of the same community, and that he hath a righter notion of some things, yet it is no part of his wisdom to oppose his single judgment to the general suffrage, and to go in a path by himself. For why should a man be needlessly singular, and draw on himself the imputation of pride, when he might avoid it? It is the most prudent way to bend, where a man lawfully may, and to submit to the common decision. Perhaps, the majority err in their choice; perhaps, rules, and modes, and customs might be thought on more expedient than those which are most prevailing, and have the publick vote; at least I fancy so. But what then? Shall I set up my judgment for the common standard? And think to give laws to the greater number? It is the Apostle's advice, that we *submit ourselves one to another*. And since in every society this is absolutely necessary, that some should submit to others, (since it is much if they have all to a man the same notions of things) which is fittest, that one or two should submit to a much greater number, or the much greater number to one or two? I hope there is no need of my telling you that I restrain this compliance to things *lawful* or *indifferent*; not extending it to matters where *conscience* interposeth, whose authority is always greater than

than that of any number or custom whatsoever.

Daniel seems at first sight to have been guilty of an affected singularity, when he refuses to take *the portion of meat and drink* which the King had appointed him. But the excuse which he made for his refusal, that he should hereby ^f *defile himself*, was not a mere pretence to hide his ill-humour and obstinacy, but a very substantial one, proceeding on this ground, that it was the custom with these nations to throw a part of the bread and wine on the altar; or, if they had no altar at hand, upon the fire or the hearth, instead of an altar, and that way to consecrate to their Gods the whole of what they should eat *. It was for this reason that he reckoned the meat was defiled, and that he himself should be so by eating it; it being a partaking with idols. Now I have mentioned this custom of the *Heathens*, methinks I would make one use of it, though a little out of my way, and that is, to reprove those who go under the name of *Christians*, and yet sit down to their meals, and rise up again, without begging a blessing upon what they are to receive, or returning thanks for what the bountiful hand of Providence hath given them. The mistaken piety of *Heathens*, who thus acknowledged their false gods at

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their

f Dan. i. 8.

* Grot. in loc.

their tables, is a severe reprimand to *Christians* for their neglect of the true God. Near akin to this last is

5. *Peaceableness*, a virtue of society, which no Christian should be defective in, or can be so, without injury to Religion. We are charged, ^s *If it be possible, as much as lieth in us, to live peaceably with all men.* ^h *To make supplications, prayers, and intercessions for all men, more especially for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.* Now it would be very odd, for the same men to pray for the publick peace, and at the same time to break it by an unquiet turbulent behaviour, or by seditious words and practices, *speaking evil of dignities*, and doing things which they know to be offensive to the higher powers. Christians, in their several places, should ⁱ *study to be quiet, and to do their own business*; that they may not ^k *suffer as busy-bodies in other mens matters*; endeavouring to promote peace, as far as they have any influence in families, or neighbourhood, or greater communities; not given to emulations, wrath, strife, contention, which are all of them ^l *works of the flesh*; not quarrelsome and litigious, but, for peace sake, receding from what they are persuaded

^s Rom. xii. 18. ^h I Tim. ii. 1, 2. ⁱ I Thes. iv. 11.

^k Pet. iv. 15.

^l Gal. v. 20.

suaded is their right in lesser things; of which we have an example in ^m *Abraham*, who, though he was *Lot's* uncle, and, in that relation, had a just claim to the precedency, yet to prevent all strife between himself and his nephew, and between their herdsmen, lets him have the first choice where to settle in the land. And thus a greater than *Abraham*, I mean our blessed Lord, though not obliged to pay tribute for the service of the temple, would yet do it, to avoid ⁿ *giving offence*. It is observed of *the wisdom that is from above*, that it is not only *pure* but *peaceable*. We are therefore to be peaceable as well as pure; and the rather, because peaceableness is a point of heavenly wisdom. A peaceable demeanour gains us the esteem and affection of those that know us, reflects an honour on our profession, and puts us into a capacity of serving the cause we are embarked in better than we could otherwise do. To add but one particular more,

6. The virtue that, above all others, makes any society flourish, is *benevolence* or good-will. This virtue, which we commonly call *humanity*, is a principal part of Christianity too. There is no other Religion so fitted to inspire and cherish this excellent temper, as the Gospel of our Saviour, by its Principles, its Precepts, and Examples.

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In

^m Gen. xiii. 9.ⁿ Mat. xvii. 27.

In praise of *benevolence* we may observe, that a person of this temper is emphatically styled * *the good man*, ° *for whom*, it is supposed, there are *some* to be found, who *would even dare to die*. We meet with the same title explained after the same manner in *Xenophon* †, who tells us, that *Cyrus*, was called by those, whom he had succoured and befriended, *the benefactor*, *the good man*. Remember this, that *the good man*, by way of eminence, is the man of kind and friendly inclinations, the lover of his species, who hath a hearty concern for the welfare of all, and shuns no opportunities, that offer, of promoting it; whose breast is filled with none but affections of the best and noblest kind, such as love, and those other passions that branch out of it. Hatred he is a stranger to; he hath discarded envy, ill-nature, and revenge; he allows them not any room in his heart; and, if he feels some sudden motions of them on certain occasions, (as what man is there exempted from all such?) he stifles and suppresses them; and will not suffer them to break forth
into

* *Υπερ τῶ ἀγαθῶ* for *the good man*; not for *a good man*, as we have translated it, because it would probably then have been without the article, as *υπερ δικαιο* is in the same verse.

° Rom. v. 7.

† *Cyri Institut. lib. 3. ἀνακαλῶντες τὸν εὐεργετήν, τὸν ἀνδρα τὸν ἀγαθόν.* This place gives great light to that of the Apostle just mentioned, and the using the article in both is very remarkable.

into his life, and distort and pervert the actions of that. This is the man, who, if there was occasion, would be most likely to have others at his service, not in a complement only, but in a time of need, ready to share his dangers, and shield his life with the hazard of their own.

A man can be no Christian that is not in some measure thus inclined; *charity* being one of the chief ingredients in a truly christian temper, the main feature in the image of the Son of God, to which we are to be conformed; which, it were to be wished, some men would better consider, who seem to have made up a Christianity to themselves in which love hath no share, a Christianity that hath no heat or life belonging to it, but what it borrows from a bitter uncharitable zeal. The professors of the Gospel should be eminent in this virtue. Their charity should shine before men, like the light of the sun in the property of being unconfined; but as to its cheering and agreeable nature more like that of the heavenly city, *which hath no need of the sun, or of the moon, to shine in it, because the glory of the Lord doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.* Their hearts should melt in tenderness and compassion, diffuse themselves abroad in good wishes, and be continually prompting them to acts of kindness and beneficence. They should

congratulate, not envy, another's prosperity; and condole, not rejoice, in his calamities; be quick to do a good office, and as slow to resent a bad one done to themselves. Nor must their *benevolence* be bounded within their own party, which is a *Jewish* not *Christian* charity, but take the widest scope. Was this godlike disposition more conspicuous in the generality of Christians, what an honour would it be both to the Master, and to the disciples! And how would every one be persuaded to believe that Religion was a good thing, when they saw it to have so good an effect on the professors of it, to render them kind, and amicable, and useful!

I have now gone through the *first thing* proposed, which was to explain and open the duty of taking care that *our good be not evil spoken of*; both as it relates to Christians in general, and in a more particular manner to those, who, in the judgment of charity, are really such.

I shall now proceed,

II. To prove and enforce the doctrine by some proper considerations. And that it is our duty and concern to exercise the greatest care and caution in this matter is easily shewn.

I. The

1. The first consideration shall be taken from the world we live in. The people of the world look with an ill eye upon the people of God; almost all the causes of enmity concur that can set two people at variance, such as difference of language, of maxims and opinions, of genius and inclinations, of manners and interests. Hence the enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent is the most irreconcilable of any; being founded, besides a contrariety of customs, in an opposition of natures too. Our Saviour hath instructed his disciples what they are to expect from the world, telling them that ^p*if they were of the world, the world would love them, but because they were not of the world, but he had chosen them out of the world, therefore the world hated them.* Now every disciple of Christ should make it his business to behave himself so prudently, and irreproachably, that the world, how much soever it hates them, may have no ground to despise them, nor any excuse for its hatred; ^q*having a good conscience, that whereas ill men would be glad to speak evil of them as of evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse their good conversation in Christ.*

Jeremiah's complaint of some in his time, that they ^r*watched for his halting*, is verified

of

^p John. xv. 19. ^q 1 Pet. iii. 16. ^r Jer. xx. 10.

of good men in every age more or less; who, upon that very account, should walk the more circumspectly, giving no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. Persons that travel in the narrow way should call to mind, that, besides the all-seeing God, a great many others have their eye upon them; who will not pity their failings, and make allowances for them as God will, but severely remark every little error, and represent it as criminal, or ridiculous. The most commendable way of revenge in this case is to disappoint them; and by a discreet, winning, inoffensive behaviour, to stop their mouths, if we cannot change their hearts. And it is some encouragement, that the case of true Christians at present is not altogether so bad as that of Christ's first disciples, who living among men of another Religion, were hated and persecuted the more on that score; whereas we are all of us, or all to a few, Christians by profession; and, tho' unhappily distinguished by different denominations, which have produced too great an alination of affections on all sides, yet the two most opposite parties among us are those of good men and bad; and the bad, being outwardly of the same Religion as the good, cannot, for shame, be so free to censure them for their exactness in walking according to their common rule. And, besides this, if we consider Religion under the three heads, of duties relating to
God,

God, to our neighbour, and to ourselves, we shall find that the godly are hardly more hated for their strictness in those of the first and the last class, that is, for their spirituality, their devotion, their watchfulness and circumspection, their purity, mortification and self-denial, than they are praised and approved for their justice and charity, their kindness and liberality, their modesty and sincerity, and all the other virtues that shew their good-will towards men. And that, for the sake of these latter, the graces which wicked men are no friends to, meet with a more favourable reception than they would otherwise do. *Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?* There is a secret charm in goodness and piety, when attended with good-nature, and an agreeable conversation, that disarms envy and malice, possesses itself of the esteem of bad men, if they are not very bad indeed, and unites the good, tho' of different persuasions in lesser things, in love to one another. The mutual shiness and disaffection among true Christians of different parties, and their undervaluing thoughts of one another, are most commonly owing to some of those imperfections before-mentioned; which, like repelling qualities, hinder that close and strong conjunction, which the spirit of unity tends to produce in the christian world.

At

At worst, if we should suffer in our good name or otherwise, we shall be happy in this, that we *suffer for righteousness sake*, as the same Apostle adds in the next verse. It will be a satisfaction that we have not by our own folly and mismanagement given a handle for such treatment.

2. Out of regard to Religion we should be mindful of the same thing. Every Christian is in a lower sense entrusted with the Gospel of Christ, it is a *depositum* committed to his charge; and he is to keep it with the utmost care, both its doctrines, and its precepts; to be tender of its reputation, and resolved to watch against every thing that tends to its discredit. It must be supposed too, that all who have experienced the power of Religion, have a superlative affection for it; that they put the highest value on the Gospel which contains such inestimable promises, and hath produced such blessed effects in themselves. And how then can they be indifferent to what concerns the honour and interest of their holy Religion? Or be negligent of their behaviour, when the credit of the Gospel depends so much upon it? It is impossible any sincerely pious man should be wholly indifferent to the one, or negligent of the other. But there is something more required of us than barely our not being *indifferent* to the interest of Religion, and that is, that we be zealously affected towards it, quick
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to spy, and as careful to avoid every thing that may prejudice so good a cause; as it is certain we shall be, if we esteem and love our Religion in any degree proportionable to what it deserves from us.

3. We are all bound to desire and endeavour the salvation of others. Nor can any one, that is himself in a converted state, be unconcerned about the conversion, and spiritual, as well as temporal, happiness of others. This being so, for the same reason that we are obliged to pray for others, and to seek their spiritual and everlasting good, we must be obliged to use the most proper means to this end; to beware of every thing that may tend to harden them in sin, and prevent their return to God, and to practise all those things whereby we may one awaken, and edify, another, may conquer the sinner's prejudices, and bring him to have other thoughts of the ways of piety. Shall we *destroy those for whom Christ died?* There is no true Christian would willingly and deliberately do this; there is no such person but abhors the thought of it. But let us, my friends, consider, that we may do this without intending it, yea at the same time that we intend the contrary, by not being so watchful over our conduct as is needful. We are not only to regard our actions as to the substance of them, but as to their appearance and circumstances; and to order these so, as that by the beauty of holi-

holiness, and the force of a commanding example, we may obtain entrance for the truth into the hearts of men.

4. A sense of our duty to God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, should persuade us to the same care. Hath the *kindness and love of God appeared in saving us, not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but of his own free grace and mercy?* Hath he translated us from the most miserable into the happiest of all conditions? And can I otherwise than love, and praise, and magnify his name? Or, if I love him as I profess to do, and as his benefits require, can I chuse but be jealous for his honour, and do my utmost to promote his interest among men? Now in order to this our Lord hath told us, that *our light should so shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven.* You see the glory of God is inseparable from that of Religion; that of Religion depends very much on the representation we make of it in our lives. God hath said, that he will be "*glorified before all the people*"; and we can do this no way more effectually than by an example of uniform goodness, and amiable piety? Then would not the name of God, or that other worthy name, whereby we are called, be blasphemed; the doctrine of our Saviour would approve itself to the very senses of men, when they beheld

[†] Mat. v. 16.

^u Lev. x. 3.

beheld it shining in our conversations unclouded by great and avoidable infirmities. O what a tender, what a vigilant concern should we have for the honour of our Redeemer; to whom we are so infinitely indebted, and from whom we have received such proofs of an unparalled affection! When any duty is pressed upon us for *Christ's* sake, as in that instance *1 Thess. iv. 1.* *Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received how you ought to walk, and to please God, so you would abound more and more;* when, I say, any duty is urged upon us in this form, the argument should never fail of making a very strong and lasting impression upon us. *By the Lord Jesus,* that is, by the love of Jesus to the children of men, in becoming man, and doing and suffering so much for their salvation, which we pretend to admire and celebrate as surpassing all example; as also by the love which we make profession of to Jesus, we should be persuaded and taught to do this and that, in order to make him the best return we are able for his love, and to give the most convincing proof and demonstration of our own. Once more,

5. I might argue from the obligation we are all under to endeavour after perfection. *“ Be ye perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect. * That ye may be perfect and entire, lacking*

‡ Mat. v. 48.

* Jam. i. 4.

lacking nothing. † *Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, and are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God.* To perfect our works, it is not enough that no essential part be wanting, but there should be every thing that is requisite to add a grace and a comeliness to them, what may shew the strength of the principle from which they proceed, and be a kind of polishing to them in the sight of men. The former indeed, or the essential part, is all the perfection necessary to entitle them to the gospel-reward. But shall we do no more than just what is absolutely necessary to save us? They who are so frugal in Religion, and think it their wisdom to act here, as in purchasing worldly things, which they get at as low rates as they can, shew themselves to be wretchedly ignorant of the things of God. The truly good man will not *think himself to have already attained, or that he is already perfect; but forgetting the things that are behind, will be pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ.* He will labour after what he knows to belong to christian perfection, in the largest extent of that word. I add, that it is his duty to labour more fervently than the greater part of Christians do, and to study to know what that perfection is; that, having a clearer idea of it, he may be able to exhibit

hibit a fairer and more complete copy of it in his own conversation. I acknowledge there may be sometimes greater degrees of real, inward perfection, where the outward example is not so engaging; yet still, so far the example is imperfect; and, which must not be omitted, the greatest height and vigour of real Religion, that is, of love to God and man, is on supposition of an equality in other respects, always attended with the greatest decorum and loveliness of the external demeanour. A defect therefore must certainly lie somewhere, either in the understanding, or natural temper, or education and principles, of the Christian; or, if not in these, in his graces; as often as he gives occasion, by something or other in his conduct, for *his good to be evil spoken of*.

All that remains is the *Application* of this point; upon which I shall be the shorter, since what I have already offered hath been almost wholly practical.

1. I shall apply what hath been said more generally. We all bear the christian name, and, I hope, are inwardly persuaded of the truth of that Religion which we profess. We believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God; that both Christ and his Doctrine came down from heaven; we should not be willing to exchange our Religion for any other;

we look on it as the way of life, and trust to obtain salvation by it. In all this we do well, provided we do not stop here, and act an inconsistent part ; in words own Christ, and in works deny him ; lay hold of the promise and neglect the condition ; profess a pure, undefiled Religion, and lead corrupt and wicked lives. Let me entreat such, as do thus, not to go on exposing Religion, and themselves too, after this manner. Let me beg them to reflect, what a deal of mischief they do the cause which they pretend to list in the defence of ; and how great their folly is to expect to be saved by a Religion, the credit of which they are daily undermining by their evil examples. Let them remember this, and shew themselves men. They are reasonable creatures, and able to discern an absurdity and contradiction in the common conduct of life. And how is it they cannot do the same in matters of a higher nature, and more important consequence ? Can there be a more glaring absurdity than to make their boast of the *Gospel*, as the *Jew* formerly did of the *Law*, when they live in perpetual contradiction to it, and do all that lies in them to make it appear contemptible in the eyes of the world ? Their guilt in *sining wilfully after they have received the knowledge of the truth*, and saying to Christ, *Hail, Master, and kissing him*, while they betray, and crucify him, is not little ; nor will
will

will their punishment be less than their guilt, if they do not unfeignedly repent, and forsake the way of destruction they are now in.

2. As for those that are real as well as nominal Christians, of them it may, in a particular manner, be expected, that they should listen to the advice that hath been offered them, since they must own it to be founded in Reason and Scripture; and they have that within them which must incline them to their duty, of which they are persuaded. They should *walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise*; humbly beg of God to guide them in the right way; and make use of that wisdom, which hath been given them from a above, to regulate their behaviour in the minuter parts of it, to the end there may be nothing wanting in their example to give it its proper evidence and success. If it be objected, that some of the instances before recommended to the Christian's care are of a trivial nature, and not worth regarding, (as I am apprehensive some may be ready to imagine) I take leave to answer, that in Religion nothing is *truly little*, not even those things which are of inconsiderable moment, when viewed abstractedly, in their own nature, or compared with some others. For as soon as they affect Religion, and make a part of that, or are connected with

what is so, they change their rank, tho' not their nature, and become great and weighty.

All things are not of the same importance ; it is true, all things are not alike necessary to salvation, but all things that have a manifest influence on the salvation of others, or on our own greater progress and perfection, challenge our serious notice. There are the *constituent* parts of Religion, and others that we may call *ornamental*. Every one will confess, that the former are to be looked to in the first place. But will any one think this to be a good reason for slighting the second? One may be compared to the stuff of which the garment is made, the other to the shape, and trimming ; the two latter of which are never entirely disregarded by those who would be thought most indifferent and mortified in their habit. Were we concerned for no more in our clothes, than just to cover our bodies, and keep them warm, there would be no need of troubling ourselves about the fineness, or colour, or fashion of them ; nor any foundation for preferring one to another, in most cases. Now if this would be carrying things to an extreme, (as all acknowledge it would by their practice, which shews them to have an eye to *decency*, as well as *necessity*, or *covenience*) why should we run into an extreme like this in Religion, consulting only what is of the essence of it, or but one remove from essential, and over-

overlooking what might be ornamental to it, and set it off to greater advantage? In our houses, and in the appearance we make abroad in the world, we choose what we account most fit and becoming; we are not contented to have all things necessary for use, but we would have them clean, and neat, and in their proper place and order. And, for certain, we should not be more careless in our conduct, as it any way relates, tho' but indirectly, to the things of God, and our souls; especially, when we attend to the consequence of our neglect in this case. Were the things themselves as mean and trifling in their own nature, as some may conceive them, yet since they draw such consequences after them, since we are like to be more or less useful, as we observe or despise them, since by guarding against little blemishes, and defects, and indiscretions, we save our Religion from contempt, and prepare the way for the conversion, and establishment of our neighbour, which, by a contrary management, we should hinder; I think, it evidently follows, that such rules and directions as those before given are not below any one's observation. After the actions themselves, the consequences of them are to be weighed. And herein it is, that the prudent man differs from another; that he looks before him, and around him, and provides against the *appearance of evil* in him-

self, because of those *real evils* that may follow in respect of others. Whatever truth there may be in that *Jewish* proverb, “that the chief things which will undo the world are the follies of religious men,” he would not willingly countenance and make it good by his own inadvertency and misconduct.

I shall conclude with a word or two to those, who, from the infirmities and failings of christian professors, take occasion to *speak evil* of that which is *good*. This practice is very unreasonable, very unjust, and very wicked.

It is very *unreasonable* and *foolish* not to distinguish between good and bad, but to confound them in our censure, and reject that which is good, because it is not absolutely pure and unmixed. What if there be some *failings* that accompany real goodness? That which was really good before continues so notwithstanding this union. Gold does not cease to be gold, because it is mixed with some dross; nor is the quantity or value of it ever the less in itself; as will appear the moment we come to separate them. In other cases we do not think the worse of valuable qualities and attainments for their being sometimes found in conjunction with great imperfections. It is not made an objection against *knowledge*, that the most knowing men are not always the

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the best-natured, or most virtuous; but we can tell how to value skill in any profession and are glad to make use of it, how unhappily soever it be matched. And why must Religion alone meet with such hard and unequal usage, for no other reason, but that we find in the votaries of it some things which were better wanting?

Such proceeding is *unjust*, as well as *unreasonable*. There is a great deal of injustice to the *religious person*, who, governing himself in the main of his behaviour by the principles of reason and conscience, deserves our esteem, in spite of some little imperfections, which are by far too light to weigh down his many virtues. Such a one, with all his defects, makes a character greatly superior to any man's, that is complaisant, frank, liberal, discreet, and every thing but religious; and much more than to theirs, who are little less wanting in *civil* and *moral*, than in *religious* accomplishments; which describes the greater number of those who are most severe and witty on the slips and weaknesses of good men. The injustice to *Religion* is yet greater than to the *religious*, in loading it with the imperfections of those that profess it; which whatever they are, they brought over with them from their former state; which, moreover, Religion doth not allow of, but reprove and condemn, and, if permitted to

have its perfect work, would quickly correct. As far as any man frames his temper and way of life by the rules of Religion, there is nothing in it that can justly offend and displease; what there is of this kind proceeds not from Religion, but from the want of it, or from natural temper, incapacity, and human weakness, false notions, ill habits contracted before conversion, &c. and is therefore very unjustly made use of to traduce and disgrace Religion. But why does not Religion cure men of all these weaknesses and distempers? Not because the Principles of Religion, and the Grace of God are unactive, impotent things, but because they work not, as it is not fit they should, without our concurrence.

Finally; this method of dealing with Religion is extremely *profane* and *wicked*, being an affront to God himself, whose image and institution it is; his *institution*, as it is contained in the holy scriptures; his *image*, as exemplified in the renewed soul. What saith our blessed Saviour to his disciples? *He that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.* The contempt of Religion is really a contempt of God, who is the supreme fountain and author of it; the reproaches of them that reproach it fall on him; and he will not hold them guiltless, who offer him such indignities. Nay, though it could be supposed

ed that wicked men confined their mockery to the *persons* of the godly, without making a jest immediately of godliness itself, yet will not God leave them unpunished; both for the sake of the righteous, whose characters, as supreme governor and judge of the world, he is concerned to vindicate, one time or other; and for his own, whose image and likeness, delineated upon them, ought to be respected, though done in none of the brightest colours, and set in an indifferent frame. To treat this divine image after a different manner shews a root of bitterness within, and that men hate God and Religion, though they dare not openly avow it.







A
S E R M O N

Concerning the NATURE of

Christ's Kingdom

Chiefly designed against the

Corruptions and Usurpations

OF THE

CHURCH of *ROME.*

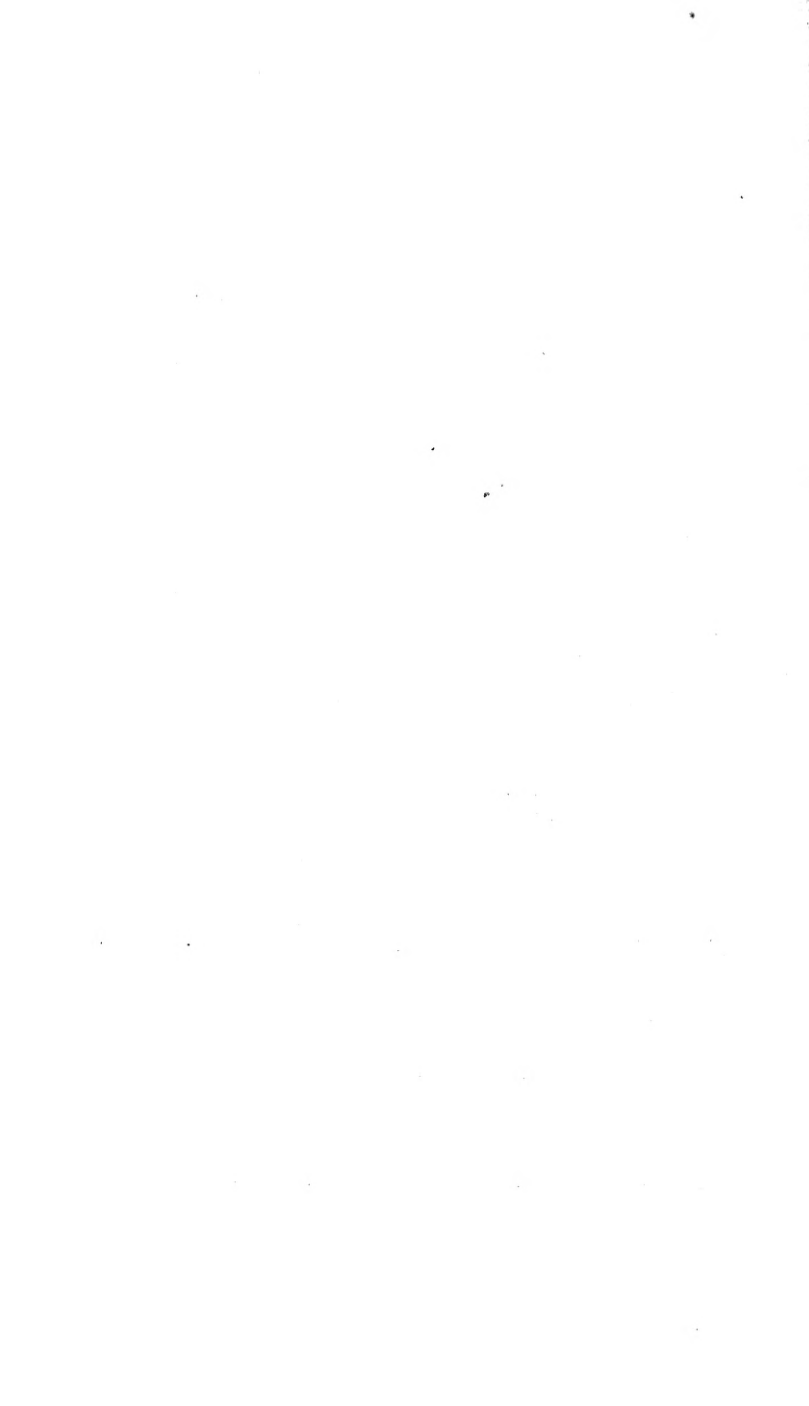
PREACHED to an

ASSEMBLY of MINISTERS,

At *Sherbourn* in *Dorsetshire,*

APRIL 8, 1735.







S E R M O N IV.

On the Nature of CHRIST'S Kingdom.

JOHN. XVIII. 17.

My Kingdom is not of this World.

MANY ages before the Messiah appeared among men, it was foretold that he should be a King. The Prophets beheld him in Vision sitting upon the throne of his glory, and rejoiced in the distant prospect. One of them, particularly, describes him under the familiar name of ^a *the Son of Man*, coming with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days, by whom was given unto him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom; that all people, nations, and languages should serve him; that his dominion should be an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom that which should not be destroyed.

At

^a Dan. vii. 13, 14.

At length *the fulness of time is come*; this wonderful Person, *the Word*, is made Flesh; wise men from the *East* come to *Jerusalem*, saying, *Where is he that was born King of the Jews?* He challenges the character of the *Messiah*, and, by consequence, the style of Universal King included in it. The multitude rightly judging by his miracles, that he was *Messiah the Prince*, would have taken him by force, and made him a King; they were in haste to proclaim his title, and fight under his banner. But the doctrine he taught, and his manner of life, were so very opposite to the views and interests of the *Pharisees*, and other leading men among the *Jews*, that they became his bitterest enemies; and for no other reason, but because he would not set up a temporal Kingdom, accused him to the Roman Governor of designing it. ^b *If thou let this man go, thou art no friend to Cæsar; whosoever maketh himself a King, speaketh against Cæsar.* Whereby they would insinuate, that *Jesus Christ* invaded the rights of the Emperor of *Rome*; an accusation the more inexcusably malicious (not only for that his whole life was a plain confutation of this charge, and he had ever taught them, *to render unto Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's* but) because he had, but a little before, in this very trial, told *Pilate*, who asked him whether he was *King of the Jews*, that his
King-

^b John xix. 12.

Kingdom was not of this World. He does not disown his being a King; but, when *Pilate* repeats the question (*art thou a King then?*) answers, *thou sayest that I am a King*; which is a more indirect way of asserting that he was so; especially when he adds, that *for this end he came into the world, that he might bear witness to the Truth*; intimating that it is not only a Truth that *Jesus* is a King, but one of those Truths that lie at the foundation of the Christian Religion. Yet still, that they might not mistake him, the nature of his Kingdom is sufficiently explained in these words, *My Kingdom is not of this World.* Here I shall,

- I. Give some account of the Kingly Power of our Lord. And then,
- II. Proceed to explain and prove this declaration concerning his Kingdom in the Text, *that it is not of this World.*

I. It may be proper to give some account, tho' short, of *Christ's* Kingly Power. A Kingdom is a society of reasonable Beings united under the government of one supreme head. Such a Kingdom is the Church of Christ, and such a Head is Christ in his Kingdom. ^c *He is Head over all things to the Church, which is his Body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.* There is ^d *one Lord,*
and

^c Eph. i. 22, 23.

^d iv. 5.

and but *one*; not one *invisible*, and another *visible*, as the slaves of *Rome* are taught to believe. This may be an essential doctrine of that Church, but is no where to be met with in the *Bible*. Not a word, *there*, of holding another Head besides Christ, to whom, as well as to Christ, *every knee must bow*. And so little foundation is there for that modest way of arguing, that the Church must have such a Head set over it, *aliter Dominus non fuisset discretus*, because otherwise the Lord had not been discreet; (which is the demonstration they bring for an *Infallible Guide*) so little foundation, I say, is there for this manner of thinking, that a *Universal Monarchy* in the *Church* would be attended with worse consequences than in the *World*; degenerating into a more mischievous tyranny, and naturally drawing after it the prevalency, every where, of vice and error.

It hath been very judiciously observed,
 * ' That the main purpose of God in con-
 ' founding the language of mankind at *Babel*,
 ' most probably was to prevent the early
 ' establishment of one great empire in the
 ' world; and in consequence of that, the
 ' proportionable growth of every vice and
 ' impiety among mankind.' And would not
 the effects of one *Ecclesiastical Empire*, grasp-
 ing the whole earth, be still more fatal?
 Tend-

* *Sherlock* of Providence and Revelation, *examined with Candour*.

Tending to make any corruptions in doctrine or practice quickly spread themselves from the head to the members, and from one part to another, over the whole body of the christian world, and to render them, once they obtained, absolutely incurable. Such an empire therefore could never be designed by God; as the diversity of Languages, usually attended with a like diversity of genius, and manners, and inclinations, concurs to make it not only *difficult*, but, in the present circumstances of things, utterly *impracticable*. And, for my own part, I could sooner believe, that if God had intended the union of all mankind under One Visible Ecclesiastical Head, he would have prepared the way to it, by bringing them back again to one Language, than that he hath actually designed there should be any such Universal Government in the Church, when it would unavoidably produce such a dreadful train of evils; never yet did take place, and never will, while men are divided by so many different tongues, and different forms of civil government. Could we indeed once see the eldest Heir in a direct line from *Noah* acknowledged absolute sovereign of all the countries and regions of the earth, which according to the wise scheme of some men, is his undoubted right as soon as he can be found, we might then allow it to be a pro-

per time for the *Pope* to put in for the care and government of all the souls in this mighty empire, each of these two having, by this means, his proper portion; till then the *Right* in one case will by impartial persons be esteemed full as *groundless*, as the *Fact* in the other is *visionary*.

The two great branches of Christ's regal office are *Legislation*, or a power of making laws, and the *Distribution* of rewards and punishments; and in both these he hath no equal or partner.

The Lord Jesus is our *Lawgiver*, and his law is perfect. No man may presume to add to it, or diminish from it, without usurping, or disclaiming his authority. Nothing can be more decisive than the concluding words of St. *Matthew's* Gospel, containing an account of our Saviour's last Commission to his Apostles before he left the world; *And Jesus spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and on earth; go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo I am with you always even unto the end of the world.* I am with you to protect, assist, and reward you, to confirm your doctrine and bless your labours; but then it is on this condition, that you keep close

close to the instructions which I have given you, and deliver nothing as a part of Christianity, but what you have received from me, *teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.* The character given of *Moses*, that he was faithful in all his house, as a servant, does very justly belong to the Apostles of our Lord, who were exceeding careful not to pass beyond their rule, not requiring any thing for which they had not *Christ's* authority. Of this we have a most remarkable instance in the Apostle *Paul*, whose exactness in distinguishing betwixt what was the result of his *own Thoughts*, and what he had by *Revelation*, cannot be sufficiently commended. *† I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. To the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord.* ver. 10. *To the rest speak I, not the Lord.* ver. 12. But now, they that pretend to be *Successors* of the *Apostles* have not discovered the same scrupulosity. It would have been much more for their own credit, and for the interest of Christianity, if they had. The peace of the Christian Church had not then been disturbed, the purity of its Doctrine defiled, and the simplicity of its Worship corrupted by endless innovations: nor would an Assembly of Christian Bishops (as the Popish Council of *Trent* hath done, calling themselves at the same time *holv* and *æcumenical*)

nical) have impudently declared that the *Oral Traditions* of their Church were by them received, with the same pious affection and reverence, as the *written Word* of God; and established such Decrees, and with such sanctions, as render it doubtful, at best, whether they have not incurred that [§] *Anathema* of the Apostle *Paul*, against any man that should preach any other Gospel than that which he had preached. Making more necessary to salvation than the sacred writers have done, and such things too as evidently contradict the Truths taught by them, is so much like preaching another Gospel, that considering persons will not think themselves to have half the reason to be afraid of their multiplied, but causeless curses, that these holy Fathers had to dread that single one of the inspired Apostle.

It were much to be wished, that none who have the name of *Protestants* would ever follow the pernicious ways of the *Romanists* in this respect; and by so doing give occasion for *the way of truth to be evil spoken of*. But, alas, where's the Party that hath not been guilty in some degree? Nor let any think to come off by saying, they only *interpret* the laws of Christ, and take them out of their generality, that they may become more useful by being distinctly stated and explained; since (besides that no such

right

§ Gal. i. 8, 9.

right of interpreting scripture for others appears to be lodged with any one man or body of men, but the contrary; and these pretended interpretations are many times new laws, and such too as make void the old)

“ this presumptuous imposing the senses of
 “ men upon the words of God, the special
 “ senses of men upon the general words of
 “ God, and laying them upon men’s consci-
 “ ences together, under the equal penalty
 “ of death and damnation; this vain con-
 “ ceit that we can speak of the things of
 “ God better than in the words of God;
 “ this deifying of our own interpretations
 “ and tyrannical enforcing them upon others;
 “ this restraining the word of God from
 “ that latitude and generality, and the un-
 “ derstandings of men from that liberty,
 “ wherein Christ and his Apostles left them,
 “ is (as the great *Chillingworth* observes)
 “ the only fountain of all the Schisms of
 “ the Church, and that which makes them
 “ immortal. Take away these walls of
 “ separation, and all will quickly be one *.”

The other branch of Christ’s Kingly Power is dispensing rewards and punishments.

‘The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all Judgment, with the execution of it, to the Son. Who then art thou that judgeth another man’s servant? To his own mas-

* *Chillingworth’s Safe Way.* † Rom. xiv. 4.

ter he standeth or falleth. ^g One is our Master, even Christ; ^h before whose Judgment-Seat we must all appear, that we may receive every one according to the things done in his body. Let us ⁱ therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart; and then shall every man, who is worthy, have praise of God. This single consideration shews, beyond all contradiction, that to censure and punish in matters of mere conscience, or such as do not disturb the publick peace, is a power not fit to be trusted with mortal men, unless these counsels of the heart, these hidden things of darkness, were known to them; which we are here told shall not be brought to light till the day of final account. There is need of some better authority to support the claim of such a power, than any can be fetched from Rom. xvi. 17. Now I beseech you, mark them who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; though a popish Commentator on this place * fancies that it recommends a diligent Inquisition after heriticks: the design of which notable observation we may suppose to have been to justify the Inquisition practised in the

^g Mat. xxiii. 8. ^h 2 Cor. v. 10. ⁱ 1 Cor. iv. 5:

* Facit hic locus pro observandis & inquirendis diligenter hæreticis, tanquam hominibus noxiis & Christianæ reipublicæ perniciosis. *Esthius in Loc.*

the Church of *Rome*; where, for what they call *Heresy*, that is, in truth, for worshipping God only, and believing no other things than those which are contained in the holy scriptures, a man is first thrown out of the Communion of the Church, then out of his Estate, and at last out of the World. Let all who thus freely deal out death and damnation to others, consider the doom of that servant, who in his Lord's absence beat his fellow-servants; and whether, as their guilt is much the same, they are not without repentance, obnoxious to the same Punishment; ^h *The Lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with unbelievers.* Having premised this short account of Christ's Kingly Power, I now proceed,

II. To explain and prove the declaration in the Text, that the *Kingdom of Christ is not of this World.* The meaning of which, every one will easily apprehend, is not that our Saviour's Kingdom is *purely invisible.* The *Head* is so at present, through distance of place, but not the *Body.* Our blessed Lord hath an *external Kingdom, in the world, though not of it, consisting of all those persons, wheresoever dispersed, who*

own his authority and live in obedience to it. This Kingdom is of the same extent with the visible Church, and by what means soever a man is made a member of the one, by the same means he becomes a subject of the other. It may be called *external*, because it is ordinarily subject to the notice and examination of our senses, as other things in the world are. The *subjects* of this Kingdom, the *ministers* of it, its *laws* and *ordinances*, are all visible. We every day converse with those who pass under the name of Christians, and do many things, which are by them intended as testimonies and significations of their faith in Christ, and subjection to him. *Baptism* is an outward Rite by which the greater part of christian professors have been received into that number, and laid under the so-solemn bonds of the Gospel-Covenant; which Covenant many of them have further renewed by joining in the Observation of the *Lord's-Supper*, another external Institution of Christ's Religion, and visible badge of his disciples. If any one, that is a stranger to the Kingdom of Christ, is desirous of being better acquainted with it, let him look into the *New Testament*, (which is not locked up from prying eyes, as the *Sibylline Oracles* formerly were, unless among the *Papists*, who have their reasons for doing it) and he will there find an account of
its

its constitution, and of the laws and regulations by which it is governed. If he thinks fit, he may further attend on the Religious Assemblies of Christians, in some of which it is to be hoped, he will see the worship of God performed, according to the rules laid down in this sacred Book, and hear those, whose peculiar office it is, preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, and explain and enforce the duties incumbent upon all that acknowledge Christ for their Lord. So that the City of God is a City upon a Hill, which cannot be hid. The Church is a *visible Society*, and a great part of Religion external.

And yet by the *Visibility* of the Church we are not to understand, that the most faithful followers of Christ, the best and soundest part of his Church, have always been the greatest number, and made so considerable a figure in every age, as to draw the eyes of all the world upon them. On the contrary, the Scripture plainly speaks of a *grand Apostacy*, under which ¹ *the Woman* (by whom is figuratively represented the true Church) *should flee into the wilderness*. And therefore it is a very silly question which is so often, and with so much triumph, asked us, *Where was your Church before Luther?* They have been told that our Religion was in the *Bible*, where that part
of

¹ Rev. xii. 6.

of theirs which is peculiar and characteristical will never be found. And as many as adhered to the profession and practice of this Religion (as, thanks be to God, there were never wanting some that did, and more, we have reason to think, than History gives an account of) they were by far the most valuable, when they were not the most powerful, part of the Christian Church; and to these (the smaller their number, the greater their honour) we reckon it our glory and happiness to succeed. With just the same reason, as the Papists put the fore-mentioned question, might the worshippers of *Baal* in *Elijah's* time have asked the worshippers of the true God---*Where is your Church now?*

The sum of the argument (and it is a very shrewd one) is in short this. The same men, by unjust restraints, cruel persecutions, and a thousand wicked arts, first of all thin the number of the true professors of the Gospel, and so terrify the rest, that few have the courage to join themselves to them; and when they have done, make the very fewness of those that openly profess the truth (of which they themselves are the principal cause) an objection, and reproach against them. It must be owned to be no fault of theirs, that they have not carried this argument to a demonstration in all the parts of *Christendom*, as they have done in *France*, where the Protestants are almost reduced to a state of

Invi-

Invisibilty. Not to stay any longer on this, the Kingdom of our Saviour is not of this world in the several respects following, omitting others that might be named.

1. It is not of this world in its *original*. So our Saviour himself explains it in the end of the verse, *My Kingdom is not from hence*. It did not spring from the earth, like other Kingdoms. This is the *new Jerusalem*, descending 'out of heaven from God; of which we may say, as of that City we yet further look for, that its *maker and builder is God*. It did not take its rise from human compacts and agreements, but from the appointment of God; neither was it at first settled by human means, but by a divine hand. This is probably one reason of its being so often styled *the Kingdom of Heaven*, and *the Kingdom of God*. Thus ^k *Daniel*, having described the succession of the four Monarchies, represented by the several parts of the great Image in *Nebuchadnezzar's Dream*, comes at last to speak of another Kingdom, which the God of Heaven should set up, and which was therefore aptly figured by the Stone cut out of the Mountain without hands; for so did the Gospel prevail and triumph by the influence of an invisible power, which attended it in so wonderful a manner, as to shew that the establishment of Christianity was the sole work of God.

But

^k Dan. ii. 44, 45.

But now should we ask the same question concerning the *Papal Hierarchy* as our Saviour does about the Baptism of *John*, *Was it from heaven or of men?* The subjects of that tyranny will be sure to say, from *heaven*, because they are told so, and dare not say otherwise. But they who have more diligently inquired into its original, have proved that it was of *men*, if it had not a more scandalous pedigree; that the craft and knavery of the Bishops of *Rome*, working upon the folly, weakness, and vices of Princes, and assisted by the ignorance and distractions of the Times, was the foundation of that monstrous power which the *Man of Sin* by degrees possessed himself of. In a History dedicated to Pope *Clement VII.* and wrote at his command before his advancement to that *See*, the * Author hath the honesty and courage to take notice that the *Emperor* having quitted *Rome* to hold his residence at *Constantinople*, the *Roman Empire* began to decline, but the *Church of Rome* (that is, the power of the *Popes*) augmented as fast.

2. In respect of the *end* and *design* of its establishment, the Kingdom of Christ is not of the world; being intended for the recovering of mankind from the kingdom of darkness, that is, from ignorance, error, superstition, and vice, by which they are too often led captive, and for their re-union
with

* Machiavel's *History of Florence*

with God as their almighty sovereign, and chief good; for the perfecting of the saints in knowledge, charity, and holiness, and making them partakers of a felicity unteem and eternal. And the *means* employed are suitable to the *end*, *viz.* a system or collection of *Doctrines, Precepts, and Promises* admirably adapted to reform the life, to purify the heart, to exalt the affections, and restore the will to its true liberty; together with a very great simplicity and spirituality of divine worship, prayer, preaching the word, and administration of the Sacraments; which we may conceive to be another reason of its being stiled *the Kingdom of Heaven*, since as it is *from Heaven*, so it hath a visible tendency to raise men *to Heaven*, and was designed for this very purpose. Agreeable to all this, the *wisdom* which the subjects of this Kingdom are to learn, and govern themselves by, in a more especial manner the *Ministers* of it, is not *carnal* and *worldly*. Such was not the wisdom of our Lord himself, or of his Apostles, ¹ *Who had their conversation in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the Grace of God.* They renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, and were strangers to the crooked politicks that have generally been in fashion; not having any low, much
less

¹ 2 Cor. i. 12.

less wicked, designs to serve, which required such management.

Can this be said of all that have administered the affairs of the Redeemer's Kingdom since *that*, particularly of the *Romish Polity* and *Politicians*? Have their views been thus remote from the spirit of the world? Try them by this test. For what end was Popery set up, but to gratify the pride, avarice, and ambition of the Clergy and their Retainers? To be the instrument of getting wealth and power into their hands? What other views have all the peculiar Doctrines of that Antichristian Church? In every age, there have been men of corrupt minds, who have gone upon the supposition that Gain is Godliness, but never were there such flagrant instances of this as in the Church of *Rome*, where even Vows of Poverty are only a more concealed art of getting money. Pardons and Indulgences are some of the merchandise of spiritual *Babylon*, and so are the Souls of men, the salvation of which she openly sets to sale; and when this trade shall fail, and no man shall buy her merchandise any more, it cannot be wondered, ^m *If the Merchants of these things that were made rich by her, mourn and lament over her, saying---Alas, Alas, that great City, that was clothed in fine Linen and Purple, and decked with Gold and precious Stones!---For in one hour is so great riches*

^m Rev. xviii. 11,—16.

riches come to nought. You shall hear no such generous offer from the Church of Rome, as that in the Prophet, *Ho every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money come ye, buy and eat; yea, come and buy wine and milk without money and without price.* No Money, no Indulgence, you must either suffer or pay, lie in Purgatory if you are not bought out; which is the ground of that saying--*That there is no consolation for the Poor*---whereas, paying your Fees, which have been settled in the Pope's Chancery, you may have Absolutions, Dispensations, and what not. By such methods it is almost incredible what advantage they have made of the credulity of the People, and those vain terrors which they had raised in their minds; how rich one part of the world was grown, and how poor the other. King *Richard I.* in an Assembly of the Bishops of this Kingdom could not forbear telling them with tears in his eyes, * “ that he was an unfortunate
 “ Wretch and no King; that the revenues
 “ of his Kingdom were crumbled into in-
 “ finite parcels, of which the least part
 “ came to his share; and that they were
 “ possessed by Monks and Canons of several
 “ Orders.” And how came they in possession of them, but chiefly by making
 people

* Chron. Gervas quoted by F. Simon in his Hist. of Ecclesiast. Revenues.

people believe that there is such a place as Purgatory, where the Souls of men are little less miserable, for the time, than in Hell itself; that they were keepers of the Prison, and by their prayers and masses could help men out*. What are their Prayers in an *unknown Tongue*, making it a crime for people to examine and judge for themselves, and denying them the free use of the Scriptures? What are these, but the arts they put in practice to keep men in ignorance, and thereby in a slavish dependence upon the Priest, and blind attachment to their Church?

May we not, without breach of charity, add that among *Protestants* whoever make the Christian Religion, or any part of it, an engine of State, seem either to mistake, or not duly consider, the nature of Christ's Kingdom; and not to have the promoting the true interest of Religion so much at heart as they should; but also, if not chiefly some other interest which they dare not avow? For instance all persons must be kept out of Places of Civil Trust and Power, that will not take the Sacrament according to the Rites of the *Church of England*; if they

* The most common Form, in Deeds of Donation in favour of Monasteries, was expressed in these terms, *I N. the Son of N. give to such a Monastery such and such Goods, for the Remedy of my Soul, or of the Soul of my Father or Mother.* F. Simon's *Hist. of Ecclesiast. Revenues.*

they think differently from the Church (by which the persons using this language always mean their own particular inclosure) they must not be admitted into the Magistracy †. But why so? Is it that the advocates for such *Tests* seriously believe, that the *common Cause of Christianity* can no otherwise be so well secured, as by setting this mark of infamy upon their *Dissenting Brethren*, and obliging those in their own Church to receive the Sacrament, fit or unfit, inclined, or averse, as a *Qualification* for Preferment, or the *Domination of a Party*? Are the motives that determine them in this matter purely of a *spiritual and religious* kind, or taken from the things of this world? I am sensible, unless those that are concerned will put such questions to themselves, it is to little purpose for others to ask them. I shall therefore say nothing further but this, that as often as the *Ends* which men openly or secretly propose in their use of any Doctrine or Institution of the Gospel are *secular*, they so far contradict the great design for which the Kingdom of Christ was established; and by mingling heaven and earth, Religion and fleshly wisdom together, make a more heterogeneous alliance, than the gold and brass and iron and clay did in *Nebuchadnezzar's* visionary image.

VOL. II.

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3. The

† Qui seorsim ab Ecclesia sentiunt, a Magistratu arcendos censeo, &c. Linc. Concio ad Syned. &c.

3. The Kingdom of Christ with regard to the proper *method* of supporting and enlarging it, is not worldly, but spiritual; *viz.* by prayers to God, and exhortations with men, by the manifestation of the truth to every man's conscience, by the brightness of evidence, the beauty of example, and the allurements of charity; by appealing to the Reason and Understanding of men, convincing their judgments, and thereby making way to their affections; patiently instructing the ignorant, restoring those that are gone astray in the spirit of meekness, and not only permitting, but encouraging persons to search the Scriptures, and judge for themselves; nay, not barely encouraging them to do this, but pressing it upon them as their duty. Christianity was never intended to be propagated by the sword. Men are not to be *driven* but *invited* into the fold; nor, in case of differences arising among Christians themselves, in understanding their common Rule, are they to be ended by force and coercion, by an unbending authority, or by worldly hopes and fears. Fines and imprisonments are penalties for the civil magistrate to inflict, and only in civil cases; not for the Church, whose weapons ought to be of quite another kind. Nor should any member of the Christian Church wish it in his power to revenge himself upon all that have the boldness

ness to differ in opinion from him and his party, or be ready to shew his displeasure against them, as far as he is able, by hard names, angry threatnings, severe and rash censures, and endeavouring to injure them in their reputation or worldly interests.

What Apology then can be offered for the *Church of Rome*? Concerning which a judicious Historian * hath made this observation, that were all the wars, massacres, assassinations and publick confusions, that have ever been in the world upon the account of Religion put together, they would not make a hundredth part of those, that have been caused by the *Papacy* in the space of six hundred years. This black mark of *Persecution*, cruel avowed *Persecution*, is a short answer to all those Notes of the Church, by which *Bellarmin* attempts to prove the *Roman* to be the true Church, and the only Church deserving that title; there being hardly any thing that can argue a greater degeneracy than this uncharitable persecuting spirit, or that is a plainer confession of her having neither *Scripture* nor *Reason* on her side.

The nearer approaches any other Denominations of Christians make to that Antichristian Church in this particular, the further off they depart from the spirit of pure primitive Christianity. When will men learn

* Geddes.

to make *Sincerity* the only Test of Religion? Not to be too forward and positive in determining against the *Sincerity* of their fellow-christians, where there is no other evidence of the want of it, than their not acknowledging the truth or importance of every favourite notion of theirs? And leave the punishment even of *Insincerity* to the proper *Person* and *Time*? I would not overstrain the definition of *Sincerity* itself, as I apprehend a certain Writer * hath done, as if there must be no prepossession, no bias, no leaning to a side, or there can be no *Sincerity*; for wherein then will *Sincerity* differ from *Perfection*? It is enough that a man hath no prejudice inconsistent with a prevailing love of the truth; for this in short is what I understand by *Sincerity*, even such a love of the Truth, as engages men to search for it as for hid treasure, and having found it to lay it up in their hearts, and to practice in all things agreeable to it; or, in other words, a constant endeavour to *know* and *do* the will of God. This, I will venture to say, is the only necessary qualification of a faithful subject in the Kingdom of Christ, the glorious characteristick of every such person, *that* which secures the professors of the Gospel an infallible title to the favour and approbation of their common Lord, and ought therefore to recommend
and

* Dr. *Waterland's* Importance, &c. p. 159.

and indear them to one another. Nor should they be terrified with any man's bare affirmation, without proof, that something more is necessary than *Sincerity*, that persons may have a *Covenant-Right* to happiness, that those who are innocent in God's sight may stand only in *Uncovenanted Mercy* *. Strange indeed, that a man should be a true Christian, and not in the *Christian Covenant* ! Nay, that he may lose his *Covenant-Right* to the mercy of God, by taking that course without which he could have *no right* to it at all ! For that is really the case here. Being persuaded of the truth of the Christian Revelation, the persons I am now speaking of, are exceedingly thankful for it, and solicitous to conform their faith and practice entirely to this unerring standard. They are among the *Hearers* described by our blessed Saviour, who in an honest and good heart *having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience* ; and therefore, conscious of their own integrity, may safely defy all the empty terrors with which ignorant or designing men endeavour to keep them from making a free use of their own *Reason*, and of *the Word of God* : since it is impossible there should be any danger, in respect of the favour of an infinitely wise Being, in examining freely, and judging uprightly.

* Id. p. 126.

In the notion of *godly Sincerity* is included not barely a *right*, but (unless in some peculiar circumstances) an *obligation* to inquire and judge and determine every man for himself, and then to profess and act according to that judgment. He that inquires after truth, is in a better condition, though he misses it, than another who comes into possession of it by accident; unless (as my * Lord *Falkland* says wittily) “ the Church
 “ be like a conjurer’s circle, that will keep
 “ a man from the devil, though he came
 “ into it by chance.” According to the observation of another excellent judge of men and things---“ It is much more easy to bear
 “ with a gross error in any one who brings
 “ with him a mind disposed to hearken to
 “ the meaning of God, than with the plain-
 “ est truths of another who aims at imposing
 “ his own sense on his neighbour; for he
 “ that possesses the truth after this manner,
 “ hath obtained it by mere accident, not by
 “ a lawful and rightful possession, resulting
 “ from the divine gift, by means of a re-
 “ gular investigation. Such a man possesses
 “ her, but not as standing on her own
 “ foundation, but on a strange and borrow-
 “ ed one; which is so contrary to her ge-
 “ nius, that she will never continue where
 “ she is thus imprisoned, but extricating
 “ herself from hence, will betake herself
 “ to

* Discourse of Infallibility.

“ to some free country, where, as in a fair
 “ field, she can be at liberty to make use of
 “ her own weapons*.”

Imposing on others in matters of Religion is so very opposite to the nature of *Christianity*, as a rational Institution, of *man* as a free self-determining agent, and of all *acceptable Religion* as a voluntary service, that whoever do it had need produce the most evident demonstration to justify them. Let us see very briefly by what the practice can be supported.

Infallibility is such a shameless pretence, hath so little foundation in *Scripture*, in *Tradition*, and in the *Reason of the thing*; and is so very contrary to all *appearances*, to the *characters* of the persons, who, by those that believe the thing, are generally agreed to have some share of it, if not the whole (I mean the Popes of *Rome*, the vilest species of men, for a long succession of them, that ever were) to the stupid *Interpretations* of *Scripture* †, and foolish and hurtful *Doc-*
 K 4 *trines*

* *Vitenbogart* in a Letter to the cited Remonstrants at the Synod of *Dort*. Vide Brandt's History of the Reformation, &c. v. 3.

† Of all men the Pretenders to Infallibility have succeeded most unhappily in expounding *Scripture*. Fallible Interpreters have often given a most surprizing light to obscure and difficult Passages, and, one may venture to say, have certainly found out their true Sense. While the infallible Interpreters have been infallibly in the wrong, in expounding the plainest
 Places,

trines that have flowed from this fountain : I say *Infallibility* upon these and other accounts is such a shameless pretence, and hath moreover been so often, and so well exposed, that some of the Papists themselves are ashamed of it. One of them particularly, a Champion of their Church, frankly owns, that this same *Infallibility* is an unfortunate word, and wishes that it was forgotten, or at least laid aside *. And indeed *Infallibility* itself, as long as the Proof of it is only *probable*, will not answer the end for which they have recourse to it, *viz.*, that the Faith of Christians may be a *divine Faith*, which they say it cannot be, if the evidence it rests on be only *probable* ; as the evidence according to them, can be no more than *probable*, if men that are fallible are left to draw every
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Places. Two or three Instances may serve by way of Specimen. Pope *Boniface VIII.* proves the Supremacy from *Gen. i. 1.* *In the Beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth* ; therefore the Pope hath power in Temporals and Spirituall's ; unless you will say with the *Manichees* that there are two Principles. *Exod. xxii. 28.* *Thou shalt not revile the Gods, nor curse the Ruler of thy People.* See a plain proof of the Dignity of the Priesthood, for the Law of God here setting Priests before Kings, calls them Gods and the others Princes. Would one think that the power of the Pope should be foretold in those Words, *All Kings shall fall down before him, all Nations shall serve him?* *Ps. lxxii. 11.* And yet the Council of *Lateran* have given us their Authority for it, that this is the meaning of that Place.

* *Cressy* in his faithful Narration, &c.

one his own Faith, *immediately* from the *Scriptures*. But now, where is the mighty difference, if in this fundamental Question, whether there be any such infallible Guide appointed, (not to instance in several other leading Questions) fallible men are to be determined by their private judgment of the nature and weight of the proofs brought for the Affirmative? Of this particular truth, if it be a truth, they cannot be more certain, with an infallible Guide, than we are, or may be, of all the necessary truths of Christianity. And, if not certain of this, their belief of *Infallibility* cannot render them more certain of other things; since the superstructure can have no greater firmness and stability than is in the foundation. But what if we should be so good-humoured to grant them, what they will never be able to prove, that an *Infallible Certainty* might be had of the *Infallibility* of some Persons, in the Church of *Rome*; even this would not do, unless we were further assured that our infallible Guides *would* not, or *could* not, *knowingly* lead us wrong; being either so *inflexibly honest*, as, in defiance of all temptations, to remain faithful to their trust; or so *irresistibly over-ruled* by a superior influence, as, contrary to their own inclinations, and the views of interest and power, which swayed them in all their other actions, to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing

thing but the truth. And for both these, the least security to be required is the *Gift of Miracles* annexed to that of *Infallibility*. And it must be confessed, one of the Notes of the true Church given by the *Romanists* is *the Glory of Miracles*. Only there is this double misfortune, that the Miracles of that Church do not very well answer the character of *divine Miracles*, which, being intended to manifest the truth of something else, are very manifest themselves: whereas *theirs* have all the marks of fraud and imposture upon them; and were they never so real and great, would not have weight enough to balance such a prodigious mass of absurdities and contradictions as that Religion is composed of.

To renounce *Infallibility*, and at the same time hold fast the claim of *Authority*, or a right to require *Subscription* to any number of Articles in words of mens devising is no better than raising a mighty building upon the Sand. It is laying a burthen on the necks of Christ's disciples, more insupportable to thinking and ingenuous minds, than that yoke of legal ceremonies which the Apostle *Peter* saith, *neither they nor their Fathers were able to bear*. It is challenging a power, as it may chance, to depose and persecute the truth, and establish error in its room; the least hazard of which ought not to be run, without the most uncommon necessity; and so much the rather, as *established Forms* are
more

more easily introduced, than, after they have been consecrated by length of time, they are removed again, or to be revised and altered, whatever occasion there be for it. To argue for such authority from the usefulness of it, amounts to this extravagant assertion; “ That the happiest constitution of the Church, is that which hath the most apparent tendency to promote the growth of Ignorance, Uncharitableness, and Hypocrisy; which, when they spring from a blind regard to *Church-Authority*, are rather to be chosen than *Freedom of Enquiry* attended with probity of mind, charity, and an encrease of divine knowledge.” I mention this last, because more knowledge may reasonably be expected where every man is invited to examine things and see with his own eyes, than where the business of examining and determining, or rather of determining without examining is devolved upon a few.

In Societies erected for the advancement of the Sciences this is the method taken, in which there are as many *Judges* as there are *Members*, and no authority is admitted but that of Reason and Experience. And why a like method should not be proper for the right understanding the Book of *Scripture* as well as that of *Nature*, I cannot imagine. The plea, that the Church does not define any of these Questions as necessary to be

be *believed*, either *Necessitate Medii*, or *Necessitate Præcepti*, that they are not Articles of *Faith* or *Assent*, but only of *Peace* or *Union**, will do but little service. In the *Prophet's* language, the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself upon it, and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it. One can hardly forbear observing, that if these Articles are not imposed as necessary to be *believed*, *Necessitate Medii*, in order to *Salvation*, yet the *subscribing* them is a necessary qualification for exercising the Ministerial Office in the Church: besides which, it might be further remarked, that if these Articles were only designed as Articles of *Peace*, the *Compilers* have not been very happy in expressing their meaning, having made choice of words that seem to imply the quite contrary †. But passing over these things, methinks, all that are against their being imposed as Articles of Faith, should reckon them no little hardship under the notion of Articles of Peace, and to be a real violation of that Peace, which they are intended to secure. For what is the Peace of the Church, but every man's enjoying unmolested all those Rights and Franchises which our Lord hath bequeathed to his

* Bp. Bramhall and others. See Chillingworth's *Life*.

† Articles whereupon it was agreed——for the avoiding the Diversities of Opinions, and for the establishing of Consent touching true Religion.

his followers; for which, this of finding out the truth, and defending it in the best manner we are able, is one. And how any man, who judges it unlawful to subscribe to the *truth* of certain opinions, can be satisfied to promise that he will not at any time *oppose* and *contradict* them, is, I confess, a thing beyond my comprehension. So far am I from being convinced by any thing which a learned Divine hath said, “ that “ barely propagating his sentiments can “ make a man a Heretick, and a wickedder “ man than he would else have been *,” since, after a sober debate of the matter with himself, he may verily think it his duty openly to vindicate his opinions, and may do it in a modest and christian manner. Suppose him mistaken, yet his guilt in opposing the truth, under the notion of error cannot be so great as acting in direct contradiction to his conscience would be; one is like assaulting a friend, believing him to be an enemy, for which we are heartily sorry as soon as we come to know it; the other is knowingly deserting one whom we judge to be a friend, out of cowardice, or some worse principle, the crime of which is not at all lessened by its afterwards appearing that he was really an enemy, but unknown to be such: and then whether the opinions imposed are considered as Articles
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* *Dr. Waterland's Importance*, p. 114. and 145.

of Faith, or only of Peace, the temptation is much the same which they lay men under, to shut their eyes that they may be able to go blindfold, where they could not, or not without a great deal of fear and reluctance, with their eyes open.

Sometimes to justify their hard usage of those that will not submit to their dictates, the friends to Imposition alledge, as the reason of it, the *certainty* on their side, and the *perversefulness* and *obstinacy* on the other. "The Church, say they, is morally certain in what she proves *—We pretend not to impose Articles of Faith in an arbitrary manner—We require no man to receive them for true because they are ours, but because they carry their evidences along with them, and will bear examining. And whereas it may be said, that the Protestant Churches however do determine before-hand, that every person upon examination *ought* to find these things true, which they have formed into Creeds or Articles; it is owned that they do so, as to the *main things* at least, and where is the harm? It is no more than presuming that there are some things so *certain*, that the Reason of mankind *ought* to submit to them, and that those things which they have defined are of that kind †." This, and more
to

* *Waterland's Importance*, &c. p. 181.

† *Ibid.* p. 196.

to the like effect, is their Apology for themselves. In answer to which it is obvious to observe, that tho' men cannot possibly be mistaken in what they *really* prove, yet nothing more common than to be so, in thinking they prove a thing when they do not; that *confidence* very often shews the *man*, and not the *cause*, and that there ought to be some plain *Criteria* to mark the distinction between those *main things* which the Church is morally certain of, judges necessary to be believed, and hath proved to be so, and *others* in which she is not so positive. But passing by this, let men be as certain as they please of the truth of their notions, does it therefore necessarily follow that these notions must appear with the same certainty to all unprejudiced understandings, in whatever light they are seen? The very nature of some truths might convince them of the contrary, the evidence of which not arising out of the things themselves, like Propositions in *Mathematicks*, but from *external Revelation*, the proofs drawn from thence may sometimes be so balanced by Objections both from *Reason* and *Scripture*, that it is no wonder if all honest minds, neither having the same capacity, nor being placed in the same circumstances, are not alike affected by them. Now unless the Imposers were as certain that all sincere persons must be of their mind, as they are that they themselves are in the right, they ought to be more mode-

moderate and reserved in the censures of those, whose *Creed* does not consist of all the same Articles that theirs does; and should not be too forward to enlarge the list of *Fundamentals*, in which without the gift of discerning spirits, they may easily be mistaken. In a word, that every person ought to *examine*, will be readily granted; but that every person, upon examination, *ought to find* those things true, which any Church hath seen fit to form into Creeds or Articles, will, I doubt, hardly pass for sense, since after examination they can find things no otherwise than they appear, the assent or dissent of the mind, a previous inquiry being supposed, not depending upon its own choice.

The most plausible pretence of all is the *Peace of the Church*, which it is said is disturbed and violated by a diversity of opinions in Religion; for these produce separate Communion, and separate Communion destroy Peace and Unity. But why then are not the *Terms* of Communion framed with a greater latitude, that no serious peaceable Christian, if possible may be excluded? Or if those of any particular Communion judge every thing in that Communion to be well-ordered, and that they are obliged in Conscience to conform to it and defend it, by all means, let them be masters of their own conduct; but let them withal remember, that others may think differently of the same things, and of their

their duty with regard to them, who ought not therefore to be judged and concluded by their conscience. Not joining in external Communion, out of a principle of conscience, with those from whom a man differs in his opinion of the truth of some things imposed and professed, and the lawfulness of other things practised, in that Communion, is really joining or agreeing with all the sincere members of that Communion, in what is of much greater moment than external Communion can be; even in following what he apprehends to be the truth, and keeping a good conscience. This he does in *separating* from such a particular Communion, as they do by *continuing* in it. So that whatever differences there are between them, they are united in the *bond of integrity*, which is that which holds all the faithful followers and subjects of Christ together, and not a *unity of opinion*, or *uniformity* in modes of worship. From hence I infer, that since there may be the same *integrity* in persons of different Communions, there ought to be *mutual charity*; and that they who make it their business to possess such persons with prejudices against each other, do not take the way to promote the interests of Christ's Kingdom. Once more,

4. Our Saviour's Kingdom did not *interfere* with the Kingdoms of this world. None were deprived of their dominions to

make room for it; nor did he teach doctrines dangerous to the Civil Government; his title was not inconsistent with the titles of earthly Princes; nor his rights with theirs; nor the power that was given him with any lawful power exercised by them over their subjects. Instead of overturning their thrones he confirmed them, and was so far from discharging subjects of their allegiance to their lawful Governors, that he made it their duty to obey for conscience sake; declined intermeddling in controversies of a temporal nature, saying, *Who hath made me a Judge, or a Divider over you?* And tho' he was a King would not be proclaimed so to the world till after he had left it, that the *Jews* might have no occasion to mistake in the nature of his Kingdom, nor the *Romans* have any jealousy upon the account of it. *Herod* needed not have been so much alarmed at the birth of Jesus, as to make a slaughter of the Children of *Bethlehem*, in hopes he would have been cut off among the rest, if he had had a right notion of the Messiah's Kingdom, and could have foreseen what sort of King Jesus would have proved. Nor had the *Romans* the least reason from his doctrine, or life, to apprehend that he would be a mover of sedition. And before the Governments of the world became Christian, the disciples were like their Master, equally inoffensive in their principles and behaviour.

I am

I am afraid it would not be quite so easy to clear all the professors of Christianity in following ages, especially the Ecclesiasticks: For, not to mention those among ourselves, who, while they owe their worldly wealth and pomp and grandeur to the State, set up for *Independency* on it, and pretend to be invested *Jure divino* with such powers as visibly entrench on the authority of the Prince, and the rights and liberties of the subject, to whom, alluding to a well-known fable, we might say in the language of the Poet *,

‘ Lay down your temporal Emoluments, and
 ‘ return to your first Poverty, if you would
 ‘ not have the State to meddle with your
 ‘ affairs, not claiming any other power but
 ‘ to instruct and feed the flock of God;’

I say, not to expose the pretensions of these men as they deserve, I shall only take notice that the doctrine of the *Pope’s Supremacy* over all persons, civil and ecclesiastical, Princes and Subjects, is such a gulph as does at once swallow up the rights and privileges of all mankind. In vain hath Christ said, *My Kingdom is not of this world*, if his Substitute at *Rome* hath authority to depose Kings, and give away Kingdoms; if he hath the revenues and armies of a Prince, and lives with the same state and attendance. The same person styles himself *the Successor*

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of

* *Macra cavum repetes arcum, quem macra subisti.*

Hor. Lib. I. Ep. 7.

of *Peter* in the chair of Rome; but is no better qualified to be *St. Peter's Successor*, than the *Vicar of Christ*. When *Cornelius* fell down at *Peter's* feet, he immediately expressed his dislike of such an excessive veneration, and raised him up, saying, ^m *I myself also am a man*. Did the Pope ever read this history? Or does he regard it, and consider how little resemblance there is between him and his Predecessor, when he suffers men, Kings themselves not excepted, to adore him like a God, not only falling at his feet, but kissing them too? Which fawning custom a Popish Commentator * fancies he hath found a place of Scripture to justify. ⁿ *And Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and Queens thy nursing mothers; they shall fall down to thee with their face towards the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet*. Was ever such insolence, for a mortal man, and a Christian Bishop, one who should teach others humility by his example, to claim such extravagant honours? Or was there ever such impudence as his flatterers are guilty of, when they quote such passages of Scripture in defence of this abominable practice? You see then it is not from *Christ* or *St. Peter* that the Pope hath derived that worldly state and power in which he rivals earthly Princes. No, but the *Papal Pontificate* (as hath been clearly proved

^m Acts x. 25, 26.

* Cornelius a Lapide.

ⁿ Isa. xlix. 23.

proved by a Writer of this Nation *) did with all its preeminences spring from the *Heathen*, as both of them, the *Heathen High-Priest* and the *Christian*, owed their *Primacy* solely to the *Civil Primacy* of the City of *Rome*. The *Bishops of Rome*, at the time the *Pagan High-Priesthood* was dissolved, took upon them the same State that had belonged to that Office, and laid claim to all the same privileges, which made the Governor of that City (who was a *Heathen*) say, “ Make me “ *Bishop of Rome*, and I will be a *Christian* “ too.” But if it be further enquired from whence he had that power, by which he lords it over Princes, takes upon him to make and unmake Kings, and release Subjects from their allegiance, dispensing with the most solemn oaths, excommunicates them, lays their Kingdoms under an interdict, gives their Dominions to others, authorizes traitors and assassins, and, if they fall in their attempt, canonizes them? I answer, that in all this he hath no other example than the Devil, who having shewed our Lord all the Kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, tells him, by way of inducement to fall down and worship him, that he would make a grant of them to him, for they were all delivered to him, and to whom he would he gave them. The titles of *Lord God*, *Vice-God*, and *Pontifi-*

cal Omnipotence, given to the Pope by his flatterers, not without his own consent and approbation, would afford something like a foundation on which to build his other claims, if they really belonged to him. But this only aggravates the affront to God, as well as the insult upon the authority of Princes. The Pope is guilty of much the same impious presumption, in regard of Almighty God, as that of *Salmeoneus* in the fable, who is said to have challenged divine honours; and, in order to obtain them, to have endeavoured to imitate *non imitabile fulmen*, the thunder of heaven which is inimitable. For thus does the Pope of *Rome* sit in the temple of God, shewing himself as God, uttering his thunders from the *Vatican*; and pretending, like God himself, who ruleth in the Kingdoms of men, to pull down one and set up another. And may we not hope, that as the Poet* describes *Jupiter* with his thunder striking that daring wretch, so the time will come, when the Pope shall be thrown from his Seat by that God, whose honours he hath so long arrogated? We may not only *hope* for such a time, but we *know* that it will be, and know not but it may be near. Let us pray that God would hasten it, and destroy the Kingdom of the Beast and all its Dependencies, that the Kingdom

* Virgil. *Æneid.* L. 6.

dom of our blessed Saviour, which is not of this world, may appear in its true glory.

I shall just Apply what hath been said in two Inferences, and conclude.

1. Is not the Kingdom of Christ of this world? Then from hence it will follow, and from hence we are all of us to draw this instruction, that the sincere disciples of Jesus, the true subjects of his Kingdom, are not of this world. So our Master himself, praying for his disciples, says, *They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.* This denotes both their temper and character, and the expectations which they are to have from the world.

The *temper* and *character* of real Christians are denoted by their not being of this world. They are not of this world, their governing temper and their general conversation are not worldly. They are not conformed to this present world, but transformed by the renewing of their minds. As far as they are under the power of a worldly spirit, so far they are of this world; and as far as they are of this world, so far they have no relation and title to a better. Hence the *children of the world*, and the *children of light* stand for two opposite characters. The children of the world choose the world for their portion, and have hardly any other rule but the maxims and examples of the world; the children of light walk under

the guidance of that light which came from heaven, and leads thither; the word of God is their rule, the glory of God their end, and God himself their exceeding great and everlasting reward.

The other thing, signified by the Christian's not being of this world, is the *lot* and *condition* which he is to look for in the world. Here he hath no continuing city, no certain resting-place, he is only a stranger and pilgrim on earth, and very often must expect to fare, after much the same manner, as strangers use to do. ° *If ye were of the world* (saith our Lord to his disciples) *the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.* These words of our divine Master were most remarkably verified in the first Christians; and do so far hold true at all times, that the best men are seldom the greatest favourites of the world. And however the world uses them, tho' contrary to its custom, in the most indulgent and friendly manner, they must not think to pass thro' the world without their portion of sorrow and affliction; for tho' *verily there is a reward for the righteous*, yet this world is not a place for dispensing it. Let us, my Friends, consider this, and endeavour so to live in this world, and to preserve such a disposition and state of mind, with
regard

° John xv. 19.

regard both to its good and evil things, that it may evidently appear, that we are not of this world in the same sense they are so, whose portion is in this life, but that we seek for another country, even a heavenly.

2. The Ministers of Christ in a more especial manner, remembering whose Ministers they are, and for what purposes called and appointed, should esteem themselves obliged to form all their views, and every part of their behaviour and management, agreeably to the nature and design of the Redeemer's Kingdom. Their business is to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, pure and unmixed and to labour for the advancement of peace and righteousness, which are the Kingdom of God among men, thereby training them up for the Kingdom of Glory hereafter. We may be allowed, *my Brethren*, to magnify our Office, and have a great deal of reason to do it, provided only, we rightly understand, and faithfully discharge the duties of it. Zealous we should be for the cause, interest, and honour of our divine Master; but then it is highly necessary that our zeal be according to knowledge, lest while we think we are doing him good service, we be really gratifying our own passions, and contending for the tenets and honour of a particular faction or party, to the prejudice of that *one faith*, and *one common interest*, in which all true Christians are equally concerned.

cerned. We are not to betray the *least* truth, but the degree of our zeal should always be proportioned to the *importance* of the truths we defend; and, in the manner of defending them, is to be directed and governed by prudence and charity. Be it our care to instil into the minds of our hearers the excellent principles of pure and undefiled Religion, of love to God, universal charity and good-will to men, as their fellow-creatures and fellow-subjects, and of unshaken fidelity to their heavenly King; to raise them to a divine temper, to engage their preference of things unseen, and to be helpers of their faith, hope, joy, and patience; the effect of all which will be, that they will better fulfil the duties of every relation, whether to their Families, to their Friends and Acquaintance, to their Prince, their Country, or to the Church of God.

And that our instructions may have the more certain and abundant success (as well as upon other accounts) let us be sure to live and act no otherwise than we teach. Let all our exhortations be enforced by the powerful oratory of a good example. While we point out heaven to others, let not our eye and heart, our chief desires and aims for ourselves, be fixed upon the earth; as if we were willing to put others out of conceit with it, only that we might have the greater share of it ourselves. Let us abhor every
every

every thing that would be an indication of a low, fordid, tricking, selfish, tyrannical disposition. Let us call no man *master* upon earth, nor set up for *masters* ourselves; but imitate our Saviour's Fore-runner, who desired no greater honour, than that of conducting men to the Messiah, in whose glory he would disappear, as the morning-star in that of the risen sun. ^P *He must increase, but I must decrease.* Far from lording it over God's heritage, and acting as if we imagined ourselves to have dominion over the faith of our fellow-christians, we should rejoyce to see them in the peaceable possession, and full exercise of that liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free; never better pleased than when the Church listens to the voice of the heavenly Bridegroom, as he speaks to her in the lively oracles of truth, and regards no other authority but his.

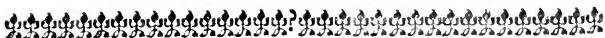
The less fond we shew ourselves of worldly power and dominion, the greater influence shall we be likely to have over the minds of men, and stand higher in their inward esteem and respect; which is a sort of power more honourable to us, and by all wise and good men much more to be desired than the other, as it will furnish us with a capacity and opportunity of doing more good in the world. And let us not, like *Diotrephes*

trepbes, love an invidious preeminence among ourselves. They are memorable words of our divine Master, which he spoke to his disciples, when something of this spirit shewed itself among them, and they should ever live in our remembrance. ⁹ *Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister, and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.* In persons intrusted by their King and Country with the management of civil affairs, next to integrity, the chief thing required is *political wisdom*, that they understand the times, what they need and what they will bear; are acquainted with the true interest of Prince and People, and will contribute their part to maintain the publick tranquility. This is *their* praise. Let it be *ours* that we are wise to win Souls, have a just notion of the rights and interest of the Christian Church, and, according to our proper sphere and capacity, are instrumental to preserve and promote them.

To conclude---Let us be sincere, diligent, and faithful, and we shall in no wise lose our reward.

⁹ Mat. xx. 26, 27.





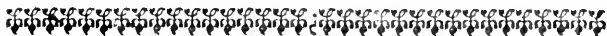
T W O
S E R M O N S
O N
S E C R E T P R A Y E R.

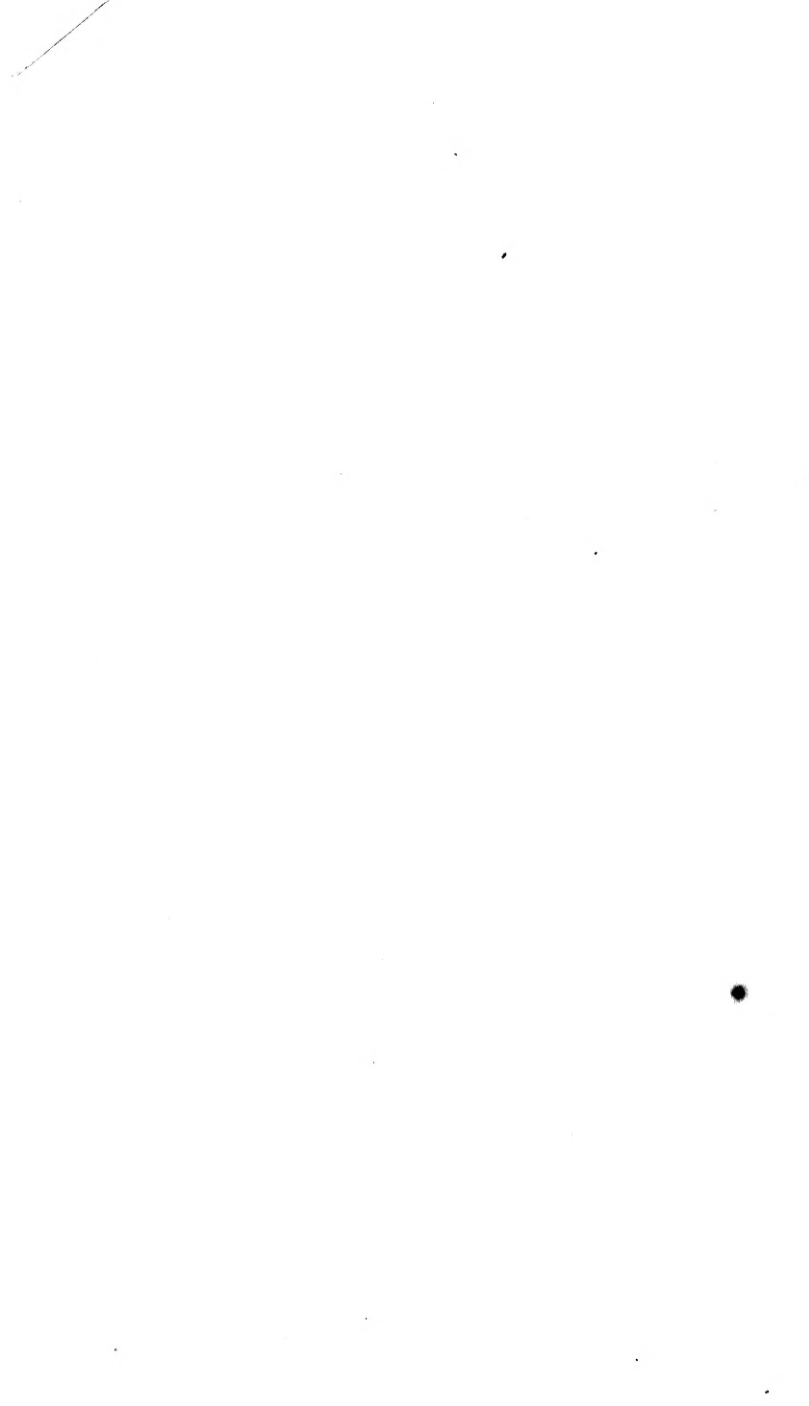
To which are added

Two Essays on P R A Y E R,

- I. Concerning the rational Grounds of Prayer
in general.
- II. Concerning the Qualifications necessary to
render Prayer an acceptable service.

1736.







T H E
P R E F A C E.

T H A T the perfection of man consists in his likeness to God, and his final happiness in the enjoyment of him; are truths of the same evidence, and importance. And it is very observable that these two, I mean the perfection and happiness of reasonable Beings, have a mutual influence upon each other; for the more perfect any such Being is, the greater is its capacity for the fruition of God, its supreme good; as, on the other hand, the more perfect the enjoyment it hath of God, the more perfect will its nature become; its faculties proportionably widen and improve, and a degeneracy from its present state be more unlikely, and, morally speaking, impossible. Then shall holy souls be like God indeed, when they shall see him as he is; when, beholding his glory, they shall be transformed into the same image, from glory to glory;

by

by which entire conformity to the most excellent of all Beings, they shall be fitted for the nearest access to him, and the sublimest acts of contemplation, love, and praise. This plainly shews what is the principal business and felicity of man in the present life; they are both comprised in that one precept, Acquaint thyself with God.

Heathens have been instructed by the light of Nature to place Religion in an imitation of the object whom we worship; and this is, certainly, the right notion of the matter. Whoever professes an esteem and veneration for God, but takes no care to be like him, does no more than compliment him; he cannot love God as he ought, nor think very advantageously of those perfections, which he doth not judge it worth his while to be at any pains for acquiring. The great design of the Gospel is to bring us back to God, the fountain from which we had strayed; that being restored to a participation of his image in this world, we might be made forever happy by him, and in him, after death. Now the question is, how this assimilation to God shall be wrought. I mean not by what efficient cause; for what other efficient can be supposed of this supernatural change than God himself? But by what instrumental cause, or means? A question that is easily answered. Would we resemble God? Let us frequently converse with him. Acquaintance and familiarity insensibly produce a similitude of manners and dispo-

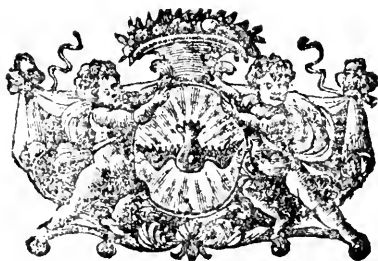
disposition. He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, he will be taught by their example, and excited to an emulation of their virtues. The same would be the effect of being often with God, which is one ground or reason of the scriptures describing Religion, by walking with God. The truly religious man sets the Lord always before him. God is often in his thoughts; he often darts his soul upward in pathetic ejaculations and wishes, saying, O that I had wings like a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest! Nor does he stop here, but by these momentary acts of devotion, as I may call them, he is prepared for more set and continued exercises of it, and hath his inclination to them encreased. So that it would be a vain thing for any one to think of excusing himself from the stated duties of piety, by pretending that all the same ends are sufficiently answered by short, occasional conversions of the mind to God, frequently intermingled in the common train of our thoughts. For I will be bold to say, that whoever hath this happy art of conversing with God in the midst of his ordinary affairs, will not be able, nor desirous, to excuse himself from waiting upon him, at proper intervals, in a more express and solemn manner; any more than a person, who meets his friend in company with others, will be satisfied with that, so as never to covet the enjoying him alone. He that walks with God hath his seasons of retirement, and communion

with him; when he bids the world get behind him, and quit, for a time, all his common delights, that he may give himself to Reading, Meditation and Prayer, and, in the silence of earthly passions, may hear God speaking to him in the still voice of his love.

When I consider this, that the Christian's main duty and concern is to endeavour an abstraction of mind and heart from the world, and to raise himself above all present things, by faith and love, by prayer and praise, and this with a view to his being, after a life spent in such preparatory methods, translated into the immediate presence of God, there to dwell forever, in bliss unutterable; when I consider this, and at the same time see a great, I had almost said the greater part of persons professing godliness, immersed in earthliness and sensuality, conformed to the course of this world, without manifesting any thing of a divine temper, or taking any pleasure in the operations and entertainments of the divine life, ah, think I with myself, how little genuine, vital Christianity is there left among those, who carry the name of Christians! Can the happiness of seeing God in heaven be reserved for these low, carnal minds, that industriously shun all intimacy with him now? Do they esteem indeed this promised vision to be any happiness?

That by perusing the following Sermons (published at the request of some whom the Author knew not how to deny) such of my readers as
had

had before none, or a superficial regard to the duty of SECRET PRAYER, may be persuaded to the constant and delightful practice of it ; and others, in their approaches to God, receive some assistance towards kindling and keeping alive the heavenly flame, shall be the earnest Prayer of one, whose greatest ambition, he trusts is, (he is sure ought to be) to serve those souls which Christ died to save.







S E R M O N V.

The Duty and Advantages of Secret Prayer.

MAT. VI. 6.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

PRAYER may be considered merely in its general notion, as an address to Almighty God; or as distinguished into its several kinds, mental and vocal, social and solitary. Of these, it is not agreed among interpreters, which is referred to in the Text. There are those who expound the words,

Enter into thy closet, in an allegorical or mystical sense as if, in other words, it should have been said, “ enter into the secret chambers of thy soul ; let thy Prayers be mental, and thy worship of God performed within, in thy own heart.” If the design of this allegorical interpretation be to exclude, or degrade joint vocal Prayer as of no necessity, or of little use, and to insinuate that Religion is nothing but *Quietism*, it proceeds upon a manifest mistake, since we are to exalt God in the congregation, and not to forget the assembling of ourselves together ; not surely, that being assembled, we may, as the manner of some is, pass the time *in silent musing*, but with one mouth, as well as one heart, praise the name of the Lord, present our common supplications to him, and give our most heedful attention to his holy word ; having the promise of our Saviour, *that where two or three meet together in his name, he will be in the midst of them*, to do what they shall agree to ask of him. In case the whole intended be this, that in Publick Prayer, and in the midst of a religious Assembly, we should have our eye to the frame and workings of our hearts, and unite our secret desires to the Prayers offered up in the house of God, nothing is more true ; in as much as without this hidden devotion all the outward signs and expressions of devotion, will
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be of no avail. But though this be true, yet I do not apprehend it to be any part of the meaning of the Text, which, as will presently be shewn, ought to be understood in the obvious acceptation of the words.

Others therefore are of opinion, that this direction of our Lord concerns the duty of Prayer in general, and that he only speaks comparatively that we should rather seek retirement when we pray, than desire to pray in company with others, who may take notice of our seriousness and zeal. This, say they, is the sum of the matter, that whether we pray alone, or before others, we should have the same disregard to the praise of men, and the same unfeigned and pious regard to God, as if shut up in our closet, where we had him alone as a witness to our words and actions, as well as to our thoughts. This, I own, is a good sense of the words, and comes nearer that which is the true sense of them than the other, yet does not, as I conceive, justly express it; it being very probable that our Saviour is here speaking of separate or particular Prayer, and condemning a very odd way, which, it seems, the Pharisees had of performing it: for so shameful was their hypocrisy, that instead of retreating from the world when they made their particular Prayers, their custom was to pray in the Synagogues, and corners of the streets, in places of publick resort and com-

pany, on purpose to draw the eyes of men upon them. For a pretence, they pleaded the rules laid down by their Rabbies or celebrated Doctors, who prescribed certain times for the reciting of the Philacteries (being portions of the law written upon pieces of parchment, which they carried about with them) and the Prayers belonging to them; so that when the time enjoined them was come, in whatever place they then happened to be, they must repeat over their Prayers. This being their rule, they so ordered the matter, as to be caught in the streets at the canonical hour, that they might be obliged to say their Prayers there, and so doing get the reputation of an exact and punctual devotion. That which gave the first handle to this theatrical way of offering up their separate Prayers, might, for ought I know, be a custom the Jews had (as we see in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican) of choosing the Temple for the place, where they made their private supplications; thinking, perhaps, that the sanctity of the place would render their Prayers more acceptable than they could be any where else. In opposition to which superstitious conceit of theirs, an Apostle of our Lord commands us *to pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting*. It is not the venerable character of the place, but the good disposition of the worshipper that God hath

hath regard to. There never was a *real holiness* by which some places were distinguished from others; and under the Gospel there is not so much as a *relative* and *ceremonial* one; though if our churches were thus holy, the closet would much better suit the nature and design of separate Prayer than they. Hither therefore our Lord counsels us to retire, and for our encouragement, tells us, that though we are not seen of men, our heavenly Father both observes, and will reward us.

That separate Prayer is a duty, and a duty which all men will not live in the neglect of, is here taken for granted, *But thou when thou prayest, &c.* For the form of expression must not be understood as leaving us at liberty, whether we will pray by ourselves or no, and only obliging us to do it apart from the view of the world, whenever we think fit to do it at all. We can no more infer any such thing from this mode of speaking, than from Christ's warning the people in another place, *to take heed how they hear*, we may conclude it a matter of indifference, whether we hear the word of God, or whether we forbear, so that we shall have nothing to answer for, provided, as often as we do hear, it be in a right manner. These duties are so exceeding plain and evident, that if persons have any conscience of their obligations to God, they will not be able wholly to omit them, Besides,

fides, that the scope of our Saviour's discourse (as you will see if you look into the chapter) did not lead his disciples to pray to God, and to give alms to men, but to rectify a great abuse that was crept into these duties, and, like dead flies in the ointment of the Apothecary, spoiled their virtue. The Pharisees performed these duties very frequently, but in such a manner as turned what they meant for sacrifice into an abomination, and was therefore by no means fit to be imitated. For this reason, having supposed that men, those at least that make a profession of Religion, would not entirely pass by these known duties, he lays down directions for the regular conducting them; and particularly as to Prayer, he charges his disciples, that for the better performance of private Prayer, they should make choice of a private place.

To affect being seen or heard of men, is bad at any time, but worst of all in our personal converse with God. *Enter into thy closet*, εἰς τὸ ταμιεῖον; the word signifies any solitary and quiet retreat, where we may be concealed from the notice of the world, and, as much as possible, undisturbed by its noise. It is not otherwise *Secret Prayer*; for how can that be said to be done in secret, which is not done secretly? The reason given for this sort of Prayer, *that God seeth in secret*, implies that no one else does.

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It may not be a secret to those we live with that we do thus pray; they may make it their observation that we spend some part of every day in our closet or chamber, and from concurring circumstances may have reason to think, that we spend it in spiritual exercises, such as Reading, Meditation, and Prayer. Nor is there any harm in all this; nay, if we could so contrive it as to be in Secret Prayer every day, and the rest of the family know nothing of it, and have no ground to suspect it, yet we ought not to be guilty of such an excessive shyness, since it would look too much like being ashamed of Religion, and might scandalize and harden those, who would be edified by our good example. We are not bound to incur the ill opinion of men, in order to gain the approbation of God; but should rather do what will deserve, and is likely to procure their esteem, that the wholesome instructions and admonitions we give them, may have the greater force upon their minds, when they see them accompanied with a suitable practice in ourselves. Nor do our Prayers ever the less merit the name of *Secret*, because we have the reputation in our families, and among our acquaintance, of persons piously disposed. Of this we must be sure to take care, that our good be not evil spoken of, that we do not appear fond of being observed, and, while we are in our closets,

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inform all that are any thing near us of what we are about, by the loudness of our devotions, or make the longer stay there, that by the length of the time people may measure our extraordinary piety. They that have not the same conveniences for secrecy that others have, shall be accepted, if they are as retired as they can be, when they are not so retired as they would; for this is what we must endeavour, that our Prayers have the qualification required in the Text; and supposing we do, to this end, make choice of the most secret places that are in our power, and manage the whole in a modest and unaffected manner, we have done, in this respect, all that we are obliged to.

In the further handling of this subject, my design is,

- I. To offer several considerations in proof of the duty of Secret Prayer.
- II. To shew the very great, and singular advantages of it. And,
- III. To consider the particular case, or question, concerning the frequency of its performance.

I. I shall offer several considerations in proof of the duty of Secret Prayer.

1. The Scripture commands it; not I confess in terms, but by manifest consequence
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and fair interpretation. Were the words of the Text the only authority we had to build this practice upon, it should be abundantly sufficient with such, as make profession of the greatest respect, and veneration for all the injunctions of our blessed Lord. These are among the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth, hearing which the multitude admired him, and which we should piously reverence. It is true our Lord saith not, *Pray thou in secret*; but he saith what amounts to the same, *When thou prayest enter into thy closet, and pray to thy Father in secret.* He argues upon it, as a thing not disputed at any time, that men ought to pray by themselves; and I hope it ought to be much less disputed now by us, who have this excellent rule for the manner of performing the duty. Had it not been antecedently a duty, Christ would not have concerned himself to lay down any directions about it; he would have acted beneath himself in so doing, and have done what he never did, with regard to the, traditional practices of the Jews. The Pharisees had introduced a great many usages into Religion, for which they had nothing to plead from the law of God, either moral or positive. Does our Lord direct them how to manage themselves in the doing these things, if they would do them, without any way endeavouring to undeceive them
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in the notion they had of these things being commandments of God, which were only human traditions? Not at all. And we may be confident he would have passed over Secret Prayer with the same neglect, in case it had been as destitute of foundation in Reason and Scripture, as some other customs common in that age. And after all, it doth not look well, when in a matter like this, that is as much a privilege as a duty, men insist upon the most exprets command; and unless the precept be delivered in words that cannot be evaded, will not be satisfied of their duty, nor set about the practice of it. It argues but too plainly that their heart is not right with God; for I can hardly make any doubt, that all good Christians, all who have a taste for the exercises of Religion, and have had communion with God in them, will be convinced of their obligation to pray to him in secret, and exceeding glad of the encouragement they have so to do. And by the way, this encouragement to Secret Prayer, or the reward promised to the conscientious performance of it, is a clear intimation of its being a duty; for promises are made to duties, and the most valuable promises to the most excellent duties. The Apostle *Paul* exhorting children to obey their parents, takes notice that it was ^a *the first commandment with a promise*; whereby he would

^a Eph. vi. 2.

would suggest that filial obedience is a thing highly pleasing to God; and I know not why we may not conclude after much the same manner in the present case. Secret Prayer is recommended by a promise immediately annexed to it. It is therefore an undoubted duty, and a duty which we should delight in, because God does, we to pray in secret, as he to see us pray. And the argument is the stronger here, for that the promise is of a more divine and elevated kind, than that the fifth commandment is followed with. The promise there is temporal, *That thy days may be long in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.* Here it includes temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings. The result is, that if the Text was the only scripture proof, which we could alledge for the duty of Secret Prayer, it is absolutely decisive, and sufficient to silence all doubts in this matter; but we need not be to seek for other arguments from scripture. Give me leave to insist upon two or three.

1. The general commands of scripture relating to the duty of Prayer, carry in them an obligation to Secret Prayer, as well as to the other kinds of it; for when no particular sort is specified, and the context doth not restrain the command to one sort more than another, we ought to conclude, that all the sorts are intended, which the nature
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of the thing will admit. The same reason one man may plead for excluding Secret Prayer, because Secret Prayer is not particularly mentioned, may be brought by another, or by the same person against Publick Prayer, because there is as little mention made of that; and, according to this way of interpreting scripture, the laws that enjoin some general duty, which hath several particulars under it, will be of no signification at all; since it is certain, that when a duty of such a general nature is performed, it must be performed in some one particular way. A man cannot pray to God, and his Prayer be neither social nor solitary, neither publick nor private. It must be one or other; and therefore when the command runs in general terms, it is reasonable to suppose that it reaches to all. Indeed if it otherwise appeared that Publick Prayer was a duty, but not as to Secret, then the Text exhorting to Prayer in general, might justly enough be understood of Publick Prayer, and no other; but this is not the case here. From what hath been already said, the obligation to Secret Prayer is manifest, and will be yet further so from the following considerations; for which cause, it ought to come in for its share in the general command. I shall content myself with citing a few of these general precepts, ^b *Pray always with all*

^b Eph. vi. 18.

all Prayer and Supplication. Now how is it possible we should pray always, if we do not pray in secret? It is acknowledged, that though we do pray in secret, and that often, yet we shall not pray always according to the rigor of the term. The term therefore is not to be taken in its rigor, as if we were bound to employ all our time in Prayer; this would be absurd. However, though it doth not, and cannot imply the continued and uninterrupted exercise of Prayer, it seems most naturally to denote the frequent exercise of it. It is hardly proper to say that a man prays always, who prays but seldom, as a great part of the world must needs do, if they never pray but in publick; the opportunities for such Prayer being nothing comparable in number, to those of sacrificing to God in secret.

Another thing observable in the Text now quoted is, that as we are *to pray always*, so *with all Prayer and Supplication.* *With all Prayer*, and therefore with Secret, which is one principle kind of it. *With all Prayer and Supplication*; where two words are used, not improbably to signify, that we must abound, as in the several parts, so in the several kinds of Prayer. Those words of the same inspired writer, in his first Epistle to *Timothy*, contain a like precept, *° I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy*

hands without wrath and doubting. The former precept regarded the universality of time, this of place. We are not confined to consecrated ground. Our Prayers, from whencesoever they ascend, if our hearts accompany them, shall come up before God, even into his holy hill, whether our souls take their flight from the publick assembly, the family, or the closet. I shall name but one Text more, being of universal extent in respect to the subject-matter of Prayer, as the two former were as to the time and place. ^d *Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanksgiving, make known your requests unto God.* In these words, if any one particular sort of Prayer be more especially intended than another, it is Secret. My reason is this, that Prayer is here prescribed as a sovereign remedy against those anxious disquieting cares, which the heart is too often overcharged with. Would we be careful for nothing? In every thing we must pray, and give thanks; which is not so convenient, were it possible to be done, in Publick Prayer; for a Prayer, in which a company of Christians join, cannot take notice of the case of every individual person. Would we make known to God all our requests in the multitude of emergencies that affect the civil and christian life, our various wants and straits, fears

^d Phil. iv. 6.

fears and distresses? It can be no where done so compleatly and distinctly, as in secret, which is one peculiar advantage attending Secret Prayer, as I shall have occasion to shew more fully afterwards.

2. Whatsoever is necessary to the accomplishment of any thing commanded, is made a duty by the command obliging us to that thing. The means are always included in the end. This is a sure rule in the interpretation of laws, especially divine laws. The immediate end of the law is obedience; and if that obedience is not to be attained, but by something else which is not directly commanded, the latter, though not directly commanded, yet, because previously required to the other, is commanded by consequence; otherwise a person might break all such commands, and not sin; for either he sins in neglecting the means pre-required to the end enjoined, or not at all; but in neglecting the means he doth not sin, if no way obliged to the use of those means, because where there is no law, there is no transgression. And if he sins not in this neglect, he is guilty of no fault in not keeping the law, because, this neglect being first supposed, the keeping of the law is impossible. Now to apply this to the argument in hand. The scripture, in too many places to need particular citations, makes it our duty to lead a devout, a holy and religious life, a life of converse

with God, to be mortified to the present world, and to have our conversation in heaven, to set our affections upon things above, and not on things on the earth ; in a word, to be continually hastening to, and preparing for the coming of the day of Christ. This is every where the language of the New Testament ; and in all this do we not hear a voice, saying, “ Enter into thy closet, and pray “ to thy Father in secret ? ” Tell me, how the divine life shall be kept up, but by frequent communion with God in our retirements, as one principal help to it ? Must we not look to things seen, instead of things unseen ; must we not cool in our zeal, for the life and power of Religion ; must not our hearts decline from the love of God, and quickly grow indifferent to any further acquaintance with him, if we do not often shut our door against the world, and withdraw to meet with him whom our souls love ? Surely, there can be no such thing as true and vital Religion, a fervent and steady devotion, an established and growing virtue, where Secret Prayer is forgotten. It is by secret duties that the soul is called off from the world, the holy fire stirred up and kept from expiring, the inward man composed, good resolutions confirmed, and the graces of the Spirit awakened and improved. The conclusion of this matter is, that Secret Prayer, being an instrument of Religion, and

as necessary to the spiritual life as our common food is to the bodily, all those places of scripture, which speak of such a life as the condition of eternal salvation must be looked upon as so many commands and exhortations to Secret Prayer.

3. We may argue from Scripture examples; the examples of those, whose names are in the book of life; examples of the best of men, and of the Son of God himself; examples recorded to their praise, and with a manifest indication that God approved them. No example is of any authority against law, so as to over-rule it; but tho' example must never be alledged against law, it may sometimes be of great use in coming at the knowledge and meaning of the law. Here good precedents are often of a singular advantage; nay, and in some cases, examples may have the binding force of laws, as when the memory of them is kept up by the lawgiver, on purpose to incite others to the imitation of them. It is so in the business of Secret Prayer; for the examples of this kind that we meet with in the sacred history, with the circumstances there attending them, are a plain discovery of the will and pleasure of God; and the will of God, in what manner soever discovered, whether directly or indirectly, by promises, by threatnings, by examples, hath all the obligation of an express and formal law. Good men are called *the generation of them that seek God*; this is a great part of

their character, and such a part as renders them beloved of their Maker, and deserving of honour and esteem among their fellow-creatures.

David was a man much in Prayer, in Secret, as well as Publick Prayer; and it is observable, that this same person was *the man after God's own heart*. He was a man of great infirmities, yet still *the man after God's own heart*, because if his infirmities were great, his devotion was greater; he loved much. That *Cornelius* might be had in everlasting remembrance, it is recorded of him, *that he was a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house*; and then, as a proof of his great piety, it is added, *that he gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always*. How were it to be wished, that many who pass for good Christians were able to produce so substantial an evidence of their love to God, and charity to men, as this heathen Profelyte here doth. The same hands that he lifted up to God in Prayer, he stretched out in acts of kindness and beneficence to the poor; his Prayers sanctified his alms, and his alms prepared the way for the success of his Prayers: such Prayers could not but come up before God as incense; the lifting up of such hands could not but be as the evening-sacrifice; and so the angel of God tells him, *thy Prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God*. And what is the reward of this his eminent piety, than which greater was scarcely to be found in *Israel*?

Why,

Why, he is brought to the knowledge of a Saviour, and bid to send for *Peter*, who should instruct him in what he must do to obtain everlasting life. And see how the evidence conspires! The messengers sent for *Peter*, find him gone up into the house top to pray, where he fell into a trance, and saw heaven opened, and a vision descending from thence; of all which you have an account at large in the tenth chapter of the *Acts*. So that we have here already, a good man under the Old Testament, a heathen Profelyte, and a christian Apostle bearing testimony by their example to the practice of Secret Prayer; one a subject to the law of *Moses*, the other of the law of *Reason*, the third of the law of *Christ*.

That St. *Paul* too, the chosen vessel, did frequently exercise himself in secret godliness, may be gathered from several passages in his Epistles; particularly where he tells the *Philippians*, *that he thanked God upon every remembrance of them always in every Prayer of his for them all, making request with joy.* I shall conclude this head with the example of our great Master, which at once crowns and outshines all the rest. He, tho' the Son of God, took on him the form of a poor petitioner, that he might teach us how to pray. In that excellent Directory, stiled the *Lord's Prayer*, he hath taught us how to pray, but teaches us more effectually by his example. He prayed with his disciples, that

from him we might learn to pray in our several families; and he prayed apart from them, that we might also learn to pray in secret. His time was divided between devotion and charity, conversing with God, and doing good to men. The sun saw him by day dispensing his divine doctrines, a brighter, more quickening, and heavenly light than his own. The stars by night, as they moved their rounds, beheld him breathing out his soul to God. The angels that waited near him with delightful wonder, observed a soul burning with a flame of love surpassing theirs. They were witnesses to the humility, the ardour, and the filial resignation that went along with his morning and evening oblations. Clouds of incense were not so fragrant. We read of his being *all night long in Prayer*; he would not entrench upon the work of the day, and therefore borrowed time from the silent watches of the night. “How can we think
“of this example of one, whom we call
“our Master and Lord, and not be power-
“fully moved and affected by it? How
“can we think of the Son of God wrestling
“with his Father in secret, and not resolve
“to imitate him? O my soul, follow thy
“Saviour into his sacred privacies; there be-
“hold him pouring out his heart before God!
“See how he prays! With what strength
“of faith! What fervour of affection! What
“humble importunity! How constant! How
“unwea-

“unweared! When thou seest all this, chide thyself, O my soul, for thy little likeness and love to thy Redeemer, for thy backwardness to duties in which he goes before thee, the flatness of thy affections, and thy heedfulness and inattention, tho’ thou hast such an example to awaken and fire thee! O Jesus, I admire thee, but would not content myself with admiring thee only, may I be ambitious of resembling thee! I will look to Jesus as the perfect pattern of solitary Religion, of a contemplative no less than an active life; and when I find myself cold, and lifeless, and dry, I will say to myself, he that commands thee to pray to thy Father in secret, hath left thee his example, that thou shouldest do as he did. And how was it that he prayed in secret? Not as I do; no, he prayed much more earnestly; and I will labour to be, and to do like him.” And thus I have finished the scripture-argument for Secret Prayer; upon which I have been the larger, that I might make it evident, that this duty is not without sufficient foundation in the word of God, as I fear too many are apt to think of it that it is. To proceed therefore to another consideration.

II. The reasons that evince Prayer in general to be a duty, taken from the several parts whereof it consists, may be urged with equal strength for Secret, as for any other
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fort of Prayer. Confession, Petition, and Thanksgiving are the three most noted parts of Prayer; and from each of these the argument for the duty I am now establishing is incontestible. It is not more fit and proper that men should confess their sins together, than that every man should confess his own sins to God. It is not more fit and proper that men should spread their common wants before God in their united Prayers and Supplications, than that every man should make known his private and particular requests. It is not more fit, and proper, and decent, that men, should offer to God the sacrifice of Thanksgiving for the mercies they jointly partake of, than that every man should gratefully acknowledge the personal favours he receive from the hand of God. In the present apostate state of mankind, *Confession* of sin is become an essential part of Prayer. We all of us sin against God, societies and single persons, and are therefore bound to confess our sins to Almighty God, and humble ourselves for them; every church apart, every family apart, and every soul apart. In many things we offend all, and should therefore daily prostrate ourselves at the footstool of the throne of grace, in a lowly sense of our great unworthiness and guilt; we have our particular sins and errors, and should therefore make our particular confessions; our secret faults, and should therefore pray and confess in secret. Publick confession is not

so much the act of this, or that, or the other person, as of the congregation. In such confession there cannot be room for the enumeration of the sins and transgressions of all present, with their several aggravations (as it is impossible they should be known but to the persons themselves) and upon this ground it is highly expedient, not to say necessary, that every guilty person should make this his own act, by confessing his sins to God in secret, and setting them, as far as he is able, in order before his own eyes.

And then, as to *Petition*, can we satisfy ourselves with concurring in the Prayers that are presented by others? Do they fully express our desires? Can they so exactly state our case as ourselves may? Is Prayer, considered as an acknowledgment of our dependence upon God, an undoubted duty? And must not Secret Prayer be as necessary a duty upon the same account? Is it enough that we now and then mix with the crowd in their addresses to heaven? Should we not likewise go alone; especially knowing that we shall be welcome? How just and consonant to the first dictates of Reason is it further, that for the innumerable, and undeserved benefits which God bestows upon us, we should make him the return of our thanks and praises, having our hearts too much enlarged with sentiments of gratitude to confine themselves to those general thanksgivings, which Christians

istians make use of when together? Our souls should be often engaged in abstracted meditations of the love of God. We should delight to recollect the mercies he dispenses with so liberal a hand, and to tell him how sensible we are of them; to own our debts to his goodness, as great as those to his justice, too great and immense for us ever to discharge. The humble, penitent, thankful Christian, can never allow himself in the omission of Secret Prayer, convinced he is under the obligation to pray in secret, as to pray at all; and even constrained to make his secret confessions, petitions, and thanksgivings to his heavenly Father.

III. Self-dedication is a natural duty enforced by additional obligations from redeeming grace. The *Macedonian* converts are commended by St. *Paul*, for first giving their own selves unto the Lord, before they extend their liberality to the indigent members of Christ, *2 Cor.* viii. 5. And in this sense we may say the altar sanctified the gift; the consecration they made of themselves to God to be his temple, in which temple the heart was the altar, imparted a value to the other gifts which they offered. Now this self-dedication, to be managed as it ought to be, requires that a person be sometimes by himself. In real construction indeed the worship of any number of persons is a dedication to God, of all who bear a part in it; but then this is
not

not appropriate, and distinct enough wholly to answer the great ends of self-dedication. Sacramental dedication is more adapted to these ends than the ordinary acts of publick worship, and, in some respects, is more solemn and affecting than that which passes in secret; but tho' the former be somewhat more solemn, the latter hath the advantage in this, that it may be carried on as we find most convenient, and the opportunities for it return oftener. In a world so full of temptations as this, and with a heart so prone to depart from God, it is necessary that we should frequently devote ourselves to his service, and engage our souls to cleave to him, saying, "Lord, I am thine, thy creature, thy servant! I cannot too often mind myself of the relation I have to thee, and beseech thee to keep me in thy love! Being drawn by thy mercies, I do here present my whole man a living sacrifice, I trust, holy and acceptable through Jesus Christ, and own that it is but my reasonable service! I will repeat this dedication of myself in secret to thee, who seeest in secret." But one man was created at first, and coming out of his maker's hands, in the fulness of his intellectual powers, no doubt can be made that he immediately turned himself to the source of his Being, and confessed his power, wisdom, and goodness by invocation of his name. As soon as the woman was formed,

and

and given him to be the partner of his happiness, we may reasonably presume they joined their voices, and their hearts in hallelujahs to their common Parent and Lord. As this original pair multiplied, their worship enlarged, diffusing itself into families, and then into more numerous assemblies. But we must not conceive that the addition of social worship superseded solitary, which was prior to it. Notwithstanding this, it must exceedingly become individual persons to recognize the fountain of their mercies and personally and separately to dedicate themselves to the God of their lives.

IV. If we consider men as converted or unconverted, in which two classes they are all comprehended, there are peculiar obligations lying upon them to Secret Prayer. Are they converted? Or doubtful whether they are not? And can they go, from day to day, without begging of God his converting grace? Or hope this grace shall be given them without their imploring it? Should not their fears put them on taking refuge in the mercy of God? Should not a guilty conscience drive them to the blood of Jesus, that it may be purged and cleansed? Should not the chains they are held in make them desirous of liberty, and cry to God to set them free? Can they have any satisfaction in their minds, any true peace and comfort, while God is offended, and they take no care
to

to appease his anger? Can they think of death, and not turn pale; of a judgment to come, and not tremble; they who are yet in their sins, and pray not to God to deliver them from the guilt and dominion of them, from their ruling and their damning power? *Ask, and it shall be given you, &c.* these are the encouraging words of our gracious Lord, in which he seems to have a more peculiar regard to Secret Prayer, and in that Prayer to the grace of conversion. *Ask, and it shall be given you,* “ Lord, I
 “ own it would be most unreasonable for
 “ me to expect it on any other terms! How
 “ can I have a thing cheaper, than for the
 “ asking? How have the conscience to de-
 “ fire it? Our heavenly Father will not de-
 “ ny his Holy Spirit to them that ask him.
 “ Without that Spirit powerfully working
 “ on my soul, I can do nothing that will
 “ be effectual to salvation; never be changed
 “ and quickned; never become meet for
 “ the presence, and favour, and enjoyment
 “ of God. And may I hope that this di-
 “ vine Spirit shall be imparted to me, and
 “ will dwell with me, unworthy as I am
 “ of his sacred influences, having so often
 “ grieved, resisted, and almost quenched
 “ him? And to obtain this heavenly gift
 “ is my asking him of God all that is ne-
 “ cessary? It is; with this condition, that
 “ I do not retract and unsay my Prayers in
 “ my

“ my life and actions. I am resolved,
 “ O God, to be a humble and constant
 “ supplicant at thy throne, and will not let
 “ thee go till thou blest me, in turning me
 “ from all mine iniquities!”

Nor, after he is converted, may the Christian let down Secret Prayer, being under as pressing obligations as before, though upon a different account. The Spirit given to believers in conversion, is not only a Spirit of Holiness, but a Spirit of Prayer and Supplication. Do not duty and inclination both carry friends to be frequently in each other's company, when they have conveniency for it? It is certain, they otherwise do but trifle with the name of friendship. You are savingly acquainted with God; he hath taken you into a special covenant, honours you with the stile of friends; and will you restrain Prayer before him in secret? Is not this to shun his friendship, giving him broad signs that you are sick of his company? Like the church in *Isaiab's* time, of whom God complains, * *Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.* Are you not obliged to be daily conversing with him, in whose presence you hope to dwell for ever? If you have grace, should you not lay hold of every opportunity to actuate and increase it? And is not Secret Prayer one considerable way of doing this?

* *Ifai. xliii. 22.*

this? Upon the whole, I will venture to speak my mind, that no sincere and zealous Christian will esteem it a thing fit to be disputed, whether Secret Prayer be a duty.

I now come, according to the method proposed,

II. To lay before you some of the many great benefits and advantages, that wait on Secret Prayer, and may convince us of its being as much our interest, as what hath been urged before shews it to be our duty. And here, to prevent all mistakes, I take leave to mind you of these two things.

I. In extolling Secret Prayer, I have no aim to depreciate those other kinds of Prayer that are Social and Publick; on every one of which all good Christians will set the highest value. These are all necessary, all excellent in their kind, have all their respective advantages, do all contribute to the carrying on the great work of our salvation, and conspire to make the spiritual man perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work. There is a friendly harmony and agreement among the several sorts of Prayer; and so far are they from interfering, and clashing with each other, that neither of them can be profitably minded, but in conjunction with the others. Considering the Christian's circumstances in this world, neither of them

can be well spared, nor, where opportunities offer, safely laid aside. A religious assembly is a most lovely sight; the solemnity of publick worship, and the serious behaviour of the worshippers, are very edifying. These are the beauties of holiness, a resemblance, though but short and imperfect, of the heavenly society. A praying family is likewise beheld with pleasure by him, who hath promised to bless the habitation of the just; it is honourable in his eyes, and should be so in the eyes of men. This is the way to have our tabernacles in peace, and to visit our houses, and not sin; when, like *Job*, we sanctify our household by continual sacrifices. Such a family as this, surrounded by families that call not on the name of the Lord, is like *Gideon's* fleece, which had the dew of heaven resting upon it, while the ground all about it was dry. So that by speaking in praise of Secret worship, I do not at all detract from the other two.

2. Nor do I pretend to enter into a comparison of these several sorts of Prayer, nicely weighing the benefits of each, and at the conclusion giving the preheminance to that which is Secret. Perhaps, if such a comparison was made, and we gave to each of them its due, we should not be able readily to pronounce which excelled, being like some parts of a well-proportioned building
that

that seem so equally to conspire, though in different ways, to its commodiousness and ornament, that it is hard to determine where the odds lies. Some possibly may be inclined to ascribe most to this kind, others to that; and they may without prejudice enjoy thier several opinions, so they do not look upon all besides that particular sort of Prayer as needless, or very little useful. It is sufficient for my purpose, if the advantages of Secret Prayer are such, and so many, as to endear it to every wise and serious Christian; and that they are so, the following Particulars may decide.

1. Secret Prayer may be performed with least distraction. Such is the weakness of our nature, and such the imperfection of the present state, that the holiest persons, persons of the most even and uniform temper, have not an absolute command of themselves; not even in places, and times, and exercises, wherein they are most desirous to be serious and collected. And what then can be hoped from others, who have not their minds under so good government? When the senses are strongly assaulted by their several objects, it is hard to keep the thoughts at home. And hence it comes, that in company, or in noise or hurry, the duties we attempt are more broken and shattered; something or other is continually intruding to make us forget what we are a-

bout. One impertinent visitant or other knocks at the door, and the soul is but too easily prevailed upon to admit of their entrance. Ah, when will it be, that in a crowd of worshippers, our thoughts will be our own, and God alone be regarded by us? When surrounding objects shall be no hindrance to our devotion, and those that join with us shall, by their presence, excite our pious affections, never disturb them? This will not be till we come to heaven, where the high praises of God sound from ten thousand tongues, without one straying heart in all the vast assembly. At present we are nowhere entirely free from disturbance; but in solitude we are freest. Here the soul hath the best opportunities for self-recollection, and to shut out a busy world; and therefore it is, that the devout person, in order to converse with himself, and with God, turns aside out of the common road, and endeavours to hide himself where earthly cares and pleasures may not so easily find him. Abide you here, saith he, while I go yonder and worship. When ^f *Isaac* would meditate, he made choice of the evening as the stillest time, and of the field as the most lovely place; and so the *Psalmist* adviseth, ^g *Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.*

In

^f Gen. xxiv. 63.^g Psal. iv. 4.

In the wakeful hours of the night, the silence of the season will whisper reverence to our thoughts, and be a means of fixing them. In like manner, the more Secret our Prayers, the less distracted will they be. When we have got, as far as we can, out of the reach of vanity and care, when we have shut ourselves up in our closets, and strictly charged ourselves with the consideration of the design of our coming thither, and the awfulness of the presence into which we are come; when we have warmed our hearts with preparatory meditations, and are about to pour them out in Prayer to God, what is there now to step in between the soul and its unseen delight? What should prevent its enjoyment of God to the height, I had almost said, of its wishes, or rather of what this mortal state will allow? Now, if ever, it may lay hold of him. Now, if ever, it may talk to him, and not be interrupted. The truth is, when most alone, we are not so much alone as we should be. We cannot enter the closet, but some of our enemies will thrust in after us; so that we are obliged to be fighting, when we should do nothing else but pray. However, the closet is our safest retreat; and though the place be not like the enchanter's circle, which, it is pretended, the Devil would in vain attempt to violate, yet this evil Spirit hath not that advantage here to work his ends,

not having so many temptations and diversions to second him. The Devil could do little without the world, which ought to have no communication with our private retirements. And O the joys of the soul, when the King brings her into his chambers! When she finds herself alone with her beloved, and vows to be wholly and for ever his! When, in her raptured thoughts, she runs over his excellencies, his benefits, his works, his promises, and gives vent to her own desire! Were the good man, in secret duties, as free from inward distractions, as he sometimes is from outward, hardly any thing would be wanting to compleat his happiness.

11. Secret Prayer hath the advantage of greater liberty. But this particular, with others that remain, I shall consider in another Discourse.





S E R M O N VI.

The Advantages of Secret Prayer.

MAT. VI. 6.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

IN handling this Subject my design was,

- I. To offer several considerations in proof of the duty of Secret Prayer.
- II. To shew the very great and singular advantages of it.

III. To consider the particular case or question concerning the frequency of its performance.

The first of these I have gone through, and made some progress in the second.

I have observed,

I. Secret Prayer may be performed with least distraction.

I now add,

II. Secret Prayer hath the advantage of greater liberty. In social worship, it is impossible but we should be under some check, or restraint, from the presence of spectators, not being able to do the thing we would, lest some ill construction should be put upon it; on which account we are forced to act with something of uneasiness; we have not that entire freedom which we may use by ourselves. In Secret, we have no one to consult but ourselves; no rule to follow but our own edification; since by whatsoever edifies us, God is pleased to reckon himself glorified. Here our looks, our gesture, our method and expression may be all unconstrained. The only question is, whether I find this, or that, or another way serviceable to the better performance of the duty?

duty? If it be, I am at liberty to take it, and may, without any fear of offending, indulge my inclination; as whether it be by unhidden sighs and groans, by shedding of tears, by lifting up the hands or the eyes to heaven, by standing, or kneeling, by prostrating myself. If the affections of our minds do naturally prompt us to such bodily actions, and are promoted by them, there is not the least reason to imagine that they are forbidden us. What would give offence to men, who see nothing but our external behaviour, and draw on us the censure of affectation and hypocrisy, to God, who looks into the heart, and knows the agreement between our thoughts and our actions, is not at all displeasing.

On the contrary, his will is that we should take the utmost freedom that is consistent with the reverence we owe to him, and is fitted to excite, or express a vehemence of holy love, and corresponding emotions of soul. And particularly, as to the exactness of method or expression in our Secret Prayers we need not be solicitous. It is highly congruous, that in Publick we should have regard to the sentiments of others, and to their notions of decency, and utter nothing that may prejudice them against the duty itself, or the persons who are the guides in it; but the same reason does not hold, when we are alone by ourselves. Here indeed

we

we ought to avoid carelessness and negligence, and should not be guilty of gross improprieties, when we might easily avoid them. Expression should not be so altogether overlooked, as to betray the least disrespect to the presence of God, and want of awe and watchfulness in our approaches to him. Nor will this really fetter us, so as to hinder us in the due freedom of our words, or even in any freedom that we can desire. Prayer is more the language of the heart than of the mouth, and where there is a true fervour of spirit, it is graciously accepted, though the manner of phrasing our petitions be not the most accurate. God is not offended with the wrong placing of a word or a sentence, so long as the main end is answered; so long as the meaning and the disposition are good, and what mistakes we fall into are either the effects of our not knowing better, or of the earnestness and importunity with which we pray. Now this freedom which you see is to be found in Secret Prayer, is certainly a very great privilege. We may be perfectly easy, when God alone is our witness, and have little to concern ourselves about, but the frame and posture of our spirits; let these be right, and every thing will follow of course, as far at least, as is necessary to the obtaining the divine favour.

III. Secret Prayer may with more ease be adapted to the state and circumstances of particular persons. Every one may suit his Prayers to the dispensation of Providence he is under, or the temper of mind he is in; to the condition of his temporal or spiritual affairs. This, in Publick Prayer, is absolutely impracticable. Every one hath some personal concern of his own, his peculiar wants, and doubts, and temptations; he hath his separate petitions to make, and his separate thanks to return, together with others that are common. The Minister, or whoever else is the mouth of the company, cannot be supposed to know the exigencies of all present; or, if he did, would not be able to form his Prayer so as to comprehend them all. One here and there may find such a happy coincidence, or agreement between the Publick Prayer, and his private case, that it could not have been better represented, if the person that prays had been instructed in it before-hand; but then as to others it is not so, nor with the same persons at other times; for in this world our condition is extremely variable, the face of the heavens is not more inconstant than that of our minds. Our lives are filled with different events, and our breasts with different passions, hope, joy, fear, sorrow, perplexity, and a thousand other vicissitudes, some comfortable, and others

others afflicting. And in my Secret Prayers cannot I diversify my requests, according to the diversity of scenes that present themselves to me? If my heart be full of the more agreeable sensations and passions, what should hinder my giving them their full scope, and enlarging most in those parts of Prayer that are most delightful, Praise and Thanksgiving? Is my soul cast down within me, benighted with melancholy doubts and fears, so that I am not able to read the evidences of my integrity, and the special love of God towards me? What have I to do but lodge all my complaints with the Father of mercies; to plead with him, and expostulate with my own soul? Is there any sin that prevails more than others, and breaks the peace and harmony of my life? I can direct my Prayer more especially against that sin. Or if I am afflicted and grieved in any respect, I can bring my case to God, and beg his help and succour. What way soever my desires incline, if they are such as they ought to be, may I not lay them before him? And by the way, may not this be one proper method of trial, whether our desires are regular in their kind or degree, to consider if we should not be ashamed to give them a place in our Prayers? Every man best knows the plague of his own heart, and should frame his Prayer and Supplication accordingly.^a

And

And here, I hope, I shall not offend when I say that, were the expediency of Forms of Prayer at other times as great as it is supposed by some, yet one would think all should be agreed in this, that it is not proper to tie ourselves to them in our Secret Addresses. Not that I am He who shall condemn some persons, those particularly of very mean gifts, in the temporary use of them; or till by reading and exercise they arrive to a competent ability of expressing themselves; or in a partial use of them afterwards, if they find any advantage from it. But what I say is, that we ought not, out of choice, to confine ourselves to them, because we should hereby deprive ourselves, in great measure, of one principal advantage of Secret Prayer, I mean the opportunity it affords us of complying with the present bent of our souls, and dwelling longest where they are most engaged. And this advantage will not be accounted small, by those who accustom themselves to Secret Prayer. “ O my soul, what a pleasure is
 “ it, when thy thoughts are serene and
 “ peaceful, the stream of thy affections un-
 “ troubled and unpolluted, thy hopes of
 “ heaven strong and lively, and thy title
 “ to it clear, to call to remembrance God’s
 “ favours past, to reflect on thy present hap-
 “ py state, and to look forward to that
 “ perfect felicity, which is to be the portion
 “ of

“ of the faithful in another life ; and then
 “ to bleſs God for theſe earneſts of glory,
 “ and to bind and to devote thyſelf to him !
 “ When thou art oppreſt with melancholy,
 “ and ready to ſink under thy burthen,
 “ what a relief is it to impart thy cares to
 “ thy beſt, thy almighty Friend, and to tell
 “ him that thou art reſolved to caſt them
 “ all upon him ! I delight to mourn, and
 “ am reſreſhed with my tears, when it is
 “ in the preſence of God that I thus la-
 “ ment myſelf, and I know that he is ever
 “ ready both to pity and help me.”

iv. Secret Prayer prepares the way for
 more publick duties, which are never ſo
 well diſcharged, as when we have compoſed
 ourſelves for them by theſe retired exer-
 ciſes. After having fought God in the clo-
 ſet, we ſhall be more diſpoſed to ſeek, and
 more likely to find him in the church. Pub-
 lick Ordinances will profit us little, unleſs
 we ſet our hearts in order by the frequent
 and ſerious performance of private duties.
 The cloſet is the tiring room, where the
 ſoul dreſſes for the church ; ſecret devo-
 tion trims the lamps of the ſanctuary, and
 makes them burn ſo much the more brightly.
 Secret and Publick Worſhip are indeed mu-
 tually helpful to each other, and the reaſon
 why we do not receive more benefit from
 them is, that we do not unite them, or are
 not

not so careful and vigilant in both, as we should be. Persons may thank themselves, that they go to the house of God, and do not meet him there; that they pray and hear, but experience little or no change in themselves, either as to sanctification or comfort. Let them be faithful to their souls, and examine whether this proceeds not from their neglect to speak to God *in Secret*. There can be little doubt, that it doth so frequently. Would we be occasionally devout, we must be so habitually. No action is done with pleasure and advantage, till we have attained a facility of doing it. Without a habit of Prayer and Devotion, we shall find ourselves miserably unready, and when we would set about the service of God, shall not know how to do it, having nothing in order; like a Priest, who taking no care to prepare matters before-hand, cannot perform the sacrifice, for want either of the victims, or the utensils, or the sacred fire. But now, how can we arrive to such a habit without Secret Prayer? The distance between the times of Publick Worship is so great, that the impressions made on the heart are lost, because not often enough repeated. And besides, when we shew so much indifference for the presence of God, and communion with him, as seldom or never to retire from the world to give him a meeting, he very justly denies his presence, when

when we wait upon him in the Congregation; for he is in this sense a *jealous God*, and will reject all such worshippers, as serve him only when they have nothing else to do. Make conscience of Secret Prayer, and you will do the same as to Family Prayer, and the service of the Sanctuary; you will need no other motive, but the pleasure and satisfaction you have in these duties, and the gain you reap by them. Particularly, on the Lord's-Day, would you spend some time in your closets, in the examination of yourselves, summing together your scattered thoughts, reading of God's word, and applications to him by humble and seasonable Prayer, you would quickly perceive the happy influence of this method upon the subsequent work of the day; and when the worship you paid to your Maker was only shifting the scene from one place to another, you might be sure of finding God every where. "O my soul, the sons of God do this day present themselves before the Lord, and I intend to be among them! But shall this content thee to be among them, if thou art not of them? Do we not read of Satan's presenting himself before the Lord among his children? May I not go and return as empty as I went? To secure my welcome, I will make a private visit to the throne of grace, and beg a blessing with the word that shall

“ shall be preached; both on them that
 “ preach, and them that hear it. Having
 “ thus bespoken acceptance, I may be the more
 “ confident of it.” This was the practice of
 a certain eminently good man, of whom it
 is related, that as he was zealously affected in
 Secret Prayer, and by it sanctified every day,
 so when the Sabbath came round, he would
 spend most of the morning in Secret Prayer
 and Meditation; and was wont to say, “ we
 “ many times blame the *Minister*, when
 “ the fault is our own, that we have not
 “ prayed for him as we should have done.”

v. By Secret Prayer we are very much
 assisted in forming a judgment of our spi-
 ritual state. Among the many marks that
 are given for the trial of uprightness, there
 is scarce any one more sure and undeceiv-
 ing, than constant application to the unseen
 parts of Religion, and a general relish of
 them. *Job's* friends, to make good the charge
 of hypocrisy, accuse him of ^b *restraining*
Prayer before God. The accusation was
 false, but the supposition it went upon true,
 that it was very improbable he should be a
 good man, if he made light of Prayer. And
 so in the 27th chapter of the same Book,
 the question is asked concerning the hypo-
 crite, *What is the hope of the hypocrite, tho'*
he hath gained, when God taketh away his
 VOL. II. P *soul?*

^v Job xv. 4.

^c Ver. 8, 9, 10.

soul? Will God bear his cry, when trouble cometh upon him? Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God?

He may always call upon God in the Publick Assembly, where he hath the eyes of others upon him, but will he worship God in Secret, where there is no eye to observe him but his? Will he persevere in this imployment, and delight himself in it? I am sure it is not very likely he should.

In all my actions, to which the world is a witness, I may be secretly swayed by a regard to the good opinion of the world, and in a much greater degree than I am aware of; but in religious privacy, what is there that can awaken my affections, and move me to be serious and in good earnest, unless it be a sincere desire of approving myself to the great searcher of hearts? Can I not pass my time without consecrating stated portions of it to the God of my life; not slightly and carelessly but in a reverent and becoming manner? Have I marked the bent and motions of my spirit in secret devotion? And can I say that, ordinarily, my desires after God are sensibly strong, my heart united, and my thoughts fixed? In this case, there is nothing foreign and extrinick to work up my passions, nothing to create an artificial devotion; it can be no other than the consideration of the divine presence that awes me, and the love of my
duty

duty that allures me ; and such an awful sense of God, and unfeigned affection to his service, must certainly, in concurrence with a holy life, (which I cannot but think doth almost inseparably accompany it) be a very good indication of a new nature, and a favouring change. Let me not deceive myself with a shew of piety ; all the appearances of it in publick may be no more ; and it is certain are no more, when there is not a proportionable care to acquit ourselves of the duties of retirement ; *not with eye-service as men-pleasers*, (which we too often are in the worship of God) *but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart*. Is it after this manner that I serve God, in singleness of heart, and with fear and trembling ? Perhaps I turn my back upon him, or put him off with a few cold and formal addresses ; and as long as it is thus with me, would a favourable opinion of myself be any better than presumption ?

VI. Secret Prayer hath this most precious promise made to it, *that our Father, who seeth in secret, will reward us openly*. In this motive to secret devotion, there is not a word almost but hath its weight, and deserves to be distinctly considered.

I. I pray to *my Father*. Blessed be that kind, inviting name ! When God calls him-

self *Jehovah*, I adore him. The contemplation of his self-existent nature, and the all-sufficiency of his Being, strikes me with a religious astonishment. When he styles himself *my Father*, I cannot but love him, and draw nigh to him with confidence. Under what relation could he have represented himself, that carries in it more encouragement than this does? Had he made himself known only to man in innocence by this name, and afterwards laid it aside again, there might have been some room for doubt; but, on the contrary, it is the style he hath assumed long since the fall. It is *sinful man* whom he allows and commands to approach him as *a Father*. And, now that he hath given us this boldness of access to him, shall we avoid him and flee from him? Read those words of the Apostle, for they contain in them abundance of consolation, ^d *Through him (Jesus Christ) we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father*. Here is *the Son* to intercede for us, *the Spirit* to assist, and, to compleat all, *a Father* to receive us. That he who is our Father, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is likewise the Almighty and Everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, is so far from an argument to dissuade us from coming to him, that it is an additional motive to come. He is our Father, and therefore

^d Eph. ii. 18.

fore willing to help us, Almighty, and therefore able. “ O heavenly Father, how amazing is thy condescension! How great my privilege! Thou hast sent thy beloved Son, with a gracious invitation to present myself, and my petitions to thee. Nature dictates that I ought to pray to my Maker, and he, for my further satisfaction, tells me that I pray to *my Father*. What need of more importunity? I will do as my Saviour hath bid me. I will enter my closet, and there disclose all my wants to *my Father*. He hath an ear to hear, a heart to pity, and an arm to save; and shall not I have a tongue to speak? Merciful Father, compassionate the ignorance, and pardon the perverseness of thy child; draw me, and I will run after thee; conquer my reluctance, and disperse my fears, and inspire me with filial love and boldness, that I may delight to come into thy presence, not only with others but alone; to stand and kneel before thee for thy blessing, to call upon thee, and to plead with thee!”

2. *My Father seeth in secret.* He is the Omniscient God, present with all, and knows all. He that will judge the secrets of men cannot but be conscious of those secrets. He saw what the antients of the house of *Israel* did in the dark, every one in the chambers of his Imagery; though they were impious

enough to say, *“the Lord seeth us not, the Lord hath forsaken the earth:* not less observant of those that secretly worship him, the true God, than he shews himself to be here of the secret worshippers of idols. He observes both in their chambers, one with delight, the other with indignation. And well may he know what is done in the inmost chambers of the house, when privy to all that passeth in the heart (which may likewise be called a chamber of Imagery, where a thousand little idols are forged, as well as kept) a place ten thousand times more concealed than the closet, and inscrutable to any knowledge but that which is infinite. See the cxxxixth *Psalms*. There is no danger when I am in my closet, and pray to my Father there, of my faring as the priests of *Baal* did, who though they called upon their God from morning until noon, saying, *O Baal bear us*, found him as deaf as the image that figured him. The God whom I serve is ever with me, in heaven and on earth at the same time, encircled with hosts of angels, and dwelling with men, present in the assembly of his saints, and with every contrite soul in his solitary hours. Some have thought the words of the Text might be rendered to this sense, “ Enter
 “ into thy closet, and pray to thy Father
 “ who is in secret, that is, unseen by mor-
 “ tal

“tal eyes; and thy Father who is thus invisible, and yet beholdeth all things, shall reward thee openly.” So that according to this turn of the words, there is an opposition in the Text between the *visibility* of all things to God, and his *invisibility* to all, in order to set forth the divine knowledge, and to prevent an objection which is apt to rise in the carnal heart against the presence of God with us, from his not being seen by us. He is, it is true, *εν τω κρυπτω*, hidden from our view, yet let us not therefore entertain a doubt, whether all things are naked and open to his. This consideration of the divine Omniscience is fruitful both of terror and comfort. Of terror to such as absent themselves from the closet, or while there, leave their hearts to wander; for the God whom they refuse to serve, or whom they serve thus negligently, knows every sinful omission and commission of theirs. The same thought ministers comfort to such as come in faith, serve God though alone, with an active zeal, and dare not countenance a vain and trifling thought, any more than if every such thought was to pass under the review of a thousand spectators. God sees thy hands that are lifted up to him, and thy heart that bows before him; he is acquainted with thy good intentions, thy holy desires, thy lowly thoughts, thy inward struggles and

conflicts, thy agonies and temptations; and, seeing all these, he will accept and reward what is good in thee, supply thy necessities, assist thee in thy combats, and support thee under thy burthens. In a word, *he that seeth in secret will reward thee openly*; and this is the last thing observable in the motive.

3. *My Father will openly reward my Secret Prayers*, by his Grace shining in my conversation, his Providence interposing in my affairs; perhaps, also by procuring me the esteem and respect of men, as far as it is necessary to the comfort of this life that I should enjoy it, and consistent with my spiritual safety; and finally, will in the great day of account reward me in the presence of angels and men.

If I am constant and fervent in my Secret Prayers to God, he will reward me openly by his Grace shining in my conversation. After *Moses* had been upon the mount with God, the skin of his face shone. The glory of God, to which he had been an eye-witness, left a few of its rays upon him, which, though but a faint reflection of the divine splendors, were yet bright enough to dazzle the beholders. The devout Christian comes from his closet, as *Moses* from the mount, cloathed with beams of heavenly light. The sight he hath of God by faith is transforming, and, beholding the excellent
glory,

glory, he is changed into the same image from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of God. Holiness is the moral lustre of the uncreated Being, and a holy life is the lustre of the Christian; for whatever some may think whose senses are too gross to take hold of spiritual objects, the light of the sun is not so beautiful and lovely as a good example. The very enemies of goodness are sometimes struck with it, and in spite of themselves seized with a secret veneration at the sight of it. God cannot honour a person more, than by communicating to him the Spirit of holiness in its highest measures. This Spirit cannot be concealed, any more than a lamp enclosed in a globe of crystal, which darts its irradiations all around. And who so likely to have such uncommon degrees of this Spirit, as those who frequently converse with God in the places and duties of his appointment; particularly in Secret Prayer, turning their eyes from earth to heaven, and imposing silence on their clamorous passions, that they may see the glory of God in his infinite perfections, in his celestial habitation; and above all, in his Eternal Son, and may hear him speaking to their souls in the still whispers of his love? The effects of christian retirement will appear in the sweet composure of the passions, the evenness and affability of the behaviour,
the

the charitableness of the temper, and the purity and tranquility of the life.

Again. *If I pray to my Father in secret, my Father, who seeth in secret, will reward me openly,* by his Providence interposing in my affairs, and leading me, as it were by the hand, in ways of peace and safety. He hath promised *to give his angels charge over the godly man, to keep him in all his ways; and they shall bear him up in their hands, lest he dash his feet against a stone.* “ This gracious promise he will

“ make good to me. I shall be the object
 “ of his paternal care; my steps shall be
 “ ordered by him, and he will delight in
 “ my way. Though he goeth by me, and
 “ I see him not with eyes of flesh; though
 “ he worketh on the left hand, and I do
 “ not behold him, and hide himself on the
 “ right that I cannot perceive him, yet the
 “ effects of his providential tuition shall be
 “ visible enough; I shall be able to trace
 “ his footsteps, and to say that *God is here.*”

The same holy person, of whom I had occasion to make mention before, gives it as his experience, “ that when he hastened over the
 “ duties of God’s worship, out of a too ea-
 “ ger desire to follow his worldly business, he
 “ did many times meet with some cross in
 “ his affairs; whereas when he took his ordi-
 “ nary time, God did make his other business
 “ to succeed the better; or else his mind was
 “ brought

“brought to a quiet submission to the divine will.” Yet further,

My Father will reward me openly, by procuring me the good opinion, and the good will of men, as far as it is necessary to the comfort of this life that I should enjoy it, and consistent with my spiritual safety. This was the chief end of the *Pharisees*, in their ostentatious Prayers, *to be praised of men*, but this must not be ours. What we are to be concerned for, is the approbation of God, and the discharge of a good conscience, referring all other matters to him, who, the less solicitous we are about the judgments of other men in a way of vain-glory, will watch with the more care over our good name; so that, extraordinary cases excepted, we shall not fail of a moderate share of esteem among our acquaintance, to be sure not from the wisest and best part of them, who are the only true judges of real worth. Honour should follow, rather than be followed. Once more,

My Father, who seeth in secret, will in the great day of account reward my Secret Prayers in the presence of angels and men; that will be the day of revelation, when the secrets of men shall be judged, secret sins shall be punished, and secret duties be rewarded. What is the good word of a small number of persons, whom I may have the art to deceive by an outside of Religion,

ligion, to the honour which, supposing me to be sincerely religious, I shall receive from that glorious assembly? The most insatiable ambition cannot, one would think, desire a larger fame than this. And yet even this, promised though it be to the good man, is not that which most enhances the value of Religion in his account, and gives him spirit and resolution to persevere; it is rather the consequence of a religious course, than the aim of a religious man, whose views are directly to the glory of God, and to his own glory only as it is to be found in that.

“ This I know, that I shall receive my
 “ crown, and that it shall be placed on my
 “ head by the hand of my Judge; but what
 “ pleases me most in this prospect is, not
 “ the publick nature of the solemnity (the
 “ consideration of the great number of spec-
 “ tators moves me little) but that my crown
 “ will be intrinsically weighty and valuable,
 “ and that I shall receive it as a gift from
 “ my Saviour.” This finishes the second
 general head of my Discourse.

III. I proceed to consider a particular case or question, concerning the frequency of Secret Prayer. Here if it be asked, how often we ought to attend upon this duty, I scruple not to answer, every day, and twice in the day. Some holy men we read, have prayed *three* times a day. So did *David*,
Evening

^f *Evening and Morning, and at Noon, will I pray, and cry aloud, and he shall hear my voice.* And so Daniel, ^g *And when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he aforetime did.* But whether this was their constant practice, from which they never varied, or only a custom, which they had taken up in compliance with the dispensations of Providence towards them; whether likewise their character and office, as *Prophets*, by which they were called nearer to God than other men, might not occasion their being oftener with God, cannot with any certainty be determined; for which reason, and because our circumstances may not admit of such a frequency, I do not insist upon it; leaving every one to act as conscience, inclination, prudence, and trial shall direct. The *Psalmist* saying, ^h *Seven times a day do I praise thee*, seems to mean no more, than that from a grateful sense of the divine loving kindness, he did often in the day lift up his soul unto God, and embrace every call to more set and solemn acts of devotion. The constant method of the saints, by all that we can judge of the matter, hath been to pray to God every *Morning* and *Evening*.

In

^f Psal. lv. 17. ^g Dan. vi. 10. ^h Psal. cxix. 164.

In this we have our Saviour for an example, of whom we read, *that he rose a great while before day, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed; retiring after the business of the day for the same purpose.* And in this sense, most probably it is, that *Cornelius* is said to *pray always*, that is, every *Morning* and *Evening*, in allusion to the daily sacrifice, which being offered twice every day, is therefore called ⁱ *the perpetual burnt-offering.* Nature indeed, hath in a manner fixed these two seasons, of the beginning and end of the day, for Prayer and Praise; which makes the *Psalmist* say, ^k *It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O thou most High; to shew forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness in the night.* For why? *Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.* The revolutions of light and darkness, the vicissitudes of labour and rest do, as it were, call upon men to acknowledge their Creator, whose wisdom and goodness are seen in this establishment; to commit themselves to his protection, as often as they lie down in their bed, and to his blessing as often as they return to the employments and works of the day; thankfully commemorating his kind and watchful Providence in both,

ⁱ Exod. xxix. 39, and 42.

^k Psal. xcii. 1, 2.

both, and that tender mercy which is new to them every day of their lives.

As *David* was faithful to this method, so he hath left us, among others, two excellent *Psalms*, which appear to have been composed, one of them for the *Morning* the other for the *Evening*. His *Evening* hymn we have in the eighth *Psalms*, where he celebrates the singular favour of God to mankind, of which he takes notice as the more wonderful because of the greatness and majesty of God displayed in his works. *When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained-- What is man that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man that thou visitest him!* He mentions the moon and the stars, because it was now the time when they make their appearance; and whoever takes a view of the heavens in their night-dress, the moon shining in its brightness, and the stars sparkling as so many rich jewels, will, if he considers these things with the pious temper of the *Psalmist*, with him break out into admiration of the united power, and goodness of the Almighty Maker of the universe. The 19th *Psalms* we may read as a hymn for the *Morning*; for there, speaking also of the heavens, he makes his observation only on the sun, who goes his progress alone, and in the fulness of his glory, permits not the stars to be seen. *In them hath he set a*
tabernacle

tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it, and nothing is hid from the heat thereof. Glorious representation of the Father of lights, whose quickening warmth and influences are diffused through all things, and support and enliven the whole frame of nature!

And now need I use many words to persuade you to the practice of so excellent a duty? I would hope not. Let those, who have hitherto never repaired to their closets, but upon some worldly errand, learn from henceforward to put them to their best use; hereby, as it were, consecrating them, and turning them into so many *Proseuchæ*, or little Oratories. Let others who could not allow themselves in the total neglect of Secret Prayer, but however have not minded it, as persons that had any great love to it, be determined to perform it with more constancy, and greater intenseness of affection. Let God have more of our time, and the world less. Would we be perfect, let us give attendance to Prayer, and abound therein with thanksgiving. Was any thing more necessary, than your recalling to mind what hath been already said, in order to set home this exhortation, I could tell you, and should have no difficult part to prove it too, that
the

the happiest of men are they, who lead a life of strict holiness, and regular devotion. The mind of man is a most infirm thing, and bends beneath any considerable pressure, like weak and tender plants, if there be not something without it, to lend it a stability; at least is destitute of any principle that will afford it sincere and permanent satisfaction. God is the only stay of the human soul, the only spring of true joy. A consciousness of his presence, and assurance of his love, establish the heart, and beget in it a calm and a delectation not to be express'd. The soul, naturally fearful, becomes undaunted, and feels a strength and courage that are not her own; as a loyal subject, fighting under the eye of his Prince, is strangely animated by the royal presence, forgets his fears out of an ambition to approve his fidelity, and esteems death itself to be glorious in such a cause, and with such a witness. A pure refreshing stream of comfort follows the holy ascetick from the closet to the church, and from both through all the paths of common life. This delight springs not from his own breast, that is only the cistern to hold these living waters, while God himself is the never-failing fountain of them. The wicked God is able to punish with inward troubles and disquietudes, and doth often punish them this way; putting stings into their consciences, and daggers

into their bosoms; darkening their minds with clouds of wrath, and possessing them with unspeakable anguish and horror; these are the proofs which the wicked and the indevout sometimes have of the divine presence, as terrible as those of the devout and religious are delightful: to these he manifests himself in a very different manner, invigorating their resolutions, softening their cares, exalting their hopes, and dilating their hearts with gladness; so that, notwithstanding the storms of adversity, life flows on in the main with a smooth and gentle current, till at length it mixes with, and is lost in eternity of bliss. This, I say, is the happy condition of those who follow our Saviour's advice in the Text. God keepeth them as the apple of his eye; they lie down and rise up, go out and come in under the shadow of his wing; they have a kind of familiarity with their Maker, they walk and associate together, as one friend with another; this gives them a fixedness and serenity, which nothing else can bestow, and hardly any thing can discompose; prepares them for all events, and fills them with a noble contempt of the world, and all things in it; this, or nothing, sets them above the fears of death, when they consider it, not as a banishment from what they love, but as a change greatly to be desired, in the manner of enjoying the supreme object of their felicity, from faith
to

to fight. The greatest blessing of this life, and what infuses a spirit into their other more common delights, is the liberty they have of approaching God; now the reason is much stronger, why the same thought should reconcile them to death, which perfects the union, and places them once for all in God's immediate presence and under the direct beams of his love.

I shall close all with a few Directions, which, as they are not unnecessary, I pray God may not prove unuseful.

1. Resolve that, unless in case of necessity, you will not wholly omit this duty. You may at certain times be indisposed for it, or not so well disposed as at others; your spirits may be dull, your thoughts cramped, your minds sluggish, and every thing seemingly in disorder and confusion; yet still, let not this prevail with you, to put it off to another time, under the notion of its being more convenient. Pray with as much life as you can, when you cannot pray with as much life and pleasure as you would; better perform your duty after the poorest rate than not at all. When you cannot be lively, you may be serious; when you cannot be enlarged, you may be attentive. You may strive with yourselves when you can do no more, and God, who knows your infirmities, and sees what a burthen they are to you, and how heartily you endeavour to get above them, will accept of the will for the

deed. Omissions are dangerous, and once you give way to them, no one can say where they will end. One neglect will make way for another, and that for another, till, perhaps, at length you can pass over the duty upon very little temptation, and with no great uneasiness. By every omission, you give the Tempter an advantage against you, and by frequent omissions will contract a habit of indifference and indevotion. O beware of such a slothful spirit; it will insensibly gain upon you, and from the constant practice will lead you, by degrees, to the almost constant disuse of Secret Prayer.

2. Possess your minds with a deep sense of the divine omniscience. Confirm yourselves in the belief, that God is always present with you, and hath his eye upon you, as well in the closet, as when you are acting on the stage of the world. Let not this awful truth lose its efficacy and influence for want of consideration; make the thought familiar to your minds, revolve it often, often reflect upon the use which you ought to make of it. Seriously consider God as always present with you, and you will always behave as in his presence; consider him as seeing in secret, and you will be inclined to go aside to some secret place, that you may meet him there. You will pray to this omniscient God, and your Prayers will be more earnest and collected. You will find the old saying to be

be true, *that you are never less alone than when you are alone*, since when you are most alone, the Father will be with you. When you are entered into your closet, and the soul is entered into itself; when you have closed your eyes, and your ears to creature-objects, then will God reveal himself to you, the veil of your flesh will not be able to hide him from you, and the belief of his omnipresence will so strike and arrest your minds, that they will be under very little temptation to wander.

I remember *Seneca*, a famous moralist, gives this rule, *Sic vive cum hominibus, tanquam Deus videat; sic loquere cum Deo, tanquam homines audiant*; that is, “so live with men, “as if God saw; and so speak to God, as if “men heard.” This rule might not be very much amiss at that time, when as he saith, men had such unworthy thoughts of the Deities they worshiped, that they would whisper the most shameful requests to them; and, if they had a jealousy that any one overheard them, would immediately stop, unwilling that men should know what they made no scruple of telling their Gods. But for a Christian, who is instructed in the doctrine of the divine Unity, and should despise such foreign aids, a much better rule is, to fix in his mind a right notion of God, as a Being of infinite greatness, purity, and perfection; and then by faith to presentiate him to his thoughts, arguing thus---“If God be not present with

“ me, to what purpose do I pray to him at
 “ all in Secret? If he be present, as doubt-
 “ less he is, to what purpose do I pray to
 “ him with my lips, while my heart is far
 “ from him? Such Prayers in his account,
 “ who knows the emptiness of them, must
 “ pass for none.”

3. Pray to God for the Spirit of Prayer, and take heed that you do not quench it. You will never pray acceptably, unless in some sense, *you pray with the Spirit*, that is, by the assistance of the Spirit, purifying and exalting your desires, and guiding your requests. This is a part of his office, to endorse those petitions, which it belongs to the Son, as Mediator of worship, to present. As well might the sailor hope to be blown to the port by contrary winds, as we that our Prayers should come up before God, even into his ears, that are carried downwards by a violent gust of carnal affection, or at best not borne up by the breathings of the Divine Spirit. Now this Spirit is driven away by wilful sin, and continued impenitency; the fogs of sensual lust extinguish the sacred fire. This Holy Spirit loves a clean and pure habitation; and, though he does not find the heart of man such, makes it so, or in time retires. Where he is not the master, he will not be a guest; as how can you expect that he should, when every moment he must receive some indignity or other,
 and

and see the advice and interest of a fordid passion preferred to his? Wherefore if you purpose to live in the habitual, comfortable discharge of Secret Prayer, *walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*; which leads to another Direction very nearly connected with this.

4. Watch unto Prayer. My meaning is, that you should carefully observe whatever unfits you for your duty, and wisely prevent it. You cannot but know that there are a thousand things which unhinge, distract, and ruffle the spirit of the man, and of the Christian. Of this nature and tendency are a multiplicity of business, a swarm of earthly cares, indulgence to passion, vain conversation and delights, and unseasonable hours. How can the soul presently recollect itself, after it hath been dissipated in sensual converses? How compose itself after it hath been disordered by intemperate anger? How raise itself, after it hath been depressed and sunk with worldly anxieties? How be fitted to Pray, when it is hardly in a condition to exert any act of Reason? Would we discharge Family and Secret Prayer at night with profit to ourselves, and acceptance from God, let us take heed to ourselves, and to our conversation in the day; let us guard against intemperance of every kind; let us keep our hearts in good temper; let us retire to our houses, and to our closets in due time, and not delay till

every other place is weary of us, and no company is left for us, but men of scandalous characters, or none of the best. In the *Morning* let Prayer be one of the first things that we apply ourselves to; let us season our minds with it, and give ourselves to God before the world hath taken possession of us.

5. Watch after Prayer. Take notice what effect your Prayers have upon your temper and your conduct; whether you are more heavenly-minded, more charitable, more strict, more circumspect; how God answers your Prayers, and what returns you make to him again. There may be danger too of your being assaulted by your subtle enemy, after you have been on the mount with God, and having some snare laid for you at your stepping out into the world, which ought, in all prudence, to make you more cautious; especially, if at any time you have had more than ordinary vouchsafements, and flows of joy. Be not high minded, but fear. You should revive the memory of your experiences, your vows, and your requests. Tho' the words we utter in Prayer be soon dispersed and lost in air, yet this ought not to be a fit resemblance of the little care we take to keep our Prayers, as to the general scope of them, in remembrance. We should not contradict ourselves, and while we request one thing, practise another, build with one hand, and pull down with the other, but should
walk

walk worthy the honour we have, in conversing so freely with the great King of heaven and earth, the marks we have had of his favour, and the Petitions we have lying before him. Let it be seen that we are better every way, and in every relation, for our constant observance of this command of our Saviour.

6. Pray in the spirit of charity. The Christian's Prayers may be private, but should not be selfish. When by yourselves in the closet, call to mind that you are not by yourselves in the world; that you are members of a civil and religious society and of the catholick church; and accordingly labour to unite yourselves with them by love, and tender their interests as your own, *making Supplications, Prayers, and Intercessions for all men.* You should pray as a Parent or Child, as a Husband or Wife, as a Master or Servant, as a Brother, a Friend, a Neighbour, a Subject, a Protestant, a Christian, a Man; all these names will suggest to you for what things you ought to pray in regard of others. Tho' absent from your christian brethren in body, you should be present with them in spirit, and, by a mutual exchange of good offices this way, should endeavour to benefit one another. He that never, or seldom prays for others, is not so likely to be heard for himself, his Prayers proceeding from a narrow contracted spirit, which is not the true spirit

spirit of Christianity. The *Lord's Prayer*, which ought to be regarded as the Christian's Directory, in the main parts of Prayer, whether alone, or in publick, begins with an invocation of God, under the notion of a common Father; which may teach us this much, that even in our Secret Addresses, where we do not express ourselves in the plural number, saying, *Our Father*, we should yet consider him as the God and Father of all mankind, and more peculiarly of all good men: and, in that, of *seven* Petitions, whereof the *Lord's Prayer* is made up, the *three* first are of a publick nature. Are we not from hence to learn, that our requests, for the advancement of God's kingdom and interest in the world, should have their due room allowed them, and be placed foremost in the notion we have of their importance, when they are not so in the verbal order of our Prayers?

7. Ordinarily join reading with your Secret Prayers, and, at proper seasons, meditation too. That I call a proper season for meditation, when you either need it very much, or are happily disposed for it, and the time will allow of it; you will soon find the good effects of such a method. The same Scriptures that direct you to Pray, will supply you with proper matter and expressions for Prayer, and have a singular fitness to kindle, and cherish the spirit of devotion.

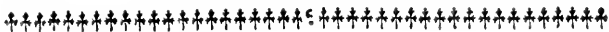
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And, as for meditation, it will be of use to rally the scattered thoughts, to put our minds into their proper situation, and to prevent our forgetting any thing, which ought to have a peculiar place in our Prayers. To conclude.

Lastly. Quicken yourselves with the consideration of death and judgement.—“ Were
“ these awful objects before me, these last
“ and most important things more in my
“ thoughts, for certain I should be another
“ sort of person than I am, and act after
“ another manner. I should be ready to
“ every good work, and particularly to works
“ of godliness, and abundantly more serious
“ in them. I must shortly die, and when that
“ moment comes, which shall I think the
“ wiser, a life led after the pleasurable and
“ distracted way of the world, or one divided
“ between the duties of my general and par-
“ ticular calling? Which is the best prepa-
“ ration for death? Which will afford me
“ most comfort in it? Which is most likely
“ to secure me a happy state after it? After
“ death, I must come to judgement. O my
“ soul, I must charge thee not to forget that
“ day! I must be judged for omissions, as
“ well as commissions; for secret, as well as
“ more open sins; for the manner and end
“ of my religious duties, as well as concern-
“ ing my observing or neglecting them. How
“ may I have confidence and rejoicing in
“ that day? If I forget God, or serve the
“ world

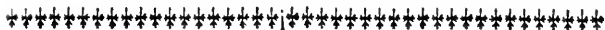
“ world more than I do him? I cannot think
“ *tc.* To seek mercy now is the way to
“ find mercy in that day. To delight in
“ God, and in his presence and worship, and
“ praise him in his courts, to draw nigh to
“ him in secret, and to behave myself in my
“ general course suitably to my profession,
“ my Prayers, and my hopes, it is this, and
“ this alone, that will assure my heart, so
“ that I shall not be ashamed before my Judge
“ at his coming.”---In a word, frequently
think of death and judgement, and you
will not be able to allow yourselves, either
in the neglect of any known duty, as par-
ticularly this of Secret Prayer, or in a flat
and careless manner of performing it.





T W O
E S S A Y S
O N
P R A Y E R,
Viz.

- I. Concerning the rational Grounds of Prayer in general. And,
- II. Concerning the Qualifications necessary to render Prayer an acceptable service.





E S S A Y I.

*Concerning the rational Grounds of
the duty of Prayer in general.*

IF it be inquired upon what *ground* Reason instructs, and God commands us to Pray, may we think it is the necessity of Prayer to inform God of our wants? By no means; for as much as that Being who knoweth all things, cannot be ignorant what things we need before we ask him. Is it that by Prayer we may hope to extort from God those favours, which of himself he is not willing to bestow? This too is impossible; since, being infinite in goodness, he can never want a will to communicate happiness to his creatures whensoever, and in what degree soever, his unerring wisdom judges meet and proper; and, being unchangeable in his perfections, and consequently in his purposes, he cannot be prevailed on, by our much speaking, to do any thing that he would not willingly do. Shall we say then that Prayer is regarded *merely* as a proper trial
of

of our obedience, and display of the divine sovereignty? Not so neither; for though it be a sufficient reason to *oblige* us to Pray, that God requires it, and a sufficient motive to *encourage* us, that he will hear us when we call upon him, yet this is not *all* that can be said on behalf of this part of Religion. Prayer is not a *Positive Institution*, like the Ceremonies of the *Law*, or the Sacraments of the *Gospel*, but immediately founded in the relations between God and us, the discoveries he hath been pleased to make of himself to us, and the nature and circumstances of the present state. It is, in itself considered, a reasonable service, hath an apparent congruity in it, and visible tendency to promote the most valuable ends, viz. the glory of God, and the happiness of man. This the following considerations will abundantly demonstrate.

I. A strong and distinct apprehension of the Being, Perfections, and Providence of God, is what we should all of us seriously endeavour to have our minds continually possessed with. Nothing can be more just and proper than this, because nothing can be more needful, nothing can be more beneficial; the foundation of a religious life being laid in right notions of the Deity, present to the mind, and fixed deep in it. But now, whether it be at all probable that they who by an habitual omission of Prayer
 say

say to God, *Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways,* should have right notions of God, and much more right affections towards him, and a right behaviour under the influence of such notions and affections, may be left to every considering person to judge. Is it a thing to be supposed, that they who never pray to God, will in the course of their lives set him always before them? That they will think of an invisible God as present with them at all other times, who have no set and solemn seasons when they place themselves more expressly in his presence, and offer up their addresses to him as present, and ready to hear and answer them? Would we look to him that is invisible, conceive of him as about our path and our lying down, and acquainted with all our ways; as present every where, and every where directing and governing the course of things; as more especially concerned to observe the actions of mankind, in order to a future judgement; would we do all this? Is it our real purpose and desire? We must then accustom ourselves to the duty of Prayer, since, in such a world as this, where we are surrounded with objects that are continually intruding upon our minds, and are fitted to fire and engage our passions, it is in vain to think of walking with God all the day, and all our life long, if we never converse with him in Prayer. And as we

must do this that we may succeed in our design, so in case we really have any such design we shall do it. The true reason why persons go from day to day without Prayer, is because they have no such formed design as this. It is very far from being their chief desire, their ruling purpose, to make God present with them by a lively faith, and ever to behave as in his presence. If they have any design, it is directly contrary to this, to flee at the greatest distance from God, to avoid all thoughts of him, and to live as without him; and if they cannot so far unlearn the natural language of Reason, and the instructions of Education, as to be able to say in their hearts *there is no God*, yet they are ready to ask, how should God see what is done here below? Is not heaven his habitation, and will so great a Being stoop to behold the children of men, and to take part in their mean affairs?

Where Prayer is not at all practised, I believe such reasonings as these are not uncommon; whereas, on the contrary, by a conscientious discharge of this duty, we should confirm and awaken the rational dictates of our minds concerning the omnipresence and omniscience of God, and his universal Providence; universal over the whole world, and special over his church and people; and establish our hearts in the belief of what the scripture hath taught us in relation

to

to the same important truths. Being often in the divine presence, and pouring out our hearts before God, we should fix in ourselves an habitual persuasion of his being the searcher of our hearts, and knowing all things; we should attend more to the operations of his hands, consider the ways of his Providence, labour to approve our actions in his sight, and regard him at once as our refuge and our judge; all these things are very fit, and becoming reasonable creatures; it becomes them to cherish in themselves right apprehensions of God, his eternal existence, and infinite perfections, as having all power and all knowledge, as being most holy, just and good, possessed of every excellence that can render him an object of veneration and love. This is most fit and becoming; and must it not for this very reason be a thing highly just, that we should pray to this God? In Prayer we acknowledge and celebrate these perfections, we revive the ideas of them in our minds, we beg of God to imprint them deep there; and thus by use and length of time these objects so remote from sense appear still more and more real, and carry with them a greater force and efficacy.

II. Is it not reasonable, that being dependent creatures, we should maintain on our minds a lively and constant sense of our dependence; and, for as much as this is not to be done where Prayer is neglected, that we

should therefore give ourselves to Prayer? Neither of these things can well be denied. Can any one deny it to be a most reasonable thing, that dependent Beings as we are, should be sensible of their dependence, that is, know ourselves to be what we are; which we do not unless we know ourselves to be dependent on God for life, and breath and all things? This being our real state, can we without a crime be ignorant of it, or not consider it, or not be affected with the reflection upon it? Most certainly, such an ignorance of ourselves and our condition, or regardlessness of it, would not be suitable to our character of reasonable Beings, and therefore could not be innocent.—This then is undeniable, that we ought to have a lively and constant sense of our dependence upon God. And is there any more room to deny that, in order to have this just sense of our dependence upon God, it is necessary we should preserve it on our minds, by frequent Prayer to the God of our lives? This I think is very evident, and what may be put out of all dispute by appealing to experience. Who are they that seldom or never reflect on the necessitousness of their condition, and the numerous evils to which they should be exposed a helpless prey, having little knowledge and less power of their own, if the world was not the charge of a kind and watchful Providence; that are
no

no more moved with these things, than if their condition was exactly the reverse to what it is? Who are the persons that live thus estranged from themselves, and from the thoughts of their frail nature, and indigent circumstances; who but those that live without Prayer? Can a man that hath his regular returns of Prayer live after this manner? Or can that man be supposed to live otherwise who never prays? Is not such a temper of mind the natural and unavoidable effect of a life in which Prayer hath no part? The consequence is so certain, that every one who is a stranger to Prayer, may be called in for a witness of it. “ I am told that God is the stay of my
“ Being, and the fountain of all my enjoy-
“ ments; but, O, I must confess, it is what
“ I have seldom thought on, and never laid
“ to heart as I should have done; was never
“ thoroughly touched and penetrated with a
“ sense of it, tho’, when I seriously put the
“ question whether things are not so, my
“ reason cannot withhold its assent!”——

This reasoning holds still more strongly of that dependence we have upon God, in regard of the spiritual and divine life. This life is a hidden life, not only as to the spring, but the supplies of it too, unseen; for which reason, when men do not draw off their minds from sensible things and attend to such things as relate to the soul,

the immortal principle within them, its disorders, weaknesſes, dangers; wherein conſiſts its proſperity, and what beſpeaks it to be on the decay, which is always the caſe of perſons unaccuſtomed to Prayer, they are apt to treat theſe things as mere viſions and chimeras; and yet it is certain, there are no greater realities than theſe, both the life itſelf, and the intercourſe between the uncreated Spirit and the ſpirits of men, by which it is maintained. Our Religion makes frequent mention of this life under different terms, ſuch as *the life and image of God, the renovation of the mind, a new creature*, and the like; and teaches us to aſcribe the origin, continuance, vigour, and perfection of this life to a divine operation and influence; things of the nature and neceſſity of which, the ſoul that caſts off Prayer, will be very unlikely to have any tolerable idea; the conſequence of which cannot but be threatening: for tho' notwithſtanding our having no clear conviction of our dependence upon God for this bodily life, and the good things of it, and never acknowledging it, God may ſee fit, upon other accounts, to give and continue theſe to us in the common courſe of Providence, yet the caſe is very different as to the gift of the Spirit, and bleſſings of a ſpiritual and ſaving kind, which there ſeems to be an apparent unſuitneſs for God to beſtow on
per-

persons that have little or no sense of their need of them, or of their coming from God, and therefore never ask them of him.

III. Natural light teaches the necessity of repentance, where persons have sinned ; that is, of godly sorrow for sin, and an effectual purpose and disposition of soul to forsake it. This *Reason* teaches ; and the same *Reason* shews the necessity of Prayer to promote repentance. Ought we not, after having violated our infinite obligations to God by transgressing his holy commandments, to be unfeignedly sorry for it, and deeply humbled under the sense of our extreme folly and ingratitude ? But, unless our eye poureth out tears unto God, and our heart lay itself open before him by confession and humiliation, how can it be expected that we should feel any workings of an ingenuous sorrow and shame, or that they should not soon vanish again ? The presence of God, into which we come by Prayer, like that of a friend, a benefactor, a father, towards whom we have acted a perfidious, an unkind, an ungrateful, or undutiful part, awakens conscience, and fills the soul with secret confusion. Besides which, confession of sin seems to be a natural expression of sincere contrition for it ; and so likewise Prayer to God, that he would forgive us, of a real concern and solicitude to be forgiven. So that a person whose soul is humbled within

R 4 him,

him, will not be able to forbear casting himself down at the feet of that adorable Majesty, against whom he hath offended; being truly penitent, he will, by a kind of irresistible impulse, be carried to deprecate that displeasure which he hath deserved, and to implore that mercy which he hath abused and forfeited, but is miserable if he cannot obtain.—And then further, as repentance signifies the forsaking of sin, it is most evident that Prayer is one principal means of it, contributing to the sinner's conversion from a course of vice and wickedness, and in general to the forsaking of any sin, and a greater freedom from the power and dominion of it. For it is hardly to be supposed that men should from day to day make such confessions, offer up such requests, and enter into such solemn engagements, as are implied in the Prayers of a sinful creature convinced of his sinfulness and wretchedness, and yet be satisfied to go on in the same course of life, committing without scruple those sins which they confess and resolve against; and gratifying without any conflict those irregular desires and inclinations, which they lament and implore the divine succour to enable them to subdue. The reflection upon such an unreasonable conduct, such a manifest contradiction between their Prayers and their lives, will cover them with shame and confusion; they will have no ease in
their

their minds, no manner of satisfaction, till they act more agreeably to their Prayers. To which this further consideration ought to be added, that our desires of freedom from sin, how weak soever they are at first, by being frequently express'd in Prayer will gather strength; and in proportion as our desires after this blessed liberty are encreas'd, our endeavours will be more constant and unwearied; as the issue of these, joined with an humble dependence on the Grace of God, cannot but be happy.

iv. Prayer hath a natural tendency, (under the divine influence, which must be always supposed) to produce an habitual seriousness of spirit, and ability to govern our thoughts and passions; which is the best preparation to a devout life, or a steady course of piety and virtue.—The pains we take to collect our thoughts, and compose our minds, when we are about to speak to God in Prayer; and much more the care we are obliged to, during the whole performance to keep our hearts with all diligence, to the intent we may not offend the God we worship by a trifling unguarded posture of soul; this care and pains we imploy about our thoughts and passions, before and in our Prayers, will be likely by time and use to leave such impressions on our spirits, as to beget a habit of seriousness, and to render it much less difficult for

us to maintain the possession of ourselves, and a wise sobriety of thought at other times. He that is accustomed every day to set his heart in order, to reduce his wandering imagination, and his stragling desires, to awe his soul with the consideration of the divine presence, and to calm the agitations of his passions, as every one must be who makes conscience of Praying to God every day, and of discharging his duty in an acceptable manner; every such person will be less liable to vanity of mind, to a looseness and dissipation of spirit, and irregular workings of the passions, than others who are under no such restraint, who have no such solemn times for the regulating their thoughts and passions, but day after day permit them to go without examination and without controul. Now this habitual sobriety of spirit, which is the natural consequence of Prayer rightly performed, is one of the best preparations to a course of steady virtue and piety in the life. For why is it that our lives are so full of breaks and interruptions? That we are carried away by the views of sensual pleasure, or of worldly gain? And, in our conversations, do so frequently forget that we are Christians, or act as if we had forgotten it? Why is all this, but because we are strangers to that habitual seriousness and composure of spirit, which was before described, and shewn to proceed from the constant

stant and faithful performance of the duty of Prayer? It being manifest that this settledness of heart would be attended with a greater consistency and uniformity in the life. Our whole conduct in this case would look more like one act of Religion, tho' consisting of several scenes or parts, and in our greatest relaxations we should be secretly swayed and influenced by the principles and rules of our holy Religion.

v. Prayer is admirably adapted to exercise and improve those several virtues, on which the credit of Religion, and the pleasure and happiness of the religious, do most visibly depend; such as *divine love*, *gratitude*, *trust* in the Providence of God under all the trials and vicissitudes of the present life, *contentment*, *hope* in the mercy of God for whatever relates to our spiritual and everlasting welfare; *heavenly mindedness*, or fervent aspirations of soul after that fulness of joy which is in the presence of God, and those rivers of pleasure which are at his right hand for evermore; and, to add no more, *charity*---*Divine love* deservedly appears in the head of this sacred band; *love* to the author of our Beings, the center of all perfection, and fountain of all good; than which surely nothing can be more reasonable. And tho' this flame is kindled from above, yet what more apparent than that it is done by Prayer, as the chief instrumental

strumental means? That devotion which should mingle in all our Prayers, consists mostly in the exercises of this sublime affection; and in order to have our sacrifice consumed by this fire of the altar, we do in our converse with God set ourselves to contemplate his loveliness and his love, his unbounded goodness and its numberless effects. The breath of Prayer fans this holy fire; we are naturally led to love that God by whom we are allowed this freedom of access, and in whose presence we find such sweet contentment and rest. And, as in other cases so here, the friendship and endearment between the Creator and the creature, are increased with the increase of their acquaintance. “ O *Love*, thou offspring of heaven, why is my heart such a stranger to thee? Why does it experience no more of thy quickening influences, thy inexpressible delights? Have I not too much reason to think it is because I am not more frequent and earnest in my Prayers? Did I strive more with this dull and cold heart of mine, to raise and warm it in my addresses to the supreme Being, I should soon perceive the good effects of this method; I should love God with more fervour, and serve him with more diligence.”

That disposition of soul which we call *gratitude*, so near a-kin to *love* that it may

may properly enough be made a branch of it, a virtue of a most heavenly nature as well as extraction, is greatly promoted by the same means. For though the duty of Prayer hath its name from the *petitioning* part, yet ought to consist of *thanksgiving* too, and is very imperfect where *thanksgiving* hath not ordinarily a pretty large share, in the heart at least, if not in the outward form and mode of words. *Thankfulness* looks back to mercies past, which it registers in the memory, and engraves in the heart; while Prayer, strictly so called, looks forward to mercies yet to come. Which account of *thankfulness* or *gratitude*, shews it to be a virtue of eminent dignity, and indispenfibly necessary to our pleasing God, in our applications to him for mercy; since it can never be supposed he will continue to shower down his favours, when they are as rain falling on a rock, on which it makes little or no impression, or as treasure thrown into a great gulph, where it is swallowed up and lost. The expressions of a thankful heart appear from hence to be as necessary as they are ornamental to our Prayers; and *thanksgiving* encreases that *thankfulness* from which it proceeds. The habit of *gratitude* is improved by frequent acts; and, consequently, by a devout and constant practice of Prayer, in which we are so plainly invited, and so strongly obliged to acts of praise. And
whereas

whereas it may be thought possible for men to be thankful to God for his mercies, who never pray to him for them, this is evidently a mistake. Blessings not received in the way of Prayer, would be looked on as coming in the natural course of things, without the design and direction of God; or we should not be able to avoid suspecting our title to them; and suspecting this, we should not so clearly discern the kindness and love of God in them, which is the very thing that must infuse life and spirit into our thanksgivings.

Trust in the Providence of God, under all the trials and vicissitudes of the present life, is likewise very much indebted to the constant returns of Prayer, performed in the best manner we are able. This *trust* in God (which is nothing else but the general belief of his Providence applied, and reduced into practice) is to be exercised in a distinct and explicit manner, when we present ourselves before the throne of divine Grace, and, by being thus continually exercised, is much strengthened and improved. The various dispensations of Providence are of use to encrease our *trust* by the necessity they lay us under of exerting it, according to the changing nature of our condition; there being none who ordinarily excel so much in this virtue as those who have past through the greatest diversity of outward events, and experi-

perienced the goodnes and faithfulness of God in them all; after much the same manner as those soldiers are most ready in handling their arms who have been kept under strict discipline, and constantly exercised. But then this beneficial influence of Providence on our *trust*, is only when Prayer goes along with it; which is one reason, that, where the dispensations of Providence are much the same, in regard of two or more persons, the effect is so very different; one continuing as restless and distrustful as ever, while another learns to commit himself with a more intire confidence to the disposal and conduct of his heavenly Father. One of these persons lives in the neglect of Prayer, or is regardless how he prays; the other is much in Prayer, and carries the same regard to God, and confidence in him, which he exercises in this duty, into all the circumstances of his life, and every part of his conversation.

The consequence of this is, that the man who gives himself to Prayer will be contented in the condition and circumstances allotted him, whatever they are. He hath often and very sincerely begged of God to do that which is best for him, and hereby wrought himself into a humble and stedfast *trust*, that he would grant him his request; when therefore the event declares what the will of God is, he cannot but be easy under
it,

it, because he knows that it shall turn to his good, let the present appearance of things be never so unpromising. The Christian that is most in Prayer will of course be most contented; he will pray himself into a quiet resigned frame, as well as obtain it as the recompence of his piety and devotion. Now contentment with what we have, in a world where we cannot, and it is not fit we should have all we desire, is the nearest approach to the happiness of the heavenly state, which consists in having none but reasonable desires, and all these desires crowned with enjoyment.

It is further certain, that Prayer nourishes *hope* in the mercy of God, for whatever relates to our spiritual and everlasting welfare. In being called to Prayer, we are called to *hope*; for to what end would Prayer be without *hope*? And as we are in a special manner to pray for those things that concern the salvation of our souls, and our happiness in another life, so we must of consequence be allowed to *hope* for them. This *hope* which is authorized and encouraged by the very command to pray, does from the duty of Prayer, frequently and carefully performed, receive a continual and considerable accession of life and vigour. Our *hope* it may be at first is languid and wavering, and mingled with so much fear and anxiety, as deprives us of all sensible comfort and relief from it;

how

however, though small, our *hope* is that which prevails with us to pray and not faint; and, persevering in Prayer, we find that our *hopes* recover strength, till they come to be more rooted and abounding, so as to stay our souls, and preserve them calm and peaceful in the views of eternity.

A heavenly frame and disposition of mind naturally results from the serious and constant discharge of this duty. For what else is Prayer but an abstraction of the mind from present sensible objects, in order to its being turned towards those of a different and a nobler nature; the raising the soul from earthly to heavenly things? The God we serve is an invisible Being; and the chief blessings we implore at his hand, have little or no relation to this visible world: hence it proceeds that the mind in Prayer gradually rises to a spirituality of temper, hath other relishes and inclinations, and is to be satisfied with no happiness but one that is spiritual and divine; a happiness suited to its own nature, and to the nature and perfections of the supreme Being; whom by continual supplications to him as the author of its felicity, it learns to regard as the object of it too; with ardent longings crying out, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.* “Thou
 “art my portion, O Lord, as such I chuse
 “thee! O that I knew where to find thee,
 VOL. II. S “that

“ that I might come even to thy feat! This
 “ is what I must despair of while I am here ;
 “ I therefore long for a more perfect state,
 “ in comparison with which I despise this
 “ scene of vanity, with all its empty and
 “ transitory enjoyments.” It is by this, among other means, the soul comes to be disengaged from the world, to set its affections on things above, and to carry higher views, and more generous sentiments into the management of common affairs than worldly minds are capable of ; thus having its conversation in heaven, where it hopes to have its everlasting abode.

Prayer widens the heart, and fills it with the most diffusive charity or benevolence. Being used to pray with or for others, we unite ourselves to them in the bonds of the most tender affection, as children of the same common parent, and sharers in the same common happiness. We love them as we love ourselves, that is without dissimulation ; look upon their interest as our own, and, in that view, sincerely desire it, rejoice in it, and as we have opportunity promote it. Now, next to the love of God, what affection is there that more exalts and adorns our nature, than the love of mankind, a universal and disinterested love ? Or how can any disposition of mind give us a nearer resemblance to the Deity ? *God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God*

God in him. Nor is this excellent affection more influential upon the happiness of others than it is on our own; it is a most pleasing sensation, and wheresoever it is a guest, pays richly for its entertainment. That we may feel the power of so amiable and agreeable a passion, let us in our Prayers as unfainedly recommend others to the divine mercy as we do ourselves. This is one condition of an acceptable Prayer, that we harbour not envy, and malice, and revenge in our bosoms. Prayer will help to kill these poisonous weeds, and cultivate and improve that love which is the original growth of our nature, being planted in it by the hand of God himself; this love will languish or revive with the spirit of Prayer and devotion.

I shall add but one consideration more.

VI. The expediency of Prayer may be argued, from its tendency to engage us to the diligent use of all necessary and proper means for the attainment of our desires.—The disposition and purpose to imploy our faculties and abilities in the best manner we can, have been elsewhere considered as one qualification of an acceptable Prayer. Here we consider the actual vigorous application to the work which God hath given us to do, as an almost inseparable effect of Prayer, when it is sincere and persevering. We shall be ashamed of perpetually contradicting

the language of our Prayers by that of our actions; declaring in one our earnest desires of things which we express an utter indifference to in the other; promising the utmost care and vigilance, and in the general course of our lives using little or none; and begging the blessing of God upon endeavours, which we never exert. We shall not be able to bear the reproaches of our minds under such an inconsistency between our Prayers and our subsequent behaviour. Prayer regularly performed will inspire the love of every virtue, cure us of our sloth and indolence, convey strength and vigour into the soul, and effectually dispose us to keep and exercise a good conscience in the ordinary affairs of life. We shall pray for nothing improper; and what we dare pray for, we shall reckon ourselves obliged to do all in our power, by prudence, and honest industry, to obtain; referring ourselves to the Providence and Grace of God for the successful issue of all.

Such being the excellent nature of the duty of Prayer, such the rational grounds of it, and its most beneficial effects, it is no wonder that God so frequently commands it, and hath made so many promises to it in the Scripture Revelation. The more reason we have for Prayer, the greater should be our readiness to this duty, and our delight in it. The authority of God ought not to be our only inducement, but his goodness too

too in obliging us to pursue our own perfection and happiness, and annexing so many additional encouragements to a thing which hath in its own nature so much to recommend it. The reason of the thing, the command of God, and the rewards promised to the constant discharge of this and other duties, are each of them singly sufficient to engage an ingenuous and considerate mind; and yet all of them, with their united influence, not too much, under the present weakness and disorders of nature, and amidst such numerous temptations as this life abounds with; happy will it be, if all together do not fail of their effect.

“ O God, thou art my God, early will
“ I seek thee, and in thee alone will seek my
“ happiness, convinced that I can never
“ find it in any thing besides thee! Hast
“ thou given me leave to approach thy pre-
“ sence, and shall I flee from it? Alas, whi-
“ ther? Does my Reason point to thee, and
“ shall my heart be averse from thee? For-
“ give me, O my God, that when thou
“ dost so kindly invite and encourage my
“ addresses to thy throne, I am so little sen-
“ sible of thy great goodness and condescen-
“ tion, and my own unspeakable privilege
“ herein! Forgive that indifference and in-
“ devotion which the many vast advantages
“ attending the faithful performance of my
“ duty render inexcusable. Yes, O Lord,

“ I gladly acknowledge that in keeping thy
“ commandments there is great reward, and
“ that whatever thou hast made my duty
“ is conducive to my highest interest! Help
“ me to discern this more clearly, and to
“ consider it more seriously, in respect of
“ all thy precepts; particularly, the obliga-
“ tion I am under to present myself and my
“ supplications to thee; that fixing my eye on
“ those most valuable ends to which Prayer
“ is so manifestly subservient, and which can-
“ not be attained without it, and having the
“ desires and inclination of my soul suitably
“ influenced by thy Grace who hast the hearts
“ of all men in thy hand, and turnest them as
“ the rivers of water are turned, I may at once
“ yield thee a more reasonable and a more
“ cheerful service. I could never think
“ it was for thy own sake, that thou com-
“ mandest thy creatures to pour out their
“ hearts before thee in Prayer. I now plainly
“ see, it is for their profit, that they may be
“ partakers of thy holiness. Grant, O Lord,
“ that for the time to come I may serve thee
“ with a filial reverence, delight to approach
“ thee, and to commend myself by frequent
“ and fervent Prayer to thy guidance, pro-
“ tection and blessing, and do every thing
“ whereby I may secure thy gracious pre-
“ sence! And thus walking in the light of
“ thy countenance, and, by an uniform
“ course of piety and devotion, continually
“ grow-

“ growing up to higher degrees of perfec-
“ tion in every divine virtue and attainment,
“ let me pass the time of my sojourning
“ here, till from thy earthly footstool thou
“ shalt call me nearer to thy throne, where
“ I shall be capable of paying thee nobler
“ homage ; and, after the service and suffer-
“ ings of a short life, enjoy thee as my ex-
“ ceeding great and everlasting reward,
“ through Jesus Christ my worthy Mediator
“ and Advocate.” *Amen.*







E S S A Y II.

Concerning the Qualifications necessary to render our Prayers acceptable to God.

THE importance of this subject being out of dispute with all those who really desire God's acceptance of their Prayers, the following things are laid before them, for their serious consideration.

1. Prayer, to be acceptable to God, must be performed by one in a state of favour with him, or in some preparation and disposition of soul towards it. Say I this only from my own thoughts, or does not the Scripture say the same? ^a *The sacrifice of the wicked (the most pompous and costly offering he can make) is an abomination to the Lord; but the Prayer of the upright (the Prayer, though no sacrifice attends it) is his delight.*

^a Prov. xv. 8.

delight. And so again in the 29th verse, *The Lord is far from the wicked; but he heareth the Prayer of the righteous.* And the *New Testament* speaks the same language, ^b *Whatsoever things we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.* But here a thought will almost unavoidably arise; if the sacrifice, or Prayer of the wicked be an abomination to God, and only the Prayers of men of upright heart meet with a gracious audience, where is the obligation on the unconverted to pray? Or to what purpose should they trouble themselves about this duty? If a man must pray that he may be converted, and yet till he is converted his Prayers are abominable, how is it possible his Prayers should ever be of any use to free him from the wretched state he is in? The answer is not far to seek, *viz.* that the qualification before mentioned as essentially necessary, is not that a man be actually in a state of Grace, or actually converted, but that he be at least in some preparation or disposition towards it. The wicked, whose sacrifice is declared to be an abomination, are such as retain their enmity against God and godliness, such as are neither reconciled, nor willing to be so, neither possessed of the treasures of divine Grace, nor desirous of them, but are bent upon their evil ways,
and

^b I John iii. 22.

and resolved to gratify their lusts whatever it costs them; such as these present their offerings with hands and hearts so defiled, that it would be most unreasonable for them to expect God should have the least regard to any thing they do; and indeed, for the greater part they do not so much pray out of any such expectation, as from other views, or because they have been accustomed to do it. But then, for the encouragement of others it is added, *that the Prayer of the upright is his delight*. Now as there are several degrees of uprightness, so the lowest of them may hope for an answerable share in the divine acceptance. Whatever be a man's present state, if he hath sincere desires, though weak, of becoming a better man, of making his peace with God, and practising his whole duty towards him, and these desires are the ground and principle of his Prayers, he is so far upright, and so far in the state he ought to be in; that is, he is in a state of preparation, which every one must be, that is not regenerated, before that change can pass upon him; regeneration not being the work of an instant. The broken sighs of a contrite heart are heard with favour and pity, the feeble and imperfect struggles of the soul towards the new birth are graciously regarded, and assisted by the merciful God who is a witness to them.

II. It is necessary that we should pray with unfeigned humility, which we can hardly avoid doing, if we consider as we ought the infinite greatness and majesty of God, or reflect upon our own extreme indigence and great unworthiness

“ Will God indeed dwell on the earth ?
 “ Behold the heaven, even the heaven of
 “ heavens cannot contain him ! The nations
 “ to him are as the drop of a bucket, and
 “ are counted as the small dust of the bal-
 “ lance in his sight, who metes out the hea-
 “ vens with a span, and comprehends the dust
 “ of the earth in a measure ; the whole cre-
 “ ation is a very little thing. What then is
 “ man, who is a worm, and the son of man
 “ who is a worm ? May we that are but
 “ dust and ashes take upon us to speak to
 “ the most high possessor of heaven and
 “ earth, lift up our eyes to the place where
 “ his honour dwelleth, come near before
 “ him, even to his mercy-seat, and with the
 “ freedom of children make known our re-
 “ quests unto him ? And how profound then
 “ should our humility and reverence be, to
 “ answer to this most astonishing condescen-
 “ tion ? Or who can forbear crying out,
 “ *What is man that thou art mindful of him ?*
 “ *And the son of man that thou visitest him ?* ”

That we may be yet further convinced of the reason we have for humility, when we approach the divine presence, we should think

think again how extremely indigent and necessitous we are. Shall we say, we have need of nothing? When, alas, without his power supporting our Beings, his bounty supplying our wants, his grace helping our infirmities, we neither are, nor have, nor can do any thing. Are not our wants continually returning, infomuch that the merciful hand of God being shut up, which hath hitherto relieved us, if we would not otherwise be brought to acknowledge our necessities, we should be forced to do it by our own feeling? That we may be filled with the fulness of God, it is fit we should see and confess our own emptiness. We ought to be sensible of our helpless condition as we are creatures, Beings whose all depends upon the will of another, who have not their good in their own hand, nor the power to foresee or avert the numerous evils that beset the present life, exposed to great dangers, and that part of them to the greatest which is infinitely more valuable, easily deceived, ignorant, defenceless, and mortal. Thus indigent is our condition as creatures, situated in a frail body, and a mutable world; and much more as *fallen* creatures; for as *fallen*, we have new wants and weaknesses, and consequently new petitions to make when we come to God in Prayer. We need mercy for the pardon of our sins, grace to heal our diseased natures, strength to vanquish

temp-

temptations, and to perform the duties of the christian life, and the consolations of the Spirit to calm a doubting and fearful mind. Ah, how can we expect that God should compassionate our condition, when we are not affected with it ourselves?

If all this will not teach us to pray with humility, let us call to remembrance our great unworthiness; and then we shall be ready to say, or see reason to say, as the Patriarch *Jacob*, and with the like lowliness and sincerity, *that we are less than the least of all God's mercies*; indigent and helpless, and deserving so to continue. We must not think to barter with God for his benefits, and to deal with him on the foot of merit; that is not the way to succeed; at best we are unprofitable servants, when most faithful and diligent, and are taught to acknowledge that we are so, even though we should do all those things that are commanded us, because, after all, we have done but what was our duty to do; whatever we do being done by powers which have their whole being and vigour from God, to whom we can give nothing but what was his own before. But, alas, this is not the worst of our case. Was this all, our *unworthiness*, we should be no otherwise unworthy than the most pure and the most exalted of God's creatures are so, who by all their services cannot enrich him
so

so much as the smallest rivulet does the vast ocean with its tributary waters. Ours is not a simple incapacity of meriting at the hand of God, but such a want of merit as is attended with demerit more than enough. We have forfeited the goodness of God, misemployed his gifts, or not employed them as we ought, been unthankful for his mercies, unfruitful under them, and guilty of numberless transgressions, in which we have broke through numberless ties and obligations. Had we a strong and habitual sense of these things upon our minds, pride would not find it so easy a matter to insinuate itself into our religious performances, and sink the value of them; but we should be able to offer to God the sacrifice of a contrite and humble spirit, which he will never despise.

III. In an acceptable Prayer the attention of the mind must conspire with the devotion of the heart. Some degree of attention is necessary. We ought to mind what we are doing, and with whom we have to do; otherwise our Prayers will be no more than the labour of our lips, and in praying we shall not pray; for that is not Prayer which is not performed with the mind; and it is not performed with the mind, if the mind be absent, and taken up about other things. The thoughts are the attendants that must wait at the altar, while the sacrifice is offering;

offering; as a devotion kindled from above, is the fire that must consume it. Every thing that discovers inattention, while we are speaking to men, is esteemed a mark of disrespect; and, surely, what no one would like in a fellow-mortal, our equal, and much more our inferior, we should all carefully avoid being guilty of in the presence of the great and omniscient God. A sudden excursion of the thoughts, not frequent, nor allowed, and no sooner perceived than checked, will be pardoned by him who knoweth our frame, and the many infirmities that encompass us; but the habitual and unrestrained wanderings of a vain mind have no excuse. And as our hearts are to be united, so in some good degree devout. With a recollection of the thoughts, there is to be a warmth of the affections, as far as it is in our power; and indeed one of these will very much facilitate or prepare the way for the other. After we have gathered in our thoughts in the performance of holy duties, and centered them, in the best manner we are able, on God and divine things, our hearts will be more likely to catch the sacred flame; ^d *While I was musing the fire burned.* The difference of natural tempers must be allowed for; and so I doubt it may, and yet no apology be left for those who have no stirrings of love to God, while they are praying to him, no breath-

^d Psa. xxxix. 3.

breathings of holy desire, no sensation of delight, no emotions of gratitude. To be thus cold and lifeless, and indifferent, is, I fear, a bad symptom in any, because it seems to argue that they are so by consent, are no ways solicitous about it, nor willing to be at any pains to bring themselves into a better temper. When this is the usual state of our minds, we are too liable to the same charge as those of old, *Of drawing near to God with our mouth, and honouring him with our lips, while we remove our hearts far from him.* The mercies of God, the happiness of being in his favour, the loveliness and the love of Jesus, and the superior excellence of heavenly and eternal things, will naturally beget agreeable passions and sentiments in the pious soul, desire, hope, love, joy, zeal, and thankfulness.

IV. The matter of our Prayers is to consist of such things as we have ground to think are agreeable to the will of God. *This is the confidence we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.* Now this demonstrates the necessity of our having some knowledge of the different nature and importance of things, and of our own case, that we may not pray amiss, which a man, ignorant or inconsiderate, is in great danger of doing. And forasmuch as spiritual blessings, or the things that accompany salvation, such

as peace with God, and conformity to him, a good conscience, order and tranquility of soul, a capacity of serving God in this world, and meetness for a better; forasmuch as these and such like blessings are the only things that are absolutely and eternally good, good in all circumstances, and for all persons, and not those that relate only to the happiness of the body, and the present life, we ought not to pray absolutely for any other; and these being good things of a higher kind, and of infinitely greater moment, we should endeavour to have our minds so possess'd with a sense of their exceeding great worth and significancy, that our concern for obtaining them may, in some due proportion, exceed our care about other things.

v. That we may be accepted we are to pray with a kind, charitable, and forgiving spirit, merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful. How else can we ask, and expect to find that mercy which we will not shew? Hath not our Saviour himself told us that upon any other condition than this our Prayers will be unavailing? *When ye stand praying, forgive if ye have ought against any, that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses: but if you do not forgive, neither will your Father that is in heaven forgive your trespasses.* And so again, *Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven. Give, and it shall be given unto you.* And a very reasonable

^f Mark xi. 25, 26.

^g Luke vi. 37, 38.

able condition this is, or none can be so, to imitate the mercy we implore. We not only pray that God would forgive us our trespasses, but that of his free and overflowing goodness he would grant us such things as we have need of. Our power indeed of doing good bears no proportion to his, nor their guilt who have injured us to the guilt of our offences against God; but what is the inference from hence? Why, that we should with so much the greater readiness afford others all the help we can, and forgive them, if they have offended us, as their guilt towards us, and the help they received from us is comparatively so little, and God gives and forgives so much.

VI. To pray acceptably, it is needful that we pray in faith; that is, that we be persuaded of the knowledge, wisdom, power, faithfulness and mercy of God. We must believe that God perfectly knows the state of our case, our desires, and our needs, what we would have, and what is fit and convenient we should have, and this much better than we know it ourselves; that being infinite in knowledge, it is impossible he should be ignorant of any thing, and as impossible that he should be mistaken in his judgement of any thing, whether it be good or evil, expedient, or inexpedient, because he is infinite in wisdom. We must believe that to God all things are possible; that his power

is without bounds, not to be controuled by any opposite force, or stopped and non-plused by any difficulty; that he cannot be more merciful than he is consistently with his other perfections, insomuch that if the person be a proper object of mercy, and his case really pitiable, he never wants a will to shew mercy; that as he hath made many gracious promises, so he keepeth truth for ever, and will not in the least tittle be worse than his word; this is the *Prayer of faith*, which Christians of all times are equally concerned in; so that if in this sense we do not ^h *ask in faith, nothing wavering*, we are forbid to think that we shall receive any thing of the Lord. There is another sort of faith of which we read in scripture, and very common in the age of miracles, a faith that was not so much a saving *grace*, as an extraordinary *gift*. Of this faith our blessed Lord may be supposed to speak, at least principally; ⁱ *What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them*. By the hands of the Apostles, and others of the first preachers of the Gospel, were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; and when it pleased God that any such miracle should be performed, the person chosen to perform it was by an extraordinary impulse upon his mind excited to attempt it, and assured of success; which is the ground that
this

^h Jam. i. 6, 7. ⁱ Mark xi. 24.

this *Prayer of faith* is called *θεσις ενεργητικη*, the ^k *effectual fervent Prayer*, we render it ; whereas it should rather have been the *inwrought*, or *inspired Prayer*. So that the faith was first wrought, and then the miracle.

From these and other like passages of scripture, some Christians, at best not so judicious as well-meaning, have thought themselves warranted to boast of a *particular faith* in Prayer, by which they mean a persuasion, and even assurance while they are praying, of their being heard in the particular thing they ask ; so that, if others can as easily believe them as they trust to a warm imagination, they know beforehand what will be the issue : or if they do not pretend to have this faith, they are satisfied others have it, and apt to question whether it be not their own fault, that they have it not. But I would gladly be informed, where such a faith as this is required as a *duty*, or promised as a *privilege*. They may almost as well lay claim to a power of working miracles, as to have *ordinarily* this faith which is so near akin to miraculous : I say, *ordinarily*, for how far upon some very extraordinary occasions God may communicate himself to persons of uncommon measures of piety and goodness, giving them intimations of his designs and purposes, and shewing them the things that shall be, I will not determine ; but such extraordinary vouchsafements are no

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rule

^k Jam. v. 15, 16.

rule for us to go by in our own practice, or in judging of the pretensions of others. The faith we are obliged to exercise in Prayer, is a faith in God's perfections and promises; and wheresoever there is this faith, our Prayers shall not be rejected for want of any other: as for instance, of the particular faith now mentioned, or a faith that hath rather ourselves than God for its object, tho' too often mistaken for that faith without which no man can be saved; I mean, an assurance that God will bestow his saving mercy upon us, since this depends on the opinion we have of ourselves as proper objects of this mercy, which we may think we are not, when we have no sufficient foundation for such uncharitable thoughts of ourselves; and God that knoweth them that are his, will not deal with us according to the judgement we pass upon our own integrity, but his infallible judgement of it, which therefore shall be decisive.

VII. Nothing can justly be expected from those Prayers, which are not accompanied with a sincere disposition and resolution in the offerer, to do all he can in the use of proper means for the obtaining of the good things which he prays for; otherwise he mocks with God and deceives his own soul, and, whatever Grace he receives, is in danger of receiving it in vain. That single instance which we are furnished with from the *Lord's Prayer*,

is an abundant proof of this; where we are taught to pray that God would *give us day by day our daily bread*. Now it is hardly supposable that any one hath so little sense as to understand this of God's communicating the necessary supplies of this life in such a miraculous and extraordinary way, as when he rained Manna from heaven upon the *Israelites* in the wilderness, and commanded the ravens to feed *Elijah*; but we readily apprehend the thing meant is, that God by his secret influence of blessing would make natural causes to produce their usual effect, prosper our prudent care and honest industry, and grant us to enjoy the good of all our labour. So that here is supposed the concurrence of our own powers and faculties with the Providence of God.

And this will direct us in the right understanding the other petitions, in which we express our desires, *that the name of God may be halloved; his kingdom come; and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven; that he would forgive us our trespasses; and not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil*. For what less do these several petitions intimate, than that we are to endeavour to put ourselves in the way of every mercy we request, and, according to our little sphere, help on the designs of God? That we praise, and honour, and worship God, profess and practise the true Religion, and promote the

interest of it in the world, as far as we are able; to imitate the angels of light in their ready and universal obedience to the divine will; by unfeigned repentance qualify ourselves for pardoning mercy; be sober and vigilant, that we may not enter into temptation, and by all due caution and resolution seek to preserve ourselves from the snares, and to repel the assaults of the evil one; to keep off the evil of sin, and every other evil to which we are liable? All this is evidently implied; which proves the dangerous tendency of those notions which represent men as having no power in working out their own salvation, unless they are acted and carried on by a Grace which they cannot resist; and all those endeavours, however sincere, as of no use that are exerted by persons not blest with those over-powring influences. For what is the natural consequence of this principle, but either men's neglecting to pray, under a pretence they cannot pray as they ought till the Grace of God works so powerfully upon them, that they cannot help doing it; or trusting to their Prayers for converting and establishing Grace, without using any care and endeavours of their own for this purpose. And if it should be said, that praying to God that he would do this and that for us, is a demonstration of our own utter impotence, it must be owned to be a very good proof that the success of our

our

our endeavours is humbly and gratefully to be ascribed to the Grace of God, but is no proof at all of the useflessness of these endeavours: they might as well argue, that because we pray to God for temporal good things, therefore nothing we can do is of the least advantage to procure them. And indeed were it not that men love their bodies better than they do their souls, and are more pinched with the wants, and sensible of the dangers of the former of these than of the latter, they would be apt to draw the same conclusion in both cases. In a word, we are to remember, that as often as we intreat God to guide, and protect, and quicken, and assist, and comfort us, we are, under him, to be our own directors, guardians, monitors, helpers, and comforters, as far as the faculties and opportunities he gives us will enable us to be so. By this means, Prayer will be a reasonable service, a ground of great satisfaction to the mind, and of a most happy influence in the course of the christian, and even of common life.

VIII. In our Prayers let us not forget to pray as *Christians*. Now in that character it is a fundamental rule, that ^l *whatever we do in word or deed, we do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus.*—^m *Through whom we have access by one Spirit unto the Father.*—ⁿ *If earthly parents, being evil, know how to give*
good

^l Col. iii. 17. ^m Eph. ii. 18. ⁿ Luke xi. 13.

good gifts unto their children; how much more shall our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? Even ° the Spirit of his Son, which he sends forth into our hearts, crying *Abba, Father*; forming us to a child-like temper and freedom of spirit, helping our infirmities, particularly in Prayer, and making intercession within us, while Jesus our Advocate, maketh intercession for us in heaven? *There is but one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus*; one High-Priest of our profession, who, because he continueth for ever, hath an unchangeable Priesthood; and, having first reconciled us to God by the sacrifice of the cross, presents us to him (our persons and services) for his gracious acceptance. Our blessed Lord, being about to depart from his disciples, and return unto the Father, that he might not leave them comfortless, tells them, ^p *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my Name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.* And the writer to the *Hebrews*, after taking notice of our being sanctified by the blood of Jesus, exhorts us, ^q *By him to offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually; that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his Name.* While Christ personally conversed upon earth, he was the great teacher of the church; we

° Gal. iv. 6. p John xvi. 23, 24. q Heb. xiii. 15.

we are now to regard him as our intercessor; the † angel, out of whose hand (he answering to the High-Priest under the law) the incense offered on the golden altar, with the Prayers of all the saints ascends before God. To him we are to have a vertyual respect, when we do not actually make mention of his Name, grounding our hopes of mercy and eternal life on his mediation. Thus doing, we shall conform to the Gospel constitution, express a proper regard to the majesty and holiness of God, to whom we presume not to draw nigh, but through a Mediator, and honour the Son whom the Father delighteth to honour.

IX. In Prayer, the glory of God is to be our ultimate end. The command is, *‘Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, to do all to the glory of God.* And if this rule holds in all, to be sure much more in those actions that immediately refer to God. Now making the glory of God our end in Prayer, denotes *two* things—our desire that he would glorify himself in his dealings with us—and our resolution and promise to glorify him in the enjoyment of all his mercies. In the former of these our Master is our pattern, *‘Father, glorify thy name. My soul is troubled; beholding the scene of terror that is approaching; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; so indeed weak nature prompts me to say;*
but

† Rev. viii. 3, 4. † 1 Cor. x. 21. † John xii. 28.

but for this cause came I unto this hour ; verse 27. *Father, glorify thy name.* “ Since the execution of thy wise and merciful designs, requires this sacrifice, and with these circumstances, as I freely consented to it at first, so I freely make it now. This is the deliberate purpose and act of my soul. “ *If thou be willing, remove this cup from me ; nevertheless not my will, but thine be done.*” In imitation of this most perfect example, let us pray with an entire submission of ourselves to the divine disposal ; willing that God should deny us, when it is for his glory, as it is our duty to deny ourselves at his command. “ Is it for thy glory, O my God, that I should want this or that comfort of life, suffer this or that affliction, be liable to this or that temptation ; only let thy Grace be sufficient for me (as it was for thy Apostle *St. Paul*) and I cheerfully submit ? I rejoice that God is glorified in me, however it be, whether by prosperity, or adversity, by life or by death, by granting my requests, or seeming to reject them.”

This is that resignation which we should all be disposed to practise, when we offer up our desires to God in Prayer ; he expects it, and it is altogether reasonable ; but any such hard, I might say impossible, proof of our love to him and zeal for his glory, as our being

* Luke xxii. 42.

being contented that he should deny us, when we beg of him his favour and the life of our souls, he does not, he cannot, demand from us; and therefore this is a case we ought never to suppose. In respect of the enjoyment of temporal good things, or freedom from temporal evils, and even the joys and consolations of Religion, however desirable, a concern for the glory of God must over-rule our desires of these things. And as we ought to pray with this reserve, *if it be for the glory of God*, so with this view, as one motive to our Prayers, *that it will be for his glory to answer us*. It hath therefore been the method of the people of God in all ages to enforce their Prayers with this plea or argument, *that God would bear them for his name sake*; that is, for the sake of his perfections, and the glory redounding from the display of them in his works. It is the glory of God to relieve the wants of his creatures, when they cry unto him, to satisfy the hungry soul with his goodness, to shew mercy to them who sincerely endeavour to qualify themselves for it, and to be the exceeding great reward of all that choose him for their portion and felicity; these and such like things are for the glory of the best of all Beings; some of them always, and others ordinarily; and it should be an additional incentive to our desires, that they are so, distinct from the consideration of our

own interest and happiness concerned in them. The other thing implied in making the glory of God our ultimate end in Prayer, is a resolution to glorify his Name in the use and enjoyment of every gift or benefit he is graciously pleased to confer upon us, to the intent, that he may have the praise, not from us only, but from all others; to utter the memory of his great goodness, and to improve every mercy as a fresh engagement to greater zeal, activity, and cheerfulness in the service of our bountiful Lord and Master.

To conclude——Perseverance in Prayer is necessary to crown the whole. We cannot be ignorant, that our Saviour spake a parable to this very end, that ^w *men ought always to pray, and not to faint*; that is, not to be discouraged, and give over praying, though all things should seem to continue as they were; so as to tempt them to ask, *what profit have we to pray to him?* Or to say, *verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence.* A delay is not a denial; nor should we think the delay too long, if we had the same knowledge of things that he hath, who is the supreme disposer of them. *The Lord is a God of judgement; blessed are all they that wait for him.* To the same purpose is the Apostle Paul's exhortation, to ^x *continue instant in Prayer.* Of the duty itself we should never grow weary, nor cease
entreat-

^w Luke xviii. 1, &c.

^x Rom. xii. 12.

entreating God to give us those mercies, in a particular and especial manner, that relate to our everlasting salvation; no temptation whatsoever should prevail with us to do this; neither the suggestion of an *indeavour* heart, that Prayer is a slavish and burdensome service; nor of an *ignorant, and foolish* heart, that it is needless; nor of an *unbelieving or desponding* heart, that it is fruitless and unprofitable. The most imperfect souls cannot but have some pleasure in offering up their sincere desires and praises to God; and the longer they persevere, provided they pray in the best manner they are able, and keep a good conscience in other things, together with their own perfection, the facility and pleasure of religious duties will increase; if not that pleasure which we may call *passionate*, yet that which consists in a *rational calm, and satisfaction of mind*.

Prayer cannot be *needless*, was it for no other reason but that God expressly and peremptorily requires it; since what he so requires, nothing will excuse us from performing: and the same consideration evidently proves that it cannot be *fruitless*; for as much as the same God who commands the duty will not, both of his abundant goodness, and out of regard to his own promise, fail to reward the regular and constant discharge of it. What if God doth not answer our Prayers so soon, or in that way and manner that

that we should choose? What if he sees fit to try our faith and patience before he rewards them, agreeably to the nature of the present state, which is a state of waiting and probation? What if he doth not communicate all that light, and life, and strength, and comfort which we desire? Still we may depend upon it, that our Prayers, with the qualifications before mentioned, shall not go unrewarded, but procure us many blessings and advantages, present and future. God, by a secret influence, will establish our hearts more and more, guide and uphold our steps, assist us in holy duties, succour us in the hour of temptation, support us under the burthens and afflictions of the present life, and make all things work together for our good. In a word, he will give us grace here, and glory and happiness hereafter. Wherefore let us be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in every duty, and particularly in this of Prayer, forasmuch as we know that our labour in the Lord, and our Prayers to him, cannot be in vain.





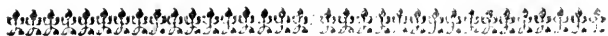
A P R A Y E R.

O Thou that hearest Prayer, the Almighty and Everlasting God, to Thee shall all flesh come! As a father pitieth his children, so, O Lord, thou pitiest them that fear Thee; thou knowest their frame, thou remembrest that they are dust! While thy wisdom and holiness leave no room for impenitent sinners to hope that thou wilt hear them, thou art pleased to incourage such as are upright in heart, under all their failings and imperfections to put their trust in thy mercy. Grant, I beseech Thee, that I may have my mind deeply imprest with a sense of these and all other thy perfections, that in my whole behaviour, and more especially in my solemn addresses to the throne of thy heavenly grace, I may be so influenced thereby as ever to glorify thy most holy Name. O let not this most blessed liberty which thou hast given me of coming into thy presence, and calling upon Thee as my Father in Heaven, be despised and neglected by me, or prove in vain for want of that sincerity and humility, and faith, and charity,

rity, and devotion, and all those good dispositions, wherewith I should bow myself before the most High God! Blot out all my offences, O most merciful Father, and uphold me with thy free Spirit! By thy good Spirit teach me how to pray; quicken and assist me in my Prayers; and grant that I may never forget to whom, and for what I make my requests; but may always have a lively apprehension of thy presence, though invisible, and of the reality, excellence, and infinite importance of spiritual and eternal blessings; that placing my happiness in Thee alone, I may not vainly seek it in other objects where it is not to be found; nor be grieved and disappointed, when outward things do not afford me that satisfaction which I ought not to expect from them. May I so pray as to live better at other times; and walk so holily and circumspectly at other times, as to be in a better disposition of mind to pray always, with all Prayer and Supplication, watching thereunto with all Perseverance; being kept stedfast in the way of my duty, by the delight I take in it, and the tranquility and establishment of soul I derive from thence. And thus let me go on in the regular uniform discharge of the duties of piety towards God, and charity towards man, till under the influences of thy Divine Spirit, being prepared by a life of faith and hope for a state
of

of vision and enjoyment, I shall be translated to those blessed and glorious mansions, where thou hast laid up for them that love Thee such things as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can enter into the heart of man fully to apprehend ; where I shall not only be sincere in my devotions as now, but equal to the angels, according to my capacities, and with fervent everlasting praises celebrate that goodness which is boundless and endless. Let these my Prayers come up for a memorial before Thee, and be graciously accepted through the mediation of thy well-beloved Son, my only Saviour and Advocate, Jesus Christ.





A
DISCOURSE
Concerning the
NATURE and DESIGN
OF THE
LORD'S-SUPPER.

IN WHICH

The principal things relating to this INSTITUTION are briefly considered; and shewn to arise out of one single notion of it, *viz.*

As a Memorial of the Death of CHRIST,

1732.





A

DISCOURSE

Concerning the

LORD'S-SUPPER.

THE *Christian Religion*, contained in the scriptures of the *New Testament*, is so called, because it is the Religion of *Jesus Christ*, which he taught partly in his own person while he was upon earth, and more fully by his Apostles after his ascension into heaven ; from whence he sent down his *Holy Spirit* upon them, to lead them into the knowledge of all truth, and, by the gifts of languages, and a power of working miracles, to enable them to propagate and establish it in all the earth. Among many things which shew the great excellency of this Religion, not only above the false Religions of the world, but even that of *Moses* himself, (tho' that also was from God) we are to regard this as none of the least considerable, that it is a *most reasonable and spiritual service*, hav-

ing but *two* duties belonging to it, that are of a *positive nature*; that is, such as might never have been duties, and would never have been so, without a particular and express command of God for them; and these are *Baptism*, and the *Lord's-Supper*. The *outward action* in both these is of itself indifferent, and obliges only by virtue of its being enjoined by one, whose authority we have no room to dispute.

By *Baptism*, they who had embraced the doctrine of salvation by Christ, took upon them the publick profession of it, and were received into the number of his disciples; as all those, in like manner are, to whom *Baptism* is now administered. By communicating in the *Lord's-Supper*, we endeavour to keep alive in ourselves, and to preserve in the world, the memory of the divine Author of that Religion into which *Baptism* first enters us. This is a plain account of these *two* Gospel-Ordinances, with regard to the first and most general design of each; the former hath a more immediate respect to the Religion itself which we profess, the latter to the Author of it, in remembrance of whom this Institution of his is to be observed throughout all generations.

That men, having sufficient evidence of the truth of the Gospel, should readily believe and entertain it, and believing it to be true, should openly profess it, is a dictate
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of natural Reason; in other words, a moral duty; but the obligation they are under to declare and profess their faith by the particular ceremony of *baptizing with water in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, doth not arise out of the nature of the ceremony itself, but is wholly to be resolved into the divine appointment. So again, that we should gratefully remember our benefactors, and that person therefore above all, who hath proved himself the greatest friend to mankind they ever had, is what Reason, and all the principles of ingenuity, will not suffer us to be ignorant of; but *for setting apart bread and wine to this use by solemn prayer, and then eating and drinking in memory of our blessed Lord*, we have no other warrant but his express command, *Do this in remembrance of me*. However, there is this to be said for these *two* rites or ceremonies, that they have nothing burdensome and difficult in the practice of them, and will bear an easy and obvious application, as signs to the things signified and intended by them; which, no doubt, is one reason of their having been chosen by our Saviour for this purpose: I say one reason, not the only one; since, besides this, another inducement seems to have been, that he might not depart, further than was necessary, from the received customs of the *Jews*; among whom, as frequent washings were a great part of their

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Religion, so *John* his Forerunner came baptizing with water, in token of that repentance by which they were prepared for the *kingdom of heaven*, or the gospel dispensation, which was then at hand: and, in eating the *Passover*, it was their manner, having taken bread, to bless and break it; and to hallow or bless several cups of wine, one of which particularly was called the ^a *cup of blessing*, which is the very name that is given by *St. Paul* to the cup in the *Lord's-Supper*. But then our Saviour adopting these rites into the worship of the Christian Church, affixes another meaning and use to them, and prescribes a different form of words in the administration. In a word, man being a creature very much influenced by his senses, and so too apt to forget things spiritual and unseen, it seemed good to the divine wisdom so far to consult his weakness in this respect, as to adorn our holy Religion with these *two emblematical representations*, which being but *two*, and admirably fitted to answer their end, have no need of any thing further to be said in their vindication.

These ceremonial Institutions are commonly called by the name of *Sacraments*, which tho' it be no scripture term, but borrowed from the language and customs of the *Romans*, is yet retained, and grown into universal use; because, as it originally signified

^a 1 Cor. x. 16.

fied the oath which soldiers took to be faithful to their General, it is properly enough transferred to denote the affectionate zeal, and inviolable fidelity which the followers of *Jesus*, in *Baptism* and the *Lord's-Supper*, profess and promise to the Captain of their salvation.

S E C T. I.

THESSE Sacraments are,

1. A plain indication of man's being in a state of apostacy, and distance from God. The apparent meaning of these Sacraments shews it. For what is *Baptism*? *Not the putting away the filth of the flesh*, but our becoming clean and pure in the sight of God. Christ is therefore said ^a *to have loved the Church, and to have given himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of Water, by the Word; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.* The sanctification, or cleansing, is by the Word, or doctrine of the Gospel, accompanied with the operation of the *Divine Spirit*; and only *with the washing of Water, or Baptism*, as the sign of this moral and inward

^a Eph. v. 25,—27.

ward cleansing. And who are they that have need of cleansing, but such as are defiled? Which shews, that till we are sanctified by the *Word* of God, (which sanctification is set forth by outward *Baptism*) we cannot please God. Again, what is the *Lord's-Supper*, as to one principal part of its intention, but a commemoration of the *Atoning Sacrifice* made by Christ's death on the behalf of mankind? And who but sinful rebellious creatures could need a sacrifice of reconciliation to be offered for them? So far then, these Ordinances have no very comfortable meaning. But,

2. They are a welcome evidence, and no less plain, of man's being in a recoverable state. That tho' the condition of this sinful race of creatures be without the grace and mercy of God, exceeding deplorable, yet, through this grace, it is not hopeless, but much otherwise; the Ordinances of *Baptism* and the *Lord's-Supper* being on purpose instituted, in concurrence with the other means of grace, to bring us into, and build us up in a state of salvation by Jesus Christ: they are *seals of the covenant of grace*, which, out of the infinite mercifulness of his nature, and to shew his well-pleas'dness with the righteousness and obedience of his most beloved Son, the great Mediator, God hath graciously entered into with sinful men. And here let it be matter of joy to us, and thanksgiving to our merciful God, that
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when, through the sin of the first man *Adam*, and the weakness and disorders of human nature thereby occasioned, there was no more room for a *covenant of innocence*, the second man, who is *the Lord from heaven*, brought in a new and better covenant; better, whether we consider the terms of it, so admirably suited to our fallen state, or the grace and the glory promised: for this invaluable covenant we are indebted, under God, to the mediation of our compassionate Redeemer *Jesus Christ*. His death procured reconciliation with God; and the Supper he bequeathed us is a standing memorial of his death. And from hence it is I shall take my direction, in explaining this Sacrament.

The main and direct intention of the *Lord's-Supper* is to be a perpetual commemoration, or remembrance, of the death of *Christ*. This appears from those words of the Apostle *Paul*, ^b *As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come*. So that we have no surer or easier method of settling a right and distinct notion of this Ordinance, than to consider the death of *Christ*, here presented before our eyes, under those several views in which it is capable of being contemplated by us. The following are some of the principal.

^b 1 Cor. xi. 26.

S E C T. II.

I. **W**E may consider the death of Christ, as manifesting the thoughts which they had of him, who put him to death, and the end designed by them in it.—The *Jews* and *Romans*, by acting this scene of cruelty on the innocent *Jesus*, proclaimed to all the world, that they esteemed him ^a *a deceiver of the people*; for had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; and by exposing him as a publick spectacle of infamy, pain and sorrow, their hope was, they should have made all men ashamed or afraid to own him. Whereas (to see how little the devices of vain men avail against God's eternal counsel) his being *lifted up* was the very way in which he was ^b *to draw all men unto him*. And the Sacrament of the Supper was appointed with this design, *That shewing forth the death of Christ therein, we might declare to the whole world our belief of him to be, that he was a teacher sent from God, his Holy Child Jesus, whom he hath anointed*; notwithstanding ^c *that Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and People of Israel, were gathered together against him; and that we are not by fear or shame restrained from professing ourselves his disciples*. The first notion then that offers itself to us of this

^a 1 Cor. ii. 8. ^b John xii. 32. ^c Acts iv. 27.

this Sacrament, is its being a badge or mark of our christian profession. We glory in that very person whom the *Jews* crucified, at the same time professing to receive him as our Lord and Master. Nay more, we profess to glory in him, even as crucified.

1. We glory in that very person whom the *Jews* crucified, at the same time professing to receive him as our Lord and Master. We are ready to cry out with the ^d *Centurion*, and those that were with him, when they saw the prodigies that attended his crucifixion, *Truly this is the Son of God*. He is not so concealed under the veil of our flesh, or disfigured by his sufferings, but I can easily perceive the divine glory shining through, and acknowledge him for the greatest person that ever lived upon earth, *the Lord of glory, and my Lord*. This title he accepted, when given him by his disciples; ^e *Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am*; but then we likewise hear him in another place saying, ^f *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I command you?* So that it is not the *title* by which I can hope to please my Saviour, without the *subjection* and *obedience* that is implied in it. I must not only say well, but do well. I am to remember that all the precepts of the Gospel, are the precepts of *Christ*, my Lord and Master; and that consequently,

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^d Mat. xxvii. 54. ^e John xiii. 13. ^f Luke vi. 46.

if I obey not the Gospel, I am in works guilty of *denying the Lord that bought me*, and act a part too much like that of the ^s soldiers, who having *platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and put a reed in his right hand, bowed the knee to him in mockery, and hailed him King*. Would I not have all that know me take notice, that I own myself the disciple of the crucified Jesus? But how? Not, it is to be hoped, by this single action only of *eating and drinking* in obedience to his command, and in honour of his memory. Alas, this alone will signify very little, but by all the actions of my life. My whole behaviour should bespeak me a christian, a servant and a follower of *Jesus*. And if I really think him that excellent and divine person I profess to believe him, this one consideration should be enough, not barely to reconcile me to my duty, but to make me in love with it; since I profess to believe him a person of the highest dignity, that he came down from heaven in order to teach us the most excellent way, and that the scope and design of all he taught and commanded, is to make us holy as he is holy, that we may be fitted to live with him and his holy angels in the presence of God for ever.

2. We not only profess ourselves the disciples of one that was crucified, but also to glory

† Mat. xxvii. 29.

glory in him as crucified. We think this no reproach to our blessed Lord that he was treated in so ignominious a manner by a blind and ungrateful world; or to our Religion, that the Author of it was slain and hanged on a tree; or to ourselves, that we are the followers of one whom the main body of the *Jews* rejected; but on the contrary, a very great honour to us, to our Religion, and to our divine Master. We are not ashamed to say, Lo, this is he, the Lord our Redeemer, we have waited for him, and he will save us! Let the prejudiced *Jews* express their abhorrence of him, and, with a mixture of scorn and hatred, call him *the man that was hanged* *; let them say, that it cannot so much as enter into their thoughts that the *Messiah* should be crucified, and punished with a death which the law pronounces accursed; I joyfully take the opportunity which the commemoration of his death, in the way that he himself hath commanded, gives me, to avow my faith and trust in him, glorying in nothing more than ^h *in Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.* Had he, whom we Christians call and account the *Messiah*, been cut off for himself, had he de-

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* As Trypho the Jew does in Justin Martyr.

^h 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

served the death which he suffered, his name would never have spread, as it hath done to the ends of the earth, and his cause have subsisted to this day ; as, we make no doubt, it will to the period of all time.

Pilate himself could observe that it was only ¹ *for envy that the chief priests and elders had delivered Jesus to him.* And the envy they betrayed on this occasion was at once their great sin, and a sort of homage and acknowledgement paid by them to our Saviour's superior virtues, which offended them for much the same reason as the light of the sun does sore eyes. " Yes, O my
 " Jesus, it was only because the world was
 " not worthy of thee, that thou metest
 " with no better usage from the world ; the
 " world would have loved its own, but be-
 " cause thou and thy kingdom were not of
 " this world, therefore the world hated thee,
 " as thou both in thy life and death did
 " shew thy contempt of the world ! And
 " shall I esteem and admire thee ever the
 " less for this ? No, but the more. When
 " I consider the noble fruits that spring from
 " that cursed tree on which the Son of God
 " expired, and that under the banner of
 " the cross all nations have been brought to
 " the obedience of the faith, I think with
 " myself, what can be more glorious either for
 " our Master, for us his disciples, or for the
 " Gos-

¹ Mat. xxvii. 18.

“ Gospel which we have received from him,
 “ than that by such unlikely means he hath
 “ triumphed over all the powers of earth
 “ and hell, and made it a more honourable
 “ thing for his followers to despise worldly
 “ pomp and riches than to enjoy them, es-
 “ teeming them as mere trifles in comparison
 “ of the true riches, and the invisible glo-
 “ ries of the heavenly world! Am I one of
 “ those that *glory in the cross of Christ*? O
 “ let me take care that I be not found in
 “ that number whom the ^k Apostle *Paul*
 “ pronounces enemies to our Saviour’s
 “ cross!”

Every one is an enemy to the cross of
 Christ, that is not an enemy to those sins
 and vices, from which Christ died to re-
 deem us; he shews himself an enemy in
 opposing the use that ought to be made of
 the doctrine of the cross, and, as much as
 in him lies, the progress of that doctrine.
 Did all the followers of Jesus behave no bet-
 ter than some of them do, how soon would
 the honours of the cross cease, and the Religion
 of him that was crucified be blotted out from
 the earth? And had all that named the name
 of Christ in the beginning approved them-
 selves no better friends to him, Christianity,
 humanly speaking, had been stifled in its birth;
 and the whole world, judging of the Master
 by the disciples, would have concluded that he

did not suffer unjustly. With the greatest reason therefore does the Apostle say of those who trample on the rules of Christianity, that they are *enemies to the cross of Christ*; they are the persons that most of all hinder the triumphs of the cross, and, of all men, they have least cause to make their boast in it.

Let me, before I close this head, address myself to such as turn their backs on the *Lord's Table*, and beseech them seriously to ask themselves a few plain questions. How can I number myself among the followers of Christ, and yet will not be persuaded to join with them in an action, whereby the christian society is distinguished from all others? Must not my Christianity, as to the external part of it, be imperfect, if I am contented to want one principal sign of a Christian? Or what should I be able to say for myself, should Christ not own me for his, upon my appearing before him without this mark of a disciple, a sincere love to all the Institutions of my blessed Master? Certainly, if it should be found that my neglecting the *Lord's-Supper*, proceeded from a want of real love and respect to my Saviour and his commands, nothing will be sufficient to excuse it. *Baptism* puts my name on the roll of his followers; but my baptismal dedication, if in infancy, being not properly my own act, it is in a manner necessary that

that I should make it mine, by recognizing it now that I am grown up to years of understanding: and how is the obligation of one Sacrament to be acknowledged and renewed any way so well as by putting myself under the bond of the other? Besides, that *Baptism* hath not so immediate and visible a regard to *Christ crucified*, as the *Lord's-Supper*, on which therefore we should set the highest value, to let the world see that we think not this article of our faith any shame to us, or discredit to our Religion, but a very great honour and advantage to both.

S E C T. III.

11. **W**E may consider the death of Christ as that of a martyr, or witness, a martyr to the truth of his own doctrine, the first, and the noblest.—His death was entirely voluntary; ^a *no man*, saith he, *taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself*: as they could not have taken it from him without his consent, so without his consent (could we suppose this) whatever he had suffered, though the consequence of what he taught, would not have procured him the name of a martyr; for he is not a martyr, who having brought himself into the snare by some doctrine

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^a John x. 18.

trine which he hath advanced and propagated, would be glad to get out of it again upon any terms, even though it were the abjuring as false all that he had taught for true; but he that dares say the same, in the face of the most threatening dangers, that he had said before, and chooses rather to die for the truth, than to deny and forsake it, this all will allow to be a real martyr; and such a martyr was *Jesus Christ*. When upon his trial the ^b *High Priest* adjured him by the living God to tell him, whether he was the *Christ the Son of God*, though silent before to all that the false witnesses had alledged against him, and not to be provoked to plead in his own defence, which he could easily have done in such a manner, as to make those, who had the bitterest hatred to the truth, yield to the force of it, he immediately answers, *thou hast said; or, I am that very person*. *Pilate* the heathen governour, and his judge, asks him a like question, *Art thou a King then?* To which he replies, *thou sayest that I am a King; or what thou hast now said, being taken out of the form of a question* *, is very true, thy words are βασιλευς ει συ, *thou art a King*, and I am free to say that I am so; ^c *to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.*

^b Mat. xxvi. 63.

^c John xviii. 37.

* His answer to the Question of the High Priest may be accounted for in the same manner.

truth. This is that good confession which St. Paul saith he witnessed before Pontius Pilate, recommending it to his son ^d Timothy for his imitation. Here are two known characters of the *Messiah*; for in the question of the High Priest, *Art thou the Christ, the Son of God?* *Christ* (or *Messiah*) and *Son of God*, seem to be used as equivalent expressions, which we may suppose to be the reason that in St. Luke's relation of the same thing, it is only, ^e *Art thou the Christ?* And that the *Messiah* was to be a King, the *Jews* to this day agree with us, as widely as we differ in explaining the nature of his kingdom. Our Saviour, for wise reasons, had not openly and directly assumed the name and titles of the *Messiah* till now; but now that he was summoned by the magistrate to give witness to the truth, and no ill use could be made by the people of his owning himself to be a King, (when his death would convince them that his kingdom was not from hence, of a worldly and temporal kind, as he then told them) he no longer seeks concealment, but owns himself to be *Messiah the King, and the Son of God*, though he was not ignorant that his so doing could have no other effect than to hasten his condemnation.

This our Saviour's constancy to the death which he bore with so much meekness to-

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wards

^d 1 Tim. vi. 13.

^e Luke xxii. 67.

wards his enemies, and confidence in God, neither of which, perhaps, was ever known in a deceiver, in that dreadful hour, though they might be in one deceived; this, I say, added to the miracles he had wrought, and the exemplary holiness and goodness of his life, should make us think, when we are meditating on his death in this view of it, of the mighty confirmation which our faith, in the divinity of our Religion, derives from hence. Would an impostor, if it was possible for such a one to put on the appearance of the most unaffected sanctity, and of all other virtues, have been able to maintain it to the very last, and in defence of a known falshood? It cannot be. And therefore when we see Jesus Christ exemplifying his divine doctrine in his life, (of which more presently) and sealing it with his blood, we may very well conclude, that for certain ^f *all things that John speak of this man, or this man of himself, or his Apostles concerning him, are true.*

But the use we are more immediately concerned to make of this view of our Saviour's death, as of a martyr, is to reflect on the reasonableness of his demands, that we should sacrifice every thing for the truth's sake, not excepting life itself, which we must ^g hate, acting after much the same manner as if we did so, or we cannot be his disciples.

^f John x. 41.

^g Luke xiv. 26.

ples. In all this he requires no more of us than he practised himself; which should put us in mind of the disposition with which we should celebrate the memory of this glorious martyr, and bring us to resolve with an humble reliance on heavenly aid, *though I die for thee, yet will I not deny thee; though all men should be offended in thee, yet will I not be offended.* That God, who knoweth the hearts of all men, knows, without putting it to the trial, whether we should adhere thus firmly to the cause of truth; and where he sees a preparation of mind and heart, will reward it, though not perhaps with the same crown as that of actual martyrs, yet with a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

S E C T. IV.

III. **W**E may consider the death of Christ as that of our example.— Generally they that are put to death, by the publick magistrate, are set forth as examples in another sense, *viz.* to warn and deter others from doing like them; but here is one, who, though treated under a form of justice as the worst of malefactors, is yet proposed to us as an example of all virtue and goodness; of virtue calumniated, oppressed

pressed and persecuted, yet still the same. So we are told, that ^a *Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps.* In our blessed Lord we have an example of the greatest disinterestedness, the most ardent zeal and concern for the good of mankind, the most wonderful humility and condescension that ever was, and a resignation and obedience to God without bounds; all which we are called upon to imitate in those words of the Apostle Paul to the *Philippians*, ^b *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took on him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.* Could humiliation, submission and obedience be carried further than this? ^c *Not my will, but thine be done.* ^d *I come to do thy will;* to do it by yielding myself to suffer it. This was the language of the blessed Jesus; and as he spoke so he acted.

The command to love our enemies, to forgive them that injure us, and to pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us, hath been reckoned a *hard saying*, an ob-

^a 1 Pet. ii. 21.

^c Luke xxii. 42.

^b Phil. ii. 5, — 8.

^d Heb. x. 7.

objection against Christianity never to be answered. But by whom is this esteemed so unreasonable? One would think only by such as have not read, or do not believe, or at best do not consider, the history of our Saviour's Passion. Other answers might be returned, but, waving them, let us leave his example, particularly when he was on the cross, to silence this objection against his precepts——^e *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*——The best excuse that could possibly be made in their favour, and accompanied with a prayer, which, from such a person, and in such circumstances, did not, and could not, fail of success. What filial trust did he exercise in God, at a time when the whole world was turned against him, and God himself had withdrawn the usual manifestations of his presence! ^f *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* He still calls him his God, not quitting his hold of him; and breathes out his holy soul into the bosom of his love, ^g *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*. So should we learn to maintain an humble hope in God, when the scene of Providence looks most dark and melancholy; and be so far from judging of our interest in the divine favour by outward events, as not to conclude any thing against ourselves, merely from the want of those sensible refreshments and exultations of spirit, which

^e Luke xxiii. 34. ^f Mat. xxvii. 46. ^g Luke xxiii. 46.

which we may have sometimes experienced. What good people call *spiritual desertion*, is many times nothing more than a depression and sadness of mind; an interruption, not in the life and activity of their graces, but in the comforts afforded by them; somewhat of the same kind with that eclipse which our Saviour suffered in his last hours, but vastly short of it in degree.

We should moreover regard Christ's dying behaviour, as finishing the example of his life. Were we only to judge of him by his death, we might from thence form a pretty certain conjecture of what his life had been; as from the manner of his life, nothing else could be expected but such a death; a death by which he glorified God, and instructed and edified mankind. We see one and the same inward principle of love to that which is good, exerting itself with a most vigorous influence, and perfect uniformity in all he did, and all he suffered: he had long before invited the world to learn of him meekness and lowliness of mind, and all the difference in this respect between the close of his life and the rest of it was, that his sufferings being then more grievous, he had an opportunity to shew these virtues in a fairer light than they had ever appeared in before. He had always gone up and down doing good, and as his life, so his death was directed to the bene-

benefit of mankind ; the spirit of piety and devotion that animated him was remarkable ; his soul was always on the wing, and what time he could borrow from the offices of friendship and kindness, and instruction towards men, he spent in prayer to God ; and the support he had from hence, and the great advantage it was of to him, in the last and darkest scene of his life, is as easily conceivable ; ^h *Father, the hour is come — I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou hast given me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thy ownself, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was !* The holy life which he had led, and the glory that was to follow, brightened the gloomy path which his soul then trod. How he stood affected to the world and all its enjoyments, he had shewn all along before ; ⁱ *being rich, for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich ;* and not think the happiness of life to consist in the abundance of the things which a man possesses, or that this world is the proper abode of felicity : and he ended a poor and mean, but not inglorious life, with a painful and shameful death, that we by him may be taught how to get above the love of the one, and the fear of the other. He pleased not himself, was not guilty of sensual indulgencies, did

^h John xvii. 1, 4, 5.

ⁱ 2 Cor. viii. 2.

did not form his conduct upon fancy, or custom, or passion, preferred heaven, from whence he came, to earth, whither he descended only on a visit of compassion; behaved gravely, usefully, and holy, and, like the setting sun, appeared greatest at the end of his course.

“ O Jesus, I now see what I have to do
 “ when I shew forth thy death in thy Sup-
 “ per! I am to contemplate the heavenly
 “ virtues and graces that then shone forth
 “ in thee, after having been exhibited in
 “ the whole course of thy life, and to ex-
 “ cite and oblige myself to imitate them.
 “ I am determined to follow thee, tho’ it
 “ be at a long distance between, and shall
 “ make it my ambition to resemble thee in
 “ every part of my behaviour, whether to-
 “ wards God, towards men, or with re-
 “ gard to myself. Was it usual in the pri-
 “ mitive church, when they commemora-
 “ ted the deaths of the martyrs, to recite
 “ their laudable actions, and worthy qua-
 “ lities? I will be thankful for their ex-
 “ amples, and those of all other good men,
 “ and be followers of them as far forth as
 “ they were so of my Saviour, but no fur-
 “ ther. Thy example, O most holy Jesus,
 “ is that which I intend to have continually
 “ before me; and while I behold thy body
 “ hanging on the cross, I will endeavour
 “ to copy and describe the amiable virtues
 “ of

“ of thy soul upon my own! My aim shall
 “ be to be ^k crucified to the world by thy
 “ cross, and to have the world crucified
 “ to me; to be zealously affected in that
 “ which is good, and meekly patient under
 “ affliction and trouble; to be actuated by
 “ the same spirit, and to live and die like
 “ thee.”

S E C T. V.

IV. **T**HE death of Christ may be considered as a demonstration of the most astonishing love that ever was, both of the Father and of the Son; of the Father in giving his Son to die for us, and of the Son of God who so freely offered himself.—^a *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*—And whereas it is the observation of our Lord, that ^b *greater love than this hath no man, that a man lay down his life for his friend*, God hath herein ^c *commended his love to us, that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us*, that we who had been enemies might be reconciled to God by the death of his Son. We see the greatness of this love in the greatness or dignity of the per-

^k Gal. vi. 14. ^a John iii. 16. ^b John xv. 12.
^c Rom. v. 8, — 10.

person suffering, and his nearness to God, being his ^d*only begotten Son, who lay in the bosom of the Father*; in the greatness of the sufferings voluntarily submitted to by him, he suffered death, even the shameful and painful death of the cross; in the great unworthiness of the persons to whom this extraordinary favour was shewn, sinners, and enemies to God by sin; and, finally, in the surpassing greatness of the benefits thence resulting, all of them issuing into, and as it were summed up in, that now mentioned, eternal life. Christ's willingness to die for the advantage we should receive from his dying testimony to the truth of his Religion, and his most instructive and affecting example, must be thankfully owned as a proof of his love; but the greatest proofs of that love are yet behind.

To perpetuate the memory of his dying love, our blessed Saviour instituted his Supper, to be observed till his second coming, commanding his disciples to do it in remembrance of him.—For which reason it may seem unaccountable, that there should be any so mistaken, as to deny this Sacrament, or so ungrateful, as to allow themselves, without any manner of uneasiness, in the neglect of it, which I fear is done by a great many who own the Institution. The Apostles and first Christians religiously kept this Ordinance, and
 much

much oftner than we do now, though they had the death of Christ fresh in their memories, and so could not be supposed to need a sensible representation of it, and of his love manifested therein, so much as we, who live at so remote a distance from the time and place of our Saviour's death. Did not Christ die for us as well as for them? And, if so, are we not equally obliged to celebrate his love in dying for us? Was not this Supper instituted for our sake as much as for theirs? And, in one respect, more, as we are now in greater danger of forgetting our benefactor, because it is now longer since that he lived upon earth, and died to procure the benefits of redemption for us? And ought we not thankfully to observe an Institution which doth so mightily assist our faith and gratitude; an Institution which the Primitive Christians observed as much oftner than we, as upon the account now mentioned, they needed it less? Such a friend and lover of souls as Christ hath shewn himself, deserves never to be forgotten; and, doubtless, never will as long as there is a church upon earth, purchased with his blood, founded by his preaching, and preserved by his Providence. But then we have reason to believe, that it is by this Ordinance, which, like a pillar, bears his name inscribed upon it, that a lively memory of him is kept up in the church.

The unparalleled love of Jesus should be our daily meditation ; but we must not think that this excludes the advantage, and even necessity of an Ordinance, in which it is remembered after a more open and solemn manner. The worship of God is to be performed every day, in the closet, and in the family, notwithstanding which God saw it requisite to set apart one day in seven for the more august and publick performance of his worship ; and that there is any such thing as true Religion in the world we may reckon, in great measure, owing to the observation of the *Lord's-Day* ; as it is to be attributed to the *Lord's-Supper* that the memory of Christ's love spreads and flourishes in his church. And I am ready to think that they who cannot be prevailed on to commemorate the love of Christ at his Table, are not the persons who stand in least need of this assistance. This then is another notion which we are to form of the *Lord's-Supper*, it is the means appointed to eternize the memory of Christ's dying love, and of the love of God declared by the same event. And, oh, let not the remembrance of his death ever die ! But let our love, inflamed and strengthened by this holy Ordinance, keep alive the memory of his. We merit to be eternally forgotten of God, if we can forget our Redeemer.

But

But why is Christ so desirous that his love should be had in everlasting remembrance? Is it only that it may be the subject of a barren admiration? Or merely for the sake of our praises, and that he may have a name upon earth? Alas, these are low ends for the Son of God to propose, who being the wonder of angels, and the delightful theme of their songs, needs not, surely, covet the applauses of such poor, ignorant and sinful mortals as we are! No, we must carry our thoughts further. The *love of God*, and *our neighbour*, are the *two commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets*; and both these have a new life and strength derived into them from the love of God, and of Jesus represented in the Sacrament of the Supper. ^e *Here is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us*; but then, for this very reason we are to love him the more, that he ^f *first loved us*. Next to God, who is love, we are to love his Son, who hath loved us, and given himself for us; and because God hath so loved us, ^g *we ought also to love one another*; for this is the *commandment of God, that he who loveth God, love his brother also*; and the same is Christ's *new commandment* to his disciples. We have all a better title to one another's love, than any of us can pretend to have had to the love of God; and shall prove ourselves doubly

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^e John iv. 19. ^f John iv. 10. ^g John xiii. 34.

unworthy of this love, if we refuse to make so easy and so reasonable a return for it, as this of brotherly affection. It is an additional motive to universal love, that we are all comprehended and embraced in the arms of divine love. And how is our love to discover itself? Why, if occasion be, ^h *in laying down our lives for the brethren.* And surely then much more in a readiness to bear their burthens, to relieve their necessities, and to discharge all the other offices of kindness and good-will to them, since no one, who is in a disposition of mind to give the greatest instance of love, can be backward to do that which is much less.

“ Thy love, O my Saviour, constraineth
 “ me to all this, because I thus judge,
 “ that thou diedst for me, that I should not
 “ live to myself, but to thee! And what
 “ am I to understand by living to thee,
 “ but doing those thing which will be most
 “ acceptable to thee, and most serviceable
 “ to the cause of Religion, that is, the cause
 “ of Jesus in the world? What but my
 “ being just, and charitable, and holy; and,
 “ in a word, behaving so, that the world
 “ may receive some of those advantages, and
 “ in a lesser degree, from me and others of
 “ the same spirit with me, as they would
 “ in greater number, and much higher de-
 “ gree reap from thy presence and company,
 “ if

^h 1 John iii. 16.

“ if thou thyself was upon earth ; and so thy
 “ Spirit breathing and acting in us, and shed-
 “ ding its benign influences upon all around
 “ us, may in some measure supply thy per-
 “ sonal absence? ”

S E C T. VI.

v. **T**HE death of Christ may be considered as that of a sacrifice, by which the displeasure of God was atoned, and the sin of man expiated.—We may here say, as our Lord's forerunner, when he pointed him out to the Jews, ^a *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!* ^b *Once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.* ^c *He bore our sins in his own body on the tree.* Now Christ's death having thus the nature of a publick sacrifice, we may regard the Supper he was pleased to institute, as a commemorative representation of this sacrifice, and as a feast upon it.

I. The *Lord's-Supper* is a commemorative representation of the sacrifice which our Redeemer made of himself on the cross.—This is the language of the Institution itself ; from that we learn, that *the bread we eat, is* (representatively) *the body of Christ that was given*

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for

^a John i. 29. ^b Heb. ix. 26. ^c I Pet. ii. 24.

for us; and the cup we drink of is (in the same sense) ^d the blood of Christ which was shed for us. The death of Christ was a true *propitiatory sacrifice*, and, as such, is commemorated in the Sacrament of the Supper. But the *Lord's-Supper* is not, and indeed cannot be, itself such a sacrifice as the *Papists* affirm, because it is a commemorative sign of it; and common sense will teach us, that the sign, and the thing signified by it, cannot be the same. However, as was just now observed, it is a representation of that sacrifice; very faint indeed, but not insignificant; and every time the believer takes the consecrated elements, he doth, as it were, lay his hands upon the sacrifice represented by them, and plead with God in virtue of it for pardon and acceptance; hereby uniting his prayers, and all that he does in the service of God, to the intercession of the great High Priest, who passed into the heavens.

The *third* and the *ninth* hours among the *Jews* (their *three* answering to our *nine o'clock* in the morning, and their *nine* to our *three* in the afternoon) were called *hours of Prayers*, because these were the times of the daily sacrifice, and the burning of incense, when the people chose to offer their prayers, that they might accompany the sacrifices in the temple, and become more acceptable in conjunction with them. Thus in all our ap-

^d Luke xxii. 19, 20.

approaches to the throne of divine grace, whether in publick or private, on the day of sacred rest, or at any other time, we should be mindful of the sacrifice of the cross, and the intercession of our High Priest, founded upon it, in the holy of holies above ; and *having an altar whereof they had no right to eat, who served the tabernacle, should by him, who was our sacrifice, and is still our High Priest, offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually ; that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.* But though the sacrifice of Christ be a main ground of our hope, and what, being sinful creatures, we are concerned chiefly to have respect to in all our religious performances, yet when we behold this sacrifice represented in the actions performed at the *Lord's-Table*, we seem to have a kind of signal given us to apply by faith to this sacrifice, and a more than ordinary advantage and opportunity for the exercise of our faith in it.

History gives us an account of an *Egyptian Nobleman*, who, out of his great affection to the memory of his son, had an image of him placed in the house, to which the servants, having committed a fault, would flee for protection, finding it their best refuge from the anger of their lord. Here we, who have grievously offended God, take refuge by faith in Christ himself, his once-dead, but now ever-living Son ; in the lively exercises

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of

of which faith, we are very much assisted by the representation of our Saviour's sufferings, exhibited to us in his Supper. " I have
 " sinned, and blush to lift up my face to
 " thee, my God ; but see here what thy
 " beloved Son hath suffered for my sins ! Let
 " thy justice behold this sacrifice, and, after
 " that fight hath disarmed it, let it then
 " strike ! "

There are two things, more especially, which we are taught by the representation of Christ's sacrifice in the Sacramental Supper, *viz.* the great evil of sin, and God's readiness to pardon it, which we are to consider as an argument of his great goodness. We see the evil of sin in the sufferings of other men, and feel it in our own ; but not all the infelicities of human life, nor death reigning from *Adam* to the last generation of men that shall be upon earth, can afford that convincing, that affecting evidence of the evil of sin, as the sufferings and death of the Son of God. " Must he, that excellent
 " person, stiled *the Son of God*, to denote
 " his dignity, and *the Lamb of God*, to signify his innocence, die to expiate the guilt
 " of sin ? And how great then must that
 " guilt be which needed such an expiation !
 " And why am I, from the dolorous passion of
 " my Saviour, to take occasion to reflect on
 " the evil of sin, but that I may be excited
 " to hate it more than ever, and to resolve
 " and

“ and watch against it? This, I am sensi-
“ ble, is the end designed ; and I do now
“ therefore renounce all league and friend-
“ ship with sin, and, both out of hatred
“ to that, and love to my Saviour, intend to
“ pursue it to its utter and final destruction.
“ And great is the encouragement I have to
“ do so, since in the Ordinance before me,
“ I have a sort of ocular demonstration, that
“ God is ready to forgive all sin ; which shews
“ that he is as good, as sin is evil.

“ Christ died as a sacrifice ; and if this sacri-
“ fice was not accepted, wherefore is this per-
“ petual memorial of it? If insufficient, why
“ is there not a repetition of the sacrifice it-
“ self, but only of the representation of it?
“ Without controversy, God is in Christ re-
“ conciling the world to himself, and is actu-
“ ally reconciled to all that repent. The hope
“ of forgiveness is essential to the Religion
“ of fallen creatures, and one of the first
“ and most active principles of it ; and where
“ this hope is raised into assurance, as it is
“ by the sacrifice of Christ which we here
“ commemorate, may it not be expected to
“ be the spring of the most chearful, most
“ constant, and universal obedience? I can
“ no more think that God will reject my
“ sincere and faithful service of him, tho'
“ attended with many sinful failings and
“ defects, than that he will accept me, and
“ be pleased with me, if I continue in the
“ ha-

“ habitual practice of any sin. His pardon-
 “ ing and receiving those that forsake their
 “ sins, punishing the more severely such
 “ as will not be persuaded to do it, are
 “ equally plain from the instance of God’s
 “ love to sinners, and hatred of sin. The
 “ death of Christ renders sin more pardon-
 “ able, but not less hateful, rather abundantly
 “ more so; I will therefore hope in the mercy
 “ of God, because Christ died; but, for that
 “ very reason, that he died, I will not pre-
 “ sume upon it, for if so much was done
 “ to the *green tree* (to him that was righteous
 “ and innocent, and so like green wood not
 “ fit fuel for the fire) ^f *what shall be done to*
 “ *the dry*; to those who, by impenitency in
 “ a sinful course, render themselves *vessels*
 “ *of wrath fitted for destruction*, as much
 “ fitted for it as dry wood is to burn?”

2. The *Lord’s-Supper* is a feast upon a sac-
 crifice. It is called a feast, in allusion to
 the Jewish Passover, for ^e *Christ our Passover is*
sacrificed for us; and as the Jews feasted
 upon their paschal lamb, after it had been
 first presented to God, so do we, sacramen-
 tally, and by faith, upon ours. This confi-
 deration of it will suggest several things of
 great use and importance to our thoughts.

1. As a feast it is very expressive of the
 Communion of saints.—Eating and drinking
 together was ever counted a mark of friend-
 ship,

^f Luke xxiii. 31.

^e 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

ship, and a likely way of establishing the union; especially if a feast was added to this very end; for, as one observes, this amounted to a mutual promise of the parties concerned to live in peace and unity among themselves. ^h By how many endearing ties doth Christ preserve the unity of his body the church! And yet all little enough to keep the members of it fast knit to one another. Of all the external bands of christian love, there is none of that efficacy as the holy communion; wherefore, it is recorded of the primitive disciples, ⁱ *that they continued stedfastly in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.* If they that are of the same family, and eat at the same table, cannot agree, they must be of a very unhappy temper indeed. ^k *We being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.* Now if they, who joining in the same Sacraments, and receiving the same Spirit, are incorporated into one mystical body, and united to one head, are not able to maintain a tolerable harmony among themselves, let us never wonder that others differ. Should not their care be at all times, and by all means, ^l *to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace?*

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^h Gen. xxvii. 28,—30. ⁱ Acts ii. 42. iv. 32.

^k I Cor. x. 17. ^l Eph. iv. 3.

Is not this the lesson we learn from our Lord's instituting his Supper; and one thing which we promise when we meet at his Table?

Let Christians reflect on the agreement among persons confederated in any wicked design, and blush to think that common guilt should do more to hold such men together, than the same common privileges and common hopes to prevent dissensions among them. And, was this a proper place for it, we might further remark it, as matter of the greatest lamentation of all, that the Sacrament of the Supper, which should be *the center of union to the christian world*, instead of always answering that end, hath too often been one of the chief engines to divide men into parties, and the principal means to sharpen and halloo the zeal of one party against another. We need not go so far back, as the animosities among some foreign Protestants in the beginning of the Reformation; I fear we have too many instances nearer home. Is it that this Sacrament hath of itself this tendency? Or because men cannot be contented to let others enjoy the Ordinances of the Gospel in that simplicity in which Christ left them to his immediate followers, nor on the same terms of communion as were then thought sufficient? Be that as it may; the duty of all communicants

municants lies plain. Does a person ^m love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity? It is certain he belongs to the *Communion of Saints*, whether he be of the particular communion that I am a member of, or of some other; though it should be of one from which I am excluded, because not able to comply, without offending my conscience with the conditions required. In this case, I am not presently to shut him out from a share in my affections, but account him as a brother, whether he will call me by that name or no; and when I think that all good Christians are of the same family, and united to the same head, how distant soever in place, or perhaps in opinion, I am to stretch my heart as wide as possible I can, that I may take them in all; remembering that the same heaven will receive us at last, though the same place, through necessity, or from some unhappy mistake, cannot hold us upon earth.

2. The *Lord's-Supper* being a feast on a sacrifice, we have a fellowship therein with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. The tabernacle, or temple, under the Law, was *the house of God*, the altar his *Table*, and the sacrifices brought to be offered there were no longer the offerer's but the ⁿ *provisions of God's house*, and are therefore called *the bread, or food, of God*; so that when the offerer was permitted to partake of his

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^m Eph. vi, 24.

ⁿ Levit. xxi, 6.

own sacrifice, he was not to consider it as his own, but as God's, and to look upon himself as God's guest. And is not every christian church the Lord's house, though not in exactly the same sense as the temple was so? Is not the Communion-Table called ° *the Table of the Lord*? And what is provided, *the Lord's-Supper*? And the Sacramental Cup, in particular, *the Cup of the Lord*? " Think, therefore, O my soul, of
 " the honour to which thou art raised, that
 " the Lord Jesus Christ is Master of the
 " feast, and that God himself vouchsafes
 " his presence, and bids every worthy re-
 " ceiver welcome to the entertainments of
 " his house! This is something more than
 " to be a guest at the table of the greatest
 " person upon earth; for here thou art the
 " guest of God, as truly so, though not
 " entertained with the same magnificence, as
 " those whom he hath advanced to dwell in
 " his heavenly palace."

The Apostle *Paul* takes notice, that they who partook of the sacrifice offered to idols, or dæmons, had fellowship with those dæmons, and were thereby disqualified from having ^p fellowship with Christ, by drinking of his Cup, and partaking of his Table. It will not be amiss if we sometimes consider that our forefathers, being idolatrous Gentiles, were among those who were in friendship with

° 1 Cor. x. 21. xi. 20.

1 Cor. x. 20, 21.

with false Gods, and strangers to the true; while we, their descendants, ^q *are brought nigh by the blood of Christ*, much nearer than our heathen ancestors; nay nearer than God's peculiar people themselves under the Law; for agreeably to the superior excellency of our sacrifice, is our greater ^r freedom of access to God; who having bestowed on us the adoption of sons, hath ^t *sent forth the spirit of his son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father*; not *the spirit of bondage but the spirit of adoption*; to encourage which filial spirit, and humble boldness towards God, the whole frame of the Gospel Dispensation is visibly fitted, and particularly the Ordinance of the Supper; we are now treated more as children, and are, emphatically speaking, *a people near unto the Lord*.

Now, since such is the nature of this Ordinance, that ^t *the bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ, and the cup of blessing which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ*, what manner of persons ought christian communicants to be in all purity of heart, and holiness of conversation, who are received into this intimate converse with the holy God, and with his Son Jesus Christ the image of his holiness? ^u *What communion hath light with darkness? If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; ^x but if*

^q Eph. ii. 13. ^r Gal. iv. 6. ^t Rom. viii. 15.

^s 1 Cor. x. 16. ^u 2 Cor. vi. 14. ^x 1 John i. 5, 6.

if we walk in the light, as he is in the light; we have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. We are, doubtless, at best unworthy of this communion with God, and not so well qualified for it as were to be desired; and hereupon we might be ready to question our being privileged with so near an approach to him, but that he hath put it out of all doubt by condescending to our weakness, and, in a manner, appealing to our very senses, in order to convince us of his entire readiness to receive us, worthless as we are, and unfit as we are for his society, to dwell with us. He that inviteth us to his Table will not deny us his presence and converse there. Let us acknowledge our unpreparedness for communion with God, and the backwardness of our bad hearts to it, but let us not doubt of God's willingness to have communion with us, provided only that we come not in our moral uncleanness or pollution; for we are never to forget this, that *without holiness* we can no more be really *nigh to God* in this world, than we can *see his face* in the next; and it would be very strange if any should be so exceeding foolish as to think of putting the blood of Christ itself, and the Sacrament of his Supper in the room of this holiness, when both these do so clearly insinuate the absolute necessity of it.

3. The *Lord's-Supper* being a feast upon a sacrifice, there seems to be sufficient ground for

for our considering it as a solemn form of our renewing our covenant with God, and a means and sign of our participating in the blessings of the covenant. The book of the Law, containing the promises of God to the people of *Israel*, and the terms upon which these promises would be fulfilled to them, is therefore called *the book of the covenant*; and, because when this book was read in the audience of the people, who promised that all that the Lord had said they would do, and be obedient, there were beasts offered in sacrifice, with the blood of which *Moses* sprinkled the people, to denote the solemn ratification of God's covenant with them, this blood therefore hath the name given it of the ^y *blood of the covenant*: in like manner, the Gospel being God's new covenant with all such as believe in Jesus Christ, as the *New Testament*, in which the Gospel is recorded, may very properly be stiled *the book of the covenant*, so *the blood of Christ*, by which this covenant was confirmed, is expressly called ^z *the blood of the covenant*. The covenant of Grace hath an essential respect to the sacrifice of the cross, as the foundation upon which it rests; and for as much as in the *Lord's-Supper* we both sacramentally and spiritually partake of this sacrifice, it does very naturally suggest the thought of renewing, by and through this

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worthy

^y Exod. xxiv. 7, 8.^z Heb. x. 29.

worthy sacrifice our covenant with God, and the dedication of ourselves and all that we have to him. In the 50th *Psaln* we have an *Edict* from the King of Heaven, published in the following form of words, *Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice* This is spoken of God's antient people, who entered into covenant with him at the very time that the sacrifice was killed and offered; whereas here, the sacrifice is first offered, and offered once for all: and then, with an eye to this sacrifice, we covenant with God, one person after another, and one generation after another, either singly, as in *Baptism*, or a whole society together, as in the *Lord's-Supper*.

The first time of our approaching the *Lord's-Table* may, upon some accounts, be the most awful, as we then first of all communicate in the memorials of our Saviour's body and blood, and by these sacred symbols confirm and solemnize our dedication to God; but then we renew this dedication, or covenant, every time we receive the holy communion. It is true, when Christ says, ^a *this cup is the New Testament, or covenant, in my blood*, the direct meaning seems to be no more than this, that the sacramental wine is a figure or memorial of the blood of Christ, by which the new covenant was established,

^a Luke xxii. 19.

established. However, because in the *Lord's-Supper* we do sacramentally eat the flesh, and drink the blood of Christ, we may therefore be allowed to look on this Ordinance as a form of covenanting between God and us, and a seal of the covenant both on his part and ours. When *Abraham* is said to have received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith, what are we to understand by this metaphor of a seal, but the assurance which God gave *Abraham*^b, by this external sign of the acceptableness of his faith, for the sake of which he was pleased to establish his covenant with him? The metaphor is borrowed from a well-known custom of making things firm and certain by setting a seal to them. And why may not the *Lord's-Supper* be, for much the same reason, esteemed a seal of God's covenant with us, being a visible sign or token of his covenant-favour towards us? The soul by faith may hear God speaking to it after some such manner as this.

“ Come hither, O thou whom I love!
 “ I do here promise upon the body and
 “ blood of my Son to be thy God, and to
 “ do for thee all that can be expected from
 “ that title; and let this body and blood be
 “ witness between me and thee, for the per-
 “ formance of my promise.—With all possi-
 “ ble humility and grateful joy (replies the
 “ soul)

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^b Rom. iv. 11.

“ soul) do I accept thy offer, O most mer-
“ ciful God ; and on the same sacred pledges
“ I promise to be thine, taking Thee, O
“ Father Almighty, for my God and Father,
“ my sovereign owner, and everlasting por-
“ tion ; Thee, O Son of God, for my all-
“ sufficient Redeemer and only Advocate ;
“ and putting myself into the hands, and
“ under the conduct, of the Holy Spirit as
“ my Sanctifier and Guide, my Helper and
“ Comforter, I present myself a living sacri-
“ fice, holy, acceptable to God, which is
“ my reasonable service ! I take the precepts
“ of the Gospel for the rule of all my ac-
“ tions, and rely upon the promises of it as
“ the immoveable foundation of my hopes.
“ I resign myself to thy disposal, acknow-
“ ledge myself bound to live to thy glory,
“ and vow by thy grace to be obedient and
“ faithful to the death. This is not the first
“ time I have thus covenanted, but now
“ I chearfully renew the engagement, be-
“ ing sensible that I cannot be bound too
“ fast. I am continually in fear, if the
“ cords be not strengthened, lest in this
“ fluctuating world I should break from my
“ anchor, and be driven off from thee. I
“ do here therefore again upon the body and
“ blood of Christ swear to be obedient and
“ faithful. Lord thou art witness to my
“ oath, be thou my help !”——Can any
“ thing

thing be conceived more awful and binding than a covenant so tranſacted?

It follows that the *Lord's-Supper* is a means and ſign of our participating in the benefits of the covenant; ſuch as peace of conſcience, joy in the Holy Ghoſt, ſtrength of grace, and more overflowing hopes of future bleſſedneſs. I have not mentioned the pardon of ſin, becauſe whenever the ſinner repents, and applies to the blood of ſprinkling, his ſins are immediately forgiven him; his pardon is not delayed till he comes to the Sacrament; nor if a man comes to it in an unrepenting and unpardoned ſtate, does he go away juſtified, only for the merit of this action; which, I fear, is the miſtaken notion of ſome, who ſeem to make uſe of the Sacrament, as too many in the Church of *Rome* do of *Confefſion* to a *Prieſt*, to pay off the old ſcore, that they may go upon a new one; a miſtake too dangerous to be ſlighted, and too abſurd to need a long confutation. All ſuch thoughts are effectually overturned by this one conſideration, that the only terms of forgiveness are *faith* and *repentance*; *faith* working by love, and *repentance* iſſuing in obedience; ſo that where theſe are, there is forgiveness, where theſe are wanting, in vain does any one take ſanctuary at the *Lord's-Table*, which can no more afford ſhelter to ſuch, than the altar did to the murderer that fled to it. The

Law is express, *Thou shalt take him from my altar that he may die.* But though God hath no where tied the forgiveness of sin to mens receiving the Sacrament, yet since forgiveness itself, and the comfortable sense of that forgiveness are two things, and the latter admits of variety of degrees, we may hope to find great advantages by conscientiously attending on the *Lord's-Supper*, with regard to the assurance of God's forgiving love, and a larger effusion of the spirit of light and holiness, and consolation upon us; of all this the Sacrament of the Supper is a proper means, as it tends to beget in us those pious affections and holy purposes, on which God will never fail to confer his covenant blessings.

What thankfulness, what love, what indignation, what zeal, what desire must the sight of what is here beheld, raise in an ingenuous mind! Thankfulness to God, love to Jesus, indignation against sin, zeal in the service of our dear Lord, and desire of being approved and accepted of him. No Ordinance better fitted than this to kindle devout affections, wherein we have the Prince of life crucified before our eyes, suffering, bleeding, groaning, dying, and all this for our sakes, to save us, and destroy sin; a scene fitted to work on all our passions, and at the same time to engage the concurrence
of

of our reasonable powers. Our affections in this Ordinance can never be wrought up to that degree (I mean the affections before-mentioned) but that our Reason will approve of it, and even require more; to which let me add, that receiving the Sacrament being, in respect of the sincere Christian, an act of obedience and love, both to God, and his Saviour, he may warrantably expect that it shall not go unrewarded. He comes because it is his duty, and his duty is his delight; and will not God bestow some marks of his special favour upon his willing and chearful servant? And then, as this Sacrament is a means, so, to every worthy receiver, it is a sign of his participating in the benefits of the covenant. “ For surely, O my soul, this eating and drinking was not ordained to be an empty idle ceremony! The thing signified, is thy feeding by faith on the body and blood of Christ; or rather thy communicating in the glorious and happy effects of his body broken, and blood shed. So indeed thou dost at other times, but more particularly now, that thy faith in a crucified Saviour is actually exerted, and accompanies the memorials of his death. He that gave himself for thee on the cross, and gives himself to thee in the Sacrament of the Supper, can withhold nothing from thee.”

Does not the very time seem to justify our expectation of partaking in *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost*? What time so proper to receive the manifestations of these, if we put ourselves in a readiness for them as when we are receiving the pledges of them, and renewing that covenant in which they are promised? Having *received gifts for men*, when will our King bestow them, if not at his own Table?—This concludes the *fifth bead, viz.* The death of Christ may be considered as that of our sacrifice.

S E C T. VII.

VI. **O**UR Redeemer died as a conqueror.— So it is expressly said, that ^a *through death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.* The wisdom of God is remarkably seen in defeating the malice of wicked men, and apostate spirits, by those very means which they make use of to bring their evil devices to pass. How great was Satan's triumph, when, having put it into the heart of *Judas* to betray Christ, and pushed on the *Jews* and *Romans* to

^a Heb. ii. 14, 15.

to crucify him, he saw the dreadful deed accomplished! Little thinking, that what he so rejoiced at would prove the most dangerous blow to his empire that he ever received. Christ had overcome the Devil in the wilderness; on the cross, his victory over him is rendered more compleat, by the influence of his death to destroy sin, and to abolish death the effect of sin. By the same act that *Sampson* brought death upon himself, he involved great numbers of the enemies of God in the same common destruction; but, strictly speaking, it was not *Sampson's* death that was fatal to the *Philistines*, but the last act of his life; whereas, in the present case, death itself was the way of victory.

There have been instances of those who have conquered at death, and, having beaten their enemies, have then died well pleased. Lo, here is one who conquers by dying, not a common enemy, but the universal and last enemy of mankind, even death itself! He was born that he might die, and he died to rise again. *Our Saviour's destroying him that had the power of death*, is best explained by his ^b *abolishing death*; the same word being used in both places, though differently translated. ^c *It is appointed to all men once to die*; but then Christ died that he might destroy or make void that death which

passeth

^b Tim. i. 10,

^c Heb. ix. 27.

^d *passeth upon all men*, by obtaining a resurrection for all, and for all that do good a resurrection to eternal life and happiness; and by making void all that death had been doing for so many thousand years, he frustrates, or makes void the design of that wicked spirit, through whose temptations man first lost immortality, and by whom, as a sort of conqueror, the human race is held in bondage to the fear of death and the grave. Christ the second Adam, or head of our race, dying without having deserved death, and dying in our stead recovers that immortality which the first Adam by his sin had forfeited for himself and posterity. Under this notion then, let us think of our dying Lord, when we shew forth his death in the Sacrament of the Supper. Let us think of him as vanquishing, not as vanquished. Let his death be considered by us as the purchase of our immortality, and his resurrection, which, in this case, we ought not to separate from his death, being so nearly and so necessarily connected with it, as the pledge and assurance of it. By this means we shall find refuge in the meditations of Christ's death, especially at the Table, against the fears of our own.

“ Why should I fear to die? Why fear
 “ to pass into the state of the dead? Hath
 “ not my Saviour tasted of the same bitter
 “ cup?

“ cup? And was not his death soon follow-
 “ ed by his resurrection? In like manner,
 “ though I die, I shall live again, be-
 “ cause Christ liveth. The interval indeed
 “ is like to be much longer between my
 “ death and my resurrection, but what of
 “ that, since the souls of the faithful imme-
 “ diately go to be where Christ is, and I
 “ have the same certainty that I shall rise
 “ in the last day, as that my Redeemer is
 “ already risen; and that I shall rise to
 “ dwell with Christ for ever, as that I live
 “ and die to him now. For this reason
 “ while I am commemorating the death of
 “ my Redeemer, I will take the occasion to
 “ celebrate his conquest over death, and to
 “ comfort myself with the prospect of that
 “ universal triumph of all his members over
 “ it, which is reserved to compleat and
 “ crown the solemnities of the last day.
 “ ° *O death, where is thy sting? O grave,*
 “ *where is thy victory? The sting of death is*
 “ *sin, and the strength of sin is the law, but*
 “ *thanks be to God, who giveth us the victo-*
 “ *ry through Jesus Christ our Lord.*”

VII. We may consider the death of Christ
 as the ground of his exaltation.—For be-
 cause *‘ he humbled himself and became obedient*
to death even the death of the cross, therefore
also hath God highly exalted him, and given
him a name which is above every name, that
at

• Cor. xv. 55, — 57.

‘ Phil. ii. 8, — 11.

at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. The whole world is subject to his authority, and all that can are to acknowledge it, by a voluntary subjection of themselves to it. In another place, God himself is brought in saying to his Son, ^s *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom! Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows;* advanced thee far above all those, who, like thee, partake of the royal state and dignity. From these two places compared together we learn, that what was so highly pleasing to God in the death of his Son, and that for which he hath exalted him to his own right hand, investing him with all power both in heaven and in earth, is the obedience and submission to the will of God which he manifested therein; his love of holiness and zeal for the advancement of it, which was the great motive to his undertaking the office of Mediator between God and man, and discovers itself throughout the execution of it.

From the humiliation of Christ the Son of God, which is the first scene that opens
to

^s Heb. i. 8, 9.

to us when we are participating in the memorials of his death, let us pass in our thoughts to his exaltation which soon followed. *He first suffered, and then entered into glory.* From hence I am instructed by what method I may gain the divine favour, and advance myself in it; not by praising his filial obedience, and resignation under sufferings, while I indulge to a fretful and repining temper myself; not by trusting to his righteousness, when I am without the love of righteousness in my own heart, and a stranger to the practice of it in my life. I cannot think, if I think soberly, that I can rise by any other way than that in which the Son of God did; that though I do not imitate him in his hatred of iniquity, yet for his sake who hated it, and because he hated it, God will bestow the same marks of his favour upon me, as on those that are most like him; and that a part of that glory, which he received as the reward of his holiness and obedience, shall descend on me, who have nothing to produce of either; not even the lowest degree of Gospel-sincerity. Let this convince me of the necessity of holiness, that I may please God, and animate me to endeavour after the highest measures of it, since in the same degree as I approach my Saviour now, I shall approach him in happiness and glory hereafter.—Once more,

S E C T. VIII.

VIII. **T**HE death of Christ may be considered in the relation it bears to his second appearance.—*For as often as we eat this his bread, and drink this his cup, we do shew his death till he come.* Come he will then, and till he does come, his church on earth is never to cease shewing forth his death. ^a *As he was once offered to bear the sins of many, so unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin (i. e. an offering for sin) unto salvation.* He then came to purchase salvation, now to confer it. These two, *viz.* the *first* and *second* coming of Christ, how great soever the distance of time may be between the one and the other, ought to be joined in the Christian's view, as they are mentioned together in the passage just now cited; *As often as ye eat this bread, &c.* We believe that Christ died, and to publish this belief we shew his death in this Ordinance; but we believe also that he rose again from the dead, that he ascended up far above all heavens, and that from thence he shall descend in the same manner as his disciples saw him go into heaven; and, in testimony of this our belief, we shew his death *till he come.*

This

^a Heb. ix. 28.

This Ordinance hath a double aspect in one; it does at the same time look backward and forward, being a thankful commemoration of the meritorious tho' accursed death which our Saviour suffered when he first came into the world, by virtue of which commemoration it becomes a joyful pledge of his second glorious advent; and as such he left it to his church, which is never to part with the pledge, till the person himself comes to redeem it by his presence. An appearance this is which every lover of Christ should rejoice to think on, ready to cry out in the extasies of his passion,

“ Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! In
 “ this mystery, I see thee darkly, as through
 “ a glass. O when shall I behold thee face
 “ to face! When will the sun of righteous-
 “ ness break through all interposing veils,
 “ that the shadows may be done away, and
 “ his spouse the church have the pleasure
 “ of seeing him in all his glory! Sweet are
 “ the approaches he now makes to our souls;
 “ these distant and cloudy views are a mighty
 “ refreshment; how much will the pleasure
 “ be increased when I shall be ^b *absent from*
 “ *the body and present with the Lord!* Above
 “ all, when I shall put on my glorified body,
 “ and, with the many thousands, and thou-
 “ sand times ten thousand of his saints that
 “ have ever lived upon earth, shall ^c *ascend to*
 “ *meet*

^b 2 Cor. v. 8.

^c 1 Theff. iv. 17.

“ meet him in the air, be publickly ab-
“ solved and acknowledged by him, and
“ by him presented holy and without blame
“ to God even our Father, see him ar-
“ rayed in majesty and love, and fall wor-
“ shipping at his feet! Lord, what will our
“ transports be!”

Did this sacred action only lead us back to the death of Christ, and signify no more, it would be but a heartless and a melancholy entertainment, we should sit pensive at his Table, and have no objects before us, but such as were fitted to feed our sorrow; but, blessed be God, from the death of Christ it carries our view to the concluding day of the world, when he shall be revealed in the glory of the Father, and of his holy angels; and thine eyes, O Christian, shall behold him, thine, and not another's! Thy Saviour died, but he is not perished; he ever liveth to govern the world, and intercede for his church; he is gone, but not with a design never more to return. And needs must this be a pleasing meditation to one whose soul is continually reaching out after his Redeemer. The faithful *Israelite* was characterized by his earnest expectation of the first coming of the Messiah; the true Christian is known by the belief and hope of the second coming of his Lord, and his care to prepare for it. The sacrifices under the Law prefigured Christ's oblation of himself on the cross; but that the
Jews

Jews had a distinct notion of this figurative meaning of their sacrifices, and thereby had their faith supported and assisted in regard of that sacrifice which was to be offered in the fulness of time, is not so certain; whereas the Christian hath in his hands the memorials of that precious death, as a kind of security of his coming again under a more godlike form. The first appearance of Christ put an end to the figures of the Law, this second will abolish the ceremonial Ordinances of the Gospel; and gladly will the church make this exchange of faith for vision, of the shadow for the substance, of the sign for the thing signified. For tho' the faithful love this Ordinance much, they love Jesus himself more, for whose sake alone they love the Institution. ^d *Him having not seen they love, and in him, though now they see him not, believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.*

“ And is it so, that I love the appearance
 “ of Christ, and am persuaded that all those
 “ things that are said concerning the awful
 “ circumstances of that appearance, and the
 “ importance and everlasting consequences
 “ of it, shall certainly come to pass, Lord,
 “ what manner of person then ought I to be
 “ in all holy conversation and godliness! Is it
 “ one end of my partaking of the *Lord's-*
 “ *Supper* to declare my belief of Christ's
 VOL. II. A a “ com-

“ coming again to judge the world, and to
 “ be glorified in his saints ? And ought
 “ not this to mind me of another thing
 “ which I should propose by it, even the
 “ making more ready for his coming, and
 “ behaving with a constant regard to that
 “ great day, that so I may be able to give
 “ up my account with joy ? Let me watch,
 “ because I know not the hour when our
 “ Lord shall come ; and let me never for-
 “ get, that such as I am at the time of my
 “ death I shall be found in judgment ; and
 “ that my death is like to be conformable to
 “ my life.”



REFLECTIONS.

THIS Discourse will naturally lead us
 to make the few following Reflec-
 tions.

S E C T. I.

1. **T**HE main use, and (with some re-
 striction we may say) the ultimate
 design of the *Lord's-Supper* is the promoting
 of

of the life of God in the soul, and the practice of universal righteousness and goodness; the noblest end that can be accomplished in us, being inseparably connected with the glory of God and our own final felicity. And, perhaps, no one Ordinance advances this end so visibly and effectually as this does, not only as we are hereby put in remembrance of our duty, and discern the manifold obligations to it, and do more directly and strongly engage to walk circumspectly, holy, and unblameably, but also, and principally, as the motives to a holy and christian life drawn from the allurements of example, the ties of gratitude, the almost irresistible force of love; from the most amiable and encouraging representations of the Deity, the most inviting prospects of another world, the glorious rewards of piety beyond the grave; and finally, from the worthlessness and insignificancy of all those things which are the usual incentives to corrupt affections, and temptations to sinful actions, are all comprized, and, as it were, closely crowded together in this one Institution. What one thing is wanting to exercise the spirit of devotion, or to increase it? To actuate every virtue or grace, and to engage us to grow and improve in it? It is a sort of summary of all the helps and encouragements which God hath vouchsafed us in the way to heaven. So that whoever does not take it in this view, but rests in the pre-

sent action, as having I know not what kind of charm and efficacy to do us a great deal of good, without making us a whit better, hath certainly a very wrong notion of it. Nor can Christians be too often warned against splitting on this rock, which hath been fatal to so many. The *Lord's-Supper* is a venerable Institution; but, after all, is no more than an *instrumental duty*, and so not to be compared with the inward power of Christianity, and the substantial virtues of a good life; these are of indispensable necessity, and eternal excellence; whereas all the external parts and offices of Religion are of more or less value according to their greater or less subserviency, as means accompanied with the influences of divine Grace, to promote these ends; and consequently, where these ends are not in any degree answered by them, all the attendance we give them, is in the sight of God of no weight or value at all.

II. By the same rule the character of the person who hath a right to come to the *Lord's-Table*, and who therefore ought to accept of the invitation to come, will be easily settled. He that hath in some good measure already attained to that temper of mind, and leads that kind of life which this Ordinance was intended, and is so remarkably fitted to carry on and perfect, hath the qualifications of a worthy communicant. He hath faith, and hope, and cha-

charity, is humble and penitent, loves his Saviour more than all, makes conscience of every known duty, and flees every known sin; and having the thing itself, which we call Religion, cannot want a competent knowledge of it, which he will endeavour to render more clear and comprehensive; he may be very imperfect in all these respects, but will he therefore abstain from the *Lord's-Supper*, when, by devoutly attending upon that Institution, he may reasonably hope to be assisted in going on to perfection? His very sense of his imperfections, as long as he does not allow himself in them, is a good sign, and ought at once to encourage him, and to make him willing to accept of all the helps and directions he can get, in order to his gaining greater heights. When he is asked, why he does not come to the *Holy Communion*, can he appeal to his own heart, that if he thought it his duty, all circumstances considered, he would not, upon any account whatever, stay away? How easily may this be turned upon him, and made use of to convince him, to his own great comfort, of the very thing he doubts of, *viz.* his right, and consequently his obligation to communicate. Would he rejoice to come if all hinderances were removed? Then it is plain he loves the duty; he gladly would communicate, if he thought he might, and endeavours to get all the sa-

tisfaction he can in the matter; that is, he discharges his duty in other instances, and would do so in this, but that he fears his sin would be greater in coming, than it is in staying away. And is not this a proof of that good conscience, which, if any thing can do it, must entitle a man to this privilege?

But, perhaps, there are those who fancy something more is necessary than sincerity; or that the danger is so exceeding great of communicating upon a mistaken supposition of our having a right when we have none, that nothing but a certainty of our having that right will justify us in running such a dreadful hazard. As to the former, if sincerity, and not any particular eminent degrees of holiness be the condition of salvation, there can be no good ground surely to imagine that some further condition is necessary to qualify us for commemorating our Saviour; if the latter be their fear, and this their fear be well-grounded, how very few, that had well-considered the thing, would venture to receive, when the number is probably so small of those who can be said to be certain of their integrity. But let us not frighten ourselves where there is no need. If we should come to the *Lord's-Supper*, not being, strictly speaking, meet to partake of it, there is nothing in this action, being done upon a mistake, but we

we may very well suppose God will overlook and pardon, as long as we come out of conscience, and with a pious design, and, if we are yet short of a Christian stature, are endeavouring every day to come up to it: nor is there any thing in the nature of the Institution itself that should give us these terrible apprehensions of it; for let us suppose that we had nothing relating to this matter in scripture, but the account which the *Evangelists* have delivered to us of the Institution, *viz.* ^a That *Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, Eat, this is my body: and that he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins; and that, at the conclusion of this holy feast, having sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.* Is there any thing in the words of the Institution, or in the circumstances of that first Supper, that should deter any Christian of a sober conversation from doing as he is here commanded? On the contrary, is there not every thing to invite, and in a manner force his compliance; the nature of the action, being nothing else but a festal Supper, of a religious kind, the condescending familiarity of the Master with his disciples, and the design of it to keep up the me-

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mory

^a Mat. xxvi. 26,—30.

mory of their friend and benefactor? And may we not therefore safely conclude, that nothing we meet with in any other part of scripture can be inconsistent with the encouragement which every upright soul may draw from the original Institution, unless there is some particular reason added for it?

But now that passage in St. Paul's first Epistle to the *Corinthians* (which is the place that hath given birth to so many groundless scruples and terrors, or at least hath been made use of to feed them) hath nothing of that nature; it contains a reproof of some in that Church for their receiving the *Lord's-Supper* in so scandalous, so irreverent, and so disorderly a manner, that they might very well be said *not to discern the Lord's body*; not observing that decorum, and sobriety at the *Lord's-Table*, which all Christians ought to do at their common meals, and much less making a due distinction between that sacred repast, and their usual ones. Who could have said less on this occasion than the Apostle does? Or who not think that a like irreverence would unfit us for the ordinary worship of God? Notwithstanding which, we do not reckon ourselves excused from coming to the house of God, but only obliged to behave with greater reverence when we are there. It is true, the Apostle says, that ^b *he that eateth and drinketh unwor-*

^b 1 Cor. xi. 29.

unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body; but let the Apostle himself explain what he means by eating and drinking unworthily, and what by that damnation that is hereby incurred. The irregularities of the Corinthian Church, which occasioned this part of the Apostle's letter to them, will explain the former, and what they suffered upon this account, the latter; for this cause (as it follows in the very next verse) ^c many among you are weak and sickly, and many sleep, or die; so that bodily disorders, sickness and death, were that judgment (for so the word signifies) which such unworthy receivers eat and drank to themselves; not damnation, as we commonly understand it, of future and everlasting punishment, as is plain to a demonstration from what the Apostle himself saith, that they were thus ^d judged or chastened of the Lord, that they might not be condemned with the world. And this will help to clear the other expression (ver. 27.) of their being guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; it signifies their shewing such a disrespect to the Sacrament of Christ's body and blood, as would expose them to the tokens of God's displeasure here mentioned.

I shall only add, that this instance of *severity* was no more than necessary, in the beginning of Christianity, to beget in the minds
of

^c 1 Cor. xi. 30.

^d Ver. 32.

of men a proper reverence for the Institutions of the Gospel; and is agreeable to the method ordinarily observed both by God and men, in making examples of those who are guilty of the first acts of contempt and disobedience against their laws and constitutions. Thus concerning the man that was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath-Day, God thus makes known his pleasure, *He shall surely be put to death, all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp.* Thus *Ananias* and *Sapphira* his wife, for bringing part of the price of the possession which they had sold, as if it had been the whole, (which is called ^f *lying to the Holy Ghost*) are both of them struck dead upon the spot. This instance of *severity*, added to that other before-mentioned of the infliction of diseases and death upon several members of the *Corinthian Church*, may seem not very well to suit with the nature of the Gospel law, which is a law of love, yet when it is considered that this was in order to secure the greater veneration to the Christian Religion, then in its infancy, and to convince the world that it came from God, so it was under his peculiar regard and protection, we shall no longer wonder at the reason of it.

* Numb. xv. 35. ^f Acts v. 3.

S E C T. II.

III. **W**E may from hence satisfy ourselves as to the *Preparation* necessary to every particular communion. Am I called to shew forth the death of Christ? And am I in a state and disposition of mind for this sacred action? Have I clean hands, and a pure heart? Am I under no such disorders either of body or mind, as would incapacitate me for attending upon this Ordinance without distraction, and receiving advantage by it? Why then should I banish myself from it? It may be I have not been able to spend the usual time in the exercises of devotion preparatory thereto; but since this hath been through no fault of my own, not out of *choice* but *necessity*, and I think myself notwithstanding, in a tolerable degree disposed for the ordinary worship of the *Lord's-Day*, so as to be able to compose my thoughts, and raise my affections towards heavenly things, why should I imagine myself forbidden to approach the *Lord's-Table*? Is much more time necessary to empty my heart of worldly thoughts and cares than I am master of? If so, I have reason to fear that I love the world abundantly too well, or am too much involved in the business of it, and shall therefore do better to set myself to remove the cause of
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my complaints, I mean that inordinate affection to the world, which makes it so difficult for me to get leave to go aside and converse with God, than letting this alone to be obliged to have recourse to certain extraordinary acts of meditation, prayer and humiliation, at the approach of every communion, and to lay the main stress of my Preparation at least, if not of my Religion, upon these.

If this neither be the cause of mens thinking such a particular portion of time employed in devotional exercises absolutely necessary to their Preparation, let them enquire whether there be not something of superstition in this, which is a thing that will not add either to the comfort or credit of their Religion. Does not our fear of God himself degenerate into superstition, when it breeds a fervility of spirit, and perpetual disquietudes, making us apprehend his displeasure for things which we do not see any intrinsick evil in, and do not know that he hath forbidden? In like manner, is not our regard to any Ordinance superstitious, when we are afraid to attend upon that Ordinance, because we have not had time to do more by way of Preparation for it, than is any where required of us? For where is it said that we must spend so much time in Preparation for the *Lord's-Supper*, or not come to it? Methinks, I would not have sincere, and devout souls fetter the free spirit of Religion with unnecessary

cessary and even prejudicial rules, and lay burthens and limitations on themselves, which God hath not laid upon them : as long as they guard against extremes, I am far from dissuading or discouraging their indulging to their pious inclinations ; on the contrary, I shall take leave to offer them a word or two of advice, as to the manner of employing their time, when they have it, that they may come to this holy festival with the greatest composure and elevation of soul they possibly can.

Let them examine whether as to the habitual temper of their minds, and the general tenor and flow of their lives, they go backward or forward in their Religion. Let them be thankful for any victories they have been enabled by the Grace of God to gain over themselves and the world, and for any progress they have made in the christian life ; and at the same time humble themselves before God for any defects which upon inquiry appear to them ; that their conformity to the example and precepts of Jesus is no greater, and that they are not more steadily and powerfully influenced by his love. Let the Grace of God that hath wrought effectually in them, notwithstanding all their infirmities, animate them to go on chearfully the rest of their way ; and by the instances wherein they have been wanting in the improvement of this Grace, let them

them be taught to be more watchful, circumspect, and abounding in good works for the future. Let them reflect whether there be not some particular part of their conduct, which does not so well suit with the rules of their christian profession, nor match so agreeably with other parts of their character; whether there be any liberties or indulgencies, which, though innocent in themselves, yet because of their having proved snares and temptations to them, they ought not to have allowed themselves in; any gift or grace that needs to be stirred up; and let them strive to come behind in no one thing, whereby they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

As to *Meditation*, let them especially make choice of those things for the entertainment of their minds, which have the most apparent tendency to weaken their engagements with the present world, and to strengthen the union of their hearts to God and Jesus, those transforming objects; to enlighten them with juster notions of the nature of true Religion and godliness, and to shew them the necessity, the beauty, and the advantages of it, that so all the springs and principles of activity in the christian life may, as much as possible, be reduced to this one of *holy love and delight*, or at least may not interfere with it; such things as will warm their hearts with sentiments of zeal and gratitude,

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render sin more hateful and detestable in their eyes, and quicken their desires after the perfection of the heavenly world. *Meditations* of this kind would have the happiest effect upon them to awaken their drowsy, or to cheer and enliven their drooping minds, and by that means would make them approach the *Lord's-Table* with equal care and satisfaction.

For the sake of some let me add, by way of caution, that in our Preparations for the *Sacrament* there is need of prudence, that while we are afraid of taking too little time, we do not impose tasks upon ourselves beyond our strength, and tire and exhaust those spirits which we should only exercise; the consequence of which will be, that we shall have no life and vigour left when we come to the *Lord's-Table*, and so be ready to impute to our indevotion what is really the effect of our indiscretion. Having made us men, creatures composed of flesh and spirit, God requires not of us the same flame and intention of devotion, as from angels, but *considereth our frame, and remembereth that we are but dust*, which is reason enough why we ourselves should do it.

iv. We may from hence too form a judgment of worthy receiving as well as of the worthy receiver. As he is the most worthy receiver, who hath most of *Jesus* in him, of his mind, his image, his spirit, so that is the most worthy manner of receiving that flows from

from these principles. It does not consist in rapturous flights of the imagination, and strong workings of the passions, which have their foundation in the natural constitution, more than in a clear discernment of the spiritual meaning and intent of the Ordinance, and a lively sense of the great benefits resulting from it. When I have Jesus Christ evidently set forth as crucified before my eyes, am I moved with the thought of it after much the same manner as I am at the recital of a sad story, and does the impression wear away like that of *a tale that is told*? However I may flatter myself, these are not so much the operations of Grace as of nature. The Christian that is assisted by this Ordinance to see the great evil of sin, and the love of Jesus in delivering from it, and to perceive the many forcible motives and engagements to all holiness of conversation that he here meets with, so as to be more in love with his duty, (by which only he can know that he loves his Saviour more) to have his pious resolutions more established, the tenderness and sensibility of his conscience increased, and to be brought more under the influence of the doctrines and precepts of Christianity in all his actions, this is he who receives most worthily, whether he hath, or hath not, the happiness of warm and melting affections; for we are not to make an estimate of ourselves by these, but by other marks;

marks; these, it is true, are very desirable things, and to be fought after, though not in the first place; but then they are not necessary in all, and perhaps in none at all times, and they may deceive us, not being joined with the things now mentioned; whereas these latter are of such a nature, that in case we find them in ourselves, we cannot be mistaken in arguing from them to our own advantage.

In regard to the *Thoughts* and *Meditations* that are most proper at the *Lord's-Table*, some help and direction may be had from what hath been offered in the preceding Discourse, and still more from the *Holy Scripture*; provided in the course of our reading we remark such passages, and endeavour to imprint them on our minds and memories, as will very naturally bear to be applied to the Sacrament of the Supper, and be of use to feed the flame of devotion while we are partaking of it.

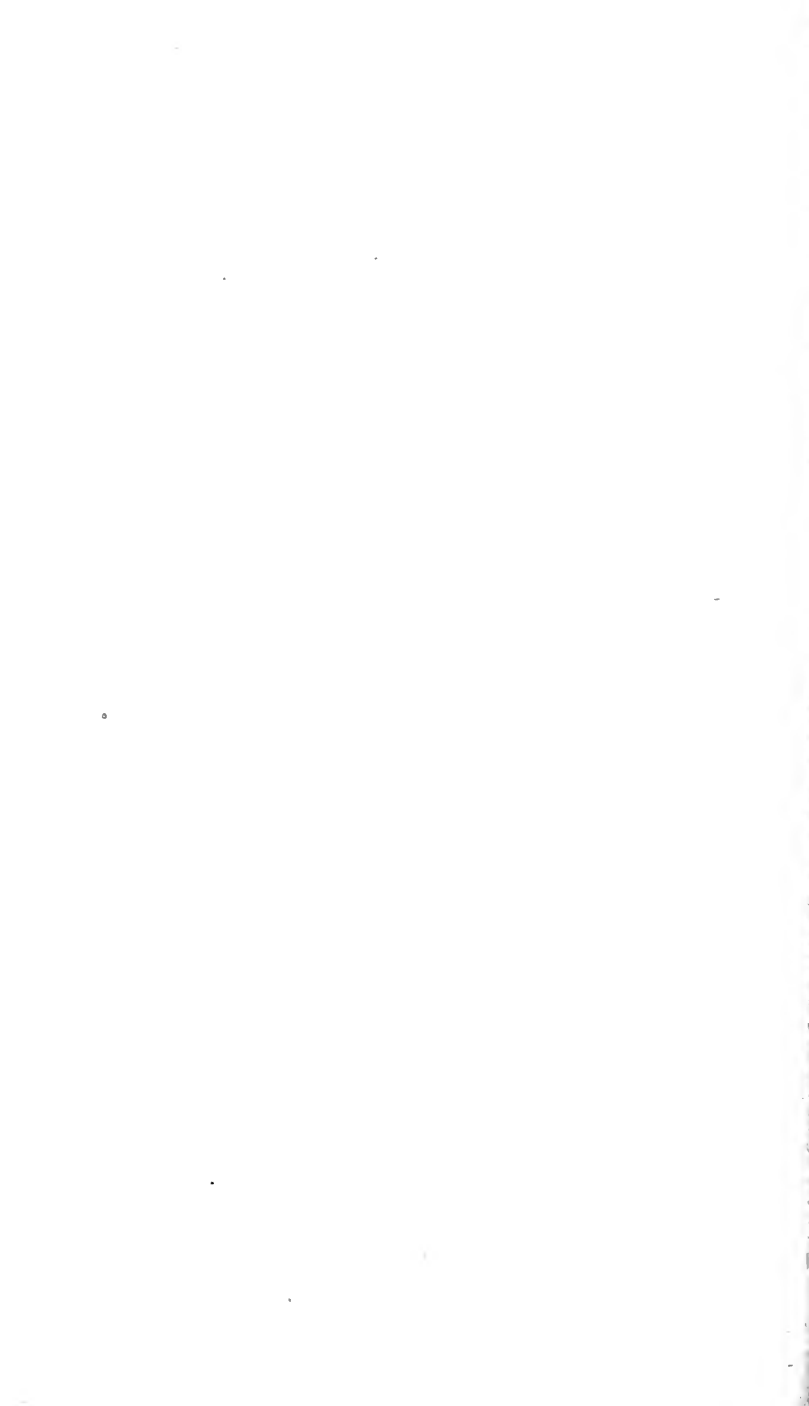
v. There seems to be no great occasion for any distinct rules concerning our behaviour after the *Holy Communion*. For what should our behaviour be afterwards, but the same as it ought to be before, and at all other times, that is, uniformly holy and good? A fancy that we are obliged to greater strictness the next day, or following week, after a Sacrament, than we are when it hath

been longer past, may be of ill consequence, and will certainly be so, if we think the more strict we are before and after a Sacrament, the less care of our behaviour we are obliged to in the time between. A life of christian piety, being the end designed to be promoted by every duty of divine worship, particularly by the *Lord's-Supper*, is what we are to be concerned for, and not to trust to occasional heats and starts in Religion.

VI. We here see the advantage of *frequent Communion*s, and the answer to the common objection against them. The advantage is, that these frequent communions tend to promote our progress in the christian life; the objection against them, that communions if frequent will lose their *solemnity*. But I very much doubt that in this case people deceive themselves with a wrong notion of *solemnity*. Do they mean that they shall not come with an unaccountable awe and dread upon their minds? And what if they do not, as long as they are serious and devout. We should think it very odd reasoning should we hear men take up a resolution not to worship God all the week long in their families or closets, to the end the duties of God's worship may be the more solemn, when performed in his own house, and on his own day. And yet the cases are not altogether unlike. An habitual seriousness and fervour of spirit is undoubtedly, in
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the nature of things, to be expected from the frequent returns of holy duties, and not from long intermissions of them ; and the more habitually serious we are, so much the better, and in so much the better preparation shall we be to wait upon God in every Ordinance. Let us not therefore of choice take up with very rare communions ; or, where circumstances will admit of it, be against having them more frequently. If we communicate seldom, because we cannot communicate oftener, we must be contented, and do as well as we can ; but by no means be the better pleased with our situation in this respect, and think we have more reverence for the *Lord's-Supper* than some have, for no other reason than that we do not come to it so often. In a word, let us study how to make this and every duty of Religion profitable to the building us up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.







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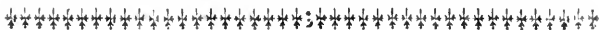
O F

The PROFESSORS OF CHRISTIANITY
to celebrate the LORD'S-SUPPER.

W I T H

An ANSWER to the PRINCIPAL EX-
CUSES for neglecting it.

1741.







Of the OBLIGATION on Christians to celebrate the LORD'S-SUPPER.

HAVING in a former Treatise explained the nature and design of the *Lord's-Supper*, because, notwithstanding the apparent excellency and obligation of this Institution of our Saviour, too many, by profession Christians, indulge themselves in the neglect of it; I shall distinctly consider the obligation lying upon the disciples of Christ to communicate in the Sacrament of the *Lord's-Supper*, and some of the principal reasons which hinder the most from complying with this obligation.

That you may clearly apprehend the obligation lying upon the disciples of Christ to communicate in the Sacrament of the *Lord's-Supper*, I would offer the following Considerations to your serious and most impartial thoughts.

1. Consider the expressness of the command. Can any words be more plain and direct than those which we meet with in the account given of this Institution by the

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Evangelist *Luke* —^a *This do in remembrance of me* — There might have been little more room to question whether this was not a temporary command, a command to continue in force only while the Apostles lived, there being none present but the Apostles when this Sacrament was instituted, if the very reason or ground of the command did not shew the contrary. The bread and wine in the Sacrament signify the body and blood of Christ, his *body broken*, and his *blood shed for the remission of sins*; and unless any one will say, that we have not the same concern in the death of Christ, and the atonement for sin made by it as the *first Christians*, the argument from hence will I think be unanswerable: that the sacrifice of Christ being intended alike for the benefit of all ages, and the covenant of Grace thereby confirmed extending to all, the Institution of the *Supper*, which was designed to lead the thoughts and meditations of Christians to this sacrifice must equally regard all; especially if we add the words just mentioned, that the Apostles were to do this *in remembrance of Christ*; i. e. after he was gone from them they were to repeat this action, in order to keep up the remembrance of him in the world, and to preserve it fresh in themselves.

It is evident at first sight that the celebrating his memory among his disciples is in general

^a Luke xxii. 19.

general hereby intended. And is not the consequence visible, that if the followers of Christ, in all ages of the world, are bound to honour the memory of their Saviour, and as much need the assistance of an outward rite to this purpose, as Christ's immediate disciples did, then this precept must include the one as well as the other? Yea more especially those who came after, since they must be more in danger of forgetting their Master than his first disciples were, who personally knew him, or conversed with those that did, and were continually talking about the wonders of his life and death, and resurrection and ascension, which were then fresh transactions? They might better surely dispense with an Ordinance dedicated to the memory of Christ, who never almost suffered him to be out of their minds and mouths, than following ages, to whom therefore this command appears to belong from the very reason of it subjoined, *viz. that it was to be in remembrance of Christ.* And that there might be the least reasonable doubt left about the perpetuity of this Ordinance, the Apostle *Paul* tells the *Corinthians*, (and in them the Christians of succeeding times)

^b *That as often as they eat this bread, and drank this cup, they did shew the Lord's death till he came*—an expression which would have been exceeding improper if the Institution

was

^b 1 Cor. xi. 26.

was to have an end so soon after it began. How could the disciples of Christ be said to *shew* or represent *his death* in this Ordinance *till his coming*, if those only of the *first age* were to shew it forth after this manner? Do not the words manifestly imply, that as Christ would always have a Church upon earth, so it would be the duty of the members of it, one generation after another, to commemorate the death of their Master till he *should appear the second time, and receive them to himself*, when there would be no occasion to do it? The command therefore I apprehend, as taking in all ages, is undeniable, and consequently the obligation upon all to observe it; for I hope there are none so absurd, as while they profess to believe the *truth* of the Gospel, to deny their being bound by the *commands* of it.

If the Gospel be true, then every precept it contains is from God, has the stamp of his authority, and is the result of his infinite wisdom; and if so, what other meaning can *voluntary* disobedience to any command bear but this, that the disobedient person regards not the authority of the most high God, and questions the wisdom of his precepts? For had he that awe of the divine authority, and that persuasion of the divine wisdom in any Command or Institution, which should and does possess every pious breast, he would not *knowingly* and *wilfully* refuse his compliance

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ance with any one injunction of the Gospel: and indeed he might as consistently withhold his obedience from one command as another, and from all as do it avowedly from any one, according to the reasoning of the Apostle ^c James, *that he who keepeth the whole law, and offends in one point, i. e. voluntarily and habitually, is guilty of all; guilty of presumptuously disowning that authority which supports all the rest.* This is the language of wilfully neglecting any command of God, which holds of the *Lord's-Supper*, as well as of other commands of the Gospel. Wilful disobedience here as in all other cases admits of no excuse, amounting to a practical denial of the authority and wisdom of God in his laws.

It nearly concerns the absenters from the *Lord's-Table* to take this matter into their most serious consideration. Are they perfectly negligent and thoughtless about receiving the *Lord's-Supper*? Do they go on one year after another without troubling themselves about it; never inquiring whether it be or be not a command of the Gospel, and whether it does or does not reach them, and even putting the thought from them when they have a suspicion it does? Have they no solicitude at all upon their spirits to approve themselves unto God by walking in all his commandments blameless, desirous to know their duty in its whole extent,
and

^c Jam. ii. 10.

and to practise every part of it? For certain if this be not *wilful disobedience*, it is a very near approach to it, and carries in it a great share of the same guilt: nor can it I think be supposed of any sincere Christian, that he should pay so little respect to the commands of the Gospel as this; every such person must be under a real concern to know his duty in every instance, (particularly with regard to his communicating in the *Lord's-Supper*) and to discharge it when known; but though he takes some care, yet it may be not all that he ought, to clear up the matter to himself, and to disengage himself from all hindrances, that he may not live in the neglect of that which is so expressly a command of Christ.

II. Consider the Person who is the immediate author of this command, and in memory of whom it is appointed. This is no other than Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, to whom we acknowledge ourselves infinitely indebted, and would be thought to have the greatest affection and regard. And certain it is, that we have the greatest reason for this acknowledgment, in as much as this most excellent Person has given us proofs of his kindness to us and concern for our happiness, the most surprising that can be imagined. ^d *Being in the form of God, and having a glory with him before the world was, he did, for our sakes,*
take

^d Phil. ii. 6, &c. John xvii. 5.

take on him the form of a servant; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself yet lower, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross; and to what end, but that he might expiate our sins by his blood, and obtain eternal redemption for us? The principle of all that our blessed Saviour did and suffered upon earth, and transacts in heaven, is love to the sinful children of men. ^e *They being partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself willingly took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage. For verily he took not hold of the fallen angels to restore them, but fallen men, the seed of Abraham.* So that it must be owned, that never was love like that of our Saviour's, as never sorrow was like his. And love requires love, the love of the Redeemer the love of the redeemed. And there is no Christian but makes profession of love to Christ, upon which let me beg you to reflect a little.

Hath ^f Christ loved me and given himself for me? And do I really love him? Then shall I be ready to do every thing that is necessary to evidence the sincerity of my own love, and the sense I have of the unexampled greatness of his; whatever is a proper and indispensable test of these I shall joyfully com-

^e Heb. ii. 14, &c.

^f Gal. ii. 20.

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comply with. And is not this the test which our Lord himself has given his disciples, ^z *If ye love me, keep my commandments?* Among these commandments our shewing forth his death in the Sacrament of the Supper is one; to which therefore we are obliged as a testimony of our love to the Person who lays this command upon us: and what adds verry much to the obligation is, that this great friend of ours is not only the author of this Institution, but the object of it too; it has an immediate reference to him, was appointed in honour of him, and is consecrated to his memory; and for the same reason then as we are bound to love Christ, and to have our hearts filled with sentiments of gratitude to him, must we not be obliged to express our love and gratitude by our love to his memory, and earnest desire to do him all the honour of which we are capable; wishing that we were able to do more, and could persuade others to entertain the same affectionate sentiments towards him, as we ourselves have? Must we not acknowledge that we are obliged to all this; and by consequence, to put ourselves in a condition to come without any more delay to the *Lord's-Table*, to which we have been so often invited? The design of this Ordinance being to do honour to the Redeemer, and to perpetuate the memory of his virtues,
and

^z John xiv. 15.

and of his dying love in the world, such a design every lover of Christ must heartily approve, and think himself happy if he can be a means of accomplishing it in any degree.

III. Consider the nature and properties of this Institution. It is the most distinguishing of all the precepts of the Gospel—exceeding plain and intelligible—easy to be performed—and greatly to our advantage. Let us briefly revolve these several things in our thoughts; and we shall be more sensible of the obligation we are under to do as our Saviour has commanded us.

I. It is the most distinguishing command of the Gospel; I mean of any that relate to the stated ordinary duty of Christians. *Baptism* is indeed a peculiar Institution of the Christian Religion; but then besides that *Baptism* in regard to far the greatest part of Christians is administered in Infancy, and so is not their own act, we may observe that it is *once for all*, being an initiating Ordinance, by which we are solemnly introduced into the church and fellowship of Christ, after which we are concerned for no more, but to walk worthy of our dedication to the service of God in this Ordinance. *Baptism* is not to be repeated, whereas the *Lord's-Supper* is a standing part of christian worship, and a duty which the disciples of Christ are to perform again and again, as they have opportu-

opportunity; ^h *As often as ye eat this bread.* Now I beseech you observe how the argument from hence proceeds. Here is a stated permanent duty of the christian society, and which at the same time is the most direct and visible mark or badge of our being the disciples of Christ: when we receive the *Lord's-Supper* every communicant takes of the sacramental bread and wine, and by eating and drinking not only as a religious action, but an action designed to be commemorative of the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, publickly avows his relation to Christ as his Lord and Master, and glories in it, even in the cross of Christ, which of old was ⁱ *to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness*; such is the declaration which every communicant makes at the *Lord's-Table*. It is the known language of his actions, so that if he was to say aloud—
 “ I own myself a disciple of Christ; I re-
 “ jice in my being so; and am resolved to
 “ make his Gospel the rule of all my ac-
 “ tions”—it would not be more expressive and significant of the thing, than the act of participating itself is.

The *Lord's-Supper* is so remarkable a part of the Christian Institution, that * *Pliny* writing to the Emperor of *Rome* about the Christians, who at that time were liable to be punished for their Religion by the publick

^h 1 Cor. ii. 26. ⁱ 1 Cor. i. 23. * Epist. l. 10. Ep. 97.

lick laws, gives this account of them, which he had received from some *Apostates*. “ That
“ they were wont to assemble on a stated
“ day before it was light, (being then under
“ persecution) and to sing a hymn to Christ
“ as a God ; binding themselves by a Sa-
“ crament, not to the commission of any
“ wickedness, but that they would avoid
“ thefts, robberies, adulteries, would make
“ good their engagements, and when called
“ upon, not deny what was committed to
“ their trust.” And this being so, that
the Sacrament of the *Lord's-Supper* is so con-
siderable a part of the worship of Christians
as such, and so peculiar to it, in which they
declare themselves the disciples of Christ,
how very strange and unaccountable is it,
that there should be so many who seem to
have no regard at all to this Ordinance,
living and dying in the neglect of it. Would
not these very persons esteem a church or a
community of Christians very *imperfect*, in
which the *Lord's-Supper* was never adminis-
tered? And must not they then be very *imperfect*
Christians, who having opportunities of attend-
ing upon this Gospel-Institution, continue
time after time to decline them? Surely such
as these will be condemned out of their own
mouths. If a church would be *imperfect*
without the *Lord's-Supper*, a single Christian
culpably depriving himself of it must be so
too.

2. Another thing observable in this Institution of the *Lord's-Supper*, and which renders the neglect of it more criminal is, that it is exceeding plain and intelligible; I mean as it lies in the scripture, from whence we are taught that this Ordinance has the nature of a religious feast, kept in memory of Jesus Christ, the *author and finisher of our faith*. While we are *eating this bread*, and *drinking this cup*, we are to think of Christ particularly as bearing the punishment of our sins in his body on the cross, and shedding his blood for the remission of them; in this sense it is easy to *discern the Lord's body*, tho' not in that which the church of *Rome* has invented; that indeed would put our faith to the stretch, by the utter contradiction it carries in it to our senses and Reason, and being itself an *impossibility*, cannot possibly be conceived. For who can conceive of a human body present under the appearances of bread and wine, and this wholly and entire in a thousand different places at the same time, offered by the priest, eaten by the people, and glorified in heaven? Such a doctrine as this is absolutely unintelligible, and a short but decisive proof of the *fallibility* of that church which has decreed it. We may confidently say it *may err*, when it has *actually erred* so very grossly. But the doctrine of *Transubstantiation* is not a doctrine of scripture. What the scripture teaches

concerning the relation which the *Lord's-Supper* has to Christ is easily to be apprehended, being only that of the *sign* to the thing *signified*. This Ordinance is intended to awaken our thoughts and remembrance of Christ, which it almost unavoidably does when we know before-hand that it was appointed for this end, and this is the end we propose in coming to it.

3. To an ingenuous and devout mind the practice of this duty is as easy, as apprehending the nature and design of it. Nothing can be less burthenfome than the outward action; for what is it we are called to do, but to partake of bread and wine in memory of our best friend? And is this so hard a command, that some persons are brought with so much difficulty to comply with it? We may reason here after the same manner as *Naaman's* servants did with him; ^k *If the Prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it; how much rather then when he saith to thee, wash, and be clean?* The means of cure would put him to so little trouble, that if he had not tried them he would have deserved to carry his leprosy with him to the grave; so in the present case, there are no proofs, though never so painful, which we should not have been ready to give of our devotedness to Christ, both for his sake and our own. And shall

we deny him this small request, that we now and then set apart some time to celebrate his memory together by this solemn rite? Consider he has not suffered the heavy yoke of *Jewish* ceremonies to come upon the neck of his disciples; instead of this multitude of ritual observances which the Law enjoined, the very number of which would have made them grievous if nothing else had done it, our Master has substituted but this one simple Institution of a ceremonial nature to be observed by Christians after their admission into the church. And as to the outward action itself, it is so inconsiderable, that was it to return much oftener than it does in most societies, we should not think much to perform it; and this among other reasons, out of thankfulness to our blessed Lord for the liberty he has purchased for his church from the bondage of *Jewish* ceremonies. It is true this duty has an inward as well as an outward part; but the inward part is of a *moral* nature, consisting in the exercises of love and gratitude and devotion, which no pious person will think unreasonable, since to all persons so disposed they must yield very great delight and satisfaction; which puts me in mind of the last thing observable in this command.

4. That it is very advantageous. It is as much our privilege as our duty to eat and drink at the *Lord's-Table*; the more inexcusable

ble therefore we if we cannot be persuaded to come when interest conspires with gratitude to enforce our duty upon us. I showed under the first part that this federal eating and drinking is expressive of a very great privilege enjoyed by the worthy communicant, as well as of an obligation incumbent upon him, *viz.* the favour and friendship of Almighty God, together with all the blessings which can be supposed to flow from thence; and such a privilege as this must certainly greatly inhanche our obligations; our obligation to receive the *Lord's-Supper* being invited thereto, and our obligation to walk worthy of it afterwards.

The *Lord's-Supper* is also of special advantage to promote a lively and devout remembrance of Christ, and thereby to invigorate our holy and heavenly affections, and to assist our progress in all virtue and goodness. That the remembrance of Christ by those that love him in sincerity has naturally this good effect, will not be denied by any such. Their love to Christ will be very much inflamed by considering the representation of his; and their desire of imitating the example of their Saviour, and standing compleat in his whole will, by their love to him.—Another obvious recommendation of this Ordinance is the peculiar tendency it has to unite the hearts of Christians in brotherly kindness and charity. *Cicero* taking notice of that endearment which was

found among persons of the same family and kindred, gives this reason of it, *Magnum est enim habere eadem monumenta majorum, &c.* “It is no small matter to have the same
“ monuments of our ancestors, the same
“ sacrifices and religious ceremonies, and
“ the same common sepulchres.” So here, and much more here than in the other case, to have the same Master, the same Redeemer, the same sacred Symbols by which they declare their common zeal for this divine Person, their common interest in him, and their common relation one to another, what an incentive, what an aid must it be to Christians to *dwell together in unity*, and mutually to study and promote each others welfare and happiness!—And then the pleasure which rewards the conscientious observation of this command, as it carries its own recommendation in it, has this further advantage, that it strengthens our resolutions, animates our holy zeal, and renders the practice of all the other duties of Religion more delightful. Communicating in the *Lord's-Supper* being thus advantageous, the obligation to communicate must be answerable; for the greater the advantages, the greater the motive, and the greater the motive to any duty, the more inexcusable must be the neglect of it.—Let this excite both non-communicants and communicants to reflect on their duty. Have I the prospect if I receive worthily of so much honour and ad-

vantage accruing to me, and shall I not be persuaded to come? Should the non-communicant say. Since it is my happiness to partake of the memorials of Christ's body and blood, and of the pledges of his love, (should the communicant say) my resolution is to walk so as to please my Lord and Master, adorn his doctrine, and contribute in my little sphere to make the world entertain better thoughts both of the Master and of his disciples.

Such being the *reasons* (to which others might be added) which evince the obligation lying upon the disciples of Christ to communicate in the Sacrament of the Supper, so obvious and forcible, it may justly occasion some surprize how it comes to pass, that so great a part of the christian world satisfy themselves in the neglect of this Ordinance. I shall briefly examine the *reasons* of this.

1. The most general and the leading reason seems to be a superstitious notion of the *Lord's-Supper*, which has too much prevailed in the Christian Church, to the great detriment of it, and does still prevail, though I hope not so much as it has done. God grant it may wear out more and more, and that men may return to a sober judicious sense of the nature and design of this, and every other part of our holy Religion! Many Christians with regard to the *Lord's-Supper* seem to be in a condition like that of the

¹ *Israelites* at the giving of the Law, when they saw mount *Sinai* burning with fire, and covered with blackness and tempest; a sight so terrible that *Moses* said, ^m *I exceedingly fear and quake; and heard the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more.* They could hardly be more afraid to approach the *mountain*, than some *Christians* are to come to the *Lord's-Table*; as if bounds were set about it on purpose, as about mount *Sinai*, to keep off people, and they had the same order as the people then had, *not to break through to come up to the Lord, lest he should break forth upon them.* They could scarcely more dread the voice of thunder in which the Law was delivered, than those timorous mistaken *Christians* do the command—*Do this in remembrance of me*—not considering that they are come to mount *Zion*, not to mount *Sinai*; to *Jesus* the Mediator of the new covenant; ⁿ *through whom we have access by one Spirit to the Father Almighty*; and surely then can have no just cause to fear approaching the Mediator himself, or rather the memorials of him at his *Table*. Our Mediator is not so terrible, as to make us stand in need of another Mediator in order to our coming before him with boldness; nay, *we are come to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the*

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¹ *Exod.* xix. 16. ^m *Heb.* xii. 18. ⁿ *Eph.* i. 18.

Law did, being a confirmation of all the promises of the Gospel ; and what then should occasion, or what can justify, such dreadful apprehensions of the *Lord's-Supper*, which may very well be called *superstitious*, as they are without all just ground, and have no other tendency than to enslave and debilitate the minds of Christians, to make them of a servile spirit, instead of inspiring a *spirit of adoption*, and cherishing the love of God and of Jesus, which is at once the noblest, and the most delightful part of practical Religion.

It is not unlikely that what chiefly gave rise to and spread this wrong notion of the *Holy-Supper*, and made people advance it so much above the level of all other religious duties in respect of the *solemnity*, was the doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, or the real corporeal presence, *i. e.* the change of the elements of bread and wine into the very body and blood of Christ, to which they were taught to pay a religious worship ; and to eat what they worshiped had certainly something more than *solemn*, even something *horrible* in it. And that which increased the superstitious veneration for this Sacrament was, the denying the cup to the *Laity* ; of this none but the Priests, the ministers of the Lord, must have the privilege to partake. Thus the superstition may be supposed to have begun, and having taken possession

fection of the minds of men, was not easily to be driven out again ; not at the *Reformation* itself, when the doctrines of Popery were banished out of Protestant Churches, but too much of the spirit retained, which was the consequence of those doctrines ; and particularly this superstitious regard to the *Lord's-Supper*, which methinks Protestants should be the more willing to part with, upon the account of its popish original.

The *Lord's-Supper* is without all doubt a most solemn Ordinance, and is it not a very solemn thing to draw nigh to God in any of the duties of divine worship ? To God the greatest, most glorious and adorable Being ? The *solemnity* of this Sacrament principally depends upon that which is common to it with the ordinary parts of worship, *viz.* the addresses to God which accompany it, which carry something more solemn in them than the *Lord's-Supper* itself does, considered merely as a feast of commemoration instituted in honour of the great Friend and Saviour of mankind. It is true this Ordinance has in it or attending it all that is solemn in other Ordinances, with something additional, I mean the manner of approaching God through the sacrifice of his Son, represented by the visible memorials of it ; but then this does not add so much to the *solemnity* of this religious action, as it does to the encouragement we
 have

have ° to come with boldness to the throne of the heavenly grace; having not only a great High-Priest passed into the heavens, but also the memorials of that sacrifice, by which he obtained the pardon of sin, acceptance with God, and eternal redemption for us. So that here is no room at all for a superstitious fear; nor is the solemnity of this Ordinance any more than that of the other duties of Religion, a reason why we should banish ourselves from it.

2. There are those who will say, they do not refuse, but only delay to come to the *Lord's-Table*. As there is no particular time of life fixed when they are first to receive the *Holy Communion*, they continue putting it off from time to time, and only wait for a more convenient opportunity of doing it. But when will that more convenient opportunity come? As to many, does not this excuse, poor as it is, serve them for years together? It is true, no exact time is limited, when our obligation to receive the *Lord's-Supper* begins to take place; but what then, if the nature of the command be such as to explain itself in this respect, as it certainly does; since the obligation to observe any command must commence as soon as persons have an ability, and can be made rationally sensible of the nature of the duty, and the advantages attending it; and that is when they are arrived to years of maturity, so as to be capable of serious consideration, of acting
steadily

steadily in Religion, and of serving God and celebrating the memory of their Saviour with understanding ; and therefore I could wish that *younger persons* would take this matter into their deliberate thoughts, and do now earnestly intreat them for their Saviour's sake, (of their obligations to whom I hope they are in some degree sensible) and for their own to do it. I suppose them to be of age to judge and act for themselves, not only to discern good and evil, but to apprehend the great Doctrines of Christianity, particularly that of *Christ being the Saviour of sinners, and only Mediator between God and man*, in memory of whom, and with a design more effectually to ingage his disciples to love, imitate, and obey him, the Sacrament of the Supper was instituted ; and what then should forbid their being received to, and receiving the *Holy Communion*, being before competently instructed in the nature and design of it, which I likewise suppose ?

Of the three great yearly Festivals that were observed among the *Jews* by divine appointment, the *Passover* corresponds very nearly to the *Lord's-Supper* under the christian dispensation. The age when they made their *first* appearance at the celebration of this Or-nance, the *Jewish* writers tell us was at furthest when they were *twelve* or *thirteen* years old ; which is rendered the more probable
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by what the ^P *Evangelist* relates concerning our Saviour, that *his Parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover; and when he was twelve years old they carried him up with them, after the manner of the feast.* Certainly as the work of our redemption by Jesus Christ is of a more signal nature, and much greater importance than any of those temporal deliverances and favours, which God vouchsafed to the *Jewish* church and nation, and for that reason deserves to be had in everlasting remembrance, so the way of commemorating it in the *Lord's-Supper*, with the intention of this Ordinance to promote a spirit of piety, and the practice of all goodness in the communicants, are things which *young persons* grown up to years of discretion with a little reflection may easily understand. And why then do not Parents put those of their children who are soberly inclined upon coming to the *Lord's-Table* sooner than is usual? I need not say I am now speaking of such Parents as communicate themselves, for from others it cannot be expected. Why should not *young persons*, who have such a sufficient ripeness of judgment, and sobriety of behaviour, be persuaded to reflect and perform their duty in this respect? They will soon find the advantage and pleasure of it in a greater composure of their passions, a more exact regularity

larity in their conversation, a better disposition of mind for the performance of other duties, and more thought and prudence and success, by the blessing of God, in the management of their common affairs.

I should be better pleased to see more *young persons* coming to the *Lord's-Table*, as they would hereby be good examples to *older persons*, who are now only bad examples to them, and might perhaps make them ashamed of their delays; for undoubtedly whatever may be said in excuse of *younger persons* when they desire longer time, such who are almost come to the middle part of life, or past it, it may be in the decline of it, can have nothing to plead for themselves; they cannot pretend that they are not of age sufficient for the thing to which they are pressed, nor with any grace talk of delaying yet longer who have delayed much too long already. For God's sake therefore, and as they regard their duty to their Lord and Redeemer, and the prosperity of their own souls, let them not thus egregiously impose upon themselves any longer. One would imagine that it was something exceeding grievous and burthensome, that they were exhorted to perform, that they are thus continually putting it off, when it is to do nothing else but what their own sense of duty, and a principle of ingenuity, gratitude, and self-interest should not suffer them to be easy in omitting, though they

they were never pressed to it. How long do they intend to go on thus? Till death overtakes them while they are thus delaying, cuts off their trifling purposes, and so they appear before their Saviour and great Judge, without having once shown forth his death according to his most express command?

3. The plea of great numbers is, that they are not fit to partake of this *Holy Supper*. Why so? Are they scandalous sinners? Do they live in a constant known violation of the precepts of the Gospel? If this be the case, I will allow that they are not qualified to approach the *Lord's-Table*; and that no man can receive *worthily* who lives in *habitual* wickedness, both before and after, and so goes on alternately attending upon his devotions and his vices. We will suppose a notorious habitual sinner to receive the Sacrament, nay, and that he sincerely intends the action in honour of Christ as his Lord and Master, and purposes future amendment at the time of performing it, yet so far is such a purpose as this from making a man a *worthy receiver*, (as things appear to me) that one of this character cannot *pray worthily*; for how can those desires and resolutions be in any proper sense worthy of or suitable to the duty performed, which are so imperfect as to be without effect, not now and then only, but always? And though a man had better pray with such
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such feeble desires than not at all, it will not follow that he had better come to the Sacrament too, than delay it till he has given some signs of his repentance in his life and conversation. Prayer is a *natural* and *universal* means of piety and virtue, in the total neglect of which it is impossible a man should be *actually* good, and the next to impossible that he should be in the way to become so; which cannot be said of the *Lord's-Supper*, this being a Positive Institution.

Hath a man been guilty of drunkenness, murder, adultery, or any other the most flagitious crimes? He cannot do better than immediately cast himself down in the presence of God, confessing his sin, humbling himself for it, imploring mercy and the like; but surely no one would think it right to go from the commission of such crimes to the *Lord's-Table*. Not to speak of *secret* or *family* prayer, there is not that *scandal* to the christian society in admitting notorious sinners to mingle in the publick prayers of the church, as in permitting, not to say inviting them, to come to the *Lord's-Supper*: eating and drinking are directly and particularly the acts of every communicant, acts distinguishing of the christian society, and a mark of friendship between the Master and his disciples; in all which respects this duty differs from prayer, which in its very nature suits the

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the condition of a finner, and in which therefore he may be allowed to join without offence, if he behave decently during the worship; and therefore upon the whole, I think such persons are in the right to stay away from the *Lord's-Supper*, till they are better disposed to make a proper use of it, and have given some proof of this disposition to themselves and others. But then a vicious life, for which no excuse is to be given in any man, and least of all in a Christian, can be no excuse for the omission of a plain duty; an omission which instead of having its guilt extenuated by this plea, is a very great aggravation of the guilt of a wicked life, which is the occasion of it. They should rather therefore argue thus—" I at
" present lead such a life as I can neither re-
" concile with the rules of the Christian Reli-
" gion, nor with a reasonable hope of an
" interest in the promises and blessings of
" it, I will therefore immediately quit the
" guilty, the dangerous way I am in; and
" then as I shall be prepared for death,
" which I have now the greatest reason to
" dread the thoughts of, especially consider-
" ing that there is not a moment when it
" may not surprize me, so I shall be quali-
" fied to shew my gratitude to my Saviour
" by joining with his disciples in the com-
" memoration of his death and sufferings,
" and the participation of all the fruits and
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‘ benefits of them.’—So much for those whose character is known to be *vicious* by themselves and others.

Shall we therefore encourage none to come but those who are assured of their being in a state of favour with God, sanctified and pardoned; or who have very good reason to think so, and are troubled with very few doubts about it? This, I take it, would be an extreme on the other hand. If persons live so as not to discredit their christian profession, if they have good dispositions which they in some measure cultivate and improve, though it should be doubtful whether they are prevailing, I cannot see that they have a sufficient cause for absenting themselves from the Sacrament, which might be of admirable service to fortify their holy resolutions, and to invigorate their pious affections, particularly their love to Christ, which they are conscious to their having in some degree, as likewise of its not being without all effect; and though it should really be so that they are not thorough converts, and the love of God and of Jesus has not yet gotten the entire mastery over their other passions, yet I can by no means think that those words of the Apostle *Paul* do at all belong to them, that *he who eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself; not discerning the Lord's body*: besides observing that

that the original word translated *damnation* might and ought to have been rendered by *judgment*, meaning some *temporal* judgment, which is a much softer one, it is enough to show that such as I am speaking of do not fall under the weight of St. *Paul's* censure, forasmuch as they *discern the Lord's body*, putting a very great difference betwixt that and their common meals, and having a very sincere desire to honour their Saviour, and to be in favour with him, which they testify, by bringing forth many, if not all the fruits of righteousness in some degree, tho' not in so great a degree as they should.

And the more fully to remove all doubt in this matter, I shall briefly consider the irregularity of the *Corinthians* noted by St. *Paul*.
 † *When ye come together into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's-Supper; for in eating every one taketh before other his own supper, and one is hungry, and another is drunken.* The question here is, whether this relates to the *Lord's-Supper* itself, or to the *Agapæ*, i. e. the *Love-feasts*, which used to accompany it in the primitive times, or to some other entertainment, which of their own fancy these irregular *Corinthians* held before they proceeded to partake of the Sacrament. One can hardly conceive, that it was at the *Lord's-Supper* itself they behaved in this indecent manner, since they could not but

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 know, that all belonging to that was only *bread* and *wine*, whereas here some of them seemed to have *eaten* as well as *drunk* to excess; why else is it said, *one is hungry, another is drunken*, if the term *drunken* was not designed to comprehend excesses of both kinds in *eating* as well as *drinking*? And then again the *Lord's-Supper* being a feast of which all in common were to partake in memory of their Saviour, it is not very credible that some would not only take this Supper before others, but without any care that the *poor* should have wherewithal to keep the feast. As to the *Agapæ*, or *Love-feasts*, it is most probable from * *Antiquity*, that they were not celebrated till after the *Lord's-Supper*; and being feasts of charity, the very nature of them will not admit of our supposing that the *poor* were excluded from them. The most likely way of solving the difficulty seems to me to be this, that the *Corinthians* of their own heads made the *Lord's-Supper* an *appendix* or second entertainment to another feast, in order to conform it to the manner of communicating at the first Institution, which was at the close of the *Passover*. † *Socrates*, in his ecclesiastical history, mentions some *Egyptians* living near *Alexandria*, who partook of the Sacrament in a different manner from what was usual
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* See Plin. l. 10. ep. 97. and Tertul. Apol. c. 39.

† Lib. 5. c. 22.

in the Christian Church, making merry, and filling themselves with all sorts of food, and then in the evening, after this, partaking of the Sacrament, which he calls *mysterics*. This looks so much like a parallel instance, that we may very well suppose the practice of the *Corinthians* condemned by St. Paul to have been the same with that of these *Egyptians*. And the Apostle might very well say, *that this was not to eat the Lord's-Supper*; for the ultimate design of their meeting together being to partake of the *Lord's-Supper*, to which the other feast was only introductory, as it showed no great respect for the *Lord's-Supper*, or knowledge of the nature of it, to behave so at the feast connected with it, so by the excesses they were guilty of (aggravated by their uncommunicativeness to the *poor* members of the church) they put themselves into a condition, in which they could not possibly *discern* as they ought the *Lord's body*; this was *eating and drinking unworthily* in the most notorious manner. But what has this to do with their case, or how can they be affected by the Apostle's censure, who come in a sober and reverent manner, and with a sincere desire and purpose to walk worthy of this Sacrament, and of all the other parts of the Christian Religion; tho' it may be they are not so perfect in their conformity to the Gospel, and so thoroughly confirmed in their good resolutions

and dispositions as they should be, and perhaps are in a way to become? And therefore the objection of *unfitness* is easily and sufficiently answered.

I would conclude this head with this reflection, that communicants of a sober and regular behaviour, may, by what has been now offered, be more fully satisfied in what they have done in coming to the *Lord's-Table*, so as to be freed from any scruples they may have been troubled with upon this account; and not only so, but may rejoice in their having chosen this good part, for so doubtless it is. “ Instead of giving way to a *spirit* “ *of bondage again to fear*, think, O my soul, “ of the duty which thou hast before thee, “ and in the omission of which thou didst “ wisely resolve not to allow thyself, and “ of the advantages annexed to the conscientious discharge of it; and with equal “ diligence and chearfulness, joined with “ earnest prayer to God for his assistance, “ apply thy mind and heart to the devout “ commemoration of thy once dying and “ dead, but now risen, exalted, ever living and “ affectionate Lord!”

4. Others urge their being involved in so much business, as not to be able to spend the time necessary by way of *Preparation* for the Sacrament. But the question is, whether the multiplicity of their business be what they cannot well avoid? If it be their own fault

fault that their time is so much taken up with the world, instead of making their worldly cares a pretence for their absenting themselves from the *Lord's-Table*, they should immediately set themselves to retrench these cares, and thereby cut of this occasion of their neglecting a plain duty of Religion; and so without all doubt they would, if it was really their desire to have all hindrances removed out of their way, in order to their partaking of this Gospel feast. If their being engaged in a great deal of business is not the effect of choice, but necessity, and they would willingly, if they could, shake of this and every other incumbrance, they have no manner of reason to banish themselves from any Ordinance of the Gospel upon this account. Because their hands are full of the world on the *week-day*, they do not therefore, when the *Lord's-Day* returns, refuse to join in the stated duties of it; and why should they deprive themselves of the privilege of communicating in the *Lord's-Supper*, any more than of performing the other parts of divine worship; or think themselves unqualified for one, any more than for the other? It is to be hoped, whenever they come to the house of God, and unite in prayers to God or in hearing his most holy word, they labour to discharge their hearts of every foreign care, that [†] *they*

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may

may attend upon the Lord without distraction; and having laid aside the thoughts of all earthly things, they might as well receive the *Lord's-Supper*, as engage in any other religious duty, if there be nothing else to prevent it, but their being taken up more than they desire with the affairs of this life at other times. But by this means they are not able to devote the requisite time to the duties of *Preparation*. To which it may be replied, that what we call *Preparation* for the Sacrament being only a *prudential* thing, no were enjoined in the word of God, must not be looked upon as *absolutely necessary*, much less the spending such an exact portion of time in the exercises of devotion. Let us employ what time we can command, and find by experience to be of use to this purpose, and we have nothing further to trouble ourselves about, but putting our hearts in the best order we can, and so moderating our affections to all these sublunary things, that as often as we are called to any duty, we may be in a proper disposition for the performance of it; let us do this, and we need not doubt of our being acceptable guests at the *Table* of the Lord.

5. The last hindrance I shall mention to men's coming to the *Table* of the Lord, and which I fear is the most common, is that persons apprehend, that the Sacrament will oblige them to greater strictness of conversation

tion than they should otherwise be bound to observe, or shall be able to make good, and by that means increase their guilt, and that therefore they had better for their own safety continue to absent themselves. But let me take the liberty to tell them, that this is such a sort of reason, as they would not satisfy themselves with in any other case where their affections were engaged. Do not they know that whatever blessings they enjoy, temporal or spiritual, their obligation to serve and glorify God is thereby rendered the greater? Are they not under stronger obligations to a holy life for being *Christians*, than if they were *Heathens*; *Protestants*, than if they had been trained up in the darkness of *Popery*? But if it was in their choice, would they therefore change conditions with *Papists* or *Heathens*? Surely no; because they know, though perhaps they do not consider it as they should, that their advantages are far beyond those of the other, and cannot be sufficiently prized. Do they not likewise know, that any superior degree of learning, or riches, or power, is a talent for which they are accountable to the Governor and Judge of the world, and which calls for higher degrees of gratitude to God, and as the consequence of that, of activity and diligence in his service; so that if possessing so much greater abilities than others, they yet do not more good than they, or not so much

much, they will be left inexcusable? But notwithstanding this, do they chuse to be ignorant, and poor, and disregarded, that they may have the less account to give at last? It is certain from universal experience that they do not, and why then should the present be the only excepted case, in which they deny themselves a most invaluable privilege, only that they may not be so strongly obliged to a regular and christian conversation? To such a conversation they are obliged by their profession of Christianity, whether they are communicants or no, to an observation of the self-same duties and virtues, and an abstinence from the same vices, as they value the favour of their God and their Saviour, and their own everlasting happiness; and let me add, are under the greater obligations to it, for having the opportunities of coming to the *Lord's-Table*, whether they make use of these opportunities or not.

It is not only *actually* receiving the *Lord's-Supper*, but their being *commanded*, *invited*, and *incouraged* to receive it, that they are to give an account of; nor is their privilege the less, nor consequently their obligation to be thankful for it, because they neglect to make any advantage of it; on the contrary, so much the greater is their guilt and their folly. They are obliged to practise nothing after the Sacrament, but what they were before obliged to, if they would
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enter into the kingdom of heaven; and to abstain from no indulgences but those which by the Gospel-constitution will exclude us from thence; their fancy therefore of securing to themselves a greater liberty by absenting from the *Lord's-Table* is very foolish: they are still talking of the danger of partaking of the *Lord's-Supper*, and not walking worthy of it, in the mean while forgetting that a sinful life will be their ruin, though they never communicate, and that there is a danger as great, or rather greater on the other side, I mean in habitually neglecting a plain Institution of the Gospel. To which let us further add, that if our obligation to walk circumspectly is greater after we have received the Sacrament, our helps, and encouragements, and pleasures are greater too; and that therefore upon the whole, we can have no good reason, upon any such account as this, to refuse another invitation to the *Lord's-Table*, which I now give you in the name of my great Master and yours.

To conclude—The Institution of the *Supper*, and the peculiar nature and design of it, have been explained; the obligations lying on the disciples of Christ to communicate in this Sacrament shewn; and the most plausible objections against it answered; and I would fain hope, that all this will not be without some good effect, both with regard
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to the judgment and the affections of my Reader; helping to give him a distincter notion of this part of his Religion, the wisdom and the design of the Institution, to convince him, that it is equally his duty and his advantage to observe it, and to produce in him, in concurrence with his own serious consideration, and the Grace of God, all those good dispositions, which the remembrance of Christ requires, and is so well fitted to strengthen and perfect.

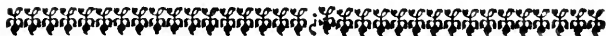
Whatever defects there have been in the manner of handling this Subject, yet I will take the liberty to say, it must be the Reader's own fault, if he is nothing at all the better for what has been laid before him. Enough I am persuaded has been offered to gain the assent of any impartial person, and if seriously considered, to prevail with all to devote themselves to God and to the Redeemer, to love them more fervently, and to serve them more diligently and faithfully. God grant our communions may be more numerous, and communicants more eminent and exemplary for every christian virtue! The *Lord's-Supper* is undoubtedly a most excellent Institution, and were it but improved as it ought, would appear to be so to the conviction of the whole world. Would to God that all those, who, in obedience to the command of their Master, eat and drink at his *Table* in remembrance of him, would
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duely consider this, taking care to behave at all times suitably to the dignity of their character, the solemn nature of their vows and engagements, and the greatness of their obligations; then would others, *seeing their good works glorify their Father who is in heaven*, and not be easy till they had joined with them in celebrating the memory of our common Lord and Saviour, saying, “Come and let us also go to this feast, and at once honour Christ, and promote, as they have done, our edification in holiness and comfort”—then would the Church of Christ be more glorious and beautiful, and his Religion a source of more abounding and more permanent pleasure and satisfaction; then, in a word, as the excellence and usefulness of all the Commandments and Institutions of the Gospel would be evident, so particularly of the *Lord's-Supper*, for which we should esteem ourselves obliged to praise God, as in it we do for his wonderful goodness to the children of men.





DEVOTIONAL
EXERCISES,
Relating to the
Lord's-Supper.
1738.







T O T H E
R E A D E R.

THE Author's design in this little Present which he makes the Publick, is, not to confine and fetter the devotion of pious communicants, but assist it, by furnishing them with materials for meditation, which they may have always at hand, to make use of when and in what manner they judge convenient. Souls the best turned for the exercises of the spiritual life, have not at all times the same happy flow of thought, or liveliness of affection; and when this is the case, that their usual activity fails them, who can tell but they may find something or other here which may help to rouse their attention, to lead them into a train of thinking, and so fan the sacred fire, that it may burn the more brightly. And if this may be supposed of these superior souls, much more of those in lower classes. As devotion, true, enlightened devotion, is one of the most sublime, and withal, most delightful and useful attainments of the human mind, being not only a very great support and refreshment to it, a sort of heavenly musick in the house of its pilgrimage, but a considerable help to the most animated practice of all virtue

and goodness, I shall esteem myself not a little happy to contribute in any degree to the spreading, or the exercise and improvement, of so excellent a disposition; I have sincerely attempted it, and have nothing further I can do, but to commend what follows to the blessing of God, and the Reader's candid and serious perusal.

Farewel,

H. G.



DEV O.



DEVOTIONAL
EXERCISES,

Relating to the

LORD'S-SUPPER,

Before, or Preparatory to Receiving.

S E C T. I.

NOW, O my soul, that thou art retired from the world, let me ask thee, as in the presence of the all-knowing God, hast thou ever seriously considered thy nature, thy interest, and thy dangers? That thou art a spiritual Being, reasonable and immortal, capable of other and nobler pleasures than thou receivest from the enjoyments of the world, and by the instrumentality of the body; of a higher and more permanent felicity than falls within the limits of this transitory life; and that without a great deal of thought and care, thou art liable to be excluded from all

title to this, which is thy proper portion, and at the same time deprived of all those inferior good things, which thou art too apt to mistake for it, and to place in the room of it; instead of attaining happiness, the thing thou art seeking after, to fall into a state of misery, from which there is no hope of rising again? Hast thou considered, O my soul, what the Son of God hath done to awaken thee out of the common lethargy, to cure thee of thy blindness, to purchase happiness for thee, and to direct, assist, and animate thee in the pursuit of it? Acknowledge, O my soul, the infinite obligations, under God the first mover, to the Redeemer of mankind, the great lover of souls, who, to ransom them from the evils they suffered, or were exposed to, and to raise them to the highest degrees of perfection and blessedness their nature and faculties would admit of, came down from the bosom of the Father into this sinful world, cloathed himself with human flesh, and human infirmities, taught the most excellent doctrine, enforced it by the most perfect example, and the most precious and divine promises, and freely seals it with his own blood, which we are taught to regard not only as the blood of a *Martyr*, but an *Atoning Sacrifice*; who established a church, or society of faithful persons, and took care that nothing should be wanting for its preservation in the world,
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and continual edification in faith, and holiness, and charity, and consolation! And canst thou deny any thing to such a friend, such a benefactor as Jesus hath been to thee? When he hath provided thee with all the means and assistances thou needest, in order to thy going on to perfection, among others with the Institution of the *Holy-Supper*, shouldest thou not thankfully accept, and faithfully improve them? O my soul, resolve, and let nothing turn thee from thy purpose, that the serving and imitating thy Saviour, and preparing thyself for that blessed immortality which he hath procured for, and revealed and promised to thee, shall be thy chief aim, thy constant employment, during the rest of thy pilgrimage upon earth!

S E C T. II.

BUT what is it, O my soul, that thy Saviour requires of thee? I hear him saying—*Do this in remembrance of me*—But what is it that he would have us do? Is it to make ourselves of no reputation and become poor for his sake, as he did for ours; to renounce every thing that this life hath in it most valuable and pleasant; to afflict the body with painful and useless austerities; and to retreat from all the affairs and conversation of the world into barren desarts, and

frightful solitudes? No such thing; tho' had he bid thee give him some such severe proofs of thy remembrance of him as these, thou couldst not in gratitude have refused them; how much more when he only enjoins thee in a religious manner, to make use of bread and wine as sacramental memorials of his body broken, and his blood shed for us. How easy the command! And how inexcusable those who, calling themselves the disciples of Christ, will not through some fault of their own, be persuaded to do as they are commanded, or do it negligently and indevoutly! Hast thou never heard and admired at the cruelties which the worshipers of false Gods, not only voluntarily but with a sort of pride, have practised upon themselves, in honour of dumb idols? Thy merciful Lord calls for no such test of thy love to him; he makes this indeed a necessary qualification for thy being his disciple, as it is in the nature of the thing, that thou keep his commandments, but either thou knowest not what his commandments are, or must be obliged to own that they are not grievous. That I love my fellow-disciples, and cultivate a benevolent disposition towards all mankind; that I be humble, meek, merciful, temperate; that I be not anxiously thoughtful about future time and events; lay not up for myself a treasure on earth but in heaven; that my treasure being there, my heart may be there also; these,
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and such like, are the commands of the blessed Jesus, who, as a means admirably adapted to my delightful progress in these and all other virtues of the christian life, does further enjoin a devout attendance at his *Table*, there to receive the pledges of his love, and grace to help in every time of need.

S E C T. III.

MUST thou not acknowledge, O my soul, that thy Redeemer's yoke is easy, and his burthen light, if thou reflect that instead of those numerous rites and ceremonies which the Mosaic Law appointed, and which rendered that service so burthensome, that an Apostle of Christ scruples not to call it *a yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear*, the Christian Church hath no other observances of a ritual nature but those two simple and easy ones (easy to be understood, and as easy to be practised) of *Baptism*, and the *Lord's-Supper*; and that of these two the latter is only intended to be repeated? So little does our divine Master delight in abridging his followers of any liberty they can reasonably desire, and so much is he concerned that their duty should be their pleasure, or a natural source of it. The things recommended and most strongly insisted on by his Gospel, are those weightier

matters of the Law, judgment, mercy, and the love of God, things intrinsically good, and amiable : and to the honour of this Sacrament of the Supper it may be observed, that tho' a *Positive Institution*, yet, to those who receive it in a right manner, it is of unspeakable use to promote the life of God in the soul, and the practice of all those virtues by which we resemble God in the conversation. Wherefore, O my soul, instead of being influenced by any objections of weak, or ill-designing men, against the Institution itself, or any trifling excuses that may tempt thee to neglect the observation of it, or vain terrors which would rob thee of the pleasure it was designed to afford thee, with all readiness obey the invitation to this sacred feast, and with all gladness of heart set thyself to celebrate the love of thy Saviour in it!

S E C T. IV.

NOR ask, why Christ would have us eat and drink in memory of him, when we could remember him without any such ceremony? Confess, O my soul, obliged as thou art, to have thy Saviour perpetually in mind! Hast thou not found it too easy and common a thing for thee to forget him, to lose thyself and the thoughts of an absent Saviour

Saviour amidst the cares, or amusements and delights of this vain world? It is not what thou shouldest do is the question; thou shouldest there is no doubt be ever looking unto Jesus, and embrace every opportunity of conversing with him in thy thoughts and meditations, without any other monitor, or prompter, than a grateful heart; this thou shouldest do, but is it thus thou wouldest act, if left entirely to thy own discretion and choice?

Record this, O my Soul, among the instances of the kind and tender care of thy Redeemer, that he calls thee off from the pursuit of the world; hath made it thy duty to dismiss thy meaner passions, and, in the absence of these, to commemorate him in this solemn manner; and by these external signs, that thou mightest have thy thoughts of him better fixed, and thy affections more powerfully actuated and enlivened, and by this means be disposed more naturally to remember him at other times, and in the ordinary course of thy life! From this sacramental transaction, frequently and rightly performed, will proceed such a strong attachment to thy Saviour, such a prevailing bent in thy inclinations, as will make it next to impossible for thee to live in an habitual forgetfulness of that Jesus, whose dying love, with unfeigned zeal and gratitude, thou hast so often shewed forth in his Supper; he will
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dwell in thy heart by faith, have the possession of all thy faculties, be precious in thy esteem, and dear to thy memory. And then further, attend to this, as a consideration of no small weight, that the remembrance of Christ in the *Holy Communion*, is not a private and solitary act, but of a publick nature, a declaration of the faith of the Christian Church, and of the high veneration it hath for a crucified Saviour, and so is better fitted to do honour to his memory, and as an everlasting monument to spread and perpetuate it in the world. And surely, O my soul, this must be a very great recommendation of this Ordinance to thee, and to all the faithful in Christ, that by publickly and constantly attending upon it, every one of you in some degree helps to support the memory of your great Redeemer among men? Would not every one that remembers Christ himself, have others to remember him too? Would he not have his love dwell in the hearts, and his name upon the tongues of all men? And the little he can do to this end, must he not do, and be exceeding glad if he could do more?

S E C T. V.

THINK again, O my soul, with what view our gracious Redeemer obliges us to remember him! He had some design in demanding this of his followers, especially in appointing such a form of commemoration. Did this design regard himself, or us? Was it for his own sake, or for ours, that he appears so desirous of living in our remembrance? For the honour that will redound to him, or the benefit and consolation that we shall receive from hence? For our sakes, no doubt, was this intended; not properly for his own, who can gain nothing by us, and hath a dignity and greatness inherent in him, that exalts him far above all the motives of vain glory. How trifling and contemptible is the honour of having his name recorded by us the offspring of the dust, and transmitted down from one generation of short-lived creatures to another, when the angels, those sons of light, surround him with their adoring multitudes, and make his praises the subject of their immortal songs! But this is the honour he covets, the joy for which he endured the cross, despising the shame, to bring many sons unto glory, to restore as great numbers as he can out of the ruins of the fallen race, to train them up in the paths of virtue and holiness, and then

then the proper time for it being come, to bestow immortality upon them. For this end he calls upon thee to remember him; it is thy advantage he proposes; and great, unspeakably great, is the privilege accruing from this duty, if thou knowest how to improve it: and to thy improvement of it nothing more is necessary than sincerity on thy part, inasmuch as God will never fail to assist all those with the quickening influences of his Grace and Spirit, who do their best, and will accept their weak, because well-meant, endeavours to please him, through the mediation of his well-beloved Son, whose meritorious death and passion is represented to them, and remembered by them in this Ordinance.

S E C T. VI.

BE this then, O my soul, thy great, thy only concern, to be approved of thy God and Saviour, to come with enlightened views, with fervent desires, and holy dispositions, and to be found a worthy, that thou mayest be a welcome guest! For thou canst not think, O my soul, that it is alike indifferent with what temper thou makest thy approaches to this sacred festival! Does the pious *Psalmist*, even under the legal dispensation, when there was so much outward
pomp

pomp and ceremony in the worship of God, lay such stress on inward purity, and moral goodness and rectitude? Does he beg of God to examine and prove him, to try his reins and his heart, and make his appeal to him, as having walked in his integrity, and had his loving kindness before his eyes, and then resolve, *I will wash my hands in innocence, so will I compass thine altar, O Lord*; and is less regard had to the qualification of the worshiper, where the worship is more refined and spiritual? Was it a more solemn thing to attend the sacrifice of a slain beast, than it is to commemorate the sacrifice of the Son of God? But how shall I, who am but sinful dust and ashes, come before the Lord? How present myself among the adorers of the most high God? He hath shewed thee, O my soul, what he requires of thee! Examine thyself, both as to thy notions of the duty before thee, the nature and the design of it, and as to thy fitness to partake of so high a privilege. Lay the foundation of faithfulness to God and man, to thy Master, and to thy fellow-disciples, in being faithful and true to thyself; diligently search thy memory, and see what the general course of thy life hath been, and whether there are not some particular great transgressions for which thou hast not yet been so thoroughly humbled as thou shouldest; descend into thy heart, and
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if there be any favourite lust, any unmortified habit of vice that lurks there, desist not from thy enquiries till thou hast found it; and, having found it, drag it into the light, shame thyself for it, and spare it not; for, alas, what will it avail thee to deceive thyself, when God is not mocked? The delusion may please and flatter, and, while it lasts, fill thee with towering imaginations, confident hopes, and strange overflowings of joy, especially at the *Holy-Table*, from a false apprehension that all the benefits enjoyed by the true disciples of Jesus are thine. But how short-lived must the peace, the pleasure, the hope be, which is all fallacious and groundless! Thy pleasures will only resemble flashes of lightening in a dark night, which cause a momentary brightness, but presently vanishing, give additional horrors to the remaining darkness. Hast thou, after fairly and fully debating it, already settled this grand point? Take the comfort of thy sincerity, and doubt not of a free and kind admission by the Master of the feast to his *Table*. However, do not therefore immediately conclude all further examination and preparation needless. Hast thou not been too indulgent in some things? Too deficient in others? Has not some bad temper grown upon thee? Some passion broke its bounds? A spirit of pride or sensuality, or worldliness, or indifference to the welfare and
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and happiness of others, tho' it does not reign in thee, yet recovered too much power? Humbly and earnestly entreat forgiveness for it, and strength against it; beg of God, the Father of spirits, to restore thee from thy wanderings; put all things into the best order thou art able thyself, and stedfastly resolve not to allow thyself in any temper or degree of any temper, in any action or omission of any action, which the Gospel does not allow thee in.

S E C T. VII.

LET me consider, O my soul, this is but one among many religious duties which I am to perform with the same seriousness and sincerity I do this! Whenever I worship God, whether in publick or private, as I hope to do it acceptably, I am to cleanse my hands before I draw nigh unto him, and to discharge my heart of every foreign care, that so I may be able to attend upon God without distraction, and have my mind possessed with a holy awe of the divine Majesty. Let me not set one duty above another, nor by the preparation I make for the *Lord's-Supper*, be tempted to think I may be more careless and negligent in the ordinary exercises of Religion. The preparation of the heart is always necessary, when we take upon us to speak to the great Lord of heaven and earth;
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and if by way of introduction to any particular Ordinance; as this of the *Lord's-Supper*, it be usual to spend more time in self recollection, and other exercises of devout retirement, to the intent we may have our hearts set in order, and all things in a readiness against the approaching season; the foundation of this practice seems to be, that it is proper to do this sometimes, and no time is reckoned more proper for such a work, than before receiving the *Lord's-Supper*, as that Ordinance is not wont to revolve so often as the stated worship of the *Lord's-Day*, and the nature of the Institution is more entirely and distinguishingly evangelical, or christian; upon this account, as I shall not make it an indispensable rule to have the very same set preparation every time I receive the Sacrament, whether necessary or not necessary, convenient or not convenient; nor banish myself from the *Lord's-Table* when I have not an opportunity for it, (since this would be to bind myself where God hath left me free) so, as often, and as far, as I find it expedient, I shall commune with my own heart, and endeavour to awaken and raise my spirit by previous exercises, before I enter upon the common duties of divine worship; and shall always charge my soul not to rush into the presence of God in an irreverent and indevout manner, lest I draw down his displeasure upon me at the very time I profess to honour his name.

S E C T. VIII.

DO I not love thee, O my Saviour? I humbly trust I can say, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. Either I am a stranger to my own heart, and ignorant after what objects it breaths and aspires, or I unfeignedly, I prevailingly love thee. Art thou the darling of thine Almighty Father, his chief delight? And art thou not mine? Does not my soul follow hard after thee; prefer thy friendship to that of the whole world; esteem all those marks and traces of thine image, which prove my relation to thee, and interest in thee, more than the peculiar treasure of kings? Does it not ardently desire to be better acquainted with thee, according to the discoveries that are made of thee in the Gospel? Would not all the pleasures and entertainments of life be insipid, and even tiresome without thee? To be with thee would not my soul willingly quit the body, even this moment, didst thou call her, and she was assured that her separation from all things here below would be followed with a nearer union with thee? I love thee, O Jesus, but not as I would, not as I ought to love thee! When I think of thy personal excellencies, thy condescensions, thy sufferings, thy death, and the glorious fruits of them, I am not able to conceive, much less describe, the love I owe

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thee; I can only say in general, that my love should have no other bounds than the capacity of my heart; I should love thee as much as I can love thee, and thus it is I would love thee. O let thy love kindle mine; let it mount into a flame; let this flame consume every visionary idol that usurps any part of the honour due to my Saviour; let it enliven every power, direct and consecrate every thought, every affection, every design; let me, and all I possess, be a sacrifice of love; to thee I devote it all, through whom all things are mine, and who art more than all other things can possibly be to me!

S E C T. IX.

WHAT abundant reason, O most blessed Saviour, have I to rejoice and be glad in thee! In thee I have determined to rejoice always, in the contemplation of thy person, thy gospel, thy virtues, thy conquests, and thy glory, and even in thy cross; in all the great things thou hast done for us, and we already enjoy, and in the much greater thou hast promised, and we yet further wait for. I will heighten the common pleasures of this life by my joy in thee, and by rejoicing in thee under all the evils and troubles of it, will learn to forget or make light of them all, and to weep as
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if I wept not. Thou art my sanctuary and my hope; here I take refuge when pursued by my griefs, and doubts, and fears, even in thee, and the several ways I have of conversing with thee. O Jesus, thou givest light to those that are in darkness, strength to the weak, rest to the weary, and comfort to the distressed! O my Saviour, as nothing is wanting in the way of assistance and encouragement on thy part, I hope less shall be wanting on mine than hath hitherto been, in returns of praise, and service, and obedience for the unsearchable riches of thy goodness!

S E C T. X.

TELL me, O thou whom my soul loveth, my Saviour and my Lord, how I shall best express my thanks to thee, among the other testimonies of thy regard to my happiness, for this wise, this kind Institution of the *Supper*, which together with the legacy of peace, as nearly related to, and closely linked with it, thou hast bequeathed to thy Church! I am very sensible, that living in the neglect of this Ordinance would not shew my thankfulness for it, and have therefore determined to go, not only to the house of God with the multitude of them that keep holy thy Day, but with the smaller

number that delight to honour thee at thy *Table*. And to let the world see I am not submitting to a disagreeable task, which I would gladly be excused from, did I know how to find an evasion, I will go with a holy alacrity, and shall not be sorry to have the joy of my heart shine out in the light and serenity of my countenance, so there be no appearance of affectation in it. Draw me, O my Saviour, by the bands of love! Thou hast thus drawn me, and I feel the sweet constraint! O thou bright morning-star, irradiate the region of my soul with thy heavenly beams! Thou hast done it, and I bless the sacred influence! O my most worthy Advocate and Intercessor, as there is no coming unto the Father but by thee, so by thee it is I make my addresses, and in thy mediation, under the goodness and mercy of God, I place my trust! Present me to the divine Majesty, and plead with him for me in virtue of thy atoning sacrifice, and obedience unto death. Thou dost continually discharge this friendly office for all the sincerely penitent and faithful, and in this confidence I humbly offer up these my supplications to the Father of lights, and the Father of mercies.





A

P R A Y E R.

O THOU Infinite and Eternal Majesty !
The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our Father in heaven, vouchsafe with an eye of favour and compassion to behold thy sinful creature, who now falls prostrate before thee, in humble adoration of thy distinguishing and most undeserved goodness to the children of men, and to me in particular, which I acknowledge to have been such as beyond measure to enhance the guilt of my offences against thee. With what sincerity, O Lord, thou desirest the conversion of sinners, the prosperity of thy saints, and the happiness of all that are upright in heart, thou hast abundantly discovered in the incarnation and death of thy well-beloved Son, our most worthy Mediator and Advocate, Jesus Christ ; and in the rich variety of means which thou hast kindly provided for the healing the manifold disorders of our nature, and our continual progress towards perfection ! As for all these I bless and praise thy wise goodness, so, in a

particular manner, and not least of all, for the Institution of the *Holy-Supper*, which coming recommended by the authority of my blessed Saviour, and bearing his name, as it was appointed in honour of his memory, I desire ever to set a very high value upon.

Being not only allowed, but invited, to attend this sacred feast, I joyfully accept the invitation, humbly trusting that thy Grace hath made me in some degree meet to partake of so invaluable a privilege; and entreating thee, that what is further wanting, in order to my communicating with yet greater advantage and acceptance, the same Grace may supply. O let the blood of Jesus thy Son cleanse me from all sin; and his Spirit, even that eternal Spirit through which he offered himself without spot unto God, enlighten, sanctify, and raise my spirit, naturally dark, deprest and polluted! Give me understanding in all thy precepts, and help me to discern the meaning, and to attain the ends of that holy Ordinance for which I am preparing. Let the sacred fire, falling from heaven, consume my drossy affections, and kindle a flame of divine love in my breast never to be extinguished.

Grant, O Lord, that I may approach with the deepest sense of my own meanest, unworthiness and guilt, and with the most exalted apprehensions of thy holiness and mercy,

cy, both which thou hast so wonderfully displayed in the method of our redemption by Jesus Christ; that I may receive the pledges of thy forgiving love, and the memorials of my Saviour's bloody passion with a lively faith, an abounding hope, with gratitude unfeigned, and joy unspeakable; and may so feel the attractive influence of his example, the efficacy of his death, and the power of his resurrection, that I may have my whole soul transformed into love, be all kindness and charity to men, and zeal for God and Jesus, may die unto sin, and live unto righteousness, be able to tread on all the power of the enemy, to deny myself, despise the blandishments and temptations of the world, have my conversation in heaven, and overcome all opposition in the way to it; and, finally, after having loved and served, and followed my Saviour without seeing him, may be with him, according to his own prayer, where he is, to behold his glory, and, with all the heavenly multitudes, ascribe blessing, and honour, and glory, and power unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!





A T

The Lord's-Table.



S E C T. I.

O MY soul, the happy, the wished for time is come, but will quickly be gone again! Lay hold of the opportunity, make the utmost advantage of it, that when past and gone, it may not be lost. Turn away thine eyes from beholding vanity, and look unto Jesus. Be all attention and reverence, thy thoughts united and elevated, every power engaged, and all thy affections present to wait on thy Lord, and minister to him at his *Table*.

S E C T. II.

AND O thou, who alone knowest the hearts of all men, and alone hast them in thy power, the Almighty and Omnipotent God,

God, help thou mine infirmities, fix my mind, prone else to wander, cause every good seed thy hand hath sown to spring up, perfect thine own work, speak peace to my soul, bid every vain and every tumultuous passion be still; the sacrifice is ready, send down the sacred fire, and help me in the same act to honour the Father and the Son, that I may have fellowship with both!

S E C T. III.

BEHOLD, my soul, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world! Rightly is he called a Lamb whose innocence was spotless, and his meekness and patience invincible; and the Lamb of God for his superior excellence and dignity, and his being chosen to this office by the Father. He was led as a Lamb to the slaughter, and as a Sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth; neither guile or complaint was found in his mouth, much less cursing and bitterness. Dost thou profess thyself a follower of the Lamb and glory in the title? Learn then of him to be harmless and blameless, meek and lowly in heart, alike averse from doing or deserving evil, and ready to suffer it.

S E C T. IV.

BUT how does the Lamb of God take away sin? By bearing it in his own body on the tree. He was wounded for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him. O heavy load, which sunk the Son of God, in his body, to the grave, and, had it lain unreMOVED, would have sunk the world into ruins! Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power and riches, and wisdom and strength, and honour and glory, and blessing.

S E C T. V.

THIS is the body of Christ. This sacramental bread is intended to signify and represent the body of Christ that was given for us, as an offering and sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour; and broken for us, as the bread in this Sacrament is broken before it is distributed. His sacred flesh was torn and disfigured with the scourges, pierced and violated with the nails and the spear. The Lamb that was seen in the midst of the throne had before been stretched on the cross, made a spectacle to God, to angels, and to men, highly approved and accepted of the first, adored by the second, mourned by some, derided and insulted over by others, of the last. O my

my foul, in thy judgment of this crucified Jesus, take for thy guide the only wise God, and for thy pattern in thy behaviour towards him saints and angels!

S E C T. VI.

DIDST thou, O Jesus, with whom the most precious things and most excellent Beings that can be named among creatures are not once to be compared, didst thou give thy sacred self for me on the cross? And art thou ready to give thyself to me in thy *Supper*? I give, I consecrate myself, without the least reserve, to thee. I could wish I was more worthy of thy acceptance. But such as I have, and am, give I unto thee, and I give it heartily, as unto the Lord, to whom I confess myself to owe more than I can give. O do thou make me more like thyself, shed more of thy beauty and loveliness upon me, sanctify me in every part and power, help me to be more perfect in every divine attainment, that I may be less unworthy of thee! And to the sacrifice of thy broken body, grant, O my Saviour, I may be able to join the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart, which thou wilt not despise; thou diedst for me, to thee I will henceforth live!

S E C T. VII.

MY blessed Saviour did not suffer in his body only. No; it was the least part of his sufferings that was visible; his soul was sorrowful even unto death, and laboured under such an agony in the garden, that he sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground; prayed, *Father, if possible, let this cup pass from me*, and had an angel dispatched express to comfort him. Nay, he was heard crying out on the cross, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Strange language for the Son of God! Does God forsake his own Son? The holy, the merciful God his innocent, his well beloved Son? He does for a time, so as to suspend the usual irradiations of his countenance, and to leave him in the hands of his enemies, to do unto him what they pleased. And when Jesus suffers and dies, shall a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? When he suffers to expiate the sins of others, shall I not be contented to suffer the pains and afflictions necessary for the cure of my own sinful affections, and the trial and improvement of my own virtues? Surely if he laments his being forsaken, who was undoubtedly the Son of God, I have no just reason to question my being a child of God, or (supposing myself to be so) to think I am
hardly

hardly dealt with, merely because destitute of those sensible consolations which I have sometimes enjoyed.

S E C T. VIII.

WAS there ever sorrow like that of my Saviour's? Can any thing be imagined to exceed it? Yes, O my soul, tho' his sorrows were unconceivably great, his love was greater, for his love made him willing to pass through such a sea of sorrows; his love brought him to that dark hour, and supported him in it; love to the rebellious sons of men, love to thee, O my soul! Hereupon I cannot forbear crying out, was ever love like his love? And, reflecting on the unparalleled greatness both of his sorrow and his love, I further say to myself, is there any evil like the evil of sin, the guilty, the cursed occasion of this dolorous scene? From whence I am unavoidably led to ask, what ingratitude, O my soul, can be equal to thine, if after all that thy Redeemer hath done and suffered for thee, thou wilt not be persuaded to break thy league with his enemies, that is, with thy sins; Christ having no enemy but sin, or such as sin hath made enemies to him?

S E C T. IX.

WHY, O my soul, is this bread called *the Communion of the body of Christ*, but at once to signify the object commemorated, a dying crucified Jesus, and the near relation among those who join in commemorating him; that because the bread is one, we also being many, are one body, forasmuch as we are all partakers of the one bread? Christians conspiring in this sacred action may justly be called *a Communion*, since the bread is one of which they jointly partake, and the sacrifice one and the same represented by this bread, they are hereby taught, that all the disciples of Christ, how great soever their number be, (acknowledging this sacrifice, and putting their trust in it, which they declare by their united participation of that one bread, which is the memorial of it) constitute but one mystical body, or society, of which they are the members, and Christ Jesus is the head. O my soul, let thy most ardent wishes, thy most importunate prayers, thy most unwearied endeavours, be for the peace and unity of the Christian Church, that all the faithful in Christ may be one, even as thou Father art in the Son, and the Son in thee, that they may be made perfect in one, and dwell and walk in love! And resolve, O my soul, that no prejudice, no provocation, shall ever alienate thy affections from any of those, who
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are fellow-members of the same body with thee, and make thee forget what thou owest them, or rather what thou owest to thy Saviour ; thy regard to whom thou canst not better express, than by thy zeal to promote the peace of his church, and welfare and happiness of all belonging to it!

S E C T. X.

COULD the *Jews* say—Behold, how he loved him—seeing Jesus weep at the grave of *Lazarus*? And may I not with much more reason cry out—Behold, how he loved us—when I think of his shedding not tears, but blood his vital blood for us? He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood. His condescending to wash his disciples feet did not more plainly, or in a more affecting manner, discover his humility, than his washing us in his blood does his love. And for such love, what is the most proper return but love? What other return can I make that will be accepted, if love be wanting? If I love him, he first loved me ; his love was a love of compassion and benevolence, mine is a love of gratitude, mine is a debt, his free. If I love my fellow-christian, if I love all mankind, if I love my enemies, the honour is his to have shewed me the way ;
and

and having such a guide and pattern, it would be an indelible reproach upon me not to follow him.

S E C T. XI.

OBERVE, O my soul, the time when thy Lord gave his disciples the new commandment of love, because, tho' only a circumstance, it is exceeding instructive and quickening! It seems to have been soon after he had been instituting his *Supper*. And what more proper season for the delivery of this law, or stronger conviction of the reasonableness of it, than that afforded by this Ordinance, in which the love of Jesus is seen rising, and spreading itself beyond all bounds, and triumphing over all opposition? If the commandment is new, in respect of the height to which the disciples of Christ are to carry their love, the example is still more new and uncommon by which it comes recommended. Should they be called to lay down their lives for the brethren, they would herein only love one another as he, their Lord and Master, had loved them. Nor can I regard it as such a hard saying, that I am to love my enemies (which he also enjoins me) since, when we were enemies, Christ died for us, that he might reconcile us to God, and, when dying,

dying, prayed for his enemies, enemies whom nothing but his blood would satisfy, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* I will learn, O my Saviour, how to love of thee! Never was the world taught a more excellent lesson; never before had this lesson so excellent a teacher.

S E C T. XII.

THIS Cup is the New Testament, or Covenant, in Christ's blood; the blood of the New Covenant, which was shed for many for the remission of sins. *First*, this blood of atonement was shed for the remission of sins; then, after a short space intervening, the Gospel Dispensation was more fully opened, the New Covenant solemnly proclaimed, and repentance and remission of sins preached in the name of Christ among all nations. Besides the confirmation which the Gospel, containing God's Covenant of Grace with mankind, receives from the blood, or death of Christ, considered with all its circumstances, this blood, being the blood of a sacrifice, appointed by God, and represented in the sacramental *Supper*, is, as such, a sign or seal on God's part by which the Covenant is solemnized, and our assurance of his designs of favour and mercy towards us rendered as

complete as we can reasonably wish it to be. Think well of this, O my soul, and never more harbour the least suspicion of the freeness, the abundance, or the extent of the divine mercy! The mercy of God is not less conspicuous in the Covenant itself, and the manner of establishing it, than his faithfulness is out of question in fulfilling it; only seek mercy in the way which the Gospel hath marked out to thee, and doubt not but thou shalt find it. The death of Christ, and now his life, is thy security. Let the mercy of God encourage thy hopes, and his faithfulness and truth, in keeping covenant, be a pattern to thine.

S E C T. XIII.

O LORD, I am not my own; I never was, never can, never desire to be so, and hope and promise never to act as if I was! Truly I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds. Thine I am by creation, thine by purchase, thine by covenant. I confess, and triumph in the relation, and acknowledge all the duties resulting from it. I have sworn, and cannot repent, that I will keep thy righteous statutes; and I now joyfully repeat the solemn engagement. Here I am; Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Deal with

with me and mine as seemeth good in thy sight; thy will and not mine shall be the rule of my desires and actions, and thy glory my supreme end. It is thine to command and dispose, mine to obey and submit. Thou hast bought me with a price, even with the precious blood of thine own Son, of which this sacramental wine is a memorial. I therefore, as in gratitude bound, present my whole self, body and soul to thee, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is my reasonable service, with a full purpose of heart to glorify thee with both. I consider this sacramental eating and drinking not only as expressive of a very high privilege enjoyed by the worthy communicant, who is here treated with the condescending freedom of a domestic servant, a guest, a friend of God, and of Jesus, but as an obligation upon me to behave at all times as thy devoted covenant servant in Christ. O Lord, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of my heart, and prepare my heart unto thee!





When retired, after Receiving.

S E C T. I.

HAST thou not, O my soul, this day, had thy dear Lord evidently set forth as crucified before thy eyes, and, by commemorating his death in the *Holy-Supper* declared thyself a disciple of this crucified Jesus? And what is to be the temper of my mind, and my future behaviour, that it may agree with the character of one who professes himself a disciple of such a Master? Ought I not to be crucified with Christ to the world, the pomps and vanities, the riches and pleasures of it? Yes certainly. A disciple of Christ is not to be taken up with these things. Did the Master embrace a life of meanness and poverty, and voluntarily submit to a most painful and ignominious death? Was he not more despised by the men of the world, than he despised the things of it, and shewed himself superior to its spirit,

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its wisdom, its maxims and temptations? And shall the disciple eagerly covet these things, admire them, value himself upon them, and place his happiness in them? In all this would he shew himself mindful of his profession? Or rather would he not shamefully forget it? Though I am not obliged to renounce the possession, or the moderate use of any worldly advantages that Providence hath put into my hand, yet I am all such love of them as would weaken and counteract the diviner affections, and much more that which is inconsistent with the prevalency of such affections. I am to be of such a temper with regard to these earthly things, as to be able readily to forego them, to enjoy without abusing them, and being elated and corrupted by them, and to do all the good I can with them.

Can I have such an object often in my view, as the Son of God covered with a cloud of affliction; a cross, and this Lord of glory nailed to it, and expiring upon it, and yet not have my affections at all deadened to the world? Have the same high thoughts of it, and the same fond attachment to it as ever? O my soul, it is impossible, the contemplation of a crucified Jesus must have other effects! It must, and I trust it hath. I look unto Jesus, and suddenly the glory of the world disappears, its charms fade, and all its treasures lose their imaginary

value. Let those doat on the world, who never meditate on a crucified Saviour, never remember him at his *Table*; this I have done, and found the happy influence of that example which my Redeemer hath set before me so strong, that I no longer follow the world as a captive in chains the triumphal chariot of his conqueror. This, alas, I did as the other slaves of the world in the days of my vanity, but, thanks to my Saviour, am now a conqueror in my turn! His example sets me free, his death hath convinced me of my folly, and taught me other and sounder notions of things. Henceforth not those things which render me less like my Saviour, while he was in the world, shall be the matter of my glorying, but those by which I become conformed to him, among others, my being victorious over the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life; all which are not of the Father, but of the world, which passeth away, and the lusts thereof.

S E C T. II.

I WILL not think of pleading with my Saviour, as what must render me dear to him—have I not eaten and drank in thy presence, and honoured thy memory—being

ing sensible I have no other answer to expect, if I am found among the workers of iniquity, than that terrible one, *Depart from me, I know you not.* He will not know me, because I knew him no better; will not think his name honoured by being taken up by such polluted lips; will be ashamed to own me for his, because so utterly unworthy of his approbation. The greater, my soul, thy honour in the near access thou art allowed to thy Redeemer, and the oftener thou professest thy subjection to him, by partaking of the memorials of his body and blood, the greater is thy obligation to obey him, and the greater will be thy guilt if thou dost not! All the rest of my life is to correspond with this particular action, and to make good what I have virtually promised in it, though I should not have expressly promised it, as I have done, and intend to do again, if God give opportunity.

S E C T. III.

BEWARE, O my soul, how thou framest a decisive judgment of thy state and character, merely, or chiefly from the manner in which the sensitive part of thy nature hath been affected at the *Holy-Table!* Perhaps thy passions have been strongly

moved, thou hast felt an unusual liveliness and flow of spirits; or, on the contrary, hast had a kind of dead weight upon thee, which hath bowed thee down to the earth, a more than ordinary confinement in thy thoughts, and langour in thy affections. Now, O my soul, in case the warmth of thy affections be followed with an answerable tenderness of conscience afterwards, happy art thou, and hast abundant reason to be easy and thankful; not so if it be only a sudden gust of passion, which leaves thee as much under the power of sensual and worldly affections as ever; thy Religion is vain, and thou art yet to learn what are the first principles of practical Christianity!

On the other hand, the reflection on the little fervour of the duties thou hast performed, if it hath been owing to thy own neglect, and too great indulgence to the animal life, much more if it hath proceeded from a habit of indevotion, ought to humble thee, and fill thee with an uneasy concern about thy present temper. But supposing it not to be chargeable on any such criminal causes, (as thou hast ground to believe it is not when thou art unfeignedly desirous of doing better, and findest thy choice of that which is good, and the determination of thy will to it, more firm and entire, so as to be proof against the temptations that assault thee in thy christian course) be not
too

too severe in thy censure of thyself, inasmuch as God, who knoweth thy frame, will make gracious allowances for the weakness of it. The thing thou art principally to attend to, is thy habitual disposition, and ordinary conduct. Am I exact and regular in my common deportment, watchful over my thoughts, and careful that the general frame and posture of my spirit be agreeable to my christian profession? Am I more circumspect to avoid temptation, and more resolved and successful in my conflict with it? Is my conversation in heaven, and my great solicitude how I shall keep myself in the love of God? This being supposed, I am justified to conclude, that the great design of the *Lord's-Supper*, and every other Gospel-Institution, hath been answered; that I have communicated with profit, if I have not done it with so much life and pleasure as I could have wished, and may therefore go on my way rejoicing that God hath accepted me.

S E C T. IV.

HAST thou not, O my soul, this day, while commemorating the love of thy Saviour, and exciting thy own by the remembrance of his, resolved to lead a more exemplary,

emplary, devout, and useful life than thou hast hitherto done? Such resolutions are perfectly just, and peculiarly agreeable to the Ordinance of the *Supper*, and I will suppose thine to have been sincere; yet, stop a moment, and consider those words of thy Saviour to his disciples, *The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*. Even those who want not integrity of heart, are too often more forward to purpose and promise, than afterwards they are punctual in fulfilling their engagements; their readiness to promise shews the willingness of the spirit, that they have a spirit within them which hath strong convictions of duty, and laudable dispositions to the practice of it, while their failure, in part, though not entirely, in the performance, is a melancholy proof of the weakness of the flesh. The *Apostles* of Christ are a most memorable example of this, who bravely resolved to stand by their Master at all hazards, protesting, that though they should die with him, yet would they not deny him. Glorious resolution! But how poorly kept to; for when it came to the trial (to say nothing of the traitor *Judas*) all but one forsook him and fled, and he for his part did worse than forsake him, he denied him; and this soon after they had been celebrating the *Supper* with their Master, and though they were zealously affected to him, as they had reason to be, having received

ceived a thousand marks of the most tender friendship from him, and three of them being more highly honoured than the rest with the sight of his transfiguration. And is this the end of all? From this I learn the kind and provident care of our divine Master in the counsel he gave his disciples, and the necessity of following it, *To watch and pray that they enter not into temptation.*

I am not to trust to the duty I have lately performed, nor to the devotion, tho' real, I have exercised in it; nay, nor to the Grace which I may have reason to think hath been bestowed on me as the reward of my unfeigned desire and endeavour to please God, unless I further add my own continued prayers and vigilance. As the mere outward action in the Sacrament does not convey Grace, but the Spirit of God by it, nor is a qualification for receiving it, but the temper of mind, and right intention and probity of soul with which I communicate, so the influence which this Sacrament hath, in the after course of my life, to prepare me for the more ready discharge of other duties, and to preserve me in the hour of temptation, does not immediately and necessarily flow from the Sacrament itself, but depends on my doing my part after the solemnity is over, as well as in the act of receiving; otherwise I shall have no cause to wonder, if I am worsted by temptations, and quickly lose

lose my relish for the pleasures of devotion. Be sure then, O my soul, to fix this deep in thy remembrance, that neither the love of Christ to thee, nor thine to him, nor thy conversing with him at his *Table*, however encouraging and delightful, will absolutely secure thee from temptation (God, for wise reasons, permitting temptations of divers kinds to befall us for the trial of our virtue and fidelity) or in it, without watchfulness and prayer! In prudence then take care, that both these accompany and follow all thy good purposes and dispositions, whether at the *Table* of the Lord, or at any other time when thy affections are more than usually enlarged and stirred within thee, that so whatever temptations occur to draw thee off from thy duty, or to make thee less vigorous in it, being mindful of the vows of God that are upon thee, thou mayest be more than conqueror over them all.

S E C T. V.

THE cloud which hath guided thy meditations hitherto has a bright as well as a dark side, it is a cloud of glory. For the present then change the scene, O my soul, from the humiliation of the Son of God, which thou hast been called to remember in his *Supper*, turn thine eyes to his exalted state, from

from a dying to a risen Saviour, from his first coming in the form of a servant, to his second appearance in the form of God, when being sat down on the throne of his glory, and all nations gathered before him, he shall separate them one from the other, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats, and absolve or condemn, reward or punish them, according as their works have been! Yet a little while, O my soul, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry; and when he shall appear, they also that have waited for him shall appear with him in glory, having their bodies raised from the grave, and made like unto his! With this prospect I will comfort myself under all the infelicities of life, and apprehensions of death.

I must die, pass through the dark valley, drink of the cold cup that my Saviour drank of; but, if I belong to him as a living member of his mystical body, I shall rise again to a blessed immortality. It was not the design of his death to excuse his followers from dying, but as connected with his resurrection, to save them from the terrors of that last enemy; forasmuch as death is now only a dark passage to the regions of immortal light and glory, and we lay down this body, with all its frailties and imperfections, to take it up again without them, bright, active, and incorruptible. Look forward, O my soul, to that glorious day! Think what a joyful,
what

what a surprizing meeting that will be of perfected minds with their glorified bodies, of all the saints that have ever lived in the most distant regions and ages of it, with one another! Think of that divine and eternal festival in which they shall all join with one heart, in the kingdom of their Father, and at which thou, O my soul, shalt be a transported guest!

Now we necessarily meet in separate, and, alas, too often in divided and opposite communions, estranged and alienated in our affections for want of knowing one another better; now they are but few with whom thou canst personally join in the common duties of divine worship, still fewer in the *Lord's-Supper*; thy many infirmities abate the pleasures of thy best performances, and the pleasure, as it is imperfect, so is transient too; hereafter, all the followers of the Lamb, all the faithful servants of God, a multitude without number, shall worship together in the temple above, unite their praises to God and the Lamb, mingle their affections like so many confluent streams in one common ocean of love, be delivered from every temptation, and from every grief, be made perfect in knowledge, holiness and bliss, and so continue to everlasting ages.

O what life and spirit should the meditation of this infuse into all my religious performances! How shouldst thou stretch all thy
thy

thy faculties, O my soul, and aim to do the will of God as the angels do in heaven, and as thou thyself shalt do it when thou art come thither! Blessed time, when all upright minds shall see that wonderful Person face to face whom now they behold as through a glass darkly! Blessed time, when the presence of the Redeemer shall make all memorials of him needless! O most blessed time, the expectation of so many ages, when the church shall receive the immediate and fullest emanations of that love which she is now ravished with the contemplations of! Then shalt thou acknowledge, O my soul, that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither can enter into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath laid up for them that love him! Then shalt thou reap the fruits of thy Lord's victories, and thy own, of his victory over death, and of thy own through him, over sin and the world! Then, in fine, will it be true, in the highest sense the words are capable of, *That we are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to God the Judge of all.*



A

P R A Y E R.

GREAT and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty—what then art thou whose power hath produced and sustains, whose wisdom both contrived and directs, and whose goodness crowns them all! I praise thee, O my God, from the bottom of my soul, that, having made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him, thou hast in the course of thy Providence so ordered the circumstances of my birth and education, that I should be a partaker of the Grace of the Gospel from my earliest years, and know the wonderful works of God, even those things which many Prophets and Kings desired to see and hear, and could not.

For all my powers and faculties, as a reasonable creature, all the testimonies of thy paternal care, all the effects of thy common bounty

bounty and goodness, in the course of my life, I bless and magnify thy holy name; but more especially for thy distinguishing Grace and Mercy in Jesus Christ, in whom, while I rejoice and glory, I cannot forget to pray that all mankind may enjoy the same happiness, and the whole world know that thou hast so loved it as to give thine only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Hear, O most gracious God, the prayers of thy faithful people for the enlargement of that kingdom of truth and righteousness which thou hast set up among men, that the Religion of Christ may be professed and practised in its greatest simplicity; grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, their numbers continually increase, their consolations abound, the multitude of them that believe be of one heart and one soul, and the church of Christ appear to be the school where immortal souls are trained up for the more perfect worship, and the everlasting felicity of the heavenly world.

O let not thy Grace be received in vain by me! Let it not be in vain that I have been so fully taught the way of the Lord, have had both external and internal assistances, and every sort of encouragement, that I might abound in all the fruits of holiness, which are by Christ to the glory and praise of God.

Forgive me, O merciful Father, that I have made thee returns so unsuitable to thy great goodness towards me, to the vast and numberless obligations thou hast laid me under, and the repeated engagements I have taken upon myself! O forgive me the coldness of my love, my sloth and inactivity, the little proficiency I have made in the virtues of the christian and divine life, with the advantage of so excellent a rule, so perfect an example, so free an access to the throne of Grace, such almighty aids, and the prospect of so glorious a reward!

O may the consideration of thy readiness to pardon fill me with an ingenuous hatred and detestation of all sin; and my abhorrence of sin, and care to avoid it, and all the occasions of and temptations to it for the future, be a satisfying proof that all my sins are actually forgiven me, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ thy Son, whose death I have been shewing forth in his *Supper*! And may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make me perfect to do his will, fulfilling in me the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power.

Help me to carry in mind the design of one duty to dispose me for another, and of all the instrumental duties of Religion to beget and strengthen

strengthen those exalted principles and habits of goodness in my soul, by which it will be more and more ripened for the life of heaven. By faith let me be able to see him who is invisible; and always to walk as in his presence, and be more affected and influenced by the contemplation of an absent Saviour, in every view of him.

While I meditate on the blessed Jesus, enduring the contradiction of sinners, and humbling himself unto death, even the death of the cross, may I be instructed what to expect in the present life, and after what manner to behave under all the sufferings and afflictions of it; and may a risen and an exalted Redeemer elevate my heart above all the vanities of this transitory state of things to that happy world, whither he, my Lord, and the forerunner of all the faithful, is gone; that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, for whose sake let me be willing to suffer the loss of all things, not counting my life dear to me, so I may finish my course with joy.

Give me, O Lord, to feel more of the mighty power of thy Grace, concurring with the Gospel of thy Son, to mortify every inordinate desire, to confirm every good purpose, to purify and regulate my affections, and to change my whole soul more and more into

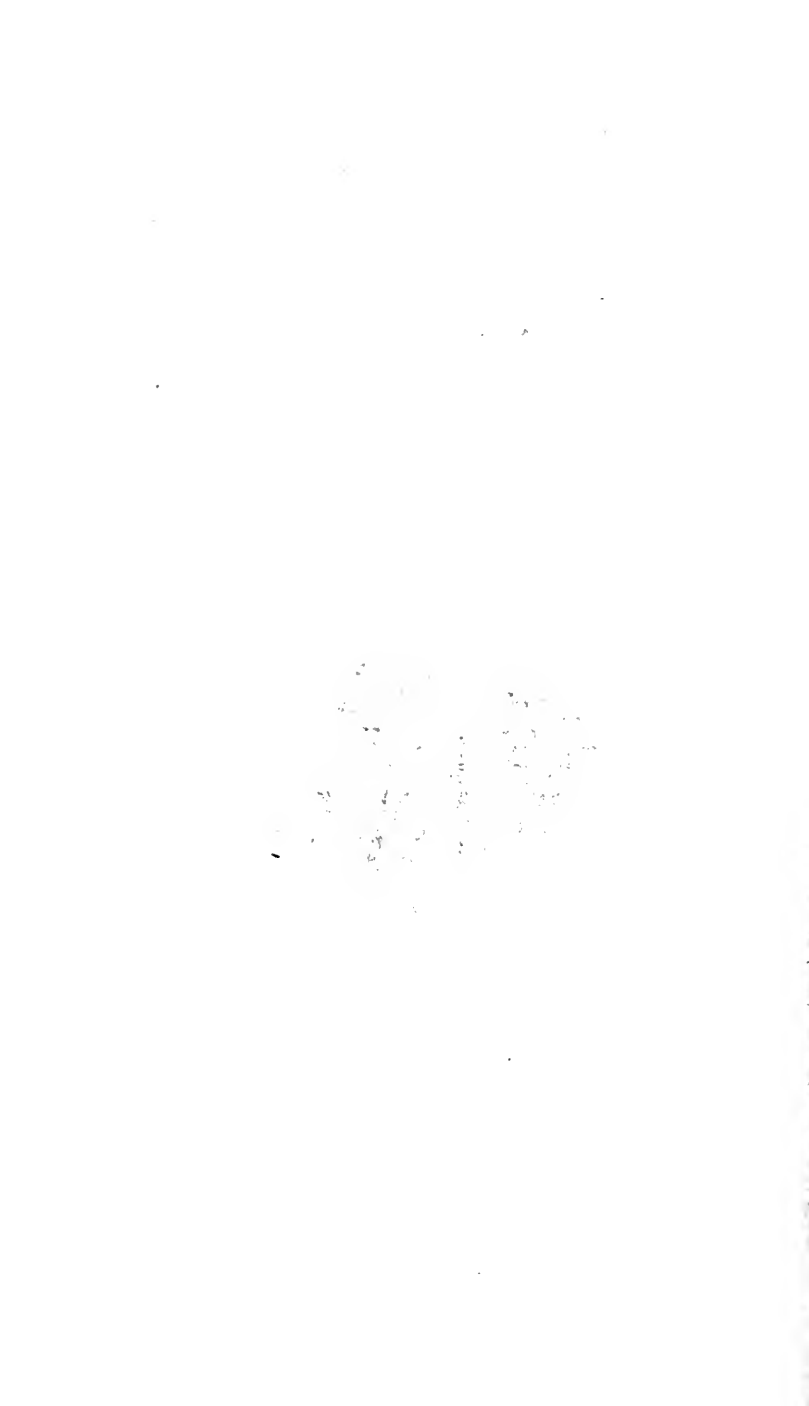
a divine image and likeness! By that Grace let me be enabled to trample on all the temptations to sin, and to keep a conscience void of offence both towards God, and towards man; that my love to thee may be superlative, and, tho' not adequate to thy excellencies and thy benefits, which it can never be, may bear some proportion to my capacities; that my devotion may be unaffected and fervent, my resignation entire, and obedience chearful, uniform, and constant.

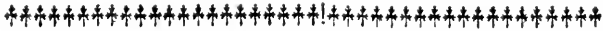
To men let me be just and charitable, kindly affectioned, ready to do good and to communicate as I have ability and opportunity, carrying it towards all with a mild, a peaceable and christian spirit; while, as to myself, I am sober-minded, poor in spirit, and pure in heart, and tho' not free from all mental irregularities, am yet getting ground upon them daily; opposing my inclinations as often as they oppose my duty, deny myself, am temperate in all things, bridle my tongue, and labour to be an example of patience, meekness, contentment, and to come behind in no good thing, looking for the mercy of God unto eternal life; that so, when I shall have done the work which thou hast given me to do, and suffered all that thou sawest meet for the trial of my faith, and hope, and submission to thy will,
I may

I may finally inherit the promises which thou hast made us in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Amen.*

Rev. v. 13. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing and Honour, and Glory and Power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.



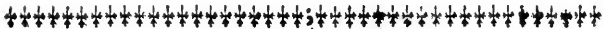




THE
REGULATION
OF
DIVERSIONS;

Designed principally for the
BENEFIT of YOUNG PERSONS.

1708



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

PHYSICS 309

1961-62



THE
REGULATION
OF
DIVERSIONS.

THE forming *Young People* to a solid and serious temper hath been always accounted a matter of the last importance both to themselves, and the publick, in regard nature generally keeps the ply that is first given it, and a wild undisciplined Youth is seldom known to make a *religious* and *useful* man. The disorders committed in the first stage of life are much like a gross mistake in our way at first setting out upon a journey, which carries us so much wider of our end, and is consequently the more difficult to be retrieved.

On this account, I should think, whoever offers *Young Persons* to be their Guide, provided he give security he will not mislead them, may reasonably expect a welcome :
their

their inclinations and desires are warm and impetuous, and, like their blood, on which they very much depend, quickly inflamed; the world they live in is full of objects fitted to ferment and set them on fire; in short, all things within and without (if care be not taken) conspire to ruin and betray them; the heat of their imagination hurries them on, and will not suffer them to make a stand, that they may coolly consider their danger, and enter into all the reflections necessary to the exactness of their conduct; for which reason it is requisite that rules and measures of acting be formed to their hands, and that they be very particular; these they may have the leisure to read, and the review will cost them no great trouble; but to draw them out in order for themselves, (no one assisting them) if it be not beyond their capacity, would too much fatigue and vex their patience. Upon such views as these it is that I composed the following *Essay*, which, I can be witness, was honestly designed, and, should the success be but answerable to the goodness of the intention, it will be no little satisfaction.

It is easy to observe there are certain passions and qualities belonging to every age, and which form its peculiar character. *Covetousness*, is the vice of *Old-Men*; an immoderate and unwearied concern to raise their fortunes and greaten their families is a com-

common fault of the *Middle-Aged*; and the *Younger Sort* are distinguished chiefly by their violent love of pleasure, of sensual worldly pleasure. Pleasure is indeed the idol of the *Young*, to which all things else are sacrificed; it is made a kind of business, they devote themselves intirely to it, and live as if they had nothing to do but gratify a vain extravagant humour. They are apt to think themselves a sort of privileged persons whom the prohibition of pleasure does not reach; imagine the vigour and gaiety of their age, the strength of their inclinations, and the quick relish they have of pleasure, are so many *probabilities* they were made on purpose for it, and will bear them out in all the liberties they take.

Now, I acknowledge, pleasure does much better become the vivacity of Youth than the langour and gravity of Age; and that degree of pleasure a *Young Man* might innocently enough enjoy, an *Old Man* could not give himself to without a breach of decency. But let not the *Young* therefore fancy they have a toleration to go what length they please; if *Youth* be not forbid the injoyment of pleasure, yet in this injoyment it is to keep within the bounds of Religion and Virtue. It is an ill character in any one, (be his age what it will,) to be a *lover of pleasure more than a lover of God*.

The pleasures of sense are of *two* kinds; some are in themselves unlawful, and absolutely forbidden us, as *fornication, uncleanness, &c.* Here we do not say the *desire* is to be tempered and moderated, but quite suppressed; nothing less will suffice.

The pleasures of this sort are so gross and defiling, so opposite to the design of Christianity, to that purity of heart it requires from all who profess it; and tend so directly to undermine the principles of Natural Religion; that the Reason and Understanding of Young People themselves, as inconsiderate as they are, blush at them; and if at any time they make bold with them it is not that they are ignorant of the guilt and pollution that cleave to such carnal gratifications. I shall therefore pass over the pleasures of this kind, as carrying their own condemnation with them, and proceed to consider the *second* sort of pleasures that are in themselves, and abstracting from the abuses made of them, lawful and allowed, and which therefore within certain restrictions and limitations may be lawfully desired.

The danger here is the greater, because not being apprehensive of it, we grow careless and secure. The object is, in general, harmless and inoffensive, and that satisfies us; not reflecting that the desire of an *innocent object* may be culpable through its excess of some other irregularity attending it.

Amongst

Amongst the particulars of this sort of pleasure I shall confine myself at present to the head of *Diversions*, because a subject the least worn of any.

With these Young Persons are generally in love with to the height of *fondness*; which as it is an extreme on the one hand, so it would not be a less on the other to lay them under an **absolute** restraint as to these things; for neither does Religion require this, nor will the present state of human nature bear it, which soon breaks if always kept at full bent.

By *Diversions* here I mean a sort of medium between *sloth* and *business*; actions that take us off from the main occupations of life, and are not, in themselves considered, of any use, but only as they prepare for others. Now it is possible to err by giving either too much or too little; and both are alike prejudicial; a faculty never used grows rusty, and when continually in use wears out. So that it is really no advantage to our general or particular Calling to be engaged in it without interruption; we tire under our burthen, and dispatch but a little way in a great deal of **time**; whereas a seasonable *Diversion* would give us fresh heart, and be like oiling the wheels, which makes them move the more pleasantly, and with the greater speed: besides all which, it escapes no one, that when a person is tied down to
a thing

a thing and cannot have a loofe from it now and then, it tends to difguft him againft it.

Religion itfelf, however lovely and amiable it be, will look frightful and terrible to a Young Perfon that is obliged to be always poring on it; and the duties of it (which, when performed by the foul in a devout and animated temper, affords fo much pleafure) will become extremely irkfome and tedious, if they return too often, or be drawn out too long. *Diversions* therefore are neceffary for Youth, (and I fear in fome degree for more ftaid perfons) but the mifery is, they never fay it is enough; they fhould be allowed to manage their recreations after their own way did they know how to obferve a meafure; but generally when left to their own difcretion they exercife no confcience in the matter. Give me leave therefore to prefcribe you fome prudential rules for the better *Regulation* of your *Diversions*. Of thefe fome regard the *choice* of your *Diversions*, and the *circumftances* directly relating to them; others more immediately concern the *defire*; and others the actual *ufe* and *enjoyment*.

As for the *choice* of your *Diversions*.

I. Be fure they be fuch as are allowable. Learn to divert thyfelf without offence to thy own, or the confcience of thy neighbour. Let not that good old maxim be forgotten, *In matters of a difputable nature the fafer fide is to be chofen*. It is doubted whether

ther or no thou canst lawfully play at a certain game, but no one doubts but thou mayest lawfully let it a lone; in prudence therefore forbear, for why shouldest thou play away thy soul, a thing too precious to be staked against the monarchy of the world? *Diversions* enough are to be found unquestionably innocent, and what folly is it then to venture on such as will admit of an objection? And it is the opinion of very good Divines, that all games of *chance* are of this number.

Monfieur *Fleury* thinks Play was absolutely unknown to the *Jews*, seeing we do not find the name once mentioned in scripture; and even to this day the *Arabians* and other Eastern People play not at games of *bazard*, at least not by the allowance of their * Law. This is certain, they are more liable to abuse than others, and offer more opportunities and temptations to cheat. When a person that is a kind of professor in gaming shall play with all the skill he is master of, and meer *chance* shall give the game to another who hath little insight into the matter, it is a strong provocation to recover the game by some knavish trick. Old Players fancy that they have a sort of right to win, and if it may not be done by fair means, they will do it by foul.

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* Mœurs des Israélites pt. 2. c. 13.

You will say, if others abuse a thing, that is no reason why I should be denied the use of it; I have played and found it no such snare to me. But let me ask thee, what has been thy security? Hath it not been restraining *grace*? If so, have a care thou do not trespass too far. But let it be supposed there is no more danger to thee from one than from another *Diversion*, yet by thy example thou dost encourage others that will prove too weak for the temptation; and is it imaginable thou canst knowingly occasion sin in another, merely because thou wilt not abstain from an unnecessary action, and be altogether blameless? Yet more, it is to be considered that, in judging of the *lawfulness* of a *Diversion*, I ought not to be concluded by my single opinion, contrary to the sense of other pious and good people. Though my judgement is not to be determined by theirs, but by the evidence of the thing, yet I humbly conceive, it is but fit their judgement should have some influence on my practice. Charity obliges me to show so much regard to the peace of a fellow Christian, not to grieve him by doing an action he thinks displeasing to God, and which might be as well omitted.

And then, I would propose it to your further thoughts whether it be not a duty to stand more upon our reputation than to part with any portion of it for the sake of a *Di-*
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version; and whether we ought not to value more the esteem of good Christians than to forfeit it rather than forego a particular way of recreating ourselves? We must be all aware that with whomsoever an ill opinion of us prevails, by alienating their minds from our persons it will disable us for doing any great good to them. And think again whether it can be justifiable for a man, out of an unreasonable bigotry to any Play, to cut himself off from a part of his usefulness in the world? With all this remember St. *Paul's* Exhortation, where among other marks and characters of those things that he commends to our practice, this is one, ^a *that they be of good report*; though I *deserr* not so much to opinion and custom as to think they can alter the intrinsic nature of actions, so that virtue shall become vice, or vice virtue, (as the incautious expressions of some men would almost tempt one to believe they did) yet I cannot forbear being of the mind, that an action in its self *indifferent* may become by accident *sinful*, when stamped with an ill name by general suffrage, or by a number of conscientious Christians.

There is one thing more which, though hinted at before, deserves to be a more particular subject of your thoughts. Though a *Dierfion* be in its self undoubtedly lawful, and moreover be not scrupled by any one, yet

is not this alone sufficient to warrant me in the use of it, unless it be such too as I can use with safety. There is a great variety in the tempers of men, and this makes that a temptation to one which is not so to another. Now if upon examination I find that this or that *Diversion* hath more than once drawn me into sin, hath engaged my passions too far, or otherwise insnared me, it is to me *forbidden fruit*. I pray that God would not lead me into temptation, and can I then allowably run myself into it?

II. In your *Choice of Diversions* prefer those that will best answer their end. This, I doubt, is but little minded by the most, who take the *Diversions* that are next at hand, or which the company vote for, or to which they are led by pure humour, nay often which meer *chance* has thrown them upon. Not a thought is laid out this way, though there be room for the exercise of Reason in this as well as in cases of greater moment. I own that as trifling in things serious is a fault, so to be serious in trifles is a folly; whereupon you may suspect it would be downright jesting with your Reason to imploy it in stating the nature and differences of *Diversions*; but how much soever this may look like trifling, it may sometimes happen to have very serious consequences, and, by not consulting your own temper, nor the quality of the remedy, it is not only possible to miss of the end that every reason-

reasonable man ought to design in his *Diversions*, but to turn them into instruments of mischief.

The general end of *Diversions* is by invigorating nature, and providing her with fresh recruits of spirit, to fit her for better and more chearful service; from whence it follows that all too violent and intense exercises that exhaust the spirits, overstrain our powers, and crack the sinews of the constitution, are heedfully to be shuned. The particular and immediate end is, either to relieve the mind under *melancholy*, and then some *Diversions* that will amuse the thoughts at the same time that it imployes the body is best; or to cure it of a fit of dulness, and then bodily exercise prudently managed will be of use, leaving the thoughts to rest themselves; I mean, as to any vigorous and close application: or lastly, the end proposed is the health and vigour of the animal part; and in this case likewise a gentle and agreeable motion is most proper; but your own *prudence* will easily direct you here; I just mention these things to convince you that *discretion* is to be used, that a thoughtless and promiscuous choice of *Recreations*, without making any distinction between them, is highly absurd.

You will all grant me it is not *indifferent* what are the ends we propose in our *Diversions*, for being rational creatures we are to have some rational aim in all our actions,

not excepting those of the lowest rank; and if Reason is to sway us in the choice of our end, it would be nonsense to lay it aside in the choice of the means. A man makes himself less ridiculous by levelling at a mean contemptable end, than by fixing on an important and good design, and pursuing it by means which he spends not one moment to consider whether they are adapted or not adapted to their end.

These Two Rules may suffice for the *Choice* of your *Diversions* themselves. The *Circumstances* relating to them are next to be considered, namely, *Time*, *Place* and *Company*.

I. Let your *Diversions* be well-timed. Do not think of diverting yourselves when there is no need for it, and more serious affairs demand your application. Remember *Recreations* are to get you new strength, not to consume that you have already. *To every thing* (saith the Wiseman) *there is a season; and a time to every purpose under the heaven; a time to weep, and a time to laugh, a time to mourn, and a time to dance;* and not a little depends upon a nice observation of these times. Some seasons require respite, the spirits are exceeding dull and flaggy, or employed by nature in her *mechanical operations*; and he that at such times shall call them off, and put them on close study and thinking is not only an ill husband of his health

health, but an ill manager of business; for, let his heart be what it will, he must expect to make but sorry music when the instrument is out of tune. On the contrary, when all is spritely and serene within, and soul and body both are in good humour, let us lay hold of the opportunity, and as the Proverb directs, *Make hay while the Sun shines.* We are now capable of doing things with ease and dispatch, and it will be greatly to misplace our activity to bestow it wholly on our Play; we should rather look on it as an invitation from Providence to mind our work, and ought accordingly to improve it to this end. This holds in a more special manner with those who seldom know a clear sky; let such double their diligence when nature smiles, and make their advantage of the kind fit.

II. Let the place you chuse for your *Diversions* be unexceptionable. You are not ignorant that the Law bars you from *Publick-Houses*; and what is it better than a contempt of the *National Authority*, to frequent them notwithstanding? There is not, it is true, that care taken in the execution of the Law as might be wished, yet the *obligation* to obedience is still the same. If the Ministers of the Law neglect to discharge their duty, the Law does not thereupon lose its binding force which it derived from a higher fountain, for we are to be in subjection *not only for wrath,*

but conscience sake. Let it not be pleaded that you are not within the *design* of the *Statute*, which was purely to prevent the idleness of labouring people, that they might not spend their time and money at the *Ale-House*, when the necessities of their families called for it; for granting this to have been the main intent of the Law, yet, foreseeing this end could not otherwise be effected, our Legislators have wisely made this Prohibition general; so that it is expected from you that you carefully fly such forbidden ground, if not for your own sakes, for the sake of your poor neighbour. And this reason, on which the Law is founded, would make a distinction of *Places*, though we should suppose the Law to have left them *indifferent*. The ill consequences of your haunting Houses of ill fame are notorious; many of the poorer Idlers will take countenance from your example, and escape unpunished. The rank and condition you hold will fright the Officers from meddling with you; and, that they may not be thought partial, they will leave other offenders to go unmolested, and thus more families than one shall come to want bread by your means; besides which there is personal danger in the case, liquor must be called for, and when brought will, no doubt, be disposed of the common way, till at last you are got within a just suspicion of having drank more than is sufficient. I may add, that first or last,
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you run the hazard of falling into bad company, of which there is seldom a scarcity at such places—and this minds me of the third thing.

III. Take heed with whom you divert yourselves, for it is of more consequence than you are aware who the persons are you make your partners. Avoid those that are given to passion, ^b *For an angry man stirreth up strife.* It is odds but he will find an occasion to quarrel before you part, and then farewell to all the pleasure and harmony of the conversation; so that the love of pleasure, which Youth is so much governed by, should teach caution here. But the worst is, by herding with persons of this character, a man takes to their ill qualities, as it is natural for one flame to be kindled at another, and brawls and scuffles become so familiar that he insensibly slides into them when in more civil company. Let me further press this advice by the authority of *Solomon*, ^c *Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go; and the reason he adds is the same with that I just now mentioned viz. Lest thou learn his way, and get a snare to thy soul.* Neither let a man of corrupt morals share thy Recreations, be his temper the best in the world; nay, for this very reason shun him the more carefully. The *smoothness* of his behaviour, and his *sweet*

^b Prov. xxix. 22.

^c Prov. xxii. 24, 25.

insinuating humour will but make the poison of his example go down the more glibly. May this persuade thee to be upon thy guard, and wisely consider thy danger. An accidental meeting at a *Diversion* hath sometimes been the foundation of a lasting acquaintance; a natural goodness of temper often fatally recommends a wicked man, and from an in-dearedness for his person we easily pass to a liking of his vices. And will it be any mitigation of my misery, should I perish by this means, that a *good tempered man* was the instrument of my ruin?—So much for the *Choice* of your *Diversions*, and the *Circumstances* relating to them.

I come now to the *Second Thing* proposed, to give you those *Directions* that more immediately concern the *Desire*.

1. Let your *Desires* be cool and temperate, for thus only can they be regular. The several degrees of *Desire* should be always matched by equal degrees of worth and significancy in the object; and where that is something of a low concern, it is a shame if it kindle a raging passion. Would not a man betray a childish folly that should be eagerly bent upon hunting down a butterfly? The meanness of his spirit is not much less, that is earnest and impatient for some little *Diversion*. Let us take up that wise resolution of *St. Paul*, *not to be brought under the power of any*.

Is it fit, Sirs, I should govern my *Desires* or that my *Desires* should govern me? You will say, that I should govern my *Desires*; for being mine, my right and property, I may justly exercise that dominion nature hath given me over them. Well, let me ask you again, is it fit *Reason* should govern *Desire*, or *Desire* govern *Reason*? This question, which you may think harder to be solved than the former, is in effect the very same; for it is *Reason* makes the man, and if a man rule his *Desires* it must be by the mediation of his *Reason*. Wherefore, if the *Desires* of things of an interior nature be restless and vehement, not being in subjection to *Reason*, they are no longer in their natural state, they are undue and exorbitant. And then to make you yet more cautious how you suffer such *Desires* to take head, consider as they get strength *Reason* loses it; and they are always most craving where there is the greatest impotence or disorder of the understanding, as in children and mad-folks. But if hasty and inordinate *Desires* of *Diversions*, and such like trifles, argue a weakness of *Reason*, they show yet more plainly a defect of *Religion*. A soul full of the spirit of Christianity hath a sort of indifference for all that is in the world, and though it needs the use of these things sometimes, yet it is not glued to them; whereas he whose *Desires* towards any thing here below are loud and importunate, is tied fast to it, and consequently

quently hangs the looser from God. When the strength and spirits of the mind are wasted on other matters, nothing but indifference and lukewarmness are left for objects of a religious concern; as you may observe those trees that run out into abundance of grosser shoots seldom bear much fruit, because all the best juices go to maintain those useless luxuriances.

You need not be informed when your *Desire of Diversions* is intemperate---if it push you forward to a too frequent enjoyment of them---if you are continually in quest of new ones---if more pressing affairs are ordinarily made to stoop when they lie in the way of your *Diversions*---if having resolved upon a *Diversion*, and the weather or some accident prevent you, you are peevish and out of humour, vexed with the occasion that detains you, or sullenly idle away your time rather than you will apply yourselves to business---if these are the effects of your *Desires*, they are so very bad that you may well conclude the cause not to be very good.

II. Be not very desirous of excelling in any game or exercise; for besides that this shews a mean taste, and a wrong judgment of things, as if skill and mastery at the plays and occupations of children (for in truth all the pretty methods we take to please and flatter human life are no better; as if, I say, these little things) were greatly to be coveted;

ed; besides it diverts us from aiming at that *wisdom that is from above*, and the heavenly skill of glorifying God, and managing our high calling to the noblest purposes; besides all these disadvantages attending it, it hath likewise these unhappy consequences, that it engages us oftener than is decent in the favourite *Diversion*, untill we have attained the dexterity and the knowledge we desire; it fills us with vexation if after all we do not succeed at it, and will be a temptation, should we master it, to follow it too close, and spend too much of our time at it, either that we may make a penny of our art, or out of silly vanity to let others see our extraordinary talent at it.

I proceed now in the *Third Place* to lay before you such *Rules* and *Directions* as regard the *Use* and *Enjoyment* of your *Diversions*.

1. Beg of God that he would preside over your *Diversions*; that he would fortify you by his *Grace* against the temptations that may assault you; teach you moderation in the use of them, and the wise art of making them subservient to Religion; in a word, that he would add his blessing to them for the enlivening and refreshing your spirits. I would not be thought to mean that such a formal address ought immediately to precede every *Diversion*, though I see no harm in it if it did; but what I mean is, that in your private prayers among other petitions you
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would not omit to mention sometimes the *Regulation of your Diversions*, that as they are innocent in their nature, they may also prove innocent in their use. And there is no doubt but you will do this, if duely sensible of the need you stand in of the divine Presence, that the most harmless food may kill where he does not mercifully prevent; or plainly that we cannot be concerned about the world, though in the most simple and unforbidden instances, with absolute safety; there is nothing but the Devil may mingle his temptations with, and, when we dream of no danger near, convey poison into our cup of pleasure; which should be a reason with us to beg of God to direct and restrain us, to hedge round our way, and enable us to recreate ourselves with innocence and safety.

II. Bless God your circumstances in the world are such as to allow of needful and moderate *Diversions*; I say those that are *needful*; for really to be in a condition that would lay us under a temptation to pass away the whole of life in one enchanted circle or continued variation of them, is what no one would desire that knows what makes for his true interest; as, on the other side, it is not the most happy state of life to be confined to a perpetual drudgery of business just to supply the necessities of nature. If there be not an opportunity to unbend and
relax

relax by intervals, and taste the sweets of life, we find in ourselves a strong inclination to repine, and are the more apt to exceed bounds whenever we enjoy a vacancy. We have therefore great reason to be thankful if *Agur's* wise choice be our lot, not to have either *Poverty* or *Riches*. Our Religion is no enemy to convenient Recreations; and if herein our condition agree with our Religion, and will admit of them too, it is indeed a mercy. While we cheer and exhilarate ourselves, and the springs of life have a new force and briskness put into them, and our secret powers are disposed to act with greater pleasures, let not the goodness of our most bountiful Creator be unminded, who permits us to relieve our weariness, and supplies us with the means and capacities of doing it, and is pleased to see us lightened and animated by our Recreations, provided we do not transgress the inviolable rules of virtue and sobriety.

III. In case you play for money, let the sum be inconsiderable, and no more than you would contentedly lose. Where the stakes run high, it is no longer a *Diversion*, a calm and pleasing amusement, but endangers your repose. The whole soul is in an uneasy suspense while the game is depending, the thoughts variously agitated, and hope and fear by turns possess you; and thus what was designed to invigorate, tires and tor-

torments you, and dispirits you to a greater degree than business itself would have done. Should you lose, not to mention the vexation it will give you, you will scarce be able to forbear playing on to retrieve your loss; though instead of that it often happens that you throw more after. Should you win, it only serves to draw you in further, makes you willing to double the stake; and lured with the flattering hope of bettering your *good luck*, as you call it, lose perhaps twice the sum you had gotten. In short, win or lose, the inconvenience is much the same, and either way you become addicted to gameing.

And to this cause I make no doubt, we ought to ascribe that vehement passion for play that we see in certain persons, who are never satisfied any longer than while they are at it, nor indeed then. They play the oftener because they play for money, and by often playing they contract an habitual inclination that is continually importuning them. It cannot pass for an excuse, *that you have money to spare*; for it is a mistake to think you have so very much to spare for idle *Diversions*. Say you can spare what you play for at first, you are induced at long run to play for more than you can spare. Hast thou bread and to spare? Be thankful to God for this overplus, and shew thine is real charity by feeding his poor. Does thy cup
over

overflow? It is pity any thing should be wasted when there are so many would be glad of it to allay their thirst. It is a dangerous error, though but too common, that what is more than enough to supply our needs, and the needs of those nature has obliged us to provide for, is perfectly at our own disposal, and may be lavished away at discretion; whereas indeed we are no more than God's *Treasurers*, and must account for all that we receive; our superfluous wealth is part of the Publick Stock, and we are guilty of great mismanagement to embezzle it, and lay it out on our private occasions; I would not say, when there is occasion.

iv. Be very sparing of your *Diversions*. Though I said, not long since, that there are some occasions proper to relax in, you must not presently fancy that whenever you feel a reluctance to work, and the mind is a little wandering and dissipated, you have a sufficient pretence to seek your cure in some *Diversion*; for this backwardness does often arise not from your being unfit but unaccustomed to labour; and with a little trouble your thoughts might be recollected, and after you were once set in the work would proceed successfully enough. Besides the barely changing our business, might be made many times to supply the place of *Diversion*, and the mind weary and sick of one set of thoughts would find its repose in another;

ther; the secret of this is, that it cannot bear to be long in company with the same object; you must feed it with variety if you would keep it from languishing. In this it resembles the eye that loves not to gaze for any long while together upon the most beautiful picture, without once looking off; it is the liberty to vary its objects that gratifies it most: I believe there is scarce a *Student* but can tell us from his own experience, that after having meditated himself into a dozy heartless frame, the reading a delightful piece of *History* hath awakened him, and put him into a new vein for contemplation.

Real occasions for *Diversion* then are not so frequent as you are willing to believe, and consequently your *Diversions* ought not to be many and thick sown. The multitude of *Diversions* is extremely prejudicial, and the symptom of a vain and sensual disposition. In a life full of these airy pleasures what room is there for the mortification and self denial of a Christian? A too quick succession of them sensualizes the heart, and unites it too strongly to the world; it makes you over fond of life, and afraid of death; it weakens the influence of heavenly things; for how can it be that our aspirations to the joys above should be very ardent at the time we are so intirely possessed of worldly delights? It emasculates the spirits; so softens the mind that it sinks under adversity: it is by voluntary

tary austerities a man hardens himself against the day of trouble, and is able to bear up against those shocks of Providence from which no one is secure: whereas *Diversions* too often repeated unbrace the nerves of the soul, and enfeeble its powers; and finally render us averse to the severer exercises of Religion and Virtue. These are all natural consequences of a life abandoned to Sports and Pastimes, the serious thought of which should make us sober and reserved in the use of them.

v. Let not your *Diversions* be too long and entrench upon your precious time; as for certain they do when so much of the day is allotted them that you are forced to crowd together in haste your *Devotions* and *Business*, that they may come within the compass of the little that is left; or perhaps, wholly neglect them. He is to be commended that knows when to leave off, who having stopped and breathed a while, and taken necessary refreshment, pursues his journey with fresh vigour and alacrity, and does not, as some others, make a tedious stay at every baiting place.

Diversions in life are not altogether unlike *Digressions* in a Book, things mighty serviceable to an *Author*, they relieve him in the want of matter, and which is yet better, swell the bulk and the price of his Book; neither, if discreetly husbanded, are they

unacceptable to the Reader ; but if spun out to an unreasonable length, they take up much more room than the main subject ; we conclude the *Author* to have a wrong idea of *Digressions*, or a very mean one of his Readers. The business of life, setting aside the time that runs off in convenient sleep and repose, ordinarily claims the biggest portion of the remainder ; and in case your usual *Diversions* fill a larger space they are monstrous and unsizeable, as those overgrown *Digressions* mentioned before. Time is a most valuable talent, and the more valuable in that Eternity depends on it, and you had best think a little how you will be able to answer it at the last day, should you be prodigal of this treasure, and squander it away in *needleless Diversions*, *Diversions* that are loved not so much upon their own account (for their length is really tedious) as because they serve to pass away time.

VI. Let not your mind and heart be too far engaged in a *Diversion*. To hug a *Diversion* so close argues the affection to be prepossessed more than is becoming, and is an indication of a light and frothy soul. An infallible sign of this eager application to *Diversion* is refusing to leave it when some occasional business summons you away ; and as this is a sign of a too intense pursuit of *Diversion* so is it evidently a reason against it ; for whatsoever tends not to make a *Diver-*
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sion preparatory to business, but a let and a hinderance, must needs be an abuse of it, and inconsistent with the laws of *Temperance*; much as if I should use a remedy for a distemper, and take so great a dose of it as to encrease my illness.

VII. Look not on *Diversions* as an end, but use it as a means. Let *Diversions* be for the sake of *Business*, not *Business* minister to *Diversions*; which I fear is the common method of the world, whose principal motive to work is either that they may get wherewith to supply their *Diversions*, or that by variety they may give a poignancy and relish to them, or be able to divert themselves without censure; these are the views that animate them, and make business supportable, not the thought that they are now doing their duty, obeying God, and serving their generation. On the contrary, in their use of Recreation they look no further, they rest here as in their end, and the thing that chiefly induces it is the slight superficial pleasure it gives, not its fitness to revive them, and beget a new appetite and capacity for *Business*, that so they may glorify God by a virtuous industry. Should they deny this, they will never be believed, as long as they envy Persons of *Quality* for the pleasurable life they lead, and account them the happiest people on earth because they can be continually diverting themselves,

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and not have such heavy reflections passed upon them, as they should for taking the same liberties. What can be a plainer argument than this, that they take *Diversion* to be the great end of life? A notion that is confuted by the very name; for a *Diversion* is so called from its interrupting our principal concern; according to which etymology should we suppose it our great happiness to mind chiefly our *Diversions*, (where our circumstances allow of it) what we now term *Business* would most properly go under the name of *Diversion*.

It is not impossible that *Young Gentlemen* (if any such happen to read this small Essay) when they look on this, and some of the foregoing Particulars, will pass them over hastily, without making any application to themselves, fancying they are not the Persons concerned. The frequency and length of *Diversions*, and the not subordinating them to more manly and grave Occupations, may be a fault in those of meaner quality, but in them they bespeak a freedom and gallantry of spirit, and are a sort of rights and immunities belonging to their great birth and fortune. If they must make conscience how they spend their time, what advantage have they above others? What is a great Estate good for but to maintain the owner in a soft, idle and luxurious way of living? How else shall he distinguish himself from the trading part of the world?

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In earnest, this is such sorry reasoning that I am loath to suppose a man of any sense capable of it. *A Gentleman*, I hope, does not reckon himself above the laws of right Reason and the commands of the Gospel; he is equally a subject of God Almighty, every whit as accountable for his actions; and his time is a talent it concerns him to improve, no less than other men. Alas, Sirs, *Figure, Estate and Title* are poor empty things; thus much you learn from the example of our Lord who refused them all when in his power. Because they dazzle a vain unthinking crowd, is it imaginable they should weigh so much with the Great God, that he will exempt you from the common duties of human nature? Did our blessed Master lead a laborious and painful life? And can any that are called his disciples think it beneath them to set to any thing that hath but the face of *Business*.

To ask—How a *Gentleman* shall distinguish himself if not by his Pleasures—is a scandalous question; and might with as good grace be altered to this other question—How he shall be distinguished from other men but by being less *Reasonable* than they—If he must be differenced from the rest of the world, there are much more creditable methods for it than this that is commonly taken. Let him affect to lead the way in brave and virtuous actions, and to excel in useful learn-

ing, for which last he hath manifestly the advantage of persons whose circumstances are narrower; such accomplishments will brighten his character, and because of the eminence of his station appear sooner, and dart their light and influence further than it is possible they should in a lower sphere. For a man to plead his Estate as his *Patent* for being careless and negligent, is such a piece of *effrontery* that nothing can be more. Let the *Servant* he pays the greatest wages to, alledge that for a reason of his gading abroad, and doing less than his fellows; what answer must he expect? *Mutato nomine, de te fabula narratur.*

Hast thou so much of the world that thou dost not know of any use for it, unless it be to furnish thy Pleasures? Let not this long disturb thee; thy wealth is not so unweildy, but there are enough who would willingly take off the parings of it; the *poor* and the *needy* are always with you. I would fain believe no *Young Gentleman*, to excuse his useles unprofitable manner of life, will pretend, he is at a loss how to imploy himself, that his time lies upon his hands, and he had as good give it all to Recreation, as consume it in doing nothing. Should any one talk at this rate, he must strangely forget himself; for where is the consequence, that because he would avoid doing nothing, he is
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forced upon doing that which is to no purpose ?

The first Years of a *Gentleman's* life (after his Reason begins to display itself) are usually spent at the Publick Schools, and there he cannot want for *Business* to take him up. Let him get into the acquaintance of the best Authors, and by them labour continually in cultivating his mind and manners, and he will find the fragments of time that remain over and above are not so very considerable. But, ah, how seldom is this done! Young men that are born to Estates miserably neglect their Studies; as if learning looked too pedantic in a *Gentleman*, or as if they should suck in enough of it by only breathing in the *College Air*; though I dare say they would never consent their dear bodies should be put off with such thin diet. Hence proceeds an ignorance that has been the scandal of so many of our *Gentry*, and has made it wished they would never travel to give Foreigners so poor an idea of the sense and learning of the English Nation. And doubtless this ignorance is a principal reason of the corruption of the present age, more particularly of the vices of the tongue. *Gentlemen* would fain be remarkable for something, and despairing to pass for men of sober and solid sense, set up for *Men of Wit*, that is, for men that can make a jest of *Damnation*; for in truth, he alone is thought a *Witty Man* that can say

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extravagant things, and treat his *Maker* with the same coarseness and freedom that he would his *Footman*. Yea, so fashionable is the profane humour grown, that (God forgives us) it is almost become a *Set Diversion*; a *Diversion* I confess I did not mention in discoursing of the *Choice of Diversions*, because so very bad that every one must see the evil of it; so very bad indeed that the Devil himself cannot invent a worse. In short, (that I may return from this little digression) *Young Gentlemen* will find enough to do to lay in materials, that they may appear with honour and reputation when their *King* or *Country* shall call them into the scene of action.

VIII. Learn humility from your *Diversions*. The want of them is not, in all likelihood, a necessity of original nature, but the effect of sin. Innocent man was not liable to that stupor and satiety we so often experience; his work, properly speaking, was not labour but pleasure; his strength could carry him on to his end without resting so often by the way; and whatever faintness and lassitude he might at times fall into, must, I fancy, have been inconsiderable, and soon remedied by a short balsamic sleep. From hence it is, I am inclined to think, that part of the *Curse*,^d *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread untill thou return to the*

* Gen. iii. 19.

the ground, was not only remote, and fell immediately upon the earth, which being doomed to barrenness would put man to more expence and trouble to cultivate and improve it, but respected man immediately, and was as much as to say, that he should not only be obliged to bestow more care and labour upon the ground, but his work of that and all other kinds should be more painful and toilsome, and call for more frequent *Diversions*. But however this be, it is out of doubt that our *Diversions* are marks, if not of our *apostacy*, at least of the *imperfection* of the present state; for is it supposable that the *spirits of just men made perfect* are as we presently oppressed by a contemplation, and for the sake of change can find their pleasure in *Play Games*? You will say they are at liberty from the load of *flesh and blood* that weighs us down. Very true; but how do you apprehend it will be at the resurrection when the soul shall be again invested with its body? Shall we then need to trifle sometimes that we may work at others? No certainly; the spriteliness and strength of both parts of our nature will fit us for continual exercise, and, being equal to the angels, we shall not be subject to that weakness, and to those infirmities that belong to our present infant state.

Methinks therefore we cannot make a better nor more natural use of our *Diversions* than to draw from them an argument for
humi-

humility. And if this be the true use, assuredly they make a very wrong one of them, whose *Diversions* are a reason of their pride; they despise the man that maintains himself by an honest industry, and hath not the ability or the inclination to melt down his hours in foolish pleasures. But what cannot pride effect? It can build in the air, or upon that very ground that is sacred to humility; and so great is the interest it has got in man, that he takes occasion to be proud from those things that are the effects of sin and ought to humble him. *Nakedness*, as I may say, was the livery of innocence; cloaths had not been known but by the *Fall*; and every time we dress ourselves it is strange almost how we can forbear reflecting by that very action, that we are *apostate* creatures: and yet what hath ministered more to vanity than cloaths? I have likewise shown you that the necessity of Recreations was introduced by the *Fall*; for men therefore to insult because they divert themselves even more than is needful, betrays a strong inclination to pride, and (abstracting from other considerations) renders the *Mosaic History* extremely probable, which acquaints us that our nature was tainted with this sin in the fountain.

To add the greater force and efficacy to the *Directions* that have been given, consider the advantages of *Regularity*. I glanced

at several as I passed along, but it will not be amiss to consider more distinctly,

I. The agreeable appearance that it makes. Proportion is the very essence of beauty and harmony. The beauty of a body lies in the strict symmetry of its parts, and a fine air and colour spread over the whole; and the beauty of human life consists in a due proportion and correspondence of the several parts with one another, and of all together with the law of right Reason. Where the shrill and airy, and the more solemn sounds do jointly assist to the harmony, the musick fails not to please a discerning ear; when the lights and the shades in a picture are judiciously mingled, the eye confesses itself charmed at the sight; and who is there that is not agreeably surprized to see in a *youthful life* the brighter and the graver scenes orderly placed, and managed by an exact prudence?

II. Reflect on the credit that attends good management in *Diversions*. A temperance that restrains from the grosser instances of sensual pleasure is not without its praise in a *Young Man*, because the contrary is so very common in our times, and the fever of Youth does seem a little to excuse those extravagant sallies; how reputable then must be a temperance that descends even to the inspection and government of his Recreations? It shows his Reason to be stanch and firm, that there is a principle within him superior

to sense and fancy, which hath the mastery of his desires, and can be cool and sedate amidst warm and clamorous passions; it bespeaks present applause, and encourages great hopes and expectations of the future. The *Gentleman* that has preferred his private *Business* to his *Diversions* may with the greater confidence, be entrusted with publick Affairs by his *Prince* or *Country*, secure that he will not neglect them for his pleasures. The *Scholar* that hath stuck close to his Studies will be reckoned well furnished and prepared for the employment he engages in. And the *Tradesman* who has minded his Shop will be thought to be master of his Trade; the world will judge him in a fair way to thrive, and so if he wants a stock to begin with he shall have credit enough almost to supply it. In a word all of them, with this *Proviso*, enter upon the world with peculiar advantages.

III. The Pleasure of well regulated *Diversions* ought not to be forgotten. Whatever is reasonable will always carry with it its own reward, for Reason is the proper nature of man, his great distinctive character; and the more natural any thing the more pleasant. The temperate person feels a more serene and genuine pleasure both in the *enjoyment* and in the *reflection*.

I. Temperance gives the sincerest pleasure in the *enjoyment* of *Diversions*; of which there
are

are these two or three obvious Reasons to be assigned.

1. Their not being too common, nor lengthened out too far, makes them the more relishing. It may be remarked of all the delights of this world that they pall upon a long fruition, and, if often repeated, grow flat and tasteless; it is *absence* must recommend the most ingenious conversation; and two of the best friends that ever lived, after they have been shut up in a room for several hours, (unless they have something extraordinary to talk of) will, for the time, be heartily sick of one anothers company. On this very account I have sometimes wondered how so many people can bear a constant *round* of long-winded *Diversions*; it cannot be, sure, from the mighty pleasure they find in them; I am persuaded they enjoy less of that than other men. Monsieur *Pascal* will tell you the true ground of this—
“ In all the tumultuary business, and in all
“ the trifling *Diversions* amongst men, our
“ general aim is to make the time pass off
“ our hands without feeling it, or rather
“ without feeling ourselves; and by getting
“ rid of this small portion of life, to avoid
“ that inward disgust and bitterness which
“ we should not fail to meet with, did we
“ find the leisure to descend into our own
“ breasts.”

2. The temperate man enjoys all the pleasure a *Diversion* will naturally afford, because he does not look for more; whereas disappointment is the certain fate of very positive desires, and fruition gives but little satisfaction, in regard fancy had promised too much; the man is disgusted to find all his gay hopes so rudely treated, and himself the *Cully* of his *imagination*. It is advantageous for an object when expectation falls short of it, nor is any one displeas'd to be so mistaken, because the error contributes to his happiness; but when expectation flies too high it is a mortification to descend again, as it would be for a guest that had seated himself at the upper end of the table to be thrust down amongst the meanest of the company.

3. Temperance is the reason that a person diverts himself with an easy satisfied mind. Having paid what he owes to his more important concerns, his thoughts within are at rest, he may now venture upon a little harmless pleasure, and has the leave of God and his conscience for it. Not so he whose *Diversions* jostle out the main affairs of life; being sent into the world not that he might follow the conduct of humour and fancy, but to serve his Maker and be useful to mankind; he must needs be uneasy for having acted beneath the dignity of his nature, and the design of his creation; his conscience will be apt to tell him he hath no right
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to *Diversions*; it will upbraid him for having stolen so much time from his *Business*, and be continually duning him for the long arrears that are due. And thus the pleasure the first takes in a *Diversion* drinks pure and refined, like a liquor drawn off from its lees; that of the other is extremely puddled, as liquor when the vessel hath received a great shake, and the dregs at bottom are disturbed and unfettled. To conclude.

II. If the regular person has the better in the enjoyment of *Diversions*, much more in the reflection. Memory is not a torment to him as it is to some others who have reason to blush every time they cast their view backward, not seeing any but empty space void of all substantial actions, nor having advanced in the knowledge of God, of the world, or of themselves; to whom no standing memorial is left that a rational Being hath lived, but only a few ideas silly and impertinent as the images of a dream.

In short, if a life possessed intirely by *Diversions* be pleasing to think on, it must be when it is yet future, not when it is past. On the contrary, time well spent yields greater satisfaction in the reflection than it does in the prospect; by being past it is secured to a person, and no accident whatever can alter it, whereas there is something of contingency while it is to come, and many temptations may turn him from his duty;
besides

besides he reaps the fruits of his good husbandry, he finds his very Being bettered and improved, and more valuable than it was; to which add, that his chearful labours and his innocent mirth encourage him to hope for the happiness of a better life.

The End of the SECOND VOLUME.



To be corrected.

PAGE 36. l. 23. r. of the. p. 43. l. 28. r. a vir-
tue. p. 481. l. 31. r. Diversions.



