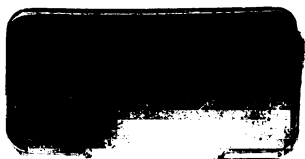

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DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

SINS of INFIRMITY

AND

WILFUL SINS;

With Another of

RESTITUTION.

By the Right Reverend

RICHARD KIDDER, D.D.

Late Bishop of *Bath and Wells.*

The THIRD EDITION.

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

THE following Discourse (in a plain and easy Style, suited to the meanest Capacity) was composed chiefly for the poorer Inhabitants of the Diocese of Bath and Wells; amongst whom, the good Bishop had designed to distribute great Numbers of them, had God spared him a few Weeks longer. The Copy was sent to the Press a very short Time before the late dreadful Tempest, which put a Period to the Author's Life.

May the good Instructions herein contained be effectual to excite in thee sincere Repentance for all thy Sins past; and mayest thou stand always ready to quit this earthly Tabernacle, when, or in what Manner soever, Death shall give thee the final Summons.

So prays thy Servant in Christ Jesus.





A

DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

SINS of INFIRMITY, &c.

I Intend to discourse of Sins of Weakness, or Infirmity, called in Scripture, *Errors*, and *secret Faults*, and of *wilful* or *presumptuous Sins*; as also of *Restitution*.

S E C T. I.

And first, of Sins of Weakness; and that in the following Method.

I. I shall consider the Nature of Sins of Weakness, or Infirmity, called, *Errors*, and *secret Faults*, very often escaping even our own Observation.

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II. The

II. The Effect of these Sins upon us, as to the Favour of God.

III. The Obligation that lies upon us, upon the Score of these Sins.

I. I shall give an Account of the Nature of Sins of Infirmity.

A Mistake here is of infinite Danger to the Souls of Men; because these Sins are consistent with the Favour of God and the State of Grace, which habitual, wilful, and presumptuous Sins are not; of which I purpose to discourse afterward. And if we repute these our wilful Sins but Infirmities, we shall think ourselves the Children of God, when we are not, and flatter ourselves to our eternal Ruin. On the other hand, if we shall repute our Sins of Weakness to be wilful Sins (as some good Christians have been prone to do) we shall fall into great Perplexities, and lose the Comfort and Peace of our Mind. So that this Matter is of great Moment, and ought to be stated with great Care.

And, for my better Proceeding in this weighty Argument, I shall shew,

I. Negatively, What is not to be reputed a Sin of Weakness or Infirmity.

1st, He that sins with Reluctance and great *Regret*, must not therefore call his Sin a Sin of *Infirmity*. For it is not to be supposed, but the wilful and deliberate Sinner hath something of this. And as the Case may be, this is rather an *Aggravation*, than an *Excuse* for the Sin. And generally speaking,

ing, the vilest (especially at first) have something of this. He that sins without Remorse, is one of the most hardened and hopeless. It is an Argument of a sad State, when a Man can do shameful things, and not be ashamed. And he that sins against these Reluctancies, is in a very sad Condition. This is not a Spot of God's Children, but a Mark of the Vassal of the Devil's Kingdom, and a Subject of the Kingdom of Darkness.

2dly, He that customarily sins after Resolutions of Amendment, must not call that a Sin of Infirmity, not though we should suppose his Resolution to be sincere and hearty. For Resolution is but a relative Duty, and only in order to the doing what we resolve to do. Therefore the Performance is necessary; and if that does not follow, this bare Resolution will not excuse him from a wilful Sin. There are certain Resolutions and Inclinations which serve to no Purpose, unless it be to condemn us. Among Men, such Promises and Purposes pay no Debts, and quit no Scores. For as a Man is not to be reputed a carnal Man, because he hath about him some carnal Desires and Inclinations, which he resists, and suffers not to come into Act; so a Man is not to be accounted a spiritual Man, because he hath some ineffectual Purposes and Resolutions. It is he that *does Righteousness* (not he that barely resolves upon it) that *is righteous as God is righteous*. Good Wishes do not speak a good Man; if they did, we should be excused very easily from our universal Obedience.

3dly, Nor is it to be allowed to be a Sin of Infirmity, which is owing to another Sin or evil Cause, which we might have avoided. For at this rate, the greatest Sins may be placed under this Head.

He that murders a Man in his drunken Fit, must not call that Murder an Infirmity; because his Drunkenness was a Fault that he ought to have avoided, and one Fault is not a sufficient Excuse for another. The same may be said of him that swears in his Anger, and blasphemes in his Fury and outrageous Passion. We commonly say, and very truly, *That the Cause of the Cause, is the Cause of the Effect, or Thing caused.* We are answerable for the Effects, when we are the Authors of the Cause of them. The Greatness of the Temptation will not excuse our Compliance. That is an Argument that the Temptation weighed more with us, than the Laws of God and the Love of Righteousness; which is so far from being our Excuse, that it is our Fault.

4thly, Those must not be called *Sins of Infirmity*, which our corrupt Nature may be said to incline us to; for then we may repute all our filthy Debaucheries and crying Sins as *Infirmities*. The State of Nature is indeed a State of Infirmity, and our greatest Crimes proceed from our Infirmity, that is natural or moral, but then this makes not our Excuse, but would entirely destroy all the Difference between Sins of Weakness and Wilful Sins.

I proceed to shew positively and affirmatively what Sins are to be reputed *Sins of Infirmity*.

Now *Errors* or *Sins of Infirmity*, are such Sins as, generally speaking, are unavoidable. I say, generally speaking. For perhaps as to some of the Particulars under this Head, they are not so. For sometimes it is possible for us to avoid the Instance, and the particular Slip or Fault, when
yet,

yet, in the main, all things considered, we cannot be free from them altogether. Under this Head I reckon,

1. Sins of Ignorance, whether of the *Law*, or of the *Transgression*, where this Ignorance is not affected and criminal; for where that is the Case, there our Ignorance will not excuse us, because it is our Fault, and one Fault will not excuse another. It is a very possible Thing, that a very innocent Man may, in some Cases, be ignorant of the *Law*, and consequently of the *Transgression*: but then this Ignorance must be involuntary, and unchosen, and unaffected. There are some Men that know not, nor will they understand; that shut their Eyes, and refuse the Light: these are they that are willingly ignorant. There must be an honest Heart, and no culpable Negligence, before Ignorance can be pleaded in our Excuse. Such an one who is honest and industrious, may mistake or forget the Law: such an one *St Paul* calls *weak in the Faith*. And there were many such at the first planting of the Christian Faith, who did not understand their *Christian Liberty*, and discharge from the Ordinances of *Moses*. The Apostles, who had received a Command to teach all Nations, were some time before they could be prevailed with to admit the *Gentiles* into the Church of Christ. The Drunkard, and profane and profligate Sinner, cannot pretend to this Excuse; his Sins cry aloud, and there is something within him that bears Witness against these foul Offences.

Yet still it is very certain, that a very good Man may be innocently ignorant of some part of his Duty, and that may happen from sundry Causes

8. Of Sins of Infirmary.

and Occasions. There are some Men who are truly good; that have a very mean Understanding, which may be allowed to be an Infelicity, but not their Fault. Others have Capacity, but not the Means of Instruction, nor any Opportunity of having the Principles of Christianity laid in them. But besides all this,

1st, Something is to be allowed for Prejudice and Prepossession: and no doubt, God will allow much where the Prejudice is not faulty. It is of great Consequence what we imbibe in our Youth. These Principles clap a great Bias upon us, and the Way is too often blocked up against the Reception of the Truth; in such a Case as this, we are very uncharitable, if we should throw all such Men among the *wilful* and *presumptuous Sinners*.

2^{dly}, The Law itself does not many times determine the measures and degrees of Virtue and Duty: we are commanded to give *Alms* of such things as we have, and here we all stand obliged: but it does not tell how much we must give, nor what Proportion of our Income. This is not determined by the Law, nor can it well be, under that Variety of Circumstances in which the Givers are placed. Again, we are commanded to be *temperate* in eating and drinking; but our Measures are not set down, nor can they be fixed, because of that Variety of Mens Needs and Circumstances; and therefore a good Man may perhaps exceed or fall short, indulge himself too much, or too little. If it be said, that Virtue consists in the middle, yet every good Man may not be able precisely to determine that matter. We are commanded to *Pray*, but we are not told
how

how often in a Day, and what Proportion of Time we are to spend at once. For where it is said, *that we must pray always and without ceasing*, we very well know, that those Expressions cannot be understood in the strictest Sense of the Letter, because we are by other Laws obliged to some other things, and it is impossible to practise it in the most rigorous and extended Sense.

3dly, Some Laws have their Exceptions either necessarily implied, or expressed, and Men are to govern themselves accordingly. We are commanded to *give to every Man that asketh*. But here it must be supposed, that he who is asked have somewhat to give, and that he do not want it more than he that asketh; and after all, if he cannot give to all, yet many times it is greater Charity to give to him that asketh not. We are obliged to *obey our Governors and Parents*; but yet we must not do it where they command what God hath forbid, or forbid what God hath commanded. This was frequently the Case under the Law of *Moses*; that required, *that a Man should marry his Brother's Widow, and raise up Seed unto his Brother*. And after all, some Men could not do this. *e. gr.* We will suppose the deceased Person Brother to the High Priest, it could not be lawful for him to marry his Brother's Widow, because by the Law he was forbid to marry any Widow, as the *Jews* well observe, [*Jevamoth*, cap. 2, 3.] And therefore he must be an excepted Person. Again, we will suppose two Brothers to marry two Sisters, one Brother dies and leaves a Widow, yet may not the surviving Brother marry that Widow, because it is expressly forbidden by another Law to take to Wife his Wife's Sister. A great many other Cases, doubtless, might be

given, in which a very good Man might mistake his Rule very innocently, and as innocently go astray from it.

4thly, There are some Things in which our Rule does not particularly direct us. God's Laws run many times in general Terms, without descending to Definitions and Specialities. Thus the Laws about Temperance, and against Covetousness, do not descend to strict Definitions, and all the Specialities contained under them. And so as to Matters of Recreations and Divertisements, a good Man may mistake, not being able to apply general Laws to the particular Occasions and Emergencies of Life; and may without Loss of God's Favour, take a greater Liberty than a wiser Man would have taken.

5thly, Again, a good Man may innocently run into some sort of Extreme. For sometimes so it is, that the Sin lies in the Degree; and where the Thing is lawful, the Excess is faulty and culpable. And the just and strict Limits of Virtue and Vice are sometimes not very discernable. It is not easy to set out the Boundaries between Truth and Falshood, which often dwell upon the Skirts of each other. And this is often the Case between Virtue and Vice. In many Cases we are prone to run into some Excess, *v. gr.* to exceed in Mirth, even then when it is not only lawful, but expedient to rejoice; or in our Grief, when it is lawful and seasonable to mourn. We may in some Cases be too morose, and too scrupulous; or, on the other hand, be too gay and complaisant. And, as the Case may be, we may be either too zealous or else too remiss. Upon these Accounts the justest Man upon Earth may err, and this through an Ignorance that is not culpable.

2. Sins of Surreption or Surprize, when we have not time to consider, and deliberate, and weigh the thing that is propounded to us. The upper Soul or Understanding of a Man does not move the Will or lower Faculties, as a Clock or Watch is moved, where one Wheel that is set on moving moves all the rest. For the lower Powers of the Soul may move, when the upper do not inform and direct. A sudden Fear or Fright may prevail in a Moment, and set the lower Powers on work, before the Understanding hath time to give Advice and Information. In this Case, a Man is rather hurried, than led or seduced; and the Action is in Truth involuntary: for where he hath not time to think, it cannot be called the Action of the Man: What he does in this Case, is not his Fault, nor will be no more imputed to him, than the Actions of Madmen or of Idiots will be charged upon them.

3. Mistakes and Errors which we are guilty of through Forgetfulness and Inadvertency, and want of a most strict and continual Watch and Guard upon ourselves: These are not wilful and deliberate; and though they are Sins, yet when they are against the habitual Inclination and Choice of the Man, they are not presumptuous Sins. It is not to be supposed, but that in this State of Weakness in which we now are, that we should be always intent and awake. *The Wise Virgins, that yet had Oil in their Lamps, whilst the Bridegroom tarried, slumbered and slept. And where the Spirit is willing, yet the Flesh is weak.*

If, after all, any Man should call for a Catalogue of those Sins which are to be reputed Sins of Weakness, he would be very unreasonable. Such

a Catalogue cannot be given in. The Reason is plain : Because those very Sins which in some Men, and in some Cases, are but Sins of Infirmity, in other Men, and in other Circumstances, may be truly called wilful Sins. An Infirmity indulged and allowed, will grow up to the Stature of a wilful Sin. And Sins of Infirmity and Wilfulness are such, many times, with respect to the Sinner. It is a certain Truth, that he that committeth the greatest Sin, is not always the greatest Sinner. And one Man may be a wilful Sinner, in that very Instance in which another is guilty only of an Infirmity. For Mens Sin and Guilt swell or grow less, according to the Circumstances which do attend them. That may be wilful in one Man, which in another is but Surreption and Surprize. It is the Will God looks at ; and as it consents or rejects, the Sin and the Sinner will be esteemed in the Sight of God, who alone knows our Hearts.

But as the Papists require us to give in a Catalogue of Fundamentals, so perhaps some may urge us still to give in a Catalogue of these Sins, though it be unreasonable, on one side and on the other, to make such a Demand ; yet I think it will be no hard Matter to give some Exemplifications of the Sins of Infirmity, which I am now treating upon.

E. gr. Such are evil Thoughts, springing indeed from an evil Temper and bad Inclination, but not consented to,

Wandering or Drowsiness in Prayer, and other parts of Divine Worship, when we strive against it ; for when it seizes our Will, and gains our Consent, it is a wilful Sin.

Evil

Evil Emotions and Propensions, that are forthwith retracted and stifled. These may be allowed to be Sins, but they are but Sins of Infirmity and Weakness. For as no Man is to be accounted an holy and spiritual Man, because he hath, now and then, good Wishes and spiritual Desires, if he proceed no farther; so he is not to be reputed a carnal Man, or out of the Favour of God and the State of Salvation, if he have some evil Motions springing up in his Mind, if he stifle and suppress them. I next proceed to consider,

II. The Effect of these Sins, as to the Favour of God and the State of Grace. That is, to enquire whether these Sins do put us out of God's Favour and the State of Grace: or whether if a Man die, that is not quite freed from these Sins, he may be saved.

Now that these Sins are consistent with the Favour of God and the State of Grace, will appear from the following Particulars.

1st, From their Unavoidableness: for so, in the main, they are. It is not possible for a Man to be always upon the Stretch, the wisest and best of Men may be mistaken or surprized in this World of Hurry, and consequently be guilty of Slips and Infirmities. But it is, by no means to be believed, that we shall lose God's Favour for those things which it was impossible for us to help: we may as well suppose we shall lose God's Favour barely because we are Men, as for those Infirmities, which are the inseparable Attendants upon human Nature.

2^{dly},

2dly, They are also involuntary, and do not import Malice or full Consent, and will therefore not condemn us. They are not chosen, not so much as in their Causes, as I have explained this Matter before, and therefore cannot denominate a Man an ill Man. It is here as in some other Cases; a Man of good Skill and Strength, in Wrestling with one of less, may yet fall, because the Ground is slippery, or through some other Accident; and so may the best Horseman, upon a fiery and starting Horse. If he slip or fall, it is not his Fault, but his Misfortune only; it is not his Choice in the least. Here is nothing imputable to the Man, because there is no Choice in the Case.

3dly, The Holiest Men in all Ages, and the most celebrated in all Ages of the Church, have been overtaken with them, and yet have not been supposed to have been deprived of God's Favour, and blotted out of the Book of Life. *Moses* himself, the meekest and one of the best Men upon Earth, yet once spake unadvisedly with his Lips. *Noah*, a perfect Man and a great Preacher of Righteousness, was once surprized and overcome by the Blood of the Grape. *Job* was a Man perfect and upright, that feared God, and eschewed Evil, and he thought he had Cause to say, *I abhor myself, and repent in Dust and Ashes*, Job xlii. 6. *David* was a Man very remarkable for his great Faith and Hope in God, and yet he says, *I have said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine Eyes*, Psal. xxxi. 28. Again, *Zacharias* was righteous before God, walking in all the Commandments of the Lord blameless, Luke i. 2, 18, 20. and yet he betrayed some Infirmity in his Faith, and

was

was struck dumb upon it. The Holiest Men have their Weaknesses and Imperfections.

4thly, The Scriptures assures us that the best of Men are not free from these Infirmities. *There is not a just Man upon Earth, that doth Good and sinneth not.* Again, *Who can say that I have made my Heart clean, and am pure from my Sin?* Eccl. vii. 20. Prov. xx. 9. Even under the Law, Cleansing and Atonement were allowed for Sins of Ignorance; and we are not freed from them under the Gospel.

It is true indeed, *He that is born of God doth not commit Sin,* 1 John iii. 9. ἁ ἁγιασῆν, he does not practise nor live in wilful Sins; that is certainly the meaning of that Place: and this Sense is reconcilable with what is said of Sins of Weakness, chap. i. 8. no Man being quite free from them.

St James supposeth, that a Brother may err from the Truth; and St. Paul, that he may be overtaken with a Fault, James v. 19. Gal. vi. 1. but do not give him for lost upon this Account: nay, their Words rather imply the contrary. We are taught in our daily Prayer to ask Forgiveness of our Sins, which sure we need not do, if we were free from Errors.

5thly, This will be out of Dispute, if we consider the Nature of God, as he is represented to us in the holy Scriptures. He is represented as good and merciful, as having the Compassions of a Father, and the Bowels of a Mother, and as one who desires not the Death, but Conversion of a Sinner. And in the New Testament he is called *Love*, his Kindness is represented as greater than

16 *Of Sins of Infirmary.*

than that of earthly Parents : and yet an earthly Parent is not wont to abdicate or disinherit a Child that studies to please him, though he should sometimes mistake his Commands, or be overtaken with a Fault.

I add, that if the Scriptures were silent, our Experience would not. We have all largely tasted of the Richness of his Goodness and Forbearance, and can say, that *it is of his Mercy that we are not consumed.*

6t**hly**, If we consider the Temper of the Gospel, and Nature of the new Covenant of Grace, we shall be farther confirmed in this Truth. I cannot possibly see how it could be called a new Covenant, or *Covenant of Grace* at all, if it did not make Allowance for Sins that are unavoidable and involuntary. Christ is called *the Desire of Nations*, that is, the most desirable Blessing that could happen to them ; and so indeed he was. His Birth is proclaimed with *Glory to God*, and with *good Will towards Men*, as good Tidings to Mankind, or *Tidings of great Joy which shall be to all People*, Luke ii. 10. But alas ! what Joy could there be in all this, if after all, there were no Hope left for us under our unavoidable Slips and Failures ? Who could hope or rejoice, if there were no Remedy in this Case, if nothing short of a sinless Obedience could secure our Souls ? We should then have remained still in a State of Bondage and Death, Christ would have died in vain : had died in vain, had he not procured Pardon for unavoidable Sins, and our Preaching, and your Faith and Hope, would have been in vain. But we are sure there is great Hope for the Sincere,
though

though they have their Failures, and that Sincerity is the Perfection of a Christian.

III. I proceed now to the Obligation which lies upon us on the Score of these Sins. - You may take your Obligation in the following Particulars.

1. You are obliged to a Sorrow even for these Sins. This will be a good Evidence that they are not wilful. For though they are upon the main unavoidable; yet it is fit we should be sorry for them. Because they urge the Defect of Holiness: and though, generally speaking, we cannot avoid them altogether; yet if we come to particular Instances, there are some that a more exact Care and Watchfulness might have prevented. Who is there among us that does his utmost, and if he does not, (and it is in his Power to do that) he is obnoxious to the Justice of God, and consequently obliged to Repentance for his Neglect.

I do not mean here by Repentance, a particular one, such as presumptuous Sins require; nor do I mean by it a perfect mastering of all these Sins for the future, which in all other Cases is required. But this Case will not admit of such a Repentance; for these Sins are often unknown, and therefore called *secret* Faults; and besides, generally speaking, they are unavoidable also.

All that can be meant by Repentance is this, *viz.* an hearty Sorrow for what we know, with a great Care to avoid them, and a general Confession and Sorrow for what we do not understand. The Psalmist, who, in another Case, shews a very particular Repentance, *Psal.* li. in this Case prays, *Cleanse thou me from my secret Faults.*

Though

Though in all other Cases there be infinite Danger in a general Repentance, and we are never safe when we repent not particularly, yet is not that the Case before us now.

2. These Sins oblige us to a very great Care that we do not wilfully offend; by doing of that we shall shew that these Sins were involuntary. We are but Hypocrites, and out of God's Favour, when we bewail our Infirmities, and indulge ourselves in wilful Sins. We mock God in this Case when we *strain at a Gnat, and swallow a Camel*. This was the Jewish Hypocrisy, who were afraid of a legal Defilement, and allowed themselves in gross Immoralities.

3. We are obliged to confess them, as far as they come to our Knowledge, and to beg for God's Pardon, in the Mediation, and for the sake of Jesus Christ. 1 *John* i. 9. chap. ii. 1, 2, 9. Under the Law of *Moses*, he that had committed a Sin of Ignorance, had a Sacrifice appointed; and there were some continual ones, as the daily Offerings for the Errors of the whole Congregation. These were but Types and Shadows of the Death of Christ, by whose Blood we are cleansed and purged.

4. In order to the securing ourselves a Pardon for these Failures, we must forgive one another. This is God's Appointment, *Mat.* vi. 14. *Luke* vi. 36. And all Acts of Mercy, such as Giving and Forgiving, have a Tendency this way. We must shew Mercy as we would receive it: our Interest and our Duty obliges us to it.

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A
DISCOURSE
OF
WILFUL SINS.

SECT II.

I Next proceed to consider those which are *wilful or presumptuous Sins*. Here I shall consider,

I. The Nature of these wilful or presumptuous Sins.

II. The Effect of them, as to the State of Grace, and Favour of God.

III. The Obligation which lies upon us on the Score of these Sins.

I. I enquire into the Nature of these wilful or presumptuous Sins.

I

I shall need say the less, because I have largely discoursed of the Nature of *Sins of Weakness*, to which these Sins are opposed, and called *presumptuous*, and said to be committed with an high hand, and a Contempt of the Law. *Deut. xvii. 12, 13. Num. xv. 30. Heb. x. 28.* These are Sins of a higher Strain, and import a far greater Guilt, and a Hazard of a future State.

Two Things are required to make a Sin wilful or presumptuous.

1. That it be a Sin against Knowledge. *To him that knows to do good, and doth it not, to him it is Sin, James iv. 17.* Our Saviour tells the *Pharisees, If ye were blind, ye should have no Sin: but now you say, We see; therefore your Sin remaineth, John ix. 41.* This is the great Aggravation of our Fault, and that which leaves us without Excuse, or any Shadow of it. *Luke xii. 47.* He that sins against Conscience, is turned Rebel to Heaven, his Guilt encreaseth to the greatest Bulk and Stature.

2. That it be committed after Consideration; this makes it a *deliberate* Sin. It is possible, that a Man that is not ignorant, may yet be surprized, and not have time to consider. The most watchful Man is not always awake. The same Sin may be in one a *wilful* Sin, which in another is but a Sin of *Infirmity*. Not that God is a Respector of Persons, but because one Man sins against a clear Light, and upon Deliberation, when another is surprized. So it is sometimes, we debate the Matter, our Flesh suggests and pleads, and so does our Conscience, and we attend to both
of

of them. One lays before us the Law, the fatal Effects of the Sin. The other tempts with Ease and Profit, and the pleasant Fruit. In this Case the Sinner offends at the highest Rate; his Sin is wilful in the very highest Degree of all.

Nor are we to be excused from this highest Guilt in some Cases where we do not, and are not able actually to consider. For if this Inability springs from ourselves, and be of our own making, the Case and the Guilt is still the same. The Action which in the special Instance is involuntary, may yet be voluntary in the cause. We have a famous Story among the Jewish Writers to my present Purpose, "A certain King entertained some *Jews*,
" and endeavoured to debauch them: He pressed
" them either to drink freely of his Wine, or to
" eat Swines Flesh, or to commit Lewdness with
" Gentile Women. Upon Deliberation, they
" chose the former, but then under that Excess
" committed the other two, and were consequent-
" ly guilty of all." We are accountable for the Effects of our wilful Drunkenness and Rage. For though we consider not, yet that is our Fault, and cannot therefore be our Excuse. Again, where the Sin proceeds from an Habit of our own voluntary creating, or from our wilful Neglect of the Means of preserving ourselves, we are in these and such Cases chargeable with wilful Sin.

II. I consider the Effect of these Sins as to the State of Grace, and the Favour of God.

These Sins do certainly cast Men into God's Disfavour, they wound and waste the Conscience, and shake our better State, and sap our well-grounded Hopes of Eternal Life. These Sins
expose

expose Men to God's Wrath, and (if true Repentance do not prevent) consign them to eternal Death. These are not *the Spots of God's Children*, as is manifest from 1 *John* iii. 4. vi. 9. *Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit Sin*. Such a Man belongs to another Kingdom. Ver. 8. *He that committeth Sin is of the Devil*. If we compare this Place with Chap. i. 8, 9. and Chap. ii. 1, 2, it is plain that St. *John* speaks of the wilful Sinner, which is said to *commit Sin*, and to walk in *Darkness*; whereas the other places, Chap. iii. speak of Sins of *Weakness*, of *Surreption*, and *Surprize*. And however the wilful Sinner may flatter himself, he is in a State of Damnation at present, in a Separation from God, and in the broad Road that leads to eternal Death and Destruction.

This Sin speaks a Contempt of God, and of his Laws, and greatly hazards our eternal Salvation. *If we sin wilfully, after that we have received the Knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sins, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which shall devour the Adversaries*. Heb. x. 26. A Sin of this Size admitted of no Sacrifice under the Law of *Moses*, but left Men obnoxious to Death, or the divine Excision. *How much more shall he be punished, who hath trodden under Foot the Son of God, and hath counted the Blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy Thing, and hath done Despite unto the Spirit of Grace? The Lord shall judge his People*. And we shall find it a fearful Thing to fall into the Hands of the living God. Of such a Sinner the Words of St. *James* are meant; *Whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all*, James ii. 10. The Reason is plain, *viz.* because
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he contemns the Authority upon which the Whole stands.

These Sins defeat the End of Christ's Appearance, the Virtue of his Blood, and Efficacy of his Atonement, 1 *John* iii. 8. till we turn to God by a true Repentance, we are in a State of great Danger. I cannot say that we are without Hope, nor will I suppose such an Intercision of our Justification, as infers God's reversing his former Pardon, and Acts of Grace, as to those Sins which were before repented of and forsaken. We have no Reason to affirm such Sinner without all Hope: God forbid. He does not presently disinherit such a Sinner. But if such a Sinner die before he repents, he dies in his Sins, and must lie down in *everlasting Burnings*.

For we have no Cause to believe that God does justify a Sinner all at once, as not only to forgive what Sins are past and repented of, but also those which are to come. This would suppose a Sin forgiven before it is committed, and consequently before it is repented of. We may as reasonably suppose a Sinner justified before he is born, as that his Sin is forgiven before it is committed.

However we may perplex ourselves in this matter, yet it is a certain Truth, that our Sanctification and Justification must run parallel together. When the Scripture says, that God does justify the *ungodly*; the Word *ungodly* only denotes what these Men sometimes had been, and not what they are when God is said to justify them. Else we must suppose, that God would clear the Guilty. St *Paul* lets us know, that the *Unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God*, 1 *Cor.* vi. 9, 10, 11. He

He reckons up those who shall not, *viz.* Fornicators, Idolaters, Adulterers, &c. He adds, *and such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, &c.* We are God's Favourites, as long as we do his Will; and *the Friends of Christ*, as long as we *obey him*. Here is no Change in God, nor are his Works and Counsels chargeable with any such thing. The Change is in us, by doing well or ill we change our State, God changeth not. He is always the same, pleased with the Holy and Penitent, and an Enemy to the Wicked and Obstinate. And those whom he owns whilst they do well, he disclaims when they wilfully offend him. God was wont when he spake of *Israel*, to say, *my People*; but when they fell into Idolatry, he altered his Stile: *The Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down, for thy People, which Thou broughtest out of the Land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves*, Exod. xxxii. 7. And thus our Saviour, speaking of those who would not forgive their Brethren; *So likewise shall my heavenly Father (not yours any longer) do also unto you, if you from your Hearts forgive not every one his Brother their Trespases*, Mat. xviii. 35.

III. I proceed now to consider the Obligation which lies upon us, on the Score of these wilful Sins. I mean toward the procuring our Pardon, and restoring us to the State of Grace, and to the Favour of God.

In this Sin two Things are to be separately considered. First, The Offence against God. And, secondly, The Injury or Damage done to our Neighbour. With respect to the first, we are obliged to Repentance. To the second, to
Restitution

Restitution and Amends, and where there hath been an Enmity, to Reconciliation.

1. We are obliged to Repentance, and have great Cause to bless God that we are admitted to second Thoughts. That where we cannot pretend Innocence, our Repentance is accepted. This is a Covenant of *Grace and Mercy*. *Repentance and Remission of Sins is preached in Christ's Name*. He came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance. Luke xxiv. 47. This was the great Doctrine of Christ, of *John the Baptist*, and of the Apostles. This speaks the *Grace and Mercy* of the Gospel; we are not rigorously bound up by our Guilts; but he that *confesseth and forsaketh his Sin*, shall be pardoned.

Here I shall (1.) speak something in general of the Nature of Repentance; and (2.) shew what kind of Repentance is required, in order to restore the wilful Sinner to God's Favour.

First, I shall speak something in general of the Nature of Repentance. I fear nothing is more common, and I am sure nothing is more dangerous, than a Mistake in this Matter.

It imports more than giving God good Words and ourselves evil; more than confessing our Sins, and great Sorrow upon the Account of them. *Judas* is said to have repented. He was full of Sorrow and Remorse: he confessed he had *betrayed innocent Blood*: he brought back the *thirty Pieces of Silver*, and returned them in the Temple; and yet, after all, he was *the Son of Perdition*, and it had been better that he had never been born. It

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is hard sometimes to know whence our Sorrow grows, whether it be the Fault, or the Detection, the Sin or the Punishment, that does produce it. Perhaps we sorrow, not because we have been wicked, but because God is just, and our Iniquity hath found us out. We know not also whither it will lead us, whether to a goodly Care, or to Desperation. It is not all Sorrow that is of a godly sort, nor all Repentance that is to Salvation.

Repentance imports two Things;

1st, A Change of Mind or Principle. A true Penitent judges and wills otherwise than he did. His Soul hath a new Bias put upon it. He judges Sin the greatest of Evils, as in truth it is, and Holiness the greatest Perfection of human Nature. He values the Favour of God above all. The Desires and Bent of his Soul are after God and spiritual Things.

2^{dly}, A Change of Life, an after Care not to offend. He forsakes his Way as well as his Thoughts. *Isa. lv.* This is expressed at large by the Prophet *Ezekiel*, chap. xviii. Our Faith and Repentance must be justified by Works; we must bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance. *Mat. iii. 8.* Judas was stifled with Sorrow, but far from Repentance. Faith and Repentance are empty Names, without good Works. The Devils believe and tremble also.

Thus much of the general Nature of Repentance. I proceed,

Secondly, To shew what kind of Repentance is required toward the restoring the wilful Sinner to God's Favour.

1. Our

1. Our Repentance must be particular. A general one will not serve. Where the Sin is known, it must be particularly bewailed and cast out. It must be as it was with the *Jews* in searching for Leaven; they cast away all which they found, and solemnly execrated what they could not find. The Psalmist prays, *Cleanse thou me from my secret Faults*: This is a general Confession, and it is as much as the Case would bear. But of his wilful Sin, he makes a particular Confession, *Deliver me from Blood-guiltiness*. O God, Psal. li. 14. St Paul did not only call himself the *chief of Sinners*, but confesseth his particular Sins, *viz.* that he was a *Persecutor, a Blasphemer, and injurious*, 1 Tim. i. 13, 15. It was provided for in the Law of *Moses*, the Sacrifice without this would not make Atonement. *He shall confess that he sinned in that thing*, Levit. v. 5. The *Jews* lay before us the Form of Words, which, by their Constitutions, the Sinner was to use; into which he was obliged to insert his particular Sin. This they call **דְּוִיָּה דְּיִשְׂרָאֵל** a *Formal Confession*, without which, and Repentance, they taught, the Sacrifice would not make an Atonement. And where the Sinner had been injurious to his Neighbour, he was obliged to confess, as well as make Restitution. Numb. v. 6, 7.

2. Our Repentance must be very serious, and bear some Proportion to our Sin. It must be accompanied with an inward Sorrow, Shame, and Pain. Peter denied his Lord, his Sin was wilful, and greatly aggravated. His Sin was not only against Light and Knowledge, but after Warning, and his avowed Profession of Constancy; it was

after many Favours and great Dignations; he was taken into the Apostleship, and taken up into the Mount upon Christ's Transfiguration; he was made from an ordinary Fisherman to be a *Fisher of Men*; his Wife's Mother had been restored by a Miracle; he had the Honour of seeing our Lord's Miracles, and hearing his Sermons; his Temptation was small, he was charged by a silly Maid, by mean and incompetent Witnesses; besides, he persisted in his Sin, and increased it; he repeated his Sin, and to his Inconstancy and Want of Truth, he added Cursing and Swearing. In a Word, his Sin was complicated and heinous, and sure his Repentance was proportionate. The Text says, he *swept bitterly*. *Quantum malum Christum neganda commiserit,plorando monstravit.* Aug. A few Tears and a small Sorrow will not serve where the Crime is so great.

3. Our Repentance must be attended with the forsaking our Sin. *St Peter*, that denied his Lord, did shew the greatest Constancy and Boldness afterward, even under the greatest Danger, as we find in the *Acts of the Apostles*. This is to be said of Repentance for wilful Sins. For Sins of Weakness, which, generally speaking, are unavoidable, the Case is otherwise. But wilful Sins must be forsaken, or else we cannot have the Grace or Benefit of Repentance.

4. Our Repentance must be speedy, or else we cannot be safe. A wilful Sin gives our Souls a mortal Wound. We never delay our Remedy, when this happens to our Bodies. Our Life is uncertain, and as we always tread on the Borders of Death, so in this Condition, we do on the
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Borders of Hell. And were we sure of Life, we cannot be sure of the Grace of Repentance, if we delay it. We shall soon be hardened, and our Danger increaseth with our Delay. If Repentance be good and profitable, it will be best to use it presently; and if it were not, we need not to repent at all. And it is much to be feared, that he that continues in such a Sin, will die in it also.

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RESTITUTION.

SECT. III.

I Proceed to consider our Obligation where our wilful Sin is not only an Offence against God, but also a Wrong and Injury to our Neighbour. What are we to do in this Case in order to our Pardon?

II. In this Case we are obliged to make *Restitution and Amends*. This is no less necessary towards our Pardon, than Repentance towards God. This is agreed among all Divines. We are obliged

in Justice to do this; and if we are not willing, we are in a State of Damnation. If he that borrows and bargains, be bound to pay, and make good his Contract; he that steals or detains what is another's, must needs be bound. We find the Repentance of a wicked Man described, *by restoring the Pledge, and giving again what he hath robbed.* Ezek. xxxiii. 15. Upon *Zaccheus* his declaring his Charity, and Purpose of ample Restitution, our Saviour said to him, *This Day is Salvation come to thy House,* Luke xix. 8.

He that is not willing to make Restitution, cannot be a Penitent. He is so far from it, that he loves his Sin, when he hugs the Fruit of it. It is not to be supposed, that he chose the Sin for its own Sake at first, but for the Profit or Advantage of it. He that detains what is another's, is as unjust as he that steals. The greatest Pretence of Sorrow and Regret, without Restitution, will avail us nothing, if it be in our Power to restore. Our Religion strictly obligeth to this; *To render to every Man his due,* Rom. xiii. 7, 8. It was also provided for in the Law of *Moses*, where several Rules are given in this Matter. *Exod. xxii. 1. Levit. v. 16. and chap. vi. 5. Num. v. 6, 7, 8.* of which Variety it were not hard to give a clear Account, were it so that it would not be too great a Digression in this place. In some Cases the Offender was obliged to restore several Fold: In other Cases to add a fifth Part, even where the Fault was ignorantly committed; but in all Cases it was absolutely necessary, and Confession and Sacrifice could not procure Pardon without it. And where the injured Person was not to be found, that Law directs what is to be done, *Num. v. 8.* But of this Matter enough.

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I shall, however, in this weighty Case, add some Rules for the better governing ourselves, and that in the following Particulars.

1. That when I speak of Restitution, and the Necessity of it, I must be understood of all Injuries whatsoever. We may wrong our Brother several Ways, and are obliged to make Restitution in all such Cases. He does not only wrong his Neighbour who robs him of his Money or other Goods, or defrauds him of his Bargain; who over-reacheth him in Contract, and detains his Dues; not only he that wounds his Body, but he that lessens his Fame, that grieves him without a Cause, that robs him of his Innocence or his Peace. These last are so far from being no Injuries, that indeed they are the greatest, though the most common, and I fear the least laid to Heart.

2. We are not only chargeable with repairing the Wrong which we have done with our own Hand, but with that also which we were the first Cause of; or that we have procured to be done, or which we have not, upon due notice, prevented: we are guilty when we procure others to do the Wrong, or do not hinder it when we can, and when we ought. He that hinders another's Charity to a poor Man, by Fraud or any evil Art, is bound to make him Restitution. Again, We are chargeable with all that Wrong of which we are the first and voluntary Cause. For though the Consequence were not designed by us, yet if we were voluntary as the first Cause, we are justly chargeable with the consequent Mischief.

chief. He that sets on fire his Neighbour's Stack of Corn, and it take hold of his House, is chargeable with the whole Damage, because it was a wilful Sin in the beginning.

3. That in all these Cases a Man is not obliged beyond what he is able to do. My Meaning is plainly this, that his future Happiness does not depend upon it; if he be otherwise a true Penitent. He is obliged always to do his utmost, and then his sincere Repentance will be accepted.

There are several Cases in which a full Restitution and Reparation of the Wrong is not possible, *v. g.* though a Man may be able to pay his Debts, to restore the Pledge, and what he hath robbed; yet the Wrong by Murder and Uncleanliness is not to be repaired in Specie, and it is too often next to impossible to repair the Wrong done by Slander.

Again, the Person injured is perhaps deceased, or in a far Country, and it is uncertain whether he be dead or alive. And if dead, yet perhaps he hath no Heirs or Relatives in Being, or none that can fairly pretend a Right.

Or perhaps a Man hath lived in a continual Course of Cheating in his Way of Trade, and Traffick. And then it is in great measure impossible to know whom he hath wronged; and in that Case he is not able to make full and just Restitution.

Or it may be, he that hath done the Wrong is grown poor, and utterly unable to make Amends.

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This happens frequently : For it is seldom that Injustice prospers long. And yet it is hard to say, that if such a Man be a true Penitent, that yet there is no Hope of Salvation left him. I add, therefore,

4. That in all such Cases, a Man is still obliged to do his utmost, and to restore as far as he is able, or as the Nature of the Case will bear. And to apply it to the Cases above-named.

He that cannot restore the Man to Life whom he hath killed, may yet be able to maintain his Family, or to do as much towards it as the Dead may be presumed to have been able to do, had he been Living ; and so much he is obliged to do if he be able. He that cannot restore that Chastity and Innocence which he hath robbed and violated, yet is he obliged, if he be able, to make all other Amends which the Case will bear. He is bound to provide for the Growth of his Folly : and to marry (in case of single Fornication) and endowing the injured Person, or making such a pecuniary Re-compence as he can, and as will be accepted. He that cannot call back his Slanders, may do something toward it. He may publicly confess his Fault, beg Pardon of the injured Person, and speak well of him for the time to come.

Again, Where the Person is to be found, the Restitution is to be made to that injured Person ; if deceased, to his Heir or next a-kin, as is directed by the Law of *Moses*, Num. v. 6, 7.

In case that cannot be done, we have no way left but to pay it to God ; I mean, by bestow-
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ing it in Works of Piety or Mercy, to the Church or to the Poor; for in this Case, to them it belongs who minister to God, or who are his Poor. All such Goods escheat to the Church or Poor, who are God's Receivers of all those Wests and Strays that have no other Proprietor. For as by our Law, such things belong to the Lord; so it was provided by the Law of *Moses*, Num. v. 8. And the Nature of the Thing requires, that so it should be, that these Things should revert to God, the great and chief Lord of Heaven and Earth, in Works of Piety and Charity.

Lastly, in the fourth Case, no more is to be said than this, that he who is not able to make a full Restitution; may yet reasonably hope, upon his sincere Repentance, to be accepted, provided first, that he do what he can at present; and that he preserves in himself a full Purpose of making an entire Restitution, if God should be pleased ever to enable him so to do.

5. That where a Man is able to make Restitution, he must take Care that it bear Proportion to the Wrong he hath done, or else he cannot expect his Pardon. This is strict Justice and indispensable. This was provided for under the Law of *Moses*, who required not only a Sacrifice, but a fifth Part to be added to the Principal, Num. v. 7. And that, I suppose, because the injured Person was grieved as well as injured. We are to consider our Neighbour's Wrong to the full extent, both the *Lucrum cessans*, and the *Damnum emergens*; the Advantage which might have risen, as well as the Damage sustained. And this was also considered in another Law of *Moses*, Exod. xxi. 19.

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6. The Son or the Heir is not obliged to make Amends for all the Wrongs that his Father, or the Testator hath done. For where the Fault was a Personal Act only, and did not increase his Estate, or any way involve it, there can be no reason that the Heir should be chargeable with it. The Case is quite otherwise where the Estate is enjoyed by the Heir, which was gotten or increased by Robbery, Oppression, Sacrilege, or any other indirect Means. There it descends *cum suo onere*, with its Burden and Incumbrance, not to say with its Curse upon it, if it be not relieved by Restitution.

7. Where the injured Person does accept of such Amends as we are able to make, though it do not bear Proportion to the Wrong we have done, yet we are discharged. For the Injured have Power to remit in part or in whole, and then there is no Injury done to him that is willing.

After all, when our Case is still more nice and perplexed, we shall do well to advise with our spiritual Guides.

And because the most righteous Man, and the most careful, may yet unwittingly do Wrong to his Neighbour, we shall do well to hallow and season our Wealth by plentiful Almsgiving, and return by the Poor, what we may possibly have been faulty in. The Jews had a Trespass-Offering, which they called *Asham Talui*, i. e. a *Suspence-Offering*, viz. when they doubted whether they had trespassed or not; in that Case, for greater Security, they brought this Offering. And we find Job making his Oblations for his Sons, who had been

been feasting, in which we too often transgress; for Job said, it may be that my Sons have sinned, and cursed God in their Hearts. Thus did Job continually, Job i. 5.

I add, that where our Injuries have begotten Misunderstanding and Enmity; in order to the restoring ourselves to God's Favour, we must be reconciled to our Brother, we must forgive as we would be forgiven, and *seek Peace and ensue it.*

F I N I S.



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