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A

PRACTICAL
TREATISE
UPON
CHRISTIAN
PERFECTION.

By WILLIAM LAW, A. M.

79

*Not as though I had already attained, either
were already perfect. Phil. iii. 12.*



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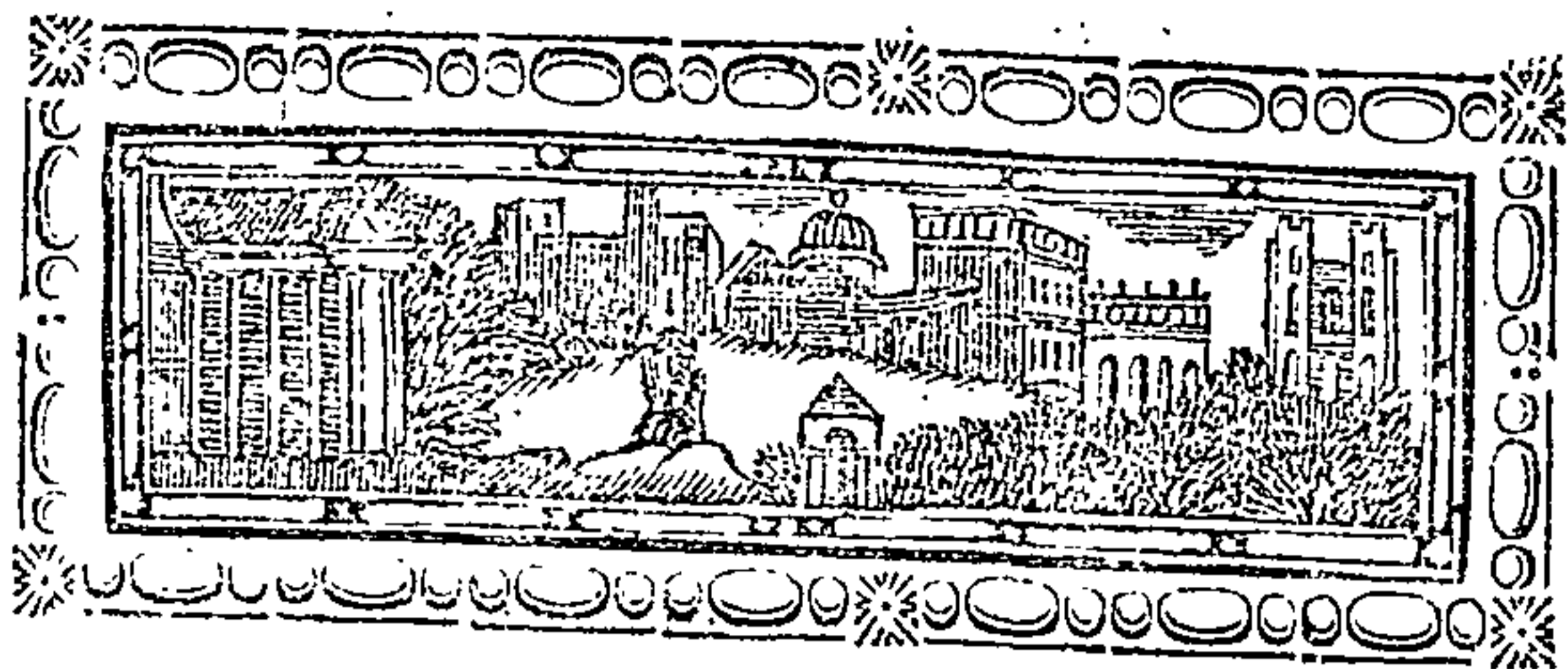
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A

Practical Treatise

U P O N

Christian Perfection.



The INTRODUCTION.



CHRISTIAN Perfection will perhaps seem to the common Reader to imply some State of Life which every one need not aspire after; that it is made up of such Strictnesses, Retirements, and Particularities of Devotion, as are neither necessary, nor practicable by the Generality of Christians.

B

BUT

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BUT I must answer for my self, that I know of only one common Christianity, which is to be the common Means of Salvation to all Men.

IF the Writers upon Christian Perfection have fancied to themselves some peculiar Degrees of Piety, or extraordinary Devotions which they call by that Name, they have not done Religion much Service, by making Christian Perfection to consist in any thing, but the right Performance of our necessary Duties.

THIS is the Perfection which this Treatise endeavours to recommend; a Perfection that does not consist in any singular State or Condition of Life, or in any particular Set of Duties, but in the holy and religious Conduct of our selves in every State of Life.

IT calls no one to a *Cloyster*, but to a right and full Performance of those Duties, which are necessary for all Christians, and common to all States of Life.

I CALL it *Perfection*, for two Reasons; first, because I hope it contains a full Representation of that Height of Holiness and Purity, to which Christianity calls all its Members: Secondly, that the *Title* may invite the Reader to peruse it with the more Diligence, as expecting to find not only a Discourse upon moral Virtues,
but

upon Christian Perfection. §

but a regular Draught of those holy Tempers which are the perfect Measure and Standard of Christian Piety.

NOW as Perfection is here placed in the right Performance of our necessary Duties, in the Exercise of such holy Tempers as are equally necessary and equally practicable in all States of Life, as this is the highest Degree of Christian Perfection, so it is to be observ'd, that it is also the lowest Degree of Holiness which the Gospel alloweth. So that tho' no Order of Men can pretend to go higher, yet none of us can have any Security in resting in any State of Piety that is lower.

AND I hope this will be taken as a Sign that I have hit upon the true State of Christian Perfection, if I shew it to be such, as Men in *Cloysters* and religious Retirements cannot add more, and at the same time such, as Christians in all States of the World must not be content with less.

FOR consider, what can Christian Perfection be, but such a right Performance of all the Duties of Life; as is according to the Laws of Christ? What can it be, but a living in such holy Tempers, and acting with such Dispositions as Christianity requires? Now if this be Perfection, who can exceed it? And yet what State, or

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Circumstances of Life, can allow any People to do all most of it?

Let us take an Instance in some one particular Temper of Christianity. Let it be the Love of God, Christians are to love God with *all their Heart and all their Strength*. Now can any Order of Christians exceed in this Temper? Or is there any Order of Christians who may be allowed to be defective in it?

Now what is thus true of the Love of God, is equally true of all other religious Duties; and consequently all those holy Tempers of Heart which constitute the Perfection of Christian Piety, are Tempers equally necessary for all Christians.

As there is but one Faith and one Baptism, so there is but one Piety, and one Perfection, that is common to all Orders of Christians.

It will perhaps be here objected, that this supposes that all People may be equally good, which seems as impossible in the Nature of Things, as to suppose that all People may be equally wise.

To this it may be answer'd, that this is neither altogether true, nor altogether false.

For to instance in Charity, it is true that all People may be equally charitable; if we understand by Charity that Habit of
the

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the Mind which stands rightly dispos'd to all Acts of Charity ; in this Sense all People may be equally charitable. But if we take Charity for Alms-giving, or a liberal Assistance of the Poor, in this Sense it is false, that all People may be equally charitable.

NOW as it is the Habit of the Mind, that constitutes the Excellency of Charity, so this is the Charity to which Christians are called, and in which they may all be equally perfect.

A G A I N, are not all People oblig'd to be equally honest, just, and true and faithful ? In these Virtues all are to be eminent and exact in the same Degree, there are no Abatements to be made for any Rank or Order of People.

NOW as to the external Exercise of these Duties, there may be great Difference. One Man may have great Business in the World, and be honest and faithful in it all ; another may have small Dealings and be honest in them ; but provided that there be in both of them the same Justice and Integrity of Mind, they are equally honest, tho' their Instances of Honesty, as to external Acts of it, are as different, as great Things are different from small.

BUT as it is the Habit of the Mind, which is the Justice which Religion requires,

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quires, so in this Respect all People may be equally just.

Now this may serve to shew us in what Respect all People may be equally virtuous, and in what Respect they cannot.

As to the external Instances or Acts of Virtue, in these they must differ according to the Difference of their Circumstances, and Condition in the World; but as Virtues are considered as Habits of the Mind, and Principles of the Heart, in this Respect they may all be equally virtuous, and are all call'd to the same Perfection.

A MAN cannot exercise the Spirit of Martyrdom, till he is brought to the Stake; he cannot forgive his Enemies till they have done him Wrong, till he suffers from them. He cannot bear Poverty and Distress till they are brought upon him. All these Acts of Virtue depend upon outward Causes, but yet he may have a Piety and heroick Spirit equal to those who have died for their Religion. He may have that Charity of Mind which prays for its Enemies, he may have that Meekness and Resignation to the Will of God, as disposes People to bear Poverty and Distress with Patience and humble Submission to the Divine Providence.

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So that they are only the external Instances and Acts of Virtue, which depend upon outward Causes and Circumstances of Life; a Man cannot give till he has something to give; but the inward Piety of the Heart and Mind which constitutes the State of Christian Perfection, depends upon no outward Circumstances. A Man need not want Charity because he has no Riches, nor be destitute of a forgiving Spirit, because he has no Persecutors to forgive.

ALTHO' therefore we neither are, nor can be all in the same Circumstances of Life, yet we are to be all in the same Spirit of Religion; tho' we cannot be all equal in Alms-giving, yet we are to be all alike in Charity; tho' we are not all in the same State of Persecution, yet we must be all in the same Spirit that forgives and prays for its Persecutors; tho' we are not all in Poverty and Distress, yet we must all be full of that Piety of Heart which produces Meekness, Patience, and Thankfulness, in Distress and Poverty.

FROM these Considerations it is easy to apprehend, how Persons may differ in Instances of Goodness, and yet be equally good; for as the Perfection of Piety is the Perfection of the Heart, so the Heart may have the same Perfection in all States and

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Conditions of Life. And this is that Perfection which is common to all States, and to which all Orders of Christians are equally called.

A G A I N, There may be another Difference of Virtue founded in the different Abilities of Persons; one may have a more enlightened Mind than another, and so may see farther into his Duty, and be able to practice it with greater Exactness, but then as his Goodness seems to consist in this, that he is true and faithful to what he knows to be his Duty, so if another is as true and faithful to that Measure of Light and Knowledge which God has given him, he seems to be as good a Man, as he that is true and faithful to a greater Light.

W E can hardly reconcile it with the Divine Goodness to give one Man two Talents, and another five, unless we suppose that he is as high in his Master's Pleasure who makes the right use of two, as he that makes the right use of five Talents.

So that it still holds good, that it is the Perfection of the Heart, that makes the Perfection of every State of Life.

I T may perhaps be farther objected, that the different Degrees of Glory in another Life, supposes that good Men and such as
are

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are accepted of God, do yet differ in their Degrees of Goodness in this Life.

I GRANT that it does.

BUT then this is no Proof that all Men are not called to the same Goodness, and the same Perfection.

PERHAPS it cannot be said of the best of Men that ever lived, that they performed their Duty in such Perfection in all Instances, as they might have done.

NOW as it suits with the Divine Mercy to admit Men to Happiness, who have not been in every Respect so perfect as they might have been, notwithstanding that he gave them such a Rule of Perfection; so it equally suits with the Divine Mercy to admit Men to different Degrees of Happiness, on Account of their different Conduct, though he gave them all one common Rule of Perfection.

DID not God pardon Frailties and Infirmities, the best of Men could not be rewarded. But consider now, does God's pardoning of Frailties and Infirmities in the best of Men, prove that the best of Men were not called to any other Perfection, than that to which they arrived? Does this prove that God did not call them to be strictly good, because he receives them to Mercy with some Defects in Goodness? No, most surely.

YET

YET this is as good an Argument, as to say, that all Men are not call'd to the same State of Goodness, or Perfection, because they are admitted to different Rewards in the other Life.

FOR it is as right Reasoning, to say, God rewards frail and imperfect Men, therefore they were call'd to no higher Perfection; as to say that because God rewards different Degrees of Goodness, therefore Men are not call'd to one and the same Goodness.

FOR as God could reward none, unless he would reward such as had Failings, so their Difference in their Failings may make them Objects of his different Mercy and Rewards, though the Rule from which they fail'd, was common to them all.

IT therefore plainly appears, that the different Degrees of Glory in another Life, are no more a Proof that God calls some Persons to different and lower States of Goodness, than others, than his pardoning Variety of Sinners is a Proof that he allow'd of those Kinds of Sin, and did not require Men to avoid them. For it is full as good an Argument to say, God pardons some Sinners, therefore he did not require them to avoid such Sins, as to say God rewards different Degrees of Goodness, therefore

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therefore he did not call People to higher Degrees of Goodness.

So that the different Degrees of Glory in the World to come are no Objection against this Doctrine, that all Christians are called to one and the same Piety and Perfection of Heart.

LASTLY, it may be farther objected, that although the Law of God calls all Men to the same State of Perfection, yet if there are different Degrees of Glory given to different Degrees of Goodness, this shews that Men may be saved, and happy, without aspiring after all that Perfection to which they were called.

It may be answered, That this is a false Conclusion: For though it may be true, that People will be admitted to Happiness, and different Degrees of Happiness, though they have not *attained* to all that Perfection to which they were called; yet it does not follow that any People will be saved who did not *endeavour* after that Perfection. For surely it is a very different Case, to *fall* short of our Perfection after our best Endeavours, and to *stop* short of it, by not endeavouring to arrive at it. The one Practice may carry Men to a high Reward in Heaven, and the other cast them with the unprofitable Servant into outer Darkness.

T H E R E

T H E R E is therefore no Foundation for People to content themselves in any lower Degrees of Goodness, as being sufficient to carry them to Heaven, though not to the highest Happiness in Heaven.

F O R consider, thou hearest there are different Degrees of Glory ; that they are proportioned to different States of Goodness in this Life, thou wilt therefore content thy self with a lower Degree of Goodness, being content to be of the lowest Order in Heaven. Thou wilt have only so much Piety as will save thee.

B U T consider how vainly thou reasonest ; for though God giveth different Rewards, it is not in the Power of Man to take them of himself. It is not for any one to say I will practice so much Goodness, and so take such a Reward. God seeth different Abilities and Frailties in Men, which may move his Goodness to be merciful to their different Improvements in Virtue : I grant thee that there may be a lower State of Piety which in some Persons may be accepted by God.

B U T consider, that though there is such a State of Piety that may be *accepted*, yet that it cannot be *chosen*, it ceases to be that State as soon as thou chusest it.

G O D may be merciful to a low Estate of Piety, by reason of some pitiable Circumstan-

cumstan-

cumstances that may attend it ; but as soon as thou chusest such an'Estate of Piety, it loses those pitiabie Circumstances, and instead of a low State of Piety, is changed into a high State of Impiety.

So that though there are meaner Improvements in Virtue, which may make some Persons accepted by God, yet this is no Ground for Content or Satisfaction in such a State ; because it ceases to be such a State, and is quite another thing, for being chosen and satisfy'd with.

It appears therefore from these Considerations, that notwithstanding God may accept of different Degrees of Goodness, and reward them with different Degrees of Glory in another Life, yet that all Christians are called to one and the same Perfection, and equally obliged to labour after it.

Thus much may suffice to give the Reader a general Notion of Perfection, and the Necessity of endeavouring after it.

What it is, and what holy Tempers it requires, will, I hope, be found sufficiently explained in the following Chapters.





C H A P. I.

The Nature and Design of Christianity, that its sole End is to deliver us from the Misery and Disorder of this present State, and raise us to a blissful Enjoyment of the Divine Nature.



THE Wisdom of Mankind has for several Ages of the World, been enquiring into the Nature of Man, and the Nature of the World in which he is placed.

THE Wants and Miseries of human Nature, and the Vanity of worldly Enjoyments, has made it difficult for the wisest Men to tell what human Happiness was, or wherein it consisted.

IT has pleased the infinite Goodness of God, to satisfy all our Wants and Enquiries by a Revelation made to the World by his Son Jesus Christ.

T H I S

THIS Revelation has laid open the great Secrets of Providence from the Creation of the World, explained the present State of Things, and given Man all the Information that is necessary to quiet his Anxieties, content him with his Condition, and lead him safely to everlasting Rest and Happiness.

IT is now only necessary, that the poor Wisdom of Man do not exalt it self against God, that we suffer our Eyes to be opened by him that made them, and our Lives to be conducted by him, in whom *we live, move, and have our Being.*

FOR Light is now come into the World, if Men are but willing to come out of Darknes.

As Happiness is the sole End of all our Labours, so this Divine Revelation aims at nothing else.

IT gives us right and satisfactory Notions of our selves, of our true Good and real Evil; it shews us the true State of our Condition, both our Vanity and Excellence, our Greatness and Meaness, our Felicity and Misery.

BEFORE this, Man was a mere Riddle to himself, and his Condition full of Darknes and Perplexity. A restless Inhabitant of a miserable disorder'd World,
walk-

walking in a vain Shadow, and disquieting himself in vain.

BUT this Light has dispers'd all the 'Anxiety of his vain Conjectures; it has brought us acquainted with God, and by adding Heaven to Earth, and Eternity to Time, has opened such a glorious View of Things, as makes Man even in his present Condition, full of a Peace of God which passes all Understanding.

THIS Revelation acquaints us, that we have a Spirit within us, that was created after the Divine Image, that this Spirit is now in a fallen corrupt Condition, that the Body in which it is plac'd, is its Grave, or Sepulchre, where it is enslaved to fleshly Thoughts, blinded with false Notions of Good and Evil, and dead to all Taste and Relish of its true Happiness.

IT teaches us, that the World in which we live, is also in a disorder'd irregular State, and cursed for the Sake of Man; that it is no longer the Paradise that God made it, but the Remains of a drowned World, full of Marks of God's Displeasure, and the Sin of its Inhabitants.

THAT it is a mere Wilderness, a State of Darknes, a Vale of Misery, where Vice and Madness, Dreams and Shadows, variously please, agitate, and torment the short, miserable Lives of Men.

DEVILS

DEVILS also, and evil Spirits, have here their Residence, promoting the Works of Darknes, and wandering up and down seeking whom they may devour.

So that the Condition of Man in his natural State, seems to be, as if a Person sick of Variety of Diseases, knowing neither his Distempers, nor his Cure, should be enclosed in some Place, where he could hear, or see, or feel, or taste of nothing, but what tended to inflame his Disorders.

THE Excellency therefore of the Christian Religion appears in this, that it puts an End to this State of Things, blots out all the Ideas of worldly Wisdom, brings the World it self to Ashes, and creates all a-new. It calls Man from an animal Life and earthly Societies, to be born again of the Holy Ghost, and be made a Member of the Kingdom of God.

It crushes into nothing the Concerns of this Life, condemns it as a State of Vanity and Darknes, and leads Man to a Happiness with God in the Realms of Light.

It proposes the Purification of our Souls, the enlivening us with the Divine Spirit; it sets before us new Goods and Evils, and forms us to a glorious Participation of the Divine Nature.

THIS is the one sole End of Christianity, to lead us from all Thoughts of Rest and Repose here, to separate us from the World and worldly Tempers, to deliver us from the Folly of our Passions, the Slavery of our own Natures, the Power of evil Spirits, and unite us to God, the true Fountain of all real Good. This is the mighty Change which Christianity aims at, to put us into a new State, reform our whole Natures, purify our Souls, and make them the Inhabitants of heavenly and immortal Bodies.

IT does not leave us to grovel on in the Desires of the Flesh, to cast about for worldly Happiness, and wander in Darkness and Exile from God, but prepares us for the true Enjoyment of a divine Life.

THE Manner by which it changes this whole State of Things, and raises us to an Union with God, is equally great and wonderful.

I AM the *Way, the Truth and the Life*, saith our blessed Saviour, *no Man cometh unto the Father but by me.*

As all Things were at first created by the Son of God, and without him was *not any thing made that was made*, so are all Things again restor'd and redeem'd by the same Divine Person.

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As nothing could come into Being without him, so nothing can enter into a State of Happiness or Enjoyment of God, but by him.

THE Price and Dignity of this Redemption at once confounds the Pride, and relieves the Misery of Man. How fallen must he be from God, how disorder'd and odious his Nature, that should need so great a Mediatour to recommend his Repentance! — And on the other Hand, how full of Comfort, that so high a Method, so stupendous a Means should be taken, to restore him to a State of Peace and Favour with God!

THIS is the true Point of View in which every Christian is to behold himself. He is to overlook the poor Projects of human Life, and consider himself as a Creature through his natural Corruption falling into a State of endless Misery, but by the Mercy of God redeem'd to a Condition of everlasting Felicity.

ALL the Precepts and Doctrines of the Gospel are founded on these two great Truths, the deplorable Corruption of human Nature, and its new Birth in Christ Jesus.

THE one includes all the Misery, the other all the Happiness of Man.

IT is on these great Doctrines, that the whole Frame of Christianity is built, forbidding only such Things as fasten us to the Disorders of Sin, and commanding only those Duties which lead us into the Liberty and Freedom of the Sons of God.

THE Corruption of our Nature makes Mortification, Self-denial, and the Death of our Bodies necessary. Because human Nature must be thus unmade, Flesh and Blood must be thus chang'd, before it can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

OUR new Birth makes the Reception of God's Spirit, and the Participation of the holy Sacraments necessary, to form us to that Life to which the Resurrection of Jesus Christ has entituled us.

So that would we think, and act and live like Christians, we must act suitably to these Terms of our Condition, fearing and avoiding all the Motions of our corrupted Nature, cherishing the secret Inspirations of the Holy Spirit, opening our Minds for the Reception of the Divine Light, and pressing after all the Graces and Perfections of our new Birth.

WE must behave our selves conformably to this double Capacity, we must fear, and watch, and pray, like Men that are always in Danger of eternal Death, and we must believe and hope, labour and aspire,

pire, like Christians, that are call'd to fight the good Fight of Faith, and lay hold on eternal Life.

THIS Knowledge of our selves, makes human Life a State of infinite Importance, placed upon so dreadful a Point betwixt two such Eternities.

WELL might our blessed Saviour say to one, that begg'd first to go and bury his Father, *Follow me, and let the Dead bury their Dead.*

FOR what is all the Bustle and Hurry of the World, but dead Shew, and its greatest Agents, but dead Men, when compar'd with that State of Greatness, that real Life, to which the Followers of Christ are redeem'd?

HAD we been made only for this World, worldly Wisdom had been our highest Wisdom; but seeing Christianity has redeem'd us to a contrary State, since all its Goods are in Opposition to this Life, worldly Wisdom is now our greatest Foolishness.

IT is now our only Wisdom to understand our new State aright, to let its Goods and Evils take Possession of our Hearts, and conduct our selves by the Principles of our Redemption.

THE Nature and Terms of our Christian Calling is of that Concern, as to de-

serve all our Thoughts, and is indeed only to be perceived by great Seriousness and Attention of Mind.

THE Christian State is an invisible Life in the Spirit of God, supported not by sensible Goods, but the spiritual Graces of Faith and Hope; so that the natural Man, especially while busied in earthly Cares and Enjoyments, easily forgets that great and heavenly Condition in which Religion places him.

THE Changes which Christianity maketh in the present State of Things, are all invisible, its Goods and Evils, its Dignities and Advantages, which are the only true Standards of all our Actions, are not subject to the Knowledge of our Senses.

IN God we live, and move, and have our Being, but how unseen, how unfelt is all this!

CHRIST is the *Lamb slain from the Foundation of the World*, the true Light, that lighteth every Man that cometh into the World. He is the *Alpha and Omega*, the Beginning and End of all Things. The whole Creation subsists in him and by him; nothing is in any Order, nor any Person in any Favour with God, but by this great Mediatour. But how invisible, how unknown to all our Senses, is this State of Things!

THE

T H E Apostle tells us, that we Christians are *come unto Mount Sion, and unto the City of the Living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable Company of Angels, and to the general Assembly of the First-born, which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the Spirits of just Men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediatour of the New Covenant, &c. (a).*

B U T our Senses see or feel nothing of this State of Glory, they only shew us a Society amongst vain and worldly Men, labouring and contending for the poor Enjoyments of a vain World.

W E are Temples of the Holy Ghost, consecrated to God, Members of Christ's mystical Body, of his Flesh and of his Bones, receiving Life, Spirit, and Motion from him our Head.

B U T our Senses see no farther than our Parents and Kindred according to the Flesh, and fix our Hearts to earthly Friendships and Relations.

R E L I G I O N turns our whole Life into a Sacrifice to God, a State of Probation, from whence we must *all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, that every*

(a) Heb. xii. 22.

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one may receive the Things done in his Body, &c. (a).

BUT our Senses, the Maxims of this Life, and the Spirit of the World, teach quite another Turn of Mind; to enjoy the good Things of Life as our Portion, to seek after Riches and Honours, and to dread nothing so much as Poverty, Disgrace, and Persecution. Well may this Life be deem'd a State of Darknes, since it thus clouds and covers all the true Appearances of Things, and keeps our Minds insensible, and unaffected with Matters of such infinite Moment.

WE must observe, that in Scripture Christianity is constantly represented to us, as a Redemption from the Slavery and Corruption of our Nature, and a raising us to a nearer Enjoyment of the Divine Glory.

IT knows of no Misery, but the Death and Misery which Sin has made, nor of any Happiness, but the Gifts and Graces of the Holy Ghost, which form us to a greater Likeness of God.

THUS saith the Apostle, *Jesus Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all Iniquity (b).*

(a) 2 Cor. v. 9.

(b) Tit. ii. 13.

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HE was manifested to take away our Sins (a).

WHO gave himself for our Sins, that he might deliver us from this evil World.

THE same Scriptures teach us, that as we are redeem'd from this State of Sin, so we are rais'd to a new Life in Christ, to a Participation of the Divine Nature, and a Fellowship with him in Glory.

THUS our blessed Saviour prayeth for all his Followers, *That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us. And the Glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one* (b).

HAPPY he that hath Ears to hear, and a Heart to feel the Majesty and Glory of this Description of our new Life in Christ!

FOR surely could we understand what our Saviour conceived, when he sent up this Prayer to God, our Hearts would be always praying, and our Souls ever aspiring after this State of Perfection, this Union with Christ in God.

TO proceed, *In my Father's House, saith Christ, are many Mansions. I go to prepare*

(a) 1 Joh. iii. 5.

(b) Joh. xvii. 21.

a Place for you, that where I am, there ye may be also (a).

THE Apostle tells us, that as we have born the Image of the Earthly, we shall also bear the Image of the Heavenly (b).

AND that when Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in Glory (c).

BELoved, saith St. John, now we are the Sons of God, and it doth not yet appear, what we shall be : but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is (d).

I CANNOT leave this Passage, without adding the Apostle's Conclusion to it. And every Man that hath this Hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

WHICH teaches us this Lesson, that no Man, whatever he may think of his Christian Improvement, can be said to have this Hope in him, unless he shews it by such a Purification of himself, as may resemble the Purity of Christ. ——— But to return.

St. PAUL thus breaks forth into the Praises of God, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath*

(a) Joh. xiv. 23.

(b) 1 Cor. xv.

(c) Col. iii. 4.

(d) 1 Joh. iii. 2.

blessed us with all spiritual Blessings in heavenly Places in Christ (a). And again, God who is rich in Mercy, for his great Love wherewith he loved us. Even when we were dead in Sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; and hath rais'd us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly Places in Christ Jesus (b).

THESE Passages teach us, that Christianity introduceth us into a new State, made up of invisible Goods, and spiritual Blessings, that it so alters our Condition, as to give us a new Rank and Degree even in this Life; which the Apostle expresses by making us *sit together in heavenly Places*.

SO, that though we are still in the Flesh, yet, as the Apostle saith, need we know no Man after the Flesh; though we are still Inhabitants of this Vale of Misery, yet are we rank'd and plac'd in a certain Order amongst heavenly Beings in Christ Jesus.

WOULD we therefore know our true Rank and Condition, and what Place we belong to, in the Order of Beings, we must search after a *Life that is hid with Christ in God*. We must consider our selves as Parts of Christ's mystical Body, and as

(a) Ephes. i. 3.

(b) Ephes. ii. 4.

Members of a Kingdom of Heaven. In vain do we consider the Beauty and Strength of our Bodies, our Alliances with Men, the Privileges of Birth, and the Distinctions of this World, for these Things no more constitute the State of human Life, than rich *Coffins*, or beautiful *Monuments*, constitute the State of the Dead.

WE justly pity the last poor Efforts of human Greatness, when we see a breathless Carcass lying in *State*. It appears to us to be so far from any real Honour, that it rather looks like ridiculing the Misery of our Nature. But were Religion to form our Judgments, the *Life* of a proud, voluptuous, and sensual Man, tho' shining in all the Splendour of the World, would give us no higher an Idea of human Dignity, than that of a poor *Corpse* laid in *State*.

FOR a *Sinner*, when glorying in *the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life*, shews us a more shocking Sight of a Misery ridicul'd, than any Pageantry that can expose the Dead.

WE have an Apostle's Authority to say, *that he who liveth in Pleasure is dead while he liveth.*

THIS shews us, that when we enquire what our Life is, or wherein it consists, we must think of something higher than the Vigour of our Blood, the Gaiety of our Spirits,

Spirits, or the Enjoyment of sensible Pleasures; since these, though the allow'd Signs of living Men, are often undeniable Proofs of dead Christians.

WHEN therefore we would truly know what our Life, our State, our Dignity, our Good, or our Evil is, we must look at nothing that is temporal, worldly, or sensible. We may as well dig in the Earth for Wisdom, as look at Flesh and Blood, to see what we are, or at worldly Enjoyments, to find what we want, or at temporal Evils to see what we have to fear.

OUR blessed Saviour put an absolute End to all Enquiries of this kind, when he said, *Be not afraid of them that kill the Body, and after that have no more that they can do* (a).

HERE our Bodies and all bodily Enjoyments are at one Dash struck out of the Account of Happiness, and the present State of Things made so very low, and insignificant, that he who can only deprive us of them, has not Power enough to deserve our Fear.

WE must therefore, if we would conceive our true State, our real Good and

(a) Luke xii. 4.

Evil, look farther than the Dim of Eyes of Flesh can carry our Views, we must, with the Eyes of Faith, penetrate into the invisible World, the World of Spirits, and consider our Order and Condition amongst them, a World which (as St. John speaks) *has no need of the Sun, neither of the Moon, to shine in it, for the Glory of God doth lighten it, and the Light of the Lamb.* For it is there, amongst eternal Beings, that we must take an eternal Fellowship, or fall into a Kingdom of Darkness and everlasting Misery.

CHRISTIANITY is so divine in its Nature, so noble in its Ends, so extensive in its Views, that it has no lesser Subjects than these, to entertain our Thoughts.

IT buries our Bodies, burns the present World, triumphs over Death by a general Resurrection, and opens all into an eternal State.

IT never considers us in any other Respect, than as fallen Spirits; it disregards the Distinctions of human Society, and proposes nothing to our Fears, but eternal Misery, nor any thing to our Hopes, but an endless Enjoyment of the Divine Nature.

THIS is the great and important Condition in which Christianity has placed us, above our Bodies, above the World, above Death, to be present at the Dissolution of
all

all Things, to see the Earth in Flames, and the Heavens wrapt up like a Scrawl, to stand at the general Resurrection, to appear at the universal Judgment, and to live for ever, when all that our Eyes have seen, is pass'd away and gone.

TAKE upon thee therefore, a Spirit and Temper suitable to this Greatness of thy Condition; remember that thou art an eternal Spirit, that thou art for a few Months and Years in a State of Flesh and Blood, only to try, whether thou shalt be for ever happy with God, or fall into everlasting Misery with the Devil.

THOU wilt often hear of other Concerns, and other Greatness in this World; thou wilt see every Order of Men, every Family, every Person pursuing some fancied Happiness of his own, as if the World had not only Happiness, but a particular kind of Happiness for all its Inhabitants.

BUT when thou seest this State of human Life, fancy that thou sawest all the World asleep, the Prince no longer a Prince, the Beggar no longer begging, but every Man sleeping out of his proper State, some happy, others tormented, and all changing their Condition as fast as one foolish Dream could succeed another.

WHEN thou hast seen this, thou hast seen all that the World awake can do for thee;

thee ; if thou wilt, thou mayst go to *sleep* for a while, thou mayst lie down and *dream* ; for, be as happy as the World can make thee, all is but sleeping and dreaming, and what is still worse, it is like sleeping in a Ship when thou should be pumping out the Water ; or dreaming thou art a Prince, when thou shouldst be redeeming thy self from Slavery.

N O W this is no imaginary Flight of a melancholy Fancy, that too much exceeds the Nature of Things, but a sober Reflection justly suited to the Vanity of worldly Enjoyments.

F O R if the Doctrines of Christianity are true, if thou art that Creature, that fallen Spirit, that immortal Nature which Religion teaches us, if thou art to meet Death, Resurrection, and Judgment, as the Forerunners of an eternal State, what are all the little Flashes of Pleasure, the changing Appearances of worldly Felicities, but so many Sorts of Dreams ?

H O W canst thou talk of the Happiness of Riches, the Advantages of Fortune, the Pleasures of Apparel, of State, and Equipage, without being in a Dream ?

I s the *Beggar* asleep, when he fancies he is building himself fine Houses ? Is the *Prisoner* in a Dream, when he imagines himself in open Fields, and fine Groves ?

And

And can't thou think that thy immortal Spirit is awake, whilst it is delighting it self in the Shadows and Bubbles of worldly Happiness?

F O R if it be true, that Man is upon his Trial, if the Trial is for Eternity, if Life is but a Vapour, what is there that deserves a serious Thought, but how to get well out of the World, and make it a right Passage to our eternal State?

H O W can we prove that we are awake, that our Eyes are open, but by seeing, and feeling, and living according to these important Circumstances of our Life?

I F a Man should endeavour to please thee, with fine Descriptions of the Riches, and Pleasures, and Dignities, of the World in the *Moon*, adding that its Air is always serene, and its Seasons always pleasant, would'st thou not think it a sufficient Answer, to say, *I am not to live there?*

W H E N thy own false Heart is endeavouring to please it self with worldly Expectations, the Joy of this or that way of Life, is it not as good a Reproof, to say to thy self, *I am not to stay here?*

F O R where is the Difference betwixt an earthly Happiness, from which thou art to be separated for ever, and a Happiness in the *Moon*, to which thou art never to go? Thou art to be for ever separated

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from the Earth, thou art to be eternal, when the Earth it self is lost, is it not therefore the same Vanity to project for Happiness on Earth, as to propose a Happiness in the Moon? For as thou art *never* to go to the one, so thou art to be *eternally* separated from the other.

I N D E E D the Littleness and Insignificance of the boasted Honours of human Life, appears sufficiently from the Things themselves, without comparing them to the Subjects of Religion.

F O R see what they are in themselves.

A H A S U E R U S, that great Prince of the eastern World, puts a Question to Haman, his chief Minister of State, he asks him, *what shall be done unto the Man, whom the King delighteth to honour (a)?*

H A M A N imagining that he was the Person whom the King had in his Thoughts, answer'd in these Words,

L E T the royal Apparel be brought which the King useth to wear, and the Horse that the King rideth upon, and the Crown Royal which is set upon his Head; and let this Apparel and Horse be delivered to the Hand of one of the King's most noble Princes, that they may array the Man withal, whom the King

(a) Esther vi. 6.

delighteth to honour, and bring him on horse-back through the Street of the City, and proclaim before him, thus shall it be done to the Man whom the King delighteth to honour.

HERE you see the Sum total of worldly Honours.

AN ambitious Haman cannot think of any thing greater to ask; *Ahasuerus*, the greatest Monarch in the World, has nothing greater to give to his greatest Favourite; powerful as he is, he can only give such Honours as these.

YET it is to be observ'd, that if a poor Nurse was to please her Child, she must talk to it in the same Language, she must please it with the same fine Things, and gratify its Pride with Honours of the same kind.

YET these are the mighty Things, for which Men forget God, forget their Immortality, forget the Difference betwixt an Eternity in Heaven, and an Eternity in Hell.

THERE needs no great Understanding, no mighty Depth of Thought, to see through the Vanity of all worldly Enjoyments; do but talk of them, and you will be forced to talk of Gogaws, of Ribbons, and Feathers.

EVERY Man sees the Littleness of all Sorts of Honours, but those which he is looking after himself.

A PRIVATE English Gentleman, that is half distracted till he has got some little Distinction, does at the same time despise the highest Honours of other Countries, and would not leave his own Condition, to possess the ridiculous Greatness of an *Indian King*. He sees the Vanity and Falseness of their Honours, but forgets that all Honour plac'd in external Things, is equally vain and false.

HE does not consider that the Difference of Greatness, is only the Difference of Flowers and Feathers; and that they who are dressing themselves with *Beads*, have as just a Taste of what adorns their Persons, as they who place the same Pride in *Diamonds*.

WHEN we read of an eastern Prince, that is too great to feed himself, and thinks it a Piece of Grandeur to have other People put his Meat into his Mouth, we despise the Folly of his Pride.

BUT might we not as well despise the Folly of their Pride, who are ashamed to use their Legs, and think it adds to their State, to be remov'd from one Place to another by other People.

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F O R he that thinks it stately to be carried, and mean to walk on Foot, has as true Notions of Greatness, as he who is too haughty to put his Meat in his own Mouth.

A G A I N, It is the Manner of some Countries in the Burial of their Dead, to put a Staff, and Shoes, and Money, in the Sepulchre along with the Corpse.

W E justly censure the Folly and Ignorance of such a poor Contrivance to assist the Dead; but if we did but as truly understand what Life is, we should see as much to ridicule in the poor Contrivances to assist the Living.

F O R how many Things in Life do People labour after, break their Rest and Peace to get, which yet when gotten, are of as much real Use to them, as a Staff and Shoes to a *Corpse* under Ground? They are always adding something to their Life, which is only like adding another Pair of Shoes to a Body in the Grave.

T H O U mayst hire more Servants, new paint thy Rooms, make more fine Beds, eat out of *Plate*, and put on richer Apparel, and these will help thee to be happy, as *golden Staves*, or *painted Shoes*, will help a dead Man to walk.

S E E here therefore the true Nature of all worldly *Shew* and *Figure*, it will make

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as as great as those are, who are dreaming that they are Kings, as rich as those who fancy that they have Estates in the Moon, and as happy as those, who are buried with Staves in their Hands.

NOW this is not carrying Matters too high, or imposing upon our selves with any Subtilties of Reasoning, or Sound of Words; for the Value of worldly Riches and Honours can no more be too much lessened, than the Riches and Greatness of the other Life can be too much exalted. We don't cheat our selves out of any real Happiness, by looking upon all worldly Honours as Bubbles, any more than we cheat our selves by securing Honours that are solid and eternal.

THERE is no more Happiness lost by not being *great* and *rich*, as those are amongst we live, than by not being *dress'd* and *adorn'd* as they are, who live in *China* or *Japan*.

THOU art no happier for having painted Cielings, and marble Walls in thy House, than if the same Finery was in thy *Stables*; if thou eatest upon Plate, it maketh thee just as happy, as if thy Horses wore silver Shoes.

TO disregard Gold, Jewels, and Equipage, is no more running away from any
real

real Good, than if we only despis'd a Feather or a Garland of Flowers.

So that he who condemns *all* the external Shew and State of Life as equally vain, is no more deceiv'd, or carried to too high a Contempt for the Things of this Life, than he that only condemns the Vanity of the vaineſt Things.

Y O U don't think your ſelf impoſed upon, or talk'd out of any real Happineſs, when you are perſwaded not to be as vain and ambitious as *Alexander*.

A N D can you think that you are impoſed upon, or drawn from any real Good, by being perſwaded to be as meek and lowly as the holy Jeſus?

T H E R E is as much ſober Judgment, as found Senſe in conforming to the Fulneſs of Chriſt's Humility, as in avoiding the Height and Extravagance of *Alexander's* Vanity.

D O N'T therefore think to compound Matters, or that it is enough to avoid the Vanity of the vaineſt Men. There is as much Folly in ſeeking little as great Honours; as great a Miſtake in needleſs Expenſe upon thy ſelf, as upon any thing elſe. Thou muſt not only be leſs vain and ambitious than an *Alexander*, but practice the Humility of the bleſſed *Jeſus*.

IF thou rememberest that the whole Race of Mankind are a Race of fallen Spirits, that pass through this World as an Arrow passes through the Air, thou wilt soon perceive, that all Things here are equally great and equally little, and that there is no Wisdom or Happiness, but in getting a Way to the best Advantage.

IF thou rememberest that this Life is but a Vapour, that thou art in the Body, only to be holy, humble, and heavenly-minded, that thou standest upon the Brinks of Death, Resurrection, and Judgment, and that these great Things will suddenly come upon thee, like a Thief in the Night, thou wilt see a Vanity in all the Gifts of Fortune, greater than any Words can express.

DO but therefore know thy self, as Religion has made thee known, do but see thy self in the Light, which Christ has brought into the World, and then thou wilt see that nothing concerns thee, but what concerns an everlasting Spirit that is going to God; and that there are no Enjoyments here that are worth a Thought, but such as may make thee more perfect in those holy Tempers which will carry thee to Heaven.



C H A P. II.

Christianity requires a Change of Nature, a new Life perfectly devoted to God.



CHRISTIANITY is not a School, for the teaching of moral Virtue, the polishing our Manners, or forming us to live a Life of this World with Decency and Gentility.

It is deeper and more divine in its Designs, and has much nobler Ends than these, it implies an *entire Change* of Life, a Dedication of our selves, our Souls and Bodies unto God, in the strictest and highest Sense of the Words.

OUR blessed Saviour came into the World not to make any Composition with it, or to divide Things between Heaven and Earth, but to make War with every State of Life, to put an End to the Designs of Flesh and Blood, and to shew us, that

that we must either leave this World, to become Sons of God, or by enjoying it; take our Portion amongst Devils and damned Spirits.

DEATH is not more certainly a Separation of our Souls from our Bodies, than the Christian Life is a Separation of our Souls from worldly Tempers, vain Indulgences, and unnecessary Cares.

No sooner are we baptiz'd, but we are to consider our selves as new and holy Persons, that are entered upon a new State of Things, that are devoted to God, and have renounced all, to be Fellow-heirs with Christ, and Members of his Kingdom.

THERE is no Alteration of Life, no Change of Condition, that implies half so much, as that Alteration which Christianity introduceth.

IT is a Kingdom of Heaven begun upon Earth, and by being made Members of it, we are entered into a new State of Goods and Evils.

ETERNITY altereth the Face and Nature of every thing in this World, Life is only a Trial, Prosperity becometh Adversity, Pleasure a Mischief, and nothing a Good, but as it increaseth our Hope, purifieth our Natures, and prepareth us to receive higher Degrees of Happiness.

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LET us now see what it is, to enter into this State of Redemption.

OUR own Church in Conformity with Scripture, and the Practice of the purest Ages, makes it necessary for us to renounce the *Pomps and Vanities of the World*, before we can be receiv'd as Members of Christian Communion.

DID we enough consider this, we should find, that whenever we yield ourselves up to the Pleasures, Profits, and Honours of this Life, that we turn *Apostates*, break our Covenant with God, and go back from the express Conditions, on which we were admitted into the Communion of Christ's Church.

IF we consult either the Life or Doctrines of our Saviour, we shall find that Christianity is a Covenant, that contains only the Terms of changing and resigning this World, for another, that is to come.

IT is a State of Things, that wholly regards Eternity, and knows of no other Goods, and Evils, but such as relate to another Life.

IT is a Kingdom of Heaven, that has no other Interests in this World, than as it takes its Members out of it, and when the Number of the Elect is compleat, this World will be consum'd with Fire, as having no other Reason of its Existence, than
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the furnishing Members for that blessed Society which is to last for ever.

I CANNOT here omit observing the Folly and Vanity of human Wisdom, which full of imaginary Projects, pleases it self with its mighty Prosperities, its lasting Establishments in a World doom'd to Destruction, and which is to last no longer, than till a sufficient Number are redeem'd out of it,

DID we see a Number of Animals hastening to take up their Apartments, and contending for the best Places, in a Building that was to be beat down, as soon as its old Inhabitants were got safe out, we should see a Contention full as wise, as the Wisdom of worldly Ambition.

TO return. Christianity is therefore a Course of holy Discipline, solely fitted to the Cure and Recovery of fallen Spirits, and intends such a Change in our Nature, as may raise us to a nearer Union with God, and qualify us for such high Degrees of Happiness.

IT is no Wonder therefore, if it makes no Provision for the Flesh, if it condemns the Maxims of human Wisdom, and indulges us in no worldly Projects, since its very End, is, to redeem us from all the Vanity, Vexation, and Misery, of this State of Things, and to place us in a Con-
dition,

dition, where we shall be Fellow-heirs with Christ, and as the Angels of God.

THAT Christianity requires a Change of Nature, a new Life perfectly devoted to God, is plain from the Spirit and Tenour of the Gospel.

The Saviour of the World saith, *that except a Man be born again, of the Water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God (a).* We are told, that *to as many as received him, to them he gave Power, to become the Sons of God, which were born, not of Blood, nor of the Will of the Flesh, nor of the Will of Man, but of God (b).*

THESE Words plainly teach us, that Christianity implies some great Change of Nature, that as our Birth was to us the Beginning of a new Life, and brought us into a Society of earthly Enjoyments, so Christianity, is another Birth, that brings us into a Condition altogether as new, as when we first saw the Light.

WE begin again to be, we enter upon fresh Terms of Life, have new Relations, new Hopes and Fears, and an entire Change of every thing that can be call'd good or evil.

(a) Joh. iii. 5.

(b) Joh. i. 12.

THIS new Birth, this Principle of a new Life, is the very Effence and Soul of Christianity, it is the Seal of the Promises, the Mark of our Sonship, the Earnest of the Inheritance, the Security of our Hope, and the Foundation of all our Acceptance with God.

HE that is in Christ, saith the Apostle, is a new Creature, and if any Man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his (a).

AND again, He who is join'd to the Lord, is one Spirit (b).

IT is not therefore any Number of moral Virtues, no partial Obedience, no Modes of Worship, no external Acts of Adoration, no Articles of Faith, but a new Principle of Life, an entire Change of Temper, that makes us true Christians.

IF the Spirit of him who rais'd up Jesus from the Dead dwell in you, he that rais'd up Christ from the Dead, shall also quicken your mortal Bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you (c). For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God.

SINCE therefore the Scriptures thus absolutely require a Life suitable to the Spirit and Temper of Jesus Christ, since they allow us not the Privilege of the Sons

(a) Rom. viii. 9.

(b) I Cor. vi. 17.

(c) Rom. viii. 11.

of God, unless we live and act according to the Spirit of God; it is past Doubt, that Christianity requires an entire Change of Nature and Temper, a Life devoted perfectly to God.

F O R what can imply a greater Change, than from a carnal to a spiritual Mind? What can be more contrary, than the Works of the Flesh are to the Works of the Spirit? It is the Difference of Heaven and Hell.

L I G H T and Darknes are but faint Resemblances of that great Contrariety, that is betwixt the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of the World.

I T S Wisdom is Foolishness, its Friendship is Enmity with God.

A L L that is in the World, the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life, is not of the Father (a).

W O R L D L Y Opinions, proud Reasonings, fleshly Cares, and earthly Projects, are all so many false Judgments, mere Lies; and we know who is the Father of Lies.

F O R this Reason, the Scripture makes the Devil the God and Prince of this World, because the Spirit and Temper which reigns there, is entirely from him;

(a) 1 Joh. ii. 16.

and so far as we are govern'd by the Wisdom and Temper of the World, so far are we govern'd by that evil Power of Darkness.

IF we would see more of this Contrariety, and what a Change our new Life in Christ implies, let us consider what it is to be *born of God*.

St. JOHN tells us one sure Mark of our new Birth, in the following Words, *He that is born of God, overcometh the World (a)*.

So that the *new Birth*, or the Christian Life, is consider'd with Opposition to the *World*, and all that is in it, its vain Cares, its false Glories, proud Designs, and sensual Pleasures, if we have overcome these, so as to be governed by other Cares, other Glories, other Designs, and other Pleasures, then are we born of God. Then is the Wisdom of this World, and the Friendship of this World, turn'd into the Wisdom and Friendship of God, which will for ever keep us *Heirs of God, and Joint-heirs with Christ*.

AGAIN, the same Apostle helps us to another Sign of our new Life in God. *Whoever, saith he, is born of God, doth not commit Sin, for his Seed remaineth in him,*

(a) 1 Ep. v. 4.

and he cannot sin, because he is born of God (a).

THIS is not to be understood, as if he that was born of God, was therefore in an absolute State of Perfection, and incapable afterwards of falling into any thing that was sinful.

IT only means, that he that is born of God, is possess'd of a Temper and Principle, that makes him utterly hate and labour to avoid all Sin; he is therefore said *not to commit Sin*, in such a Sense as a Man may be said not to do that, which it is his constant Care and Principle to prevent being done.

HE cannot sin, as it may be said of a Man that has no Principle but Covetousness, that he cannot do Things that are expensive, because it is his constant Care and Labour to be sparing, and if Expence happen, it is contrary to his Intention; it is his Pain and Trouble, and he returns to saving with a double Diligence.

THUS is he that is born of God, Purity and Holiness is his only Aim, and he is more incapable of having any sinful Intentions, than the Miser is incapable of generous Expence, and if he finds himself in

(a) 1 Ep. iii. 9.

any Sin, it is his greatest Pain and Trouble, and he labours after Holiness with a double Zeal.

THIS it is to be born of God, when we have a Temper and Mind so entirely devoted to Purity and Holiness, that it may be said of us in a just Sense, that we cannot commit Sin. When Holiness is such a Habit in our Minds, so directs and forms our Designs, as Covetousness and Ambition directs and governs the Actions of such Men, as are govern'd by no other Principles, then are we alive in God, and living Members of the mystical Body of his Son Jesus Christ.

THIS is our true Standard and Measure by which we are to judge of our selves; we are not true Christians unless we are born of God, and we are not born of God, unless it can be said of us in this Sense that we cannot commit Sin.

WHEN by an inward Principle of Holiness we stand so dispos'd to all Degrees of Virtue, as the ambitious Man stands dispos'd to all Steps of Greatness, when we hate and avoid all Kinds of Sins, as the covetous Man hates and avoids all Sorts of Loss and Expence, then are we such Sons of God, as cannot commit Sin.

WE must therefore examine into the State and Temper of our Minds, and see
whether

whether we be thus chang'd in our Natures, thus born again to a new Life, whether we be so spiritual, as to have overcome the World, so holy, as that we cannot commit Sin ; since it is the undeniable Doctrine of Scripture, that this State of Mind, this new Birth is as necessary to Salvation, as the believing in Jesus Christ.

To be eminent therefore for any particular Virtue, to detest and avoid several Kinds of Sins, is just nothing at all ; its Excellency (as the Apostle saith of some particular Virtues) is but as *sounding Brass and a tinkling Cymbal.*

BUT when the Temper and Taste of our Soul is entirely changed, when we are renewed in the Spirit of our Minds, and are full of a Relish and Desire of all Godliness, of a Fear and Abhorrence of all Evil, then, as St. John speaks, *may we know that we are of the Truth, and shall assure our Hearts before him, then shall we know, that he abideth in us by the Spirit, which he hath given us (a).*

WE have already seen two Marks of those that are born of God, the one is, that they have overcome the World, the other, that they do not commit Sin.

(a) 1 Ep. iii. 19, 24.

To these I shall only add a third, which is given us by Christ himself, *I say unto you, love your Enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despightfully use you, and persecute you, that you may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven (a).*

WELL may a Christian be said to be a *new Creature*, and Christianity an entire Change of Temper, since such a Disposition as this, is made so necessary, that without it, we cannot be the Children of our Father which is in Heaven; and if we are not his Children, neither is he our Father.

IT is not therefore enough, that we love our Friends, Benefactors, and Relations, but we must love like God, if we will shew that we are born of him. We must like him have an universal Love and Tenderness for all Mankind, imitating that Love, which would that all Men should be sav'd.

GOD is Love, and this we are to observe as the true Standard of our selves, that *he who dwelleth in God, dwelleth in Love*; and consequently he who dwelleth not in Love, dwelleth not in God.

(a) Mat. v. 44.

IT is impossible therefore to be a *true* Christian, and an *Enemy* at the same time.

MANKIND has no Enemy but the Devil, and they who partake of his malicious and ill-natur'd Spirit.

THERE is perhaps no Duty of Religion that is so contrary to Flesh and Blood as this, but as difficult as it may seem to a worldly Mind, it is still necessary, and will easily be perform'd by such as are in Christ, new Creatures.

FOR take but away earthly Goods and Evils, and you take away all Hatred and Malice, for they are the only Causes of those base Tempers. He therefore that *hath overcome the World*, hath overcome all the Occasions of Envy and ill Nature; for having put himself in this Situation, he can pity, pray for, and forgive all his Enemies, who want less Forgiveness from him, than he expects from his heavenly Father.

LET us here a while contemplate the Height and Depth of Christian Holiness, and that god-like Spirit which our Religion requireth. This Duty of universal Love and Benevolence, even to our bitterest Enemies, may serve to convince us, that to be Christians, we must be *born again*, change our very Natures, and have no governing Desire of our Souls, but that of being made like God.

F O R we cannot exercise, or delight in this Duty, till we rejoice and delight only in increasing our Likeness to God.

W E may therefore from this, as well as from what has been before observ'd, be infallibly assur'd, that Christianity does not consist in any partial Amendment of our Lives, any particular moral Virtues, but in an entire Change of our natural Temper, a Life wholly devoted to God.

T O proceed,

T H I S same Doctrine is farther taught by our blessed Saviour, when speaking of little Children, he saith, *Suffer them to come unto me, for of such is the Kingdom of God.* And again, *Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God, as a little Child, shall in no wise enter therein (a).*

I F we are not resolv'd to deceive our selves, to have Eyes and see not, Ears and hear not, we must perceive that these Words imply some mighty Change in our Nature.

F O R what can make us more contrary to our selves, than to lay aside all our manly Wisdom, our mature Judgments, our boasted Abilities, and become Infants

(a) Luke xviii. 16.

in Nature and Temper, before we can partake of this heavenly State?

WE reckon it Change enough, from Babes to be Men, and surely it must signify as great an Alteration, to be reduc'd from Men to a State of Infancy.

ONE peculiar Condition of Infants is this, that they have every thing to learn, they are to be taught by others what they are to hope and fear, and wherein their proper Happiness consists.

IT is in this Sense, that we are chiefly to become as Infants, to be as though that we had every thing to learn, and suffer ourselves to be taught what we are to chuse, and what to avoid; to pretend to no Wisdom of our own, but be ready to pursue that Happiness which God in Christ proposes to us, and to accept it with such Simplicity of Mind, as Children, that have nothing of our own to oppose to it.

BUT now, is this Infant-temper thus essential to the Christian Life? Does the Kingdom of God consist only of such as are so affected? Let this then be added as another undeniable Proof, that Christianity requires a *new Nature*, and Temper of Mind; and that this Temper is such, as having renounced the Prejudices of Life, the Maxims of human Wisdom, yields itself with a Child-like Submission and Sim-

plicity to be entirely govern'd by the Precepts and Doctrines of Christ.

CRAFT and Policy, selfish Cunning, proud Abilities, and vain Endowments, have no Admittance into this holy State of Society with Christ and God.

THE Wisdom of this World, the Intreagues of Life, the Designs of Greatness and Ambition, lead to another Kingdom, and he that would follow Christ, must empty himself of this vain Furniture, and put on the meek Ornaments of infant and undefining Simplicity.

WHERE is the Wise? Where is the Scribe? Where is the Disputer of this World? saith the Apostle, Hath not God made foolish the Wisdom of this World (a)?

IF therefore we will partake of the Wisdom of God, we must think and judge of this World, and its most boasted Gifts, as the Wisdom of God judgeth of them; we must deem them Foolishness, and with undivided Hearts labour after one Wisdom, one Perfection, one Happiness, in being entirely devoted to God.

THIS Comparison of the Spirit of a Christian, to the Temper of Children, may also serve to recommend to us a certain

(a) 1 Cor. i. 20.

Simplicity of Manners, which is a great Ornament of Behaviour, and is indeed always the Effect of a Heart entirely devoted to God.

F O R as the Tempers of Men are made designing and deceitful, by their having many and secret Ends to bring about, so the Heart that is entirely devoted to God, is at Unity with it self, and all others; it being wholly taken up with *one great* Design, has no little Successes that it labours after, and so is naturally open, simple, and undesigning in all the Affairs of Life.

A L T H O U G H what has been already observ'd in the foregoing Pages might be thought sufficient to shew, that Christianity requires a new Nature, a Life entirely devoted to God; yet since the Scriptures add other Evidences of the same Truth, I must quote a Passage or two more on this Head.

T H E holy Spirit of God is not satisfied with representing that Change which Christianity introduceth, by telling us, that it is a new Birth, a Being born of God, and the like, but proceeds to convince us of the same Truth by another Way of speaking, by representing it as a State of Death.

T H U S

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THUS saith the Apostle, *ye are dead, and your Life is hid with Christ in God (a).*

THAT is, you Christians are dead as to this World, and the Life which you now live, is not to be reckon'd by any visible or worldly Goods, but is hid in Christ, is a spiritual Enjoyment, a Life of Faith, and not of Sight ; ye are Members of that mystical Body of which Christ is the Head, and enter'd into a Kingdom which is not of this World.

AND in this State of Death are we as Christians to continue till Christ, *who is our Life, shall appear, and then shall we also appear with him in Glory (b).*

TO shew us that this Death begins with our Christian State, we are said to be *buried with him in Baptism* ; so that we entered into this State of Death at our Baptism, when we entered into Christianity.

KNOW ye not, says the Apostle, *that so many of us as were baptiz'd into Jesus Christ, were baptiz'd into his Death? Therefore we are buried with him, by Baptism into Death (c).*

NOW Christians may be said to be baptiz'd into the Death of Christ, if their Baptism puts them into a State like to that,

(a) Col. iii. 3.

(b) Ibid. 4.

(c) Rom. vi. 4.

in which our Saviour was at his Death. The Apostle shews this to be the Meaning of it, by saying, *if we have been planted together in the Likeness of his Death*, that is; if our Baptism has put us into a State like that of his Death.

So that Christian Baptism is not only an external Rite, by which we are entered into the external Society of Christ's Church, but is a solemn Consecration, which presents us an Offering to God, as Christ was offer'd at his Death.

WE are therefore no longer alive to the Enjoyments of this World, but as Christ was then nail'd to the Cross, and devoted entirely to God, that he might be made *perfect through Sufferings*, and ascend to the Right Hand of God; so is our old Man to be crucified, and we consecrated to God, by a Conformity to the Death of Christ, that *like as Christ was rais'd from the Dead by the Glory of the Father*, even so we also *should walk in newness of Life, and being risen with Christ, should seek those Things which are above.*

THIS is the true undeniable State of Christianity; Baptism does not make us effectually Christians, unless it brings us into a State of Death, consecrates us to God, and begins a Life suitable to that State of Things, to which our Saviour is
risen

risen from the Dead. This, and no other than this, is the Holiness, and spiritual Temper, of the Christian Life, which implies such a Resignation of Mind, such a Dedication of our selves to God, as may resemble the Death of Christ. And on the other Hand, such a Newness of Life, such an Ascension of the Soul, such a holy and heavenly Behaviour, as may shew that we are risen with Christ, and belong to that glorious State, where he now sits at the Right Hand of God.

IT is in this Sense, that the holy Jesus saith of his Disciples, *they are not of this World, even as I am not of this World*; being not left to live the Life of the World, but chosen out of it for the Purposes of his Kingdom, that they might copy after his Death, and Oblation of himself to God.

AND this is the Condition of all Christians to the Consummation of all Things, who are to carry on the same Designs, and by the same Means raise out of this corrupted State, a Number of Fellow-heirs with Christ in everlasting Glory. The Saviour of the World has purchased Mankind with his Blood, not to live in Ease and pleasurable Enjoyments, not to spend their Time in Softness and Luxury, in the Gratifications of Pride, Idleness, and Vanity,

nity, but to drink of his Cup, to be baptiz'd with the Baptism that he was baptiz'd with, to make War with their corrupt Natures, humble themselves, mortify the Desires of the Flesh, and like him be made perfect through Sufferings.

St. PAUL so well knew this to be the Design and Spirit of Religion, that he puts his Title to the Benefits of Christ's Resurrection upon it, when he says,

T H A T I may know him and the Power of his Resurrection, and the Fellowship of his Sufferings, being made conformable to his Death (a).

IT is his being made conformable to his Death, on which he founds his Hopes of sharing in the Resurrection of Christ. If Christians think that Salvation is now to be had on softer Terms, and that a Life of Indulgence and sensual Gratifications is consistent with the Terms of the Gospel, and that they need not now be made conformable to his Death, they are miserably blind, and as much mistake their Saviour, as the Worldly Jews who expected a temporal Messiah to deliver them.

O U R Redemption is a Redemption by Sacrifice, and none are redeem'd, but they

(a) Phil. iii. 10.

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who conform to it. *If we suffer with him we shall also reign with him.*

WE must then, if we would be wise unto Salvation, die and rise again like Christ, and make all the Actions of our Life holy by offering them to God. *Whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do, we must do all to the Glory of God.*

SINCE therefore, he that is call'd to Christianity, is thus call'd to an Imitation of the *Death* of Christ, to *forbear* from Sin, to overcome the *World*, to be born of the *Spirit*, to be born of God, these surely will be allow'd to be sufficient Evidences, that Christianity requireth an *entire Change* of our Nature, a Life perfectly devoted to God.

NOW if this is Christian Piety, it may serve to instruct two Sorts of People:

FIRST, those who are content with an outward Decency and Regularity of Life: I don't mean such as are hypocritical in their Virtues; but all those who are content with an outward Form of Behaviour, without that inward Newness of Heart and Spirit which the Gospel requireth.

CHARITY, Chastity, Sobriety, and Justice, may be practis'd without Christian Piety: a *Jew*, a *Heathen*, may be charitable and temperate; but to make these Virtues become Parts of Christian Piety, they

they must proceed from a Heart *truly* turned unto God, that is full of an *infant* Simplicity, that is *crucified* with Christ, that is *born* again of the Spirit, that has overcome the *World*. Temperance or Justice without this *Turn* of Heart, may be the Temperance of a *Jew* or a *Heathen*, but it is not Christian Temperance till it proceed from a true Christian Spirit. Could we do and suffer all that Christ himself did or suffered, yet if it was not all done in the *same Spirit* and Temper of Christ, we should have none of his Merit.

A CHRISTIAN therefore must be sober, charitable, and just, upon the same Principles, and with the same Spirit, that he receives the Holy *Sacrament*, for ends of Religion, as Acts of Obedience to God, as Means of Purity and Holiness, and as so many Instances of a Heart devoted to God.

As the bare eating of Bread, and drinking Wine in the Holy *Sacrament*, is of no use to us, without those religious Dispositions which constitute the true Frame of a pious Mind, so is it the same in all other Duties; they are mere outward Ceremonies, and useless Actions, unless they are performed in the *Spirit* of Religion: Charity and Sobriety are of no Value, till they

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they are so many Instances of a Heart truly devoted to God.

A CHRISTIAN therefore is to be sober, not only so far as answers the Ends of a decent and orderly Life, but in such a Manner as becomes one, who is *born* of the Holy Spirit, that is made one with Christ, who dwells in Christ and Christ in him. He must be sober in such a measure as best serves the Ends of Religion, and practice such Abstinence as may make him fittest for the Holiness, Purity, and Perfection of the Christian Life.

HE must be charitable, not so far as suits with Humanity and good Esteem amongst Men, but in such a Measure as is according to the Doctrines and *Spirit* of Religion.

FOR neither Charity, nor Temperance, nor any other Virtue, are Parts of Christian Holiness, till they are made holy and religious, by such a Piety of Heart, as shews that we live *wholly* unto God.

THIS is what cannot be too much consider'd by a great many People, whose Religion has made no Change in their Hearts, but only consists in an external Decency of Life, who are sober without the Piety of Sobriety, who pray without Devotion, who give Alms without Charity,

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ity, and are Christians without the Spirit of Christianity.

LET them remember that Religion is to *alter* our Nature, that Christian Piety consists in a *Change* of Heart; that it implies a new Turn of Spirit, a spiritual Death, a spiritual Life, a dying to the World, and a Living wholly unto God.

SECONDLY, This Doctrine may serve to instruct those who have liv'd Strangers to Religion, what they are to do to become true Christians.

SOME People who are ashamed of the Folly of their Lives, and begin to look towards Religion, think they have done enough, when they either alter the outward Course of their Lives, abate some of their Extravagancies, or become careful of some particular Virtue.

THUS a Man, whose Life has been a Course of Folly, thinks he has made a sufficient Change, by becoming temperate. Another imagines he has sufficiently declar'd for Religion, by not neglecting the publick Worship as he used to do. A *Lady* fancies that she lives enough to God, because she has left off *Plays* and *Paint*; and lives more at home, than in the former Part of her Life.

BUT such People should consider, that Religion is no one particular Virtue; that

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it does not consist in the *Fewness* of our Vices, or in any particular Amendment of our Lives, but in such a *thorough Change* of Heart, as makes Piety and Holiness the Measure and Rule of all our Tempers.

IT is a miserable Error to be content with our selves, because we are less vain, or covetous, more sober, and decent in our Behaviour, than we used to be ; yet this is the State of many People, who think they have sufficiently reform'd their Lives, because they are in some Degree different from what they were. They think it enough to be changed from what they were, without considering how thorough a Change Religion requires.

BUT let such People remember, that they who thus *measure themselves by themselves* are not wise. Let them remember that they are not Disciples of Christ, till they have like him offered *their whole Body and Soul* as a reasonable and lively Sacrifice unto God ; that they are not Members of Christ's mystical Body, till they are united unto him by a *new Spirit* ; that they have not enter'd into the Kingdom of God, till they have enter'd with an *infant Simplicity* of Heart, till they are so born again as not to commit Sin, so full of an heavenly Spirit, as to have *overcome the World*.

NOTHING less than this *great Change* of Heart and Mind can give any one any
Assu-

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Assurance, that he is truly turn'd to God. There is but this one Term of Salvation, *He that is in Christ, is a new Creature.* How insignificant all other Attainments are, is sufficiently shewn in the following Words: *Many will say to me in that Day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy Name? And in thy Name have cast out Devils? And in thy Name have done many wonderful Works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work Iniquity (a).*

So that there is no Religion that will stand us in any stead, but that which is the *Conversion* of the Heart to God; when all our Tempers are Tempers of Piety, springing from a Soul that is *born again of the Spirit*, that tends with one full Bent to a Perfection and Happiness in the Enjoyment of God.

LET us therefore look carefully to our selves, and consider what manner of Spirit we are of; let us not think our Condition safe, because we are of this or that Church or Communion, or because we are strict Observers of the external Offices of Religion, for these are Marks that belong to more than belong to Christ. All are

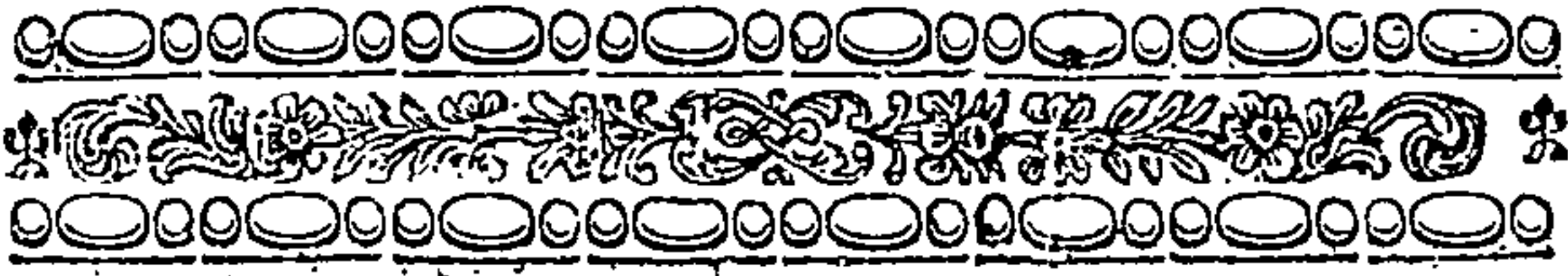
(a) Matth. vii. 22.

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not his, that *prophecy* or even *work Miracles in his Name*, much less those, who with worldly Minds and corrupt Hearts are only baptiz'd in his Name.

IF Religion has rais'd us into a *new World*, if it has fill'd us with new *Ends of Life*, if it has taken Possession of our Hearts, and alter'd the whole Turn of our Minds, if it has chang'd all our Ideas of Things, given us a new Set of Hopes and Fears, and taught us to live by the *Realities* of an invisible World, then may we humbly hope, that we are true Followers of the Holy Jesus, and such as *may rejoyce in the Day of Christ, that we have neither run in vain, nor labour'd in vain.*





C H A P. III.

Christianity requireth a Renunciation of the World, and all worldly Tempers.



TH E Christian Religion being to raise a *new*, spiritual, and as yet invisible World, and to place Man in a certain Order amongst *Thrones, Principalities*, and spiritual Beings, is at entire Enmity with this present, corrupt State of Flesh and Blood.

I T ranks the present World along with the Flesh and the Devil, as an equal Enemy to those glorious Ends, and that Perfection of human Nature, which our Redemption proposes.

I T pleased the Wisdom of God to indulge the *Jews* in worldly Hopes and Fears.

I T was then said, *Therefore shall ye keep all the Commandments, which I command you this Day, that ye may be strong, and*

go in and possess the Land, whither you go to possess it.

THE Gospel is quite of another Nature, and is a Call to a very different State, it lays its first Foundation in the Renunciation of the World, as a State of false Goods and Enjoyments, which feed the Vanity and Corruption of our Nature, fill our Hearts with foolish and wicked Passions, and keep us separate from God, the only Happiness of all Spirits.

My Kingdom, saith our blessed Saviour, is not of this World; by which we may be assured, that no Worldlings are of his Kingdom.

WE have a farther Representation of the Contrariety, that there is betwixt this Kingdom and the Concerns of this World. *A certain Man, saith our Lord, made a great Supper, and bade many, and sent his Servant at supper-time, to say to them that were bidden, come, for all Things are now ready; and they all with one Consent began to make Excuse. The first said, I have bought a Piece of Ground, and I must needs go and see it; another said, I have bought five Yoke of Oxen, and I go to prove them, I pray thee have me excused; another said, I have married a Wife, and therefore I cannot come.*

WE find that the Master of the House was angry, and said, *None of those Men*
which

which were bidden, shall taste of my Supper (a).

OUR Saviour a little afterwards applies it all in this Manner, *Whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my Disciple.* We are told, that when the Chief Priests and Pharisees heard our Saviour's Parables, they perceived that he spoke of them (b).

IF Christians hearing the above-recited Parable, are not pricked in their Hearts, and don't feel that our Saviour speaks of them, it must be own'd that they are more hardened than *Jews*, and more unsincere than *Pharisees*.

THIS Parable teaches us, that not only the Vices, the Wickedness and Vanity of this World, but even its most lawful and allow'd Concerns, render Men unable to enter, and unworthy to be received into the true State of Christianity.

THAT he who is busied in an honest and lawful Calling, may on that Account be as well rejected by God, as he who is vainly employ'd in foolish and idle Pursuits.

THAT it is no more pardonable to be less affected to the Things of Religion, for

(a) Luke xiv. 16.

(b) Mat. xxi. 45.

the Sake of any worldly Business, than for the Indulgence of our Pride, or any other Passion, it farther teaches us, that Christianity is a Calling that puts an End to all other Callings; that we are no longer to consider it as our proper State, or Employment, to take care of Oxen, look after an Estate, or attend the most plausible Affairs of Life, but to reckon every Condition as equally trifling, and fit to be neglected, for the Sake of the *one thing needful*.

MEN of serious Business and Management, generally censure those who trifle away their Time in idle and impertinent Pleasures, as vain and foolish, and unworthy of the Christian Profession.

BUT they don't consider that the Business of the World, where they think they shew such a manly Skill and Address, is as vain as Vanity it self; they don't consider that the Cares of an Employment, an Attention to Business, if it has got hold of the Heart, renders Men as vain and odious in the Sight of God, as any other Gratification.

FOR though they may call it an honest Care, a creditable Industry, or by any other plausible Name, yet it is their particular Gratification, and a Wisdom that can no more recommend it self to the Eyes of God, than the Wisdom of an *Epicure*.

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FOR it shews as wrong a Turn of Mind, as false a Judgment, and as great a Contempt of the true Goods, to neglect *any* Degrees of Piety, for the Sake of Business, as for any the most trifling Pleasures of Life.

THE Wisdom of this World gives an Importance, and Air of Greatness to several Ways of Life, and ridicules others as vain and contemptible, which differ only in their kind of Vanity; but the Wisdom from above condemns all Labour, as equally fruitless, but that which labours after everlasting Life. Let but Religion determine the Point, and what can it signify, whether a Man forgets God in his *Farm*, or a *Shop*, or at a *Gaming-Table*? For the World is full as great and important in its *Pleasures*, as in its *Cares*; there is no more Wisdom in the one, than in the other; and the Christian that is govern'd by either, and made less affected to Things of God by them, is equally odious and contemptible in the Sight of God.

AND though we distinguish betwixt *Cares* and *Pleasures*, yet if we would speak exactly, it is Pleasure alone that governs and moves us in every State of Life. And the Man, who in the Business of the 'World would be thought to pursue it, because of its Use and Importance, is as much govern'd

governed by his Temper and Taste for Pleasures, as he who studies the Gratification of his *Palate*, or takes his Delight in running *Foxes* and *Hares* out of Breath.

F O R there is no Wisdom or Reason in any thing but Religion, nor is any Way of Life less vain than another, but as it is made serviceable to Piety, and conspires with the Designs of Religion to raise Mankind to a Participation and Enjoyment of the Divine Nature.

T H E R E F O R E does our Saviour equally call Men from the *Cares* of Employments, as from the *Pleasures* of their Senses, because they are equally wrong Turns of Mind, equally nourish the Corruption of our Nature, and are equally *nothing* when compared to that high State of Glory, which by his Sufferings and Death he has merited for us.

P E R H A P S Christians who are not at all ashamed to be devoted to the Cares and Business of the World, cannot better perceive the Weakness and Folly of their Designs, than by comparing them with such States of Life, as they own to be vain and foolish, and contrary to the Temper of Religion.

S O M E People have no other Care, than how to give their *Palate* some fresh Pleasure, and enlarge the Happiness of *Tasting*.
I de-

I desire to know now wherein consists the Sin or Baseness of this Care.

OTHERS live to no other Purpose than to breed *Dogs*, and attend the Sports of the Field.

OTHERS think all their Time dull and heavy, which is not spent in the Pleasures and Diversions of the *Town*.

MEN of sober Business, who seem to act the grave Part of Life, generally condemn these Ways of Life.

NOW I desire to know upon what Account they are to be condemn'd. For produce but the true Reason why any of these Ways of Life are vain and sinful, and the same Reason will conclude with the same Strength against every State of Life, but that which is entirely devoted to God.

LET the ambitious Man but shew the Folly and Irregularity of *Covetousness*, and the same Reasons will shew the Folly and Irregularity of *Ambition*.

LET the Man who is deep in worldly Business, but shew the Vanity and Shame of a Life that is devoted to *Pleasures*, and the same Reasons will as fully set forth the Vanity and Shame of worldly *Cares*. So that whoever can condemn Sensuality, Ambition, or any Way of Life, upon the Principles of Reason and Religion, carries
his

his own Condemnation within his own Breast, and is that very Person which he despises, unless his Life be entirely devoted to God.

FOR worldly Cares are no more holy or virtuous, than worldly Pleasures, they are as great a Mistake in Life, and when they equally divide or possess the Heart, are equally vain and shameful, as any sensual Gratifications.

IT is granted that some Cares are made necessary by the Necessities of Nature; and the same also may be observ'd of some Pleasures; the Pleasures of Eating, Drinking, and Rest, are equally necessary; but yet if Reason and Religion do not limit these Pleasures by the Necessities of Nature, we fall from rational Creatures, into Drones, Sots, Gluttons, and *Epicures*.

IN like Manner our Care after some worldly Things is necessary, but if this Care is not bounded by the just Wants of Nature, if it wanders into unnecessary Pursuits, and fills the Mind with false Desires and Cravings, if it wants to add an imaginary Splendor to the plain Demands of Nature, it is vain and irregular, it is the Care of the *Epicure*, a longing for *Sauces* and *Ragons*; and corrupts the Soul like any other sensual Indulgence.

F O R this Reason our Lord points his Doctrines at the most common and allowed Employments of Life, to teach us that they may employ our Minds as falsely, and distract us as far from our true Good, as any Trifles and Vanity.

H E calls us from such Cares, to convince us, that even the Necessities of Life must be sought with a kind of Indifference, that so our Souls may be truly sensible of greater Wants, and dispos'd to hunger and thirst after Enjoyments that will make us happy for ever.

B U T how unlike are Christians to Christianity! It commands us *to take no Thought, saying what shall we eat, or what shall we drink,* yet Christians are restless and laborious till they can eat in *Plate*.

I T commands us to be indifferent about Raiment, but Christians are full of Care and Concern to be cloathed in *Purple* and fine Linnen; it enjoins us to take no Thought for the Morrow, yet Christians think they have lived in vain, if they don't leave Estates at their Death. Yet these are the Disciples of that Lord, who saith, *Whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my Disciple.*

I t must not be said that there is some Defect in these Doctrines, or that they are not plainly enough taught in Scripture, because
cause

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cause the Lives and Behaviour of Christians is so contrary to them; for if the Spirit of the World, and the Temper of Christians, might be alledg'd against the Doctrines of Scripture, none of them would have lasted to this Day.

IT is one of the Ten Commandments, *Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain*; our Saviour has in the most solemn Manner forbid Swearing; yet where more Swearing than amongst Christians, and amongst such Christians as would think it hard to be reckon'd a Reproach to the Christian Name?

THE Scripture says of Christians, that they are born of God, *and have overcome the World*; can they be reckon'd of that Number, who have not so much as overcome this flagrant Sin, and to which they have no Temptation in Nature?

WELL therefore may the Doctrines of Humility, Heavenly-mindedness, and Contempt of the World, be disregarded, since they have all the Corruptions of Flesh and Blood, all the innate and acquir'd Pride and Vanity of our Nature to conquer, before they can be admitted.

To proceed.

I KNOW it is pretended by some, that these Doctrines of our Saviour, concerning *forsaking all*, and the like, related only to his

his first Followers, who could be his Disciples upon no other Terms, and who were to suffer with him for the Propagation of the Gospel.

IT is readily own'd that there are different States of the Church, and that such different States may call Christians to some particular Duties, not common to every Age.

IT is own'd also, that this was the Case of the first Christians, they differed from us in many Respects.

THEY were personally call'd to follow Christ; they receiv'd particular Commissions from his Mouth, they were empowered to work Miracles, and called to a certain Expectation of Hatred and Sufferings from almost all the World.

THESE are Particulars in which the State of the first Church differed from the present.

BUT then it is carefully to be observ'd, that this Difference in the *State* of the Church, is a Difference in the *external State* of the Church, and not in the *internal inward State* of Christians. It is a Difference that relates to the Affairs and *Condition* of the World, and not to the *personal Holiness* and Purity of Christians.

THE World may sometimes favour Christianity, at other Times it may oppose

pose it with Persecution; now this Change of the World makes two different States of the Church, but without making any Difference in the inward personal Holiness of Christians, which is to be always the same, whether the World smiles or frowns upon it.

WHATSOEVER Degrees therefore of personal Holiness or inward Perfection, was requir'd of the first Followers of Christ, is still in the same Degree and for the same Reasons requir'd of all Christians to the End of the World.

HUMILITY, Meekness, heavenly Affection, Devotion, Charity, and a Contempt of the World, are all *internal Qualities* of personal Holiness, they constitute that Spirit and Temper of Religion, which is required for its own Excellence, and is therefore of constant and eternal Obligations. There is always the same Fitness and Reasonableness in them, the same Perfection in practising of them, and the same Rewards always due to them.

WE must therefore look carefully into the Nature of the Things, which we find were requir'd of the first Christians; if we find that they were call'd to Sufferings from other People, this may perhaps not be our Case; but if we see they are call'd to Sufferings from themselves, to *voluntary*
Self-

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Self-denials, and renouncing their own Rights, we may judge amiss, if we think this was their particular Duty, as the first Disciples of Christ.

FOR it is undeniable, that these Instances of making themselves Sufferers from themselves, of voluntary Self-denial, and Renunciation of all worldly Enjoyments, are as truly Parts of personal Holiness and Devotion to God, as any Instances of Charity, Humility, and Love of God, that can possibly be suppos'd.

AND it will be difficult to shew, why all Christians are now oblig'd in Imitation of Christ to be *meek and lowly in Heart*, if they like the first Christians are not oblig'd to these Instances of Lowliness and Meekness, or if they are oblig'd still to imitate Christ, how they can be said to do it, if they excuse themselves from these plain and required Ways of shewing it.

IF therefore Christians will shew that they are not oblig'd to those Renunciations of the World, which Christ required of his first Followers, they must shew that such Renunciations, such voluntary Self-denials, were not Instances of personal Holiness and Devotion, did not enter into the Spirit of Christianity, or constitute that *Death* to the World, or *new Birth* in Christ, which the Gospel requireth. But this is as absurd to

imagine, as to suppose that praying for our Enemies, is no part of Charity.

LET us therefore not deceive ourselves, the Gospel preaches the *same* Doctrines to us, that our Saviour taught his first Disciples, and though it may not call us to the same *external* State of the Church, yet it infallibly calls us to the same *inward* State of Holiness and Newness of Life.

IT is out of all Question that this Renunciation of the World was then requir'd, because of the Excellency of such a Temper, because of its Suitableness to the Spirit of Christianity, because of its being in some Degree like to the Temper of Christ, because it was a Temper that became such as were *born again* of God, and were made Heirs of eternal Glory, because it was a right Instance of their loving God *with all their Heart, and with all their Soul, and with all their Strength, and with all their Mind,* because it was a proper Way of shewing their Disregard to the Vanity of earthly Comforts, and their Resolution to attend only to the one Thing needful.

IF therefore we are not obliged to be like them in these Respects, if we may be less holy and heavenly in our Tempers, if we need not act upon such high Principles of Devotion to God, and Disregard of earthly Goods, as they did, we must preach

a *new Gospel* of our own, we must say that we need not be *meek and lowly* as the first Christians were, and that those high Doctrines of Charity, of blessing and doing Good to our worst Enemies, were Duties only for the first State of the Church.

F O R this is undeniable, that if any Heights of Piety, any Degrees of Devotion to God, of Heavenly Affection, were necessary for the first Christians, which are not so now, that the same may be said of every other Virtue and Grace of the Christian Life.

A L L our Saviour's divine Sermon upon the *Mount*, may as well be confin'd to his first Disciples, as these Doctrines, and it is as sound in Divinity, as well founded in Reason, to assert, that our Saviour had only Regard to his first Disciples, when he said, *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon*, as when he saith, *Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my Disciple*.

F O R let any one think, if he can find the least Shadow of a Reason, why Christians should at first be called to higher Degrees of Heavenly Affection, Devotion to God, and Disregard of the World, than they are now.

IT will be as easy to shew that they were obliged to a *stronger* Faith, a *more lively* Hope, than we are now.

BUT if Faith and Hope are Graces of too excellent a Nature, too essential to the Life and Spirit of a Christian, to admit of any Abatements in any Age of the Church, I should think, that heavenly Affection, Devotion to God, and dying to the World, are Tempers equally essential to the Spirit of Religion, and too necessary to the Perfection of the Soul, to be less requir'd in one Age, than in another.

BESIDES, it is to be considered, that these Tempers are the natural and genuine Effects of Faith and Hope, so that if they are changed, or abated, Faith and Hope must have *so far* suffered Abatements, and failed in their most proper and excellent Effects.

ALL Men will readily grant, that it would be very absurd, to suppose, that more *Articles of Faith* should have been necessary to be believed by our Saviour's first Followers, than by Christians of After-ages.

LET it then be considered, why this would be absurd, and it will plainly appear, that the same Reason, which makes it absurd to suppose, that any thing which was once necessary to be *believed*, should ever lose that Necessity, will equally shew, that

that it is alike absurd to suppose, that any thing that was once necessary to be *done*, should ever be lawful to be left undone.

F O R is it absurd to suppose, that *Articles of Faith*, should not have always the same Relation to Salvation? And is it not equally absurd to suppose the same of *any Graces* or Virtues of the Soul? That the Kingdom of Heaven should at such a time be only open to *such Degrees* of Piety, of heavenly Affection, and dying to the World, and at other Times make *no Demand* of them.

A G A I N, I believe all Men will readily grant, that whenever the Church falls into such a State of Persecution as was in the Beginning, that we are then to suffer for the Faith as the first Christians did.

N O W I ask why we are to do as they did, when we fall into the like Circumstances?

Is it because what they did was right and fit to be done? Is it because their Example is safe and agreeable to the Doctrines of Christ? Is it because we must value our Lives at no higher a Rate, than they valued theirs? Is it because suffering for the Faith, is always that same excellent Temper, and always entituled to the same Reward?

IF these are the Reasons, as undoubtedly they are, why we must suffer as they did, if we fall into such a State of the Church as they were in, do not all the same Reasons equally prove that we must *use* the World as they did, because we are in the *same* World that they were in?

FOR let us here put all the same Questions, in Relation to their Self-denials, and Renunciation of Riches, was not what they did in this Respect right and fit to be done? Is not their Example safe and agreeable to the Doctrines of Christ? Are we to value our worldly Goods, more than they valued theirs? Is not the renouncing earthly Enjoyments for the Sake of Christ, always that *same excellent* Temper, and always entitled to the *same Reward*?

THUS we see that every Reason, for suffering as the first Disciples of Christ did, when we fall into the *same State* of Persecution, that they were in, is as strong and necessary a Reason for our contemning and forsaking the World, as they did, because we are still in the *same World* that they were in.

IF it can be shewn, that the World is changed, that its Enjoyments have not that Contrariety to the Spirit of Christianity, that they had in the Apostles Days, there may be some Grounds for us Christians to
take

take other Methods than they did. But if the World is the *same Enemy* it was at the first, if its *Wisdom* is still *Foolishness*, its *Friendship* still *Enmity with God*, we are as much obliged to treat this Enemy, as the first Disciples of Christ did, as we are obliged to imitate their Behaviour towards any other Enemies and Persecutors of the common Christianity.

A N D it would be very absurd to suppose, that we were to follow the Doctrines of Christ in renouncing the *Flesh* and the *Devil*, but might abate of their Enmity in Regard to the *World*, when it is by our Use of worldly Goods, that both the *Flesh* and the *Devil* gain almost all their Power over us.

H A V I N G said thus much to shew that the Gospel belongs to us in *all* its Doctrines of Holiness and Piety, I shall proceed to enquire, what Heavenly Affection, what Renunciation of the World, and Devotion to God, is required of Christians in the holy Scriptures.

W E find in the Passage already quoted, with several others to the like Purpose, that our Saviour saith, as a common Term of Christianity, that *whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my Disciple.*

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St. MARK tells us, *There came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal Life? And Jesus said unto him, thou knowest the Commandments, do not commit Adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false Witness, defraud not, honour thy Father and Mother (a).*

AND he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my Youth.

THEN Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, one thing thou lackest, go thy way and sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the Poor, and thou shalt have Treasure in Heaven, and come take up the Cross and follow me.

AND he was sad at that Saying, and went away grieved, for he had great Possessions.

IN St. Matthew it is thus, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, &c.

Some have imagined, that from our Saviour's using the Expression, *If thou wilt be perfect*, that this was only a Condition of some high uncommon Perfection, which Christians as such, were not obliged to aspire after; but the Weakness of this Ima-

(a) Chap. x. 17.

upon Christian Perfection. 89

gination will soon appear, if it be consider'd, that the young Man's Question plainly shew'd what Perfection it was that he aim'd at; he only ask'd what he should do that he might *inherit eternal Life*. And it was in answer to this Question, that our Saviour told him, that though he had kept the Commandments, yet *one* thing he lack'd.

So that when our Saviour saith, if *thou wilt be perfect*, it is the same thing as when he said, if thou wilt not be lacking in one thing, that is, if thou wilt practice all that Duty which will make thee inherit eternal Life, thou must not only keep the Commandments, *but sell that thou hast and give to the poor*.

It plainly therefore appears, that what is here commanded is not in order to some exalted, uncommon Height of Perfection; but as a *Condition* of his being a Christian, and securing an Inheritance of eternal Life.

This same thing is farther prov'd from our Saviour's general Remark upon it; *How hardly shall they that have Riches enter into the Kingdom of God*.

By which it appears, that it was the bare entring into the State of Christianity, and not any extraordinary Height of Perfection, that was the Matter in question.

THIS Remark, and the other following one, where our Saviour saith, *It is easier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God*, undeniably shew us thus much, that what is here required of this young Man, is also requir'd of *all* rich Men in *all* Ages of the Church, in order to their being true Members of the Kingdom of God.

FOR how could this be said of rich Men, that they can hardly and with more Difficulty enter into the Kingdom of God, if they were not oblig'd to the same, that this rich Man was oblig'd to.

FOR if they may enjoy their Estates, and yet enter into the Kingdom of God, the Difficulty is vanish'd, and they may enter with Ease, though this young Man was put upon much harder Terms.

IF therefore we will but use common Sense in understanding these Words of our Saviour, we must allow that they relate to *all* rich Men, and that the same Renunciation of all Self-enjoyment, is required of them, that was required of this young Man.

HIS Disciples plainly understood him in this Sense, by their saying, *Who then can be saved?* And it appears by our Saviour's Answer, that he did not think they under-

understood him amiss; for he seems to allow their Remark upon the Difficulty of the thing, and only answers, *that with God all things are possible*; implying, that it was possible for the Grace of God to work this great Change in the Hearts of Men.

T H O S E who will still be fancying (for there is nothing but Fancy to support it) that this Command related only to this young Man, ought to observe, that this young Man was very virtuous; that he was so eager after eternal Life, as to *run* to our Saviour, and put the Question to him upon his *Knees*, and that for these things our Saviour *loved* him.

N O W can it be imagin'd, that our Saviour would make Salvation more difficult to one who was thus dispos'd than to others?

T H A T he would impose particularly hard Terms upon one whose Virtues had already gain'd his *Love*?

A N D such hard Terms, as for their Difficulty might justly be compared to a *Camel's* going through the Eye of a *Needle*? Would he make him lacking in one thing, which other Men might lack in all Ages, without any hindrance of their Salvation? Would he send him away sorrowful on the account of such Terms, as are no longer Terms to the Christian World?

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As this cannot be suppos'd, we must allow, that what our Saviour requir'd of that young Man, was not upon any *particular* Account, or to shew his *Authority* of demanding what he pleas'd ; but that he requir'd this of the young Man for the Sake of the *Excellency* of the Duty, because it was a Temper *necessary* for Christianity, and always to be requir'd of all Christians : It being as easy to conceive, that our Saviour should allow of less *Restitution* and *Repentance* in some Sinners than in others, as that he should make more Denial of the World, more Affection for Heaven, necessary to some, than to others.

I SUPPOSE it cannot be deny'd, that an Obedience to this Doctrine had shewn an excellent Temper ; that it was one of the most noble Virtues of the Soul ; that it was a *right* Judgment of the Vanity of earthly Riches ; that it was a *right* Judgment of the Value of heavenly Treasures ; that it was a *proper* Instance of true Devotion to God.

BUT if this was a Temper so absolutely, so excellently right then, I desire to know, why it has not the *same* Degree of Excellency still ?

HATH Heaven or Earth suffer'd any Change since that time ? Is the World
become

become now more worth our Notice, or heavenly Treasure of less Value, than it was in our Saviour's Time? Have we had another Saviour since, that has compounded Things with this World, and helped us to an easier Way to the next?

FARTHER, it ought to be observed, that when our Saviour commandeth the young Man to *sell all and give to the Poor*, he gives this Reason for it, *and thou shalt have Treasure in Heaven.*

THIS manifestly extends the Duty to *all* rich Men, since the Reason that is given for it, either equally obliges *all*, or obliges *none*; unless a Treasure in Heaven can be said to be a valuable Consideration to some, but not to others.

THE Matter therefore evidently comes to this, either we must say that our Saviour did not make a reasonable Proposal to the young Man, that what he required of him, was not sufficiently Excellent in it self, and advantagious to him, or we must allow that the same Proposal is as Reasonable for us to accept of now, as it was in the first Ages of the Church.

WE must Observe too, that if all the Reasons which press'd this Duty upon the young Man, equally recommend it to us, that if we neglect it, we are equally unrea-

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Unreasonable with him, who went away Sorrowful.

LET those who are startled at this Doctrine, and think it *unnecessary* now; deal Faithfully with their own Hearts, and ask themselves, whether they should not have had the same Dislike of it, had they lived in our Saviour's Days, or whether they can find any one Reason, why they should have been so Spiritual and Heavenly then, which is not as good and as strong a Reason for their being as Spiritual and Heavenly now.

LET them consider, whether if an *Apostle* was to rise from the Dead, calling *all* rich Men to this Doctrine, they would not drive their Coaches from such a Preacher, rather than be saved at such a Price.

To proceed, if this selling all, this Renunciation of worldly Wealth, was not required for the Excellency of the Duty, and its Suitableness to the Spirit of Christianity, it will be hard to shew a Reason, why such voluntary Self-denial, such Renunciation of one's own Enjoyments, such Persecution of one's self, should be required at a Time, when Christianity expos'd its Members to such uncommon Hatred and Persecution from other People.

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OUR Saviour allowed his Disciples when they should fall under Persecution, to flee from one City to another, though they were to be as *harmless* as *Doves*, yet he commanded them to be as *wise* as *Serpents*.

IF therefore the Enjoyment of Riches had been a thing that had suited with his Religion; was not a Renunciation of all worldly Wealth, a Temper necessary and never to be dispensed with, one would suppose, that it would least of all have been imposed, at a Time when there were so many other unavoidable Burdens to be undergone.

SINCE therefore this forsaking and renouncing all by our own Act and Deed, since this Degree of Self-denial and Self-persecution was commanded at a Time, when all the World were Enemies to Christians, since they were not then spared or indulged in any pleasurable Enjoyments of their worldly Wealth, but were to add this Instance of Suffering, to all the Sufferings from their Enemies, we may be sure, that it was required because it was a *necessary* Duty, because it was a proper Behaviour of such as were *born of God*, and made *Heirs* of eternal Glory.

IF this be true, then it must be own'd, that it is still the same *necessary* Duty, and
is

is now as well that proper Behaviour of those who are Sons of God, as ever it was.

F O R Christianity is just that same spiritual heavenly State, that it was then, the Dignity of Christians has suffered no Alteration since that Time, and a Treasure in Heaven, an eternal Happiness are still the same great and important Things.



C H A P.



C H A P. IV.

A Continuation of the same Subject.



N Y one that is at all acquainted with Scripture must Observe, that the Doctrine of the foregoing Chapter, is not barely Founded on those particular Texts there considered, but that the same Spirit of renouncing the World, is the most common and repeated Subject of our Saviour's heavenly Instructions.

A CERTAIN Man said unto him Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, the Foxes have Holes, and the Birds of the Air have Nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his Head (a).

A N O T H E R also said Lord, I will follow thee, but let me first go bid them farewell, that are at Home at my House.

(a) Luke ix. 57, 58.

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AND Jesus said unto him, no Man having put his Hand to the Plough, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.

THESE Passages are all of a kind with what our Saviour said to the young Man, they directly teach that same Renunciation of the World, as the first and principal Temper, the very Soul and Essence of Christianity.

THIS Doctrine is press'd, and urged upon us by various Ways, by every Art of Teaching, that it might enter into the Heart of every Reader.

THE Kingdom of God, saith our Saviour, is like unto a Merchant-Man seeking goodly Pearles, who when he had found one Pearle of great Price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it (a).

THE Doctrine of this Parable needs no Interpretation, it is plain and strong, and presses home the Advice that our Saviour gave to the rich young Man.

WHEN it says, that the Kingdom of God is a Pearl of great Price, I suppose it means, that a great deal is to be given for it, and when it says, that the Merchant went and sold all that he had and bought it, I suppose this is to teach us, that it cannot be bought at any less Price.

(a) Mat. xiii. 45.

upon Christian Perfection. 99

THE modern *Jews* would be upon much easier Terms than those who lived in our Saviour's Days; if we can now tell them that the Kingdom of God is no longer like *one Pearl of great Price*, and that they need not sell *all* that they have and buy it; but may go on seeking Pearls as they used to do, and yet be good Members of the Kingdom of God.

Now if we may not preach such a *new* Gospel as this to the present *Jews*, I don't know how we can preach it to Christians.

THIS Parable does not suppose, that the Merchant went to Trading again, after he had sold *all*, and bought this Pearl of great Price. He was content with that, and did not want any other Riches.

IF the Kingdom of God, is not Riches sufficient for us, but we must add another Greatness, and another Wealth to it, we fall under the Condemnation of this Parable.

TO proceed. The peaceful, pleasurable Enjoyments of Riches, is a State of Life every where condemned by our Blessed Saviour.

Wo unto you that are Full, for ye shall Hunger, wo unto you that Laugh now, for ye shall Weep and Mourn (a).

(a) Luke vi. 25.

IF we can think that for all this, the Joys of Prosperity, and the gay Pleasures of Plenty, are the allowed Enjoyments of Christians, we must have done wondering at the Blindness and Hardness of the *Jews* Hearts.

*W*o unto you that are Rich, for ye have received your Consolation! It is not said wo unto you that are Rich, for ye have Enriched your selves by *evil Arts*, and *unlawful Means*, but it is the *bare Enjoyment*, the Consolation that is taken in Riches, to which this Wo is threatned.

THIS same Doctrine is press'd upon us by a remarkable Parable, so plain and lively, that one would think that every Christian, that has heard it, should be afraid of every thing that look'd like Self-indulgence, or Expence in his own Pleasures and Pride.

*T*HERE was a certain rich Man, which was cloathed in Purple and fine Linnen, and Jared sumptuously every Day.

*A*ND there was a certain poor Beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his Gate full of Sores, and desiring to be fed with the Crumbs which fell from the rich Man's Table: moreover the Dogs came and licked his Sores.

*I*T came to pass, that the Beggar dy'd, and was carried by the Angels into Abraham's Bosom.

som. The rich Man also dy'd, and was buried, and in Hell he lift up his Eyes, being in Torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his Bosom (a).

THIS Parable teacheth neither more nor less than what our Saviour taught, when he commanded the young Man to sell all that he had. For it is the bare pleasurable Enjoyment, the living in the usual Delights of a great Fortune, that the Parable condemneth. Here is no Injustice, no Villanies or Extortions laid to his Charge, it is only a Life of Splendour and Indulgence, that leaves him in Hell.

THIS we are further taught, by *Abraham's* Answer to him, *Son, remember that thou in thy Life-time receivest thy good Things:* This is alledged as the sole Reason of his being in Torments.

IT is to be Observed, that nothing is mentioned of *Lazarus*, but his low and afflicted State, and then it is, *he is comforted, and thou art tormented.*

CAN any thing more painly shew us the Impossibility of enjoying *Mammon* while we live, and God when we die? A rich Man enjoying the Pleasures of

(a) Luke xvi.

Riches, is for that Reason found in Torments, a Beggar patiently bearing Want, is for that Reason made the Care of Angels, and conducted to *Abraham's* Bosom.

D O E S not this manifestly teach us that same Renunciation of worldly Enjoyments, as if we had been expressly required to part with all that we have ?

F O R if a Life of Splendour, and Pleasure, and sensual Gratifications, is the Portion of those who chuse to enjoy it, if it exposes us to so much *Wo* and Wrath hereafter, well might our Blessed Saviour tell the rich Man, that he lacked *one Thing*, that he was to *sell all* that he had and give to the Poor.

I F therefore this Parable contains the Doctrine that it first taught, if Time has not worn away its Meaning, it contains a Doctrine that concerns *all* rich Men ; it speaks as home to them, and calls as loudly for a Renunciation of all worldly Indulgences, as our Saviour did to the rich Man.

S O that there is no Advantage got by considering our Saviour's Command, as a *particular* Charge, and given to a particular young Man ; since it appears by other express Passages and Parables, that the *same* is required of all other rich Men, as they expect

expect any other Consolation, than what is to be found in Riches.

IF we will here also appropriate this Parable to this particular rich Man, we shall judge as reasonably, as if we should maintain that the *Hell* in which he was tormented was made only for him, and is a State which no one else has any Occasion to fear.

WE must therefore, unless we will set aside the Gospel, and think our selves not concerned in its Doctrines, take this as an undeniable Truth, that Christianity is still that same opposite State to the World that it was in our Saviour's Days; that he speaks to us the same Language that he spoke to the young Man in the Gospel; that if we will not hear his Voice, but indulge our selves in the proud sensual Delights of Riches and Grandeur, our Fate is taught us in the rich Man in Torments; and to us belongs that dreadful Threatning, *Wo unto you that are rich, for you have received your Consolation.*

I KNOW it has been said by some, that all that we are taught by the Command given to the young Man to *sell all*, is this, that whenever we cannot keep our Possessions without violating some essential Duty of a Christian, that then, and not till then,

need we think that we are call'd upon by Christ to quit all and follow him.

I HAVE, in Answer to this, already shewn, that the Thing required of this young Man, was no *particular* Duty, but that our Saviour press'd it upon *all*, and by a Reason which made it equally conclusive for all People, namely, a *Treasure in Heaven*.

I HAVE shewn that the same Doctrine is taught in general, by comparing the Kingdom of God to *one Pearl* of great Price, which the Merchant could buy at no less a Price, than by selling *all* that he had; by the Parable of the *rich Man* in Torments, on the Account of his living in the State and Pleasures of a Fortune; and lastly, by a general Wo that is threatened to all that are rich, as having received their *Consolation*: So that this seems a full Answer to this Interpretation.

BUT I shall however consider it farther.

NOW if this be all that is taught us Christians, by the Case of the young Man in the Gospel, that we are to part with our Enjoyments and Possessions, when we cannot keep them without renouncing some great Truth of our Religion, and that till such a time happens, we may peacefully
and

and pleasurably enjoy the Delights and State of Plenty.

IF this be the Case, I ask how a good Christian is to be assured that this is a safe and just Interpretation? How shall he be satisfied that there is no Danger in following it?

IT is plainly an Interpretation of our own making, it is not the *open expressed* Sense of the Words, it is an Addition of something to them, for which we have no Authority from the Passage it self. So that it may well be ask'd, how we can be sure that such an Interpretation may be safely complied with.

THE Text saith, *sell all* that thou hast; this Interpretation saith, ye need not sell yet, nay, that you need not sell *at all*, but that you may go on in the pleasurable Enjoyment of your several Estates, till such time as you cannot keep them without denying the Faith.

SO that the Interpretation seems to have *nothing* to do with the Text, and only teaches a Doctrine, that might as well be asserted without this Text, as with it.

I ASK therefore for what Reason we allow this Passage to teach us no more than this? Is there any other Part of Scripture that requires us to make this Interpretation? Does it better suit with the Spirit
and

and Temper of the Christian Religion? Is it more agreeable to its heavenly Designs, its Contempt of the World, than to take them in their apparent Sense?

IF this were true, then the first Followers of Christ, who observed this Doctrine in its literal Sense, and renounced all, acted less suitably to the Spirit of Christianity, than those who now enjoy their Estates.

THIS Absurdity is enough to expose any pretended Necessity of this Interpretation, which Absurdity must be granted, if we say that this new Interpretation is more suitable to the Spirit of Christianity, than to take the Words as still obliging in their first Sense.

BUT to cut off all Pretence of any Necessity from any other Part of Scripture, I have made it plainly appear, that the same Doctrine is certainly taught by many other express Passages of Scripture.

THIS Interpretation therefore is as contrary to many other Parts of Scripture, as to this Text; it is contrary to the Spirit of Christianity, and is only brought in to soften the Rigours of Religion, that People may with quiet Consciences enjoy the Pleasures of Plenty, and those who want it, spend their Time in the Ways and Means of acquiring it.

IF therefore there be not an *entire* Change in the Way to Heaven, if the once *streight Gate* be not now a wide and open Passage to all full, fat, and stately Christians; if there is still any Meaning in these Words, *Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God*, the sober Christian may as well doubt of this Allowance of enjoying the Pleasures and Plenty of his Estate, till Persecution for the Faith drives him out of it, as if he was told, that he need not *resist* the Devil, till such time as he tempted him to *deny* the Faith, or give up some Truth of his Religion.

WHEN our Saviour gave this Command to the young Man, and afterwards observ'd, upon his Refusal, that it was easier for a *Camel* to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God, the Apostles took that Command to signify the common Conditions of entering into Christianity, and immediately declar'd that they had *left all and followed him*.

AND our Saviour answered them in such a Manner, as shewed, that the Doctrine then delivered, related to all Mankind in the same Sense, and had nothing particular in it, that related to one Man, or one Age of the Church, more than another.

VERILY

V E R I L Y I say unto you, there is no Man that hath left House or Brethren, or Sisters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands, for my Sake, or the Gospel's, but he shall have an hundred fold now in this present time, and in the World to come eternal Life (a).

L E T it now be consider'd, that supposing it was barely lawful, to enjoy our Estates, and as the World says, live up to them, is this a State of any Merit? Is there any Reward annexed to it? If it is not our Sin, it is at best a losing our Time, and as unrewardable as Sleeping.

B U T on the other Side we are infallibly assured, that if we come up to the Doctrine of the Text, if we part with our worldly Enjoyments and Gratifications for the Sake of Christ, that in this Life we shall receive an *hundred fold*, and in the World to come eternal Life.

NOW if such Persons as these, are to be thus blessed in this Life, and also so rewarded in the next, it is certain that they who are not such Persons, will not be so doubly blessed both in this Life and that which is to come.

(a) Mark x. 29.

BUT now what an Interpretation must that be, which leads Men from being an *hundred* times as happy as they might be in this Life, and from such an Height of Reward in the next?

Is not this enough to shew us, that the Wisdom of this Interpretation, is not a Wisdom from above, that it favoureth not the Things that be of God?

FOR who can be so wise unto eternal Life, who can make so much of his Plenty, as by thus parting with it?

WHO that was governed by a Wisdom from above, would seek for an Evasion, where the open Sense, is not only safe, but entituled to so vast a Recompence both now and hereafter?

IT is to me no small Argument, that our Saviour meant no such Allowance, as this Interpretation has found out, because it is so contrary to the Perfection of the Soul, and is so disadvantageous to those that follow it.

OUR blessed Saviour and his Apostles both in Doctrine and Practice are on the Side of renouncing the Enjoyments of Riches, and who is he that dare preach up a worldly Peace and Indulgence, without either Text or Precedent from Scripture, and such a Peace as leads Men from such
high

high Rewards both in this Life, and that which is to come ?

W H E N our Saviour told *Peter* of his Sufferings, *Peter* took him and began to rebuke him, saying, be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee. But *Jesus* turned and said to *Peter*, get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an Offence unto me, for thou savourest not the Things that be of God, but those that be of Men.

B U T after all, this Enjoyment of worldly Riches which this Interpretation pleads for, cannot be shewn to be barely lawful, this I say cannot be shewn, without shewing at the same time, that this Passage, *it is easier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God*, is so old as to be of no Significancy now, for if the Difficulty still continues, the rich Man must have as much to part with now, as he had then.

T H E same must be said of all those other Passages above-mentioned, concerning the Kingdom being compared to *one great Pearl*, the Case of the *rich Man* in Torments, and the general *Wo* that is denounced against such as are rich, as having received their *Consolation*; all these, with a great Variety of other Texts, must have quite lost their first natural Meaning, if
this

upon Christian Perfection. III

this Interpretation be admitted as barely lawful:

So that it is an Interpretation that runs away from the plain open Sense of the Words, and leads from those great Rewards that belong to it; it is an Interpretation made without any Necessity, not supported by any Doctrine, or Practice of Scripture, contrary to the Practices of the first Christians, contrary to the heavenly Spirit of our Religion, and so contrary to various plain Passages of Scripture, that they must have lost their true Meaning, if this Interpretation be admitted.

LASTLY, If all that can be concluded from this Command of our Saviour, is only this, that we are obliged to part with our Estates, when we cannot keep them, without selling the Truth; if *sell all thou hast and give to the Poor, and thou shalt have Treasure in Heaven*, only means, when applied to us, *thou mayest keep and enjoy thy Estate, till some wicked Terms of keeping it are imposed upon thee*, this is no higher a Perfection, no greater Degree of Heavenly-mindedness, or Disregard to the World, than a *Jew* or honest *Heathen* would maintain.

FOR who does not know that it is better to be *just and faithful*, than to be *rich*, and that a Man is rather to part with his
Estate,

Estate, than to keep it at the Expence of his Virtue and Integrity? This is only the Virtue of choosing rather to be poor, than a Thief.

BUT if Christians can think that this is the highest Renunciation of the World, the highest Degree of heavenly Affection, to which they are called, if they can think that this is all that is meant by their being *crucified* and *dead* to the World, by their being in Christ *new Creatures*, by their being *born of God*, and *having overcome the World*, they may be justly said to treat the Scriptures, as the *Jews* treated our Saviour, when they said, *We will not have this Man to reign over us.*

I HAVE, I think, sufficiently shewn that our Saviour required an entire Renunciation of the World, a forsaking all its Enjoyments, in order to be his true Disciples, and that the same is as certainly required of us, as he is the same Christ, and we Heirs of the same Glory.

IT will now therefore, I know, be ask'd, whether all Christians are obliged to *sell* their Estates and give to the Poor, in order to inherit eternal Life?

THE Absurdity and Ridiculousness of such a thing, and the Disorder it must occasion in Life, will be thought sufficient to expose

expose and confute all the foregoing Doctrine.

As to the Absurdity and Ridiculousness of this Doctrine in the Eyes of worldly Wisdom, that is far from being any Objection against it, since we are assured by God himself, that the *Wisdom* of this World is *Foolishness* with God, and that the Spirit of Christianity, and the Spirit of the World, are as contrary to one another, as the Kingdom of Light, and the Kingdom of Darkness.

WHAT can be more contrary to worldly Greatness and Wisdom, than the Doctrine of the *Cross*, a crucified Saviour? Which way could any one expose himself to more Jest and Ridicule, than by being too meek and humble to resent an Affront, and accept a *Challenge*?

NOT only *Rakes* and *Libertines*, but the grave, the religious part of the World, talk of the Necessity of defending their Honour, and reckon it a Shame not to resent and fight when the Affront is given.

THIS makes the Spirit of the World, though it be as consistent with our Religion, to honour the Memory of *Cain* for killing his Brother, as to make it a part of Honour to give or accept a *Challenge*.

THIS may serve to shew us, that we must disregard the Maxims and Wisdom of

this World, and not form our Judgments of Christian Virtues with any Regard to it, since by it, Patience and Meekness may be reckoned shameful, and Revenge and Murder as Instances of Honour.

BUT I give now a direct Answer to the foregoing Question, and venture to affirm, upon the Proofs I have already produced, that all Christians are really and effectually obliged to do that, which our Saviour required of the young Man.

OUR Saviour bid him sell all that he had and give to the Poor, that he might have Treasure in Heaven, that is, he required him to renounce the Self-enjoyment of his Estate, to live no longer in the Gratifications of his Plenty, but offer it all to God in Works of Charity and Relief of others.

NOW the *selling all*, is only a Circumstance of parting with the Enjoyment of his Riches from himself, to all such Objects and Uses as are worthy of it in the Sight of God.

IF our Saviour had told Sinners that they must repent in *Sackcloth and Ashes*, I should have thought, that *Sackcloth and Ashes* was only mentioned as a *particular* way of expressing a general Duty; and that though the Circumstance of *Sackcloth and Ashes* might be omitted, yet the *Thing*
inten-

intended, the Degree of Humiliation and Sorrow, was always to be performed in the same Degree.

I TAKE it to be the same in the Case before us. It is not necessary that a Man should *sell all* that he hath, because that was the Expression used to the young Man, but it is necessary that he comply with the *Thing* signified, and practice all that Disregard of the World, and heavenly Affection which is there taught.

HE sufficiently selleth all, who parteth with the Self-enjoyment of it, and maketh it the Support of those that want it.

THIS seems to me to be the true and plain Meaning of the Passage. The Words *sell all*, are only used as a *Form of Speech*, as a general Way of expressing the parting with the Enjoyment of an Estate, as *Sackcloth and Ashes* were a general Way of expressing Repentance, and not as laying any direct Obligation of parting with an Estate in that *particular* Way, any more than *Sackcloth* is always necessary to a true Repentance.

A PERSON that was to give away his Estate, would surely comply with the Doctrine of the Text, which shews that it is the *Thing* signified, and not the *particular* Manner of doing it, that is required.

YET it is the keeping to this *literal Sense* of the Words, as if the *selling all*, was the particular Thing enjoin'd, that has taught People to excuse themselves from the Doctrine there delivered.

FOR there was some Pretence to think, that so particular an Action as the *selling all*, could only relate to him, to whom it was enjoined.

BUT if Men would consider, that this *selling all*, is only a Circumstance of the Thing, as *Sackcloth* is a Circumstance of Repentance, and that the Thing required is *heavenly Affection*, and Devotion to God, they would find themselves as much concerned in the Doctrine there delivered, as in any other Doctrine of Scripture.

WHEN our Saviour related the good *Samaritan's* Charity, and said unto the Man that talked with him, *Go and do thou likewise*, he is not exhorted to stay for an Opportunity of doing the same Action, but to do the same Thing which was implied by that Action.

TAKING therefore the Words in this plain Sense, as an Exhortation to such a Degree of heavenly Affection, and disclaiming all Self-enjoyment of Riches, and not as to any particular Action of *selling all*, it must be affirmed, that they equally concern *all* rich Men to the End of the World,

as

as that young Man to whom they were spoken.

F O R as he was called to that Temper of Mind, because it was a *right* Temper for a Christian, a *proper* Instance of his Faith and Hope, and Devotion to God, and a *right* Way of using the Things of this World; how can it be thought, that the same Temper is not equally *right* and *christian* in every rich Man now? Or how can it be thought that the rich Men of this Age, are not equally obliged to act conformably to the Temper and Spirit of Religion now, as well as in the Days of Christ?

A R E not Humility and Meekness to be practised in the *same Fulness*, that they were in our Saviour's Time? But if they are, it will be impossible to shew, why any other Virtues should admit of any Abate-ments.

O R can any one shew a better Instance of Humility and Meekness, than in departing from the splendid Enjoyments of his Fortune, to make it the Support and Relief of poor and distressed People?

I T ought also to be considered, whether it is not impossible to shew that Meekness and Humility which was then required, unless he practises them in these Instances.

L E T it also be considered, that this

Use of worldly Things is not only commanded, as suitable to the Graces and Virtues of the Christian Life, but that the Case of the *rich* Man in Torments, with the other Passages above-mentioned, are so many express Threatnings against our Disobedience.

So that it must be affirmed, that we are as much obliged to labour after the same Degrees of Faith, Hope, heavenly Affection, and Disregard of the World, as after the same Degrees of Humility, Charity, and Repentance, that ever was required of any Christians.

LET it also be considered, that the Command of selling all, is only particular in the Expression, but that Thing required, is the general Temper of Christianity; as is expressed by being *dead* to the World, having our *Conversation* in Heaven, being *born of God*, and having *overcome* the World; these Expressions have no proper Meaning, if they don't imply all that heavenly Affection, and Disregard of Riches, to which our Saviour exhorted the young Man.

GOD forbid, saith St. Paul, that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the World is crucified unto me, and I unto the World (a).

(a) Gal. vi. 14.

NOW I desire to know why any Christian should think it less dreadful, not to be crucified and dead to the World, than *St. Paul* thought it? Is not the Temper and Spirit which the Apostle shews here, as much to be aspired after, as in any other Part of Scripture?

BUT can those who spend their Estates in their own Indulgences, who live in the Pomp and Pleasures of Riches, can they without Prophaness say that of themselves, which the Apostle here saith of himself?

OR can they be said to have the Spirit of Christ, who are directed by a Spirit so contrary to that of the Apostle? Yet the Scripture says expressly, that *if any Man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

THUS we see that this Renunciation of the World, which is thought too great an Extream, to be taken from the Command given to the young Man in the Gospel, is the common Temper of Christianity, and a Doctrine the most universally taught of any other. It is indeed the very Heart and Soul of Christian Piety, it is the natural Soil, the proper Stock from whence all the Graces of a Christian naturally grow forth, it is a Disposition of all others the most necessary and most productive of Virtue. And if we might now be *more*

earthly, than in the Days of Christ, we must of necessity be proportionably wanting in all other Virtues. For heavenly Affection enters so far into the being of all christian Virtues, that an Abatement in that, is like an Alteration in the first Wheel that gives Motion to all the rest.

I WILL now a little appeal to the Imagination of the Reader.

LET it be supposed, that rich Men are now enjoying their Riches, and taking all the common usual Delights of Plenty, that they are labouring for the Meat that perisheth, projecting and contriving Scenes of Pleasure, and spending their Estates in proud Expences.

AFTER this Supposition, let it be imagined, that we saw the Holy Jesus, who had not where to lay his Head, with his twelve Apostles, that had left all to follow him; let us imagine that we heard him call all the World to take up the *Cross* and follow him, promising a *Treasure in Heaven*, to such as would quit all for his Sake, and rejecting all that would not comply with such Terms, denouncing *Wo* and eternal Death, to all that lived in Fulness, Pomp, and worldly Delights. Let it be imagined that we heard him commanding his Disciples to take no Thought, saying what shall we Eat, or what shall we Drink,

or

or wherewithal shall we be Cloathed, and giving this Reason for it, because *after all these Things do the Gentiles seek.*

LET it be imagined that we saw the first Christians, taking up the Cross, renouncing the World, and counting all but Dung, that they might gain Christ.

I DO not now appeal to the *Judgment* or *Reason* of the Reader, I leave it with his *Imagination*, that wild Faculty, to determine, whether it be possible for these two different Sorts of Men, to be true Disciples of the same Lord.

To proceed.

LET us suppose that a rich Man was to put up such a Prayer as this to God.

“ O LORD, I thy sinful Creature,
“ who am born again to a lively Hope of
“ Glory in Christ Jesus, beg of thee, to
“ grant me a *thousand* times more Rich-
“ es than I *need*, that I may be able to
“ gratify Myself and Family in the De-
“ lights of Eating and Drinking, State and
“ Grandeur, grant that as the little Span
“ of Life wears out, I may still abound
“ more and more in Wealth, and that I
“ may see and perceive all the best and
“ surest Ways of growing Richer than any
“ of my Neighbours: this I humbly and
“ fervently Beg in the Name; &c.

SUCH

SUCH a Prayer as this should have had no Place in this Treatise, but that I have Reason to hope, that in proportion as it offends the *Ear*, it will amend the *Heart*.

THERE is no one, I believe, but would be ashamed to put up such a Prayer as this to God, yet let it be well Observed, that all are of the Temper of this Prayer, but those who have *overcome* the World.

WE need not go amongst Villains and People of scandalous Characters, to find out those, who desire a *thousand* times more than they want, who have an Eagerness to be every Day richer and richer, who catch at all Ways of Gain that are not scandalous, and who hardly think any thing enough, except it equals or exceeds the Estate of their Neighbours.

I BEG of such that they would heartily condemn the prophane and unchristian Spirit of the foregoing Prayer, and that they would satisfy themselves, that nothing can be more odious and contrary to Religion than such Petitions.

BUT then let them be assured also of this, that the same Things which make an unchristian Prayer, make an unchristian Life.

FOR the Reason why these Things appear so odious in a Prayer, is because they
are

are so contrary to the Spirit of Religion. But is it not as bad to live and act contrary to the Spirit of Religion, as to pray contrary to it?

AT least must not that Manner of Life be very blameable, very contrary to Piety, which is so shocking when put into the Form of a Prayer?

BUT indeed whatever we may think, as we live, so we really pray, for as Christ saith, *where our Treasure is, there will our Heart be also*; so as the Manner of our Life is, so is our Heart also, it is continually praying, what our Life is acting, tho' not in any express Form of Words.

TO pursue this Argument a little, is this Prayer too shocking? Dare we not approach God with such a Spirit? How dare we then think of approaching him with such a Life?

NEED we any other Conviction, that this Manner of Life is contrary to the Spirit of Christianity, than this, that the praying according to it in Christ's Name, comes near to Blasphemy?

DOES not this also sufficiently convince us of the Reasonableness of Christ's Command, to forsake the Fulness, the Indulgence, and Pride of Estates, since it is a State of Life, that our Reason dare not ask God to give us?

L E T

LET it be considered how we should abominate a Person, whom we knew to use such a Prayer, and let that teach us how abominable a Life that is like it, must make us to appear in the Eyes of God, and with this Addition of Folly joined to it, that we call the Prayer *Prophane*, but think the Life, that answers to it, to be *Christian*.

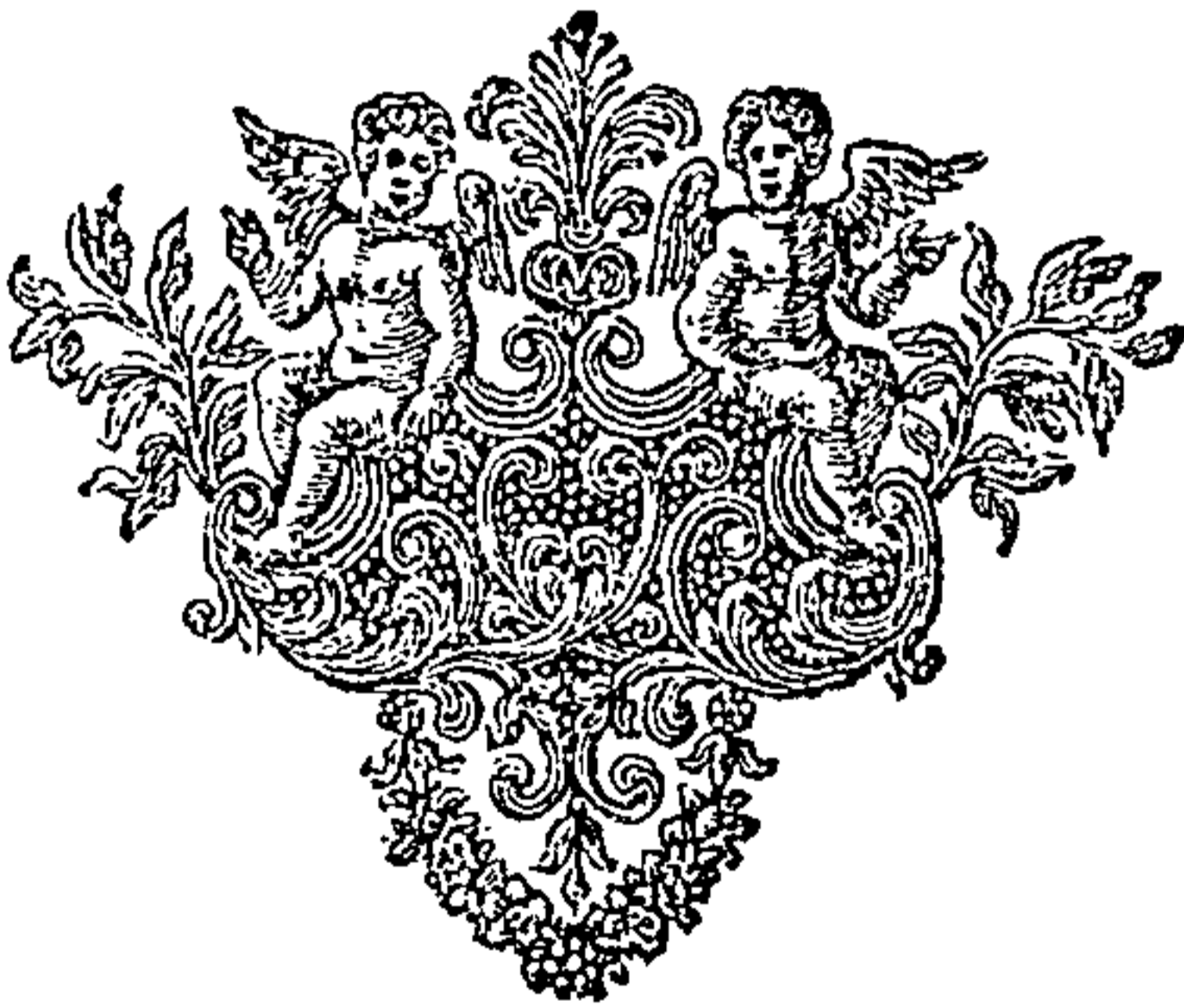
PERHAPS there cannot be a better way of judging of what Manner of Spirit we are of, than to see whether the Actions of our Life are such, as we may safely commend them to God in our Prayers.

FOR it is undeniable, that if they are such as we dare not mention to God in our Prayers, we ought in all Reason to be as fearful of acting them in his Presence.

We may indeed do several innocent Things, which on account of their Little-ness, are unfit to be put into our Devotions, but if the chief and main Actions of our Life are not such, as we may justly beg the Assistance of God's Holy Spirit in the Performance of them, we may be assured, that such Actions make our Lives as unholy, as such Petitions would make our Prayers.

FROM all that has been above observed, I think it is sufficiently plain, that the present Disciples of Jesus Christ are
to

to have no more to do with worldly Enjoyments, than those that he chose whilst he himself was on Earth, and that he expects as much Devotion to God, and heavenly Affection from us, as from any that he conversed with, and speaks the same Language, and gives the same Commands to all rich Men now, that he gave to the rich young Man in the Gospel.





C H A P. V.

A farther Continuation of the same Subject.

I H E Subject of the two preceding Chapters is of such Importance, that I cannot leave it, without adding some farther Considerations upon it.

F O R notwithstanding the Scriptures are so clear and express on the side of the Doctrine there deliver'd, yet I must expect to encounter the Prejudices of Men, who are settled in other Opinions.

I K N O W it will still be ask'd, Where can be the Impiety of getting or enjoying an Estate ?

W H E T H E R it be not honourable, and Matter of just Praise, to provide an Estate for one's Family ?

I T will also be ask'd What People of *Birth* and *Fortune* are to do with themselves, if they are not to live suitably to their Estates and Qualities ?

A N Y

A N Y one that has taken the trouble to read this Treatise, must have found, that the Doctrine here taught is none of mine, and that therefore I have no occasion to support it against such Questions as these.

T H E same Persons may as well ask, why the little Span of Life is made a State of Trial and Probation, in which Men of all Conditions are to *work out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling.*

B U T however to the first Question let it be answer'd;

T A K E no thought, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be cloathed; for after all these things do the Gentiles seek.

I F to be careful and thoughtful about the Necessaries of Life, be a Care that is here forbidden, and that because it is such a Care as only becomes *Heathens*, surely to be careful and thoughtful how to raise an Estate, and enrich one's Family, is a Care that is sufficiently forbidden Christians. And he that can yet think it lawful and creditable to make it the Care and Design of his Life to get an Estate, is too blind to be convinced by Arguments. He may with as much Regard to Scripture say, that it is lawful to *swear* falsely, tho' it forbids him to *speake* falsely.

O U R

OUR Saviour saith, *labour not for the Meat that perisheth, but for that Meat which endureth unto everlasting Life* (a). He commands us not to lay up for our selves Treasures on Earth; he assures us that we cannot serve God and Mammon.

NOW these Places have no meaning, if it is still lawful for Christians to heap up Treasures, to labour for great Estates, and pursue Designs of enriching their Families.

I KNOW it is easie to evade the Force of these Texts, and to make plausible Harangues upon the Innocency of labouring to be rich, and the Consistency of serving God and Mammon.

I DON'T question but the rich young Man in the Gospel, who had kept the Commandments of God from his Youth, could have made a very good Apology for himself, and have shewn how reasonable and innocent a thing it was, for so good and so young a Man to enjoy an Estate.

THE *rich* Man in Torments could have alledg'd how much Good he did with his Fortune, how many Trades he encouraged by his *Purple* and *fine Linen*, and faring *sumptuously* every Day, and how he con-

(a) Joh. vi. 27.

form'd to the Ends and Advantages of Society by so spending his Estate.

BUT to return, the Apostle saith, *Having Food and Raiment, let us be therewith content, that they who will be rich fall into a Temptation and a Snare, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown Men in Destruction and Perdition (a).*

WE may perhaps by some Acuteness of reasoning find out, that this Doctrine still leaves us at our liberty, whether we will labour to be rich or not, and if we do, we are as much enlighten'd as the *Quakers*, who find themselves at liberty from the use of the Sacraments.

WE may pretend, that notwithstanding what the Apostle says, of a *Snare*, a *Temptation*, and foolish *Lusts*, yet that we can pursue the Means, and desire the Happiness of Riches, without any Danger to our Virtue.

BUT if so, we are as prudent as those Christians, who think they can secure their Virtue without *Watching and Prayer*, tho' our Saviour has said, *Watch and pray that ye enter not into Temptation.*

HE therefore that neglects *Watching and Prayer*, though the appointed Means

(a) 1 Tim. vi. 8.

of avoiding Temptation, may shew that he lives as much according to Scripture, as he that is careful and desirous of Riches and Wealth, though they are the declared Occasions of *Sin, Snares, and Destruction.*

I F we will not be so humble and teachable, as to conform to Scripture in the Simplicity and Plainness of its Doctrines, there will be no End of our Errors, but we shall be in as much Darknes, as where the Light of Scripture never appeared.

F O R if we could submit to its plain and repeated Doctrines, it would never be asked, what People of *Birth and Fortune* are to do with themselves, if they are not to live up to the Splendour and Plenty of their Estates.

T H E rich Man in the Gospel was a *Ruler, a young Man, and a good Man*; if therefore there are any amongst us that are neither young nor good, it can hardly be thought that they have less to do to inherit eternal Life, than the young Man in the Gospel.

A N D as for those who like him have kept the Commandments of God from their Youth, I dare not tell them that they are not under a necessity of offering all their Wealth to God, and of making their Estates, however acquired, not the Support

port of any foolish vain Indulgences, but the Relief of their distressed Brethren.

SUPPOSE great People by Means of their Wealth could throw themselves into a *deep Sleep* of pleasant Dreams, which would last till Death awaked them, would any one think it lawful for them to make such Use of their Riches?

BUT if it was asked why this is not as lawful, as a Life of high Living, vain Indulgences, and worldly Pleasures, it could not be easily told.

FOR such a Life as this, is no more like a State of *Probation*, than such a *Sleep* is like it; and he that has done nothing but sleep and dream to the Time of his Death, may as well say that he has been *working out his Salvation with Fear and Trembling*, as he that has been living in such Luxury, Splendor, and vain Gratifications, as his Estate could procure him.

THE Gospel has made no Provision for Dignity of *Birth*, or Difference in *Fortune*, but has appointed the same *streight Gate*, the common Passage for all Persons to enter into Glory.

The Distinctions of civil Life have their Use, and are in some Degree necessary to Society, but if any one thinks he may be less devoted to God, less afraid of the Corruptions of Pleasures, the Vanities of Pride,

because he was born of one Family rather than another, he is as much mistaken, as he that fancies he has a Privilege to steal, because he was born of a Father that was poor.

W H Y may not poor People give themselves up to *Discontent*, to *Impatience* and *Repining*? Is it not because Christianity requires the same Virtues in all States of Life? Is it not because the Rewards of Religion are sufficient to make us thankful in every Condition?

B U T who sees not, that these same Reasons equally condemn the Gratifications, the sensual Indulgences of the Rich, as the Discontents and Repinings of the Poor?

S O that a great Man taking his Swing in worldly Pleasures, in the various Gratifications, which his Plenty can furnish, is as good a Christian, as careful of his Duty to God, as the poor Man who resigns himself up to Discontent, and spends his Time and Spirits in restless Complaints and Repinings.

A N D if the Joys of Religion, our Hopes in Christ, are sufficient to make us rejoice in Tribulation, and be thankful to God in the Hardships of Poverty, surely the same Hopes in Christ must be equally sufficient to make us forbear the Luxury and Softness,

ness, and all other Pleasures of imaginary Greatness.

I F therefore the rich or great Man can find out a Course of Pleasures, that support no wrong Turn of Mind, a Luxury and Indulgence which don't gratify Sensuality, Delights, and Entertainments, which indulge no vain and weak Passions, if they can find out such Self-enjoyments of their Riches, as shew that they love God with all their Strength, and their Neighbours as themselves; if they can find out such Instances of Splendour and Greatness, as gratify neither the *Lust of the Flesh*, the *Lust of the Eyes*, nor the *Pride of Life*, Religion has no Command against such Enjoyments.

B U T if this cannot be done, let it be remembered, that the Rich have no more Permission to live in sensual Pleasures, and vain Indulgences, than the Poor have, to spend their Time in anxious Complaints and unthankful Repinings.

L E T it also be remembered, that if any Distinctions of Life make Men forget, that Sin is their only Baseness, and Holiness their only Honour, if any Condition makes them less disposed to imitate the low, humble Estate of their suffering Master, or forget that they are to return to God by Humiliation, Repentance, and Self-denial,

instead of being of any real Advantage, it is their Curse, their Snare, and Destruction.

HAD there been any other lawful Way of employing our Wealth, than in the Assistance of the Poor, our Saviour would not have confined the young Man in the Gospel to that *one* Way of employing all that he had.

WAS there no Sin in pampering ourselves with our Riches, our Saviour had not said, *Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your Consolation!*

HAD a Delight in the Splendour and Greatness of this Life, been an innocent Delight for People of Birth and Fortune, he had never said, *Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

HAD worldly Mirth, and the noisy Joys of Splendour and Equipage, been any part of the Happiness of Christians, he had never said, *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

THUS does it appear, from almost every Part of Scripture, that a Renunciation of the World and all worldly Enjoyments, either of Pleasure or Pride, is the necessary Temper of all Christians of every State and Condition.

I KNOW that to all this, it will still be objected, that the different *States* of
Life,

Life, are Things *indifferent* in themselves, and are made good or evil, by the Tempers of the Persons that enjoy them. That a Man is not necessarily vain and proud, because he lives in great Shew and Figure, any more than another is necessarily humble and lowly in Mind, because he lives in a low Estate.

It is granted, that Men may be of a Temper contrary to the State in which they live, but then this is only true of such as are in any State by Force, and contrary to their Desires and Endeavours.

A MAN in a low Estate may be very vain and proud, because he is in such a State by Force, and is restless and uneasy till he can raise himself out of it. If the same can be said of any Man that lives in all the Splendour and Figure of Life, that he is in it by Force, and is restless and uneasy till he can lay all aside, and live in an humble lowly State, it may be granted that such a Man, though in the Height of Figure, may be as humble, as another in starving Circumstances may be proud.

BUT nothing can be more false, than to conclude, that because a Man may be in a low Estate, without having Lowliness of Mind, which Estate he is in by Force, that therefore another may live in all the Height of Grandeur, the Vanity of Figure

which his Fortune will allow, without having any Height or Vanity of Mind, though the State of Life be according to his Mind, and such as he chuses before another that has less of Figure and Shew in it.

NOTHING can be more absurd than such a Conclusion as this; it is as if one should say, that because a Man may be an *Epicure* in his Temper, though he is forced to live upon Bread and Water, therefore another who seeks after all Sorts of Dainties, and lives upon Delicacies out of Choice, may be no *Epicure*.

AGAIN, Who does not know that a Man may give all his Goods to feed the Poor, and yet want Charity? But will any one therefore conclude, that another may keep all his Goods to himself, and yet have Charity?

YET this is as well argued, as to say, that because a Man has nothing to spend, he may yet be proud; therefore though another may lay out his Estate in vain Expences, he may yet have true Humility of Mind.

FOR as the Man in a low Estate, would be truly what his Estate is, if he liked it, and had no Desires that it should be otherwise than it is, so for the same Reason, if those who live in Pleasures, in Shew and vain Expences, live in such a State out of
Choice,

Choice, we must talk Nonsense, if we do not say, that their Minds are as Vain as the Vanity of their State.

A G A I N, those who talk of People being Humble in a State, that has all the Appearance of Pride and Vanity, do not enough consider the Nature of Virtue. Humility and every other Virtue is never in a compleat State, so that a Man can say, that he has finished his task in such or such a Virtue.

N O Virtues have any Existence of this Kind in human Minds, they are rather continual Struggles with the contrary Vices, than any finished Habits of Mind.

A M A N is humble not for what he has already done, but because it is his continual Disposition to oppose and reject every Temptation to Pride. Charity is a continual Struggle with the contrary Qualities of Self-Love and Envy.

A N D this is the State of every Virtue, it is a progressive Temper of Mind, and always equally labouring to preserve it self.

T H O S E therefore who suppose, that People may be so finished in the Virtue of Humility, that they can be truly Humble in the Enjoyments of Splendour and Vanity, do not consider that Humility is never finished, and that it ceases to Exist,
when

when it ceases to oppose and reject every Appearance of Pride.

THIS is the true State of every Virtue, a resisting and opposing all the Temptations to the contrary Vice.

To suppose therefore a Man so truly Humble, that he may live in all the Appearances of Pride and Vanity, is as Absurd, as to suppose a Man so inwardly Sober, that he need refuse no strong *Liquors*, so inwardly Charitable that he need not avoid Quarrels, or so Holy that he need not resist Temptations to Sin.

LASTLY, The Necessity of renouncing the World in whatever Condition of Life we are, besides what appears from particular Commands, may be proved from those great Degrees of Holiness, those divine Tempers, which Christianity requires.

CH R I S T I A N S are to love God, with *all their Heart, with all their Soul, with all their Mind, and with all their Strength, and their Neighbour as themselves.*

NOW it is absolutely impossible in the Nature of the Thing, that we should practice either of these Duties in any christian Sense, unless we are so born of God, *as to have overcome the World.*

A M A N that has his Head and his Heart taken up with worldly Concerns, can no more

more love God with all his Soul and with all his Strength, than a Man who will have his Eyes upon the Ground, can be looking towards Heaven with all the Strength of his Sight.

I F therefore we are to love God with all our Heart and with all our Soul, it is absolutely necessary, that we be first persuaded, that we have no Happiness but in him alone, and that we are capable of no other good, but what arises from our enjoyment of the divine Nature.

B U T we may be assured that we never believe this Truth till we resign or renounce all Pretensions to any other Happiness. For to desire the Happiness of Riches, at the same time that we know that all Happiness is in God, is as impossible as to desire the Happiness of Sickness, when we are assured that no bodily State is happy but that of Health.

I T is therefore certain in an absolute Degree, that we are as much obliged to renounce the World with all our Heart and all our Strength, as we are obliged to love God with all our Heart and all our Strength.

I T being as impossible to do one without the other, as to exert all our Strength two different ways at the same time.

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IT is also certain in the same absolute Degree, that we unavoidably love every thing in proportion, as it appears to be our Happiness, if it appears to be half of our Happiness, it will necessarily have half the Strength of our Love, and if it appears to be all our Happiness we shall naturally love it with all our Strength.

THE Christian Religion therefore which requires the whole Strength of our Nature to aspire after God, lays this just Foundation of our Performing this Duty, by Commanding us to renounce the Happiness of the World, knowing it impossible to have two Happinesses, and but one Love.

AND indeed what can be more ridiculous, than to fancy, that a Man who is labouring after Schemes of Felicity, that is taken up in the Enjoyments of the World, is loving God with *all his Soul* and *all his Strength*?

Is it not as absurd as to suppose a Man that is devoted to the Sports of the Field, is at the same time contemplating Mathematical Speculations with all the Ardour of his Mind?

LET any one but deal faithfully with himself, consult his own Experience, the inward Feeling of his Mind, and consider, whether whilst his Soul is taken up with the Enjoyments of this Life, he feels that his
Soul

Soul is loving God with all its Force and Strength ; let any Man say, that he feels this strong Tendency of his Soul towards God, whilst it tends towards earthly Goods, and I may venture to depart from all that I have said.

NOTHING therefore can be more plain than this, that if we are to fill our Soul with a new Love, we must empty it of all other Affections, and this by as great a Necessity as any in Nature.

THE Love of God, as I have said of every other Virtue, is never in any compleat State, but is to preserve and improve itself by a continual Opposition and Resistance of other Affections.

IT is as necessary therefore continually to renounce the World, and all its Objects of our Affections, in order to form the Love of God in our Hearts ; as it is necessary to renounce and resist all Motives of Self-love and Envy, to beget the Habit of Charity.

AND a Man may as well pretend, that little Envyies are consistent with true Charity, as that little Desires after the Vanities of the World, are consistent with an entire Love of God with all our Hearts.

IT may be said, that though this Appears true in the Reason of the Thing, as consider'd in Speculation, yet that this is a Love for *Angels*, and not suited to the State of Man.

I ANSWER, it is what God has required, and the same Objection may be made against all other christian Virtues, for they are all required in a perfect Degree.

SECONDLY, if it is a Degree of Affection hardly attainable, this makes for the Doctrine, which I have delivered, and shews the absolute Necessity of having no more Enjoyments in the World than such as *Necessity* requires.

FOR if it is so hard to raise the Soul to this Degree of Love, surely it must be stupid to add to the Difficulty, by foolish and contrary Affections.

THIRDLY, If this is the proper Love of Angels, this proves that it is as proper for us, who are taught by God to pray, that his Will may be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.

AT least, if this is the Love of Angels, it shews us, that we are to imitate it as far as our Nature will allow, and to stop at no Degrees short of it, but such as we cannot possibly reach.

BUT can he be said to be doing his utmost to Love like an Angel, that is building Schemes of Felicity on Earth, and seeking Satisfaction in its imaginary Enjoyments?

AS sure therefore as this is the Love of Angels, as sure as we are called to an angelical State of Life with God, so surely
are

are we obliged to lay aside every hindrance, to part with every Enjoyment, that may stop or retard the Soul in its Rise and Affection towards God.

WE differ from Angels, as we are in a State of Probation, and loaded with Flesh; and though till the Trial be over, we must bear with Infirmities and Necessities, to which they are not subject, yet we must no more chuse Follies, or find out false Delights for our selves, than if we were, like them, free from all Infirmities.

THE Love of Enemies, is said to be a Love that becomes the Perfection of God, but yet we see, that we are so far from being excused from this Manner of Love, because it is Divine, and suits the Nature of God, that we are for that Reason expressly called to it, that we may be *Children of our Father which is in Heaven.*

IF therefore we are called to that Spirit of Love, which becomes the Perfection of God, surely the manner of angelick Love is not too high for us to aspire after.

ALL therefore that we are to learn from this Matter is this, that a Renunciation of the World is necessary, that this holy Love cannot be attained, unless we only use the World so far as our *Needs* and *Infirmities* require, and think of no Happiness

pineness but what is prepared for us at the right Hand of God.

F O U R T H L Y, this entire Love of God is as possible, as the Attainment of several other Duties, which still are the Rules of our Behaviour, and such as we are oblig'd to aspire after in the utmost Perfection.

T H E sincere Love of our Enemies, is perhaps of all other Tempers the hardest to be acquired, and the Motions of Envy and Spight the most difficult to be entirely laid aside, yet without this Temper, we are unqualified to say the Lord's Prayer. We see Examples of this Love of God in the first Followers of our Saviour; and though we cannot work Miracles as they did, yet we may arrive at their personal Holiness, if we would but be so Humble as to imitate their Examples.

O U R Saviour told them the infallible Way of arriving at Piety, which was by renouncing the World, and taking up the Cross and following Him, that they might have Treasure in Heaven. This was the only way then, and it would still be as Successful now, had we but the Faith and Humility to put it in Practice.

B U T we are now it seems become so *Wise* and *Prudent*, we see so much farther into the Nature of Virtue and Vice, than the Simplicity of the first Christians, that
we

we can take all the Enjoyments of the World along with us in our Road to Heaven.

THEY took Christ at his word and parted with all, but we take upon us to Reason about the Innocency of Wealth, and stately Enjoyments, and so possess everything, but the Spirit of our Religion.

IT is sometimes said in defence of the Dulness of our Affections towards God, that Affections are Tempers which we cannot command, and depend much upon Constitution, so that Persons who are possess'd of a true Fear of God, may yet by Reason of their Constitution, feel less Vehemency of Love than others, who are less piously disposed.

THIS is partly true and partly false.

IT is true, that our Affections are very much influenc'd by our Constitutions, but then it is false, that this is any Defence of our want of Affection towards God.

TWO Persons that equally feel the want of something to quench their Thirst, may shew a different Passion after Water, by a difference in their Constitutions, but still, Thirst after Water is the ruling Desire in both of them.

TWO *Epicures*, by a difference in their Constitution, may differ in the manner of their Eagerness after Dainties, but still, it

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is the Love of Dainties, that is the governing Love in both of them.

IT is the same thing in the case before us, two Persons may equally look upon God as their sole Happiness, by Reason of their different Tempers, one may be capable of greater Fervours of Desire of him than the other, but still, it is the ruling Desire of the other.

THEREFORE though good Men may content themselves, though they have not such Flames of Desire, as they may see or hear of in other People, yet there is no Foundation for this content, unless they know, that they seek and desire no other Happiness than God, and that their Love, though not so fervent as some others, is still the ruling and governing Affection of their Soul.

NOTWITHSTANDING the Difference in in Constitution, we see all People are affected with what they reckon their Happiness: If therefore People are not full of a Desire of God, it is because they are full, or at least engaged with another Happiness; it is not any Slowness of Spirits, but a Variety of Enjoyments that have taken hold of their Hearts, and rendered them insensible of that Happiness that is to be found in God.

W H E N

WHEN any Man has followed the Counsels of our Blessed Saviour, when he has renounced the World, rejected all the flattering Appearances of worldly Happiness, emptied himself of all idle Affections, and practised all the Means of fixing his Heart upon God alone, he may be pardoned if he still wants such Warmth of Affection, as so great a Good might justly raise.

BUT till all this be done, we as vainly appeal to our Constitutions, Tempers, and Infirmities of our State, as the unprofitable Servant appealed to the Hardness of his Master, and therefore hid his Talent in the Earth.

AND it is there said, *Out of thine own Mouth will I Judge thee, thou wicked Servant, thou knewest that I was an austere Man, &c. wherefore then gavest not thou my Money into the Bank, &c.*

So we may justly fear, that we shall be Judged out of our own Mouths, for if we know, the loving God with all our Heart and Soul, to be so difficult to the Temper and Infirmities of our Nature, why therefore do we not remove every Hindrance, renounce every vain Affection, and with double Diligence practice all the Means of forming this divine Temper? For this we may be assured of, that the seeking Happiness in the Enjoyments of

Wealth, is as contrary to the entire Love of God, as wrapping up the Talent in a *Napkin*, is as contrary to improving it.

H E that has renounced the World, as having nothing in it that can render him Happy, will find his Heart at liberty to aspire to God in the highest Degrees of Love and Desire; he will then know what the *Psalmist* means, by those Expressions, *My Heart is athirst for God, when shall I appear before the Presence of God?*

A N D till we do thus renounce the World, we are Strangers to the Temper and Spirit of Piety, we do but *act* the Part of Religion, and are no more affected with those Devotions which are put into our Mouths, than an *Actor* upon the *Stage* is really angry himself, when he speaks an angry Speech.

R E L I G I O N is only what it should be, when its Happiness has entered into our Soul, and filled our Hearts with its proper Tempers, when it is the settled Object of our Minds, and governs and affects us, as worldly Men are affected with that Happiness which governs their Actions.

T H E ambitious Man naturally rejoices at every thing that leads to his Greatness, and as naturally grieves at such Accidents as oppose it.

G O O D

GOOD Christians that are so wise as to aim only at *one* Happiness, will as naturally be affected in this Manner, with that which promotes or hinders their Endeavours after it.

FOR Happiness in whatever it is placed, equally governs the Heart of him that aspires after it.

IT is therefore as necessary to renounce all the Satisfactions of Riches and Fortune, and place our sole Happiness in God, as it is necessary to love him with all our Heart, and all our Soul, with all our Mind, and all our Strength.

ANOTHER Duty which also proves the Necessity of this Doctrine, is the Love of our Neighbour. *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.*

NOW he that thinks he can perform this Duty, without taking our Saviour's Advice of forsaking all and following him, is as much mistaken, as if he imagines that he loves his Neighbour as himself, though he heaps up Treasures for his own Self-enjoyments, and Self-gratifications.

IF a Man would know what this Love of his Neighbour implies, let him look impartially into his own Heart, and see what it is that he wishes to himself, and then turn all those same Wishes to his Neighbour, and this will make him feel the just

Measure of his Duty, better than any other Description.

THIS will also teach him, that this true Love of his Neighbour is as inconsistent with the Love of the World, as Duelling is inconsistent with Meekness and Forgiveness of Injuries.

THIS Love is a Temper of Mind that suits only such Beings, as have *one common undivided* Happiness, where they cannot be Rivals to one another; now this is the State of Christians, who have as truly *one common* Happiness, as they have one common God; but if we put our selves out of this State, and project for our selves other Felicities in the uncertain Enjoyments of this Life, we make our selves as incapable of this neighbourly Love, as *Wolves* and *Bears* that live upon Prey.

NOW one common undivided Happiness being the only possible Foundation for the Practice of this great Benevolence, it is demonstrable, that if we seek any other Happiness than this, if we don't renounce all other Pretensions, we cannot keep clear of such Tempers, as will shew, that we do not love our Neighbour as our selves.

THIS Love, as has been said of the entire Love of God, is suited to the State of Angels, it being not to be imagined that they

they have more Benevolence than this for one another; they can readily perform this Duty, because they never vary from their *one true* Happiness; and as this makes it easy to them, so nothing can make it *possible* for us, but by imitating them, in placing our *only* Happiness in the Enjoyment of our true Good.

IF our Happiness depends upon Men, our Tempers will necessarily depend upon Men, and we shall love and hate People in Proportion, as they help or hinder us in such Happiness.

THIS is absolutely necessary, and we can never act otherwise, till we are governed by a Happiness where no Men can make themselves our Rivals, nor prevent our Attainments of it.

WHEN we are in this State, it will be no harder to help our Neighbour as our selves, than it is to wish them the Enjoyment of the same Light, or the same common Air; for these being Goods, which may be enjoyed equally by all, are not the Occasions of Envy.

BUT whilst we continue eager Competitors for the imaginary Enjoyments of this Life, we lay a necessary Foundation for such Passions, as are all directly contrary to the Fruits of Love.

I TAKE it for granted, that when our Saviour delivered this Doctrine of Love, he intended it should be a governing Principle of our Lives ; it concerns us therefore, as we have any Regard to our Salvation, to look carefully to our selves, and to put our selves in such a State, as we may be capable of performing it.

NOW in this State we cannot be, till we are content to make no more of this World, than a Supply of our Necessities, and to wait for *one only* Happiness in the Enjoyment of God.

I DON'T appeal to Niggards and Worldlings, to the Proud and Ambitious ; let those who think themselves *moderate* in their worldly Desires and Enjoyments, let such deal faithfully with their own Breasts, and see whether their Prosecution of worldly Affairs, permits them to love all Christians as themselves.

THEIR Moderation may perhaps keep them from the bitter Envyings and Hatred, to which ambitious Worldlings are subject, but still they have as certainly in their Degree, and in Proportion to their Love of the World, their Envyings, and Hatreds, and Want of sincere Love, as other Men.

IF any one's Heart can bear him Witness, that in Thought, Word, and Deed, he treats all Men with that Love which he bears

bears to himself, it must be one, whose Heart fervently cries out with the Apostle, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of Jesus Christ, by which the World is crucified unto me, and I unto the World.*

A N Y other Glory than this, any other Use of the World, than being thus crucified to it, is inconsistent with this Degree of brotherly Love.

F O R a farther Proof of this Truth, we need only look into the World, and see the Spirit that appears amongst almost all Christians.

W E need not go to wicked and loose People, let us go into any virtuous Family whatever, we shall find that it has its particular *Friendships* and *Hatreds*, its *Envyings* and *Evil-speakings*, and all founded in the Interests and Regards of the World.

N O W all this necessarily proceeds from hence, that all Christians are busy in attending to their worldly Interests, intending only to keep clear of dishonest and scandalous Practices; that is, they use the World as far as honest *Heathens*, or *Jews* would do, and so consequently have such Tempers as *Jews* and *Heathens* have.

F O R it is not only Cheating and unlawful Practices, but the bare Desire of worldly Things, and the placing Happiness in them, that lays the Foundation of
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all these unchristian Tempers ; that begets particular Friendships and Enmities, and divides Christians into more Parties, than there are Families amongst them.

WERE there no dishonest Persons amongst us, yet if Christians give themselves up to the Happiness and Enjoyments of this World, there would be still almost the same Want of the loving our Neighbour as our selves.

So that it is purely the engaging so far in the World, as sober Christians do, it is their false Satisfaction in so many Things that they ought to renounce, it is their being too much alive to the World, that makes all, even the Devout and Religious, subject to Tempers so contrary to the Love of their Neighbour.

How comes it that most People find it so easy to love, forgive, and pray for all Men at the Hour of their Death? Is it not because the Reason of Enmity, Envy, and Dislike, then ceases? All worldly Interests being then at an End, all worldly Tempers die away with them.

LET this therefore teach us that it is absolutely necessary to die to the World, if we would live and love like Christians.

I HAVE now done with this Subject of *renouncing the World and all worldly Tempers*. I hope I have been so plain and clear

clear upon it, as is sufficient to convince any serious Reader, that it is a Doctrine of Jesus Christ, that it is the very Foundation of his Religion, and so necessary, that without it we can exercise no Christian Temper in the Manner that we ought.

SOME People have imagined, that they only renounce the World, as it ought to be renounced, who retire to a *Cloyster*, or a *Monastery*; but this is as unreasonable, as to make it necessary to lay aside *all* Use of *Cloaths*, to avoid the Vanity of *Dress*.

As there is a sober and reasonable Use of particular Things, so there is a sober reasonable Use of the World, to which it is as lawful to conform, as it is lawful to eat and drink.

THEY only renounce the World as they ought, who live in the midst of it without worldly Tempers, who comply with their Share in the Offices of human Life, without complying with the Spirit that reigneth in the World.

As it is right to go thus far, so is it wrong as soon as we take one Step farther.

THERE is nothing right in eating and drinking, but a strict and *religious* Temperance. It is the same thing in other Compliances with the State of this Life; we may *dress*, we may *buy* and *sell*, we
may

may *labour*, we may provide for our selves and our Families; but as these Things are only lawful for the same Reason that it is lawful to eat and drink, so are they to be governed by the same *religious* Strictness, that is to govern our Eating and Drinking; all Variations from this Rule, is like *Gluttony* and *Intemperance*, and fills our Souls with such Tempers, as are all contrary to the Spirit of Christ and his Religion.

THE first Step that our Desires take beyond Things of Necessity, ranks us amongst *Worldlings*, and raises in our Minds all those Tempers, which disturb the Minds of worldly Men.

YOU think your self very reasonable and conformable to Christianity, because you are moderate in your Desires; you don't desire an immense Estate, you desire only a *little* Finery in Dress, a *little* State in Equipage, and only to have Things *genteel* about you.

ANSWER, if this be your Case, you are happy in this, that you have but little Desires to conquer; but if these Desires have as *fast* hold of you, as greater Desires have of other People, you are in the same State of Worldly-mindedness that they are, and are no more *dead* to the World, than they that are the *fondest* of it. A Fondness for three or four Hundred Pounds a Year,

Year, is the same Slavery to the World, as a Fondness for three or four Thousand; and he that craves the Happiness of *little Fineries*, has no more renounced the World, than he that wants the Splendour of a large Fortune.

Y O U hate the Extravagance of *Dress*, but if you cannot depart from your own *little Finery*, you have as much to alter in your Heart, as they that like none but the *finest* of Ornaments.

C O N S I D E R therefore, that what you call moderate Desires, are as great Contrarieties to Religion; as those which you reckon immoderate; because they hold the Heart in the same State of false Satisfaction, raise the same vain Tempers, and do not suffer the Soul to rest wholly upon God.

W H E N the Spirit of Religion is your Spirit, when Heavenly-mindedness is your Temper, when your Heart is set upon God, you will have no more Taste for the Vanity of one sort of Life than another.

F A R T H E R, imagine to your self, that this Pretence in Favour of moderate Desires, and *little Fineries*, had been made to our blessed Saviour, when he was upon Earth, preaching his Doctrines of renouncing the World and denying our selves.

I DARE say your own Conscience tells you, that he would have rebuked the Author of such a Pretence with as much Indignation, as he rebuked Peter, *Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not the Things that be of God.*

NOW the Spirit of Christianity is the same Spirit that was in Christ, when he was upon the Earth; and if we have Reason to think, that such a Pretence would have been severely condemned by Christ, we have the same Reason to be sure, that it is as severely condemned by Christianity.

HAD our blessed Saviour a little before he left the World, given Estates to his Apostles, with a Permission for them to enjoy *little Fineries*, and a moderate *State* in *genteel Shew* and *Equipage*, he had undone all that he had said of the Contempt of the World, and Heavenly-mindedness; such a Permission had been a Contradiction to the most repeated and common Doctrines that he had taught.

HAD his Apostles lived in such a State, how could they have gloried only in the *Cross* of Christ, by which the World was *crucified* unto them, and they unto the World? How could they have said, *Love not the World, nor the Things in the World, for all that is in the World, the Lust of the*
Flesh,

Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life, is not the Father, but is of the World.

H A D they lived in a little *State*, in a moderate Shew of Figure, Equipage, and worldly Delights, how could they have said, that *She that liveth in Pleasure, is dead whilst she liveth?*

H O W could they have said, that *They who will be rich, fall into a Temptation, and a Snare, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown Men in Destruction?*

F O R it is not the Desire of *great Riches*, but it is the Desire of Riches, and a Satisfaction in the Pleasures of them, that is the *Snare*, and the *Temptation*, and that fills Mens Minds with foolish and hurtful Lusts, that keeps them in the same State of worldly Folly, as they are whose Desires are greater.

L A S T L Y, Had the Apostles lived in that Manner, how could they have said, that *Whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the World.*

F O R certainly he who is happy in the *Pleasure and Figure* of a small Estate, has no more overcome the World, than he that is happy in the *Splendour* of one that is greater.

T H U S therefore Matters stand with Relation to our blessed Saviour and his Apostles; the Doctrines they taught made
it

it impossible for them to take any Part, or seek any Pleasure in the *Shew*, and *Figure*, and *Riches*, of this World.

ONE would think that this one Reflexion, was alone sufficient to shew us, what Contempt of the World, what heavenly Affection we are to aspire after.

FOR how blind and weak must we be, if we can think that we *may* live in a Spirit and Temper, which could not *possibly* be the Spirit and Temper of Christ and his Apostles?

ANOTHER Pretence for worldly Care, and Labour after Riches, is to provide for our Families.

YOU want to leave Fortunes to your Children, that they may have their Share in the *Figure* and *Shew* of the World. Now consider, do you do this upon Principles of Religion, as the wisest and best Thing you can do, either for your self, or your Children?

CAN you be said to have chosen the *one Thing needful* for your self, or the *one Thing needful* for them, who make it your chief Care, to put them in a State of Life, that is a *Snare*, and a *Temptation*, and the most likely of all others, to fill their Minds with *foolish and hurtful Lusts*?

Is it your Kindness towards them, that puts you upon this Labour? Consider therefore

therefore what this Kindness is founded upon; perhaps it is such a Kindness, as when *tender* Mothers carry their Daughters to all *Plays* and *Balls*; such a Kindness, as when *indulgent* Fathers support their Sons in all the Expence of their Follies; such kind Parents may more properly be called the *Tempters* and *Betrayers* of their Children.

Y o u love your Children, and therefore you would leave them rich. It is said of our blessed Saviour, that he loved the *young rich* Man that came unto him, and as an Instance of his Love, he bid him *sell all* that he had, and give to the Poor. What a Contrariety is here? The Love which dwelleth in you, is as contrary to that Love which dwelt in Christ, as Darknes is contrary to Light.

W E have our Saviour's exprefs Command to love one another, *as he hath loved us*, and can you think that you are following this Love, when you are giving those Things to your Children, which he took away from his Friends, and which he could not possibly have given them, without contradicting the greatest Part of his Doctrines?

B u t supposing that you succeed in your Intentions, and leave your Children rich, what must you say to them when you are

M dying?

dying? Will you then tell them, that you have the same Opinion of the Greatness and Value of Riches that you ever had, that you feel the Pleasure of remembering how much Thought and Care you have taken to get them? Will you tell them, that you have provided for their Ease and Softness, their Pleasure and Indulgence, and Figure in the World, and that they cannot do better, than to eat and drink, and take their Fill of such Enjoyments as Riches afford? This would be dying like an *Atheist*.

BUT on the other Hand, if you will die like a *good Christian*, must you not endeavour to fill their Minds with your dying Thoughts? Must you not tell them, that they will soon be in a State, when the World will signify no more to them, than it does to you, and that there is a Deceitfulness, a Vanity, a Littleness, in the Things of this Life, which only dying Men feel, as they ought?

WILL you not tell them, that all your own Failings, the Irregularity of your Life, your Defects in Devotion, the Folly of your Tempers, the Strength of your Passions, and your Failure in Christian Perfection, has been all owing to wrong Opinions of the Value of worldly Things; and
that

that if you had always seen the World in the same Light that you see it now, your Life had been devoted to God, and you would have lived in all those holy Tempers and heavenly Affections, in which you now desire to die?

WILL you not tell them, that it is the Enjoyment of the World, that corrupts the Hearts, and blinds the Minds of all People, and that the only Way to know what Good there is in *Devotion*, what Excellence there is in *Piety*, what Wisdom in *Holiness*, what Happiness in *heavenly Affection*, what Vanity in this *Life*, and what Greatness in *Eternity*, is to die to the World, and all worldly Tempers?

WILL you not tell them, that Riches spent upon our selves, either in the Pleasures of *Ease* and *Indulgence*, in the Vanity of *Dress* or the Shew of *State* and *Equipage*, are the Bane and Destruction of our Souls, making us blindly content with *Dreams* of Happiness, till Death awakes us into *real Misery*?

FROM this therefore it appears, that your Kindness for your Children, is so far from being a good Reason why you should so carefully labour to leave them rich, and in the Enjoyment of the *State* and *Shew* of the World, that if you die in a Spirit of

Piety, if you love them, as Christ loved his Disciples, your Kindness will oblige you to exhort them to renounce all Self-enjoyment of Riches, as contrary to those holy Tempers, and that heavenly Affection, which you now find to be the only Good and Happiness of human Nature.





C H A P. VI.

Christianity calleth all Men to a State of Self-denial and Mortification.



CH R I S T I A N I T Y is a *Doctrine of the Cross*, that teaches the Restoration of Mankind to the Favour of God, by the Death and Sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

TH I S being the Foundation of the Christian Religion, it shews us, that all Persons who will act conformably to the Nature and Reason of Christianity, must make themselves Sufferers for Sin.

FO R if there is a Reasonableness between Sin and Suffering, every Christian acts against the Reason of Things, that does not endeavour to pay some part of that Debt which is due to Sin.

IN D E E D it would be strange to suppose, that Mankind were redeemed by the Sufferings of their Saviour, to live in Ease

and Softness themselves; that Suffering should be the *necessary* Attonement for Sin, and yet that *Sinners* should be excused from *Sufferings*.

SUCH an High Priest became us, says the Apostle, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from Sinners.

NOW if the *Holiness* of Christ rendered his Sacrifice acceptable to God, does not this teach us that we must labour to be *holy* in order to be accepted of God?

BUT is there not the same Reason, and the same Example in the Sufferings of Christ, if they made God more propitious to Sin, must we not as well take this Way of Suffering, to make our selves fitter Objects of Divine Pardon?

THERE is therefore the same Reason in the Nature of the Thing, for us Sinners to endeavour to conform our selves to the *Sufferings*, as to labour after the *Holiness* of Christ; since they both jointly conspired to recommend the great Attonement for Sin, and must jointly conspire to render us proper Objects of the Benefits of it.

NOR is the sinless State of Christ a better Reason for us to avoid and flee from Sin, than his suffering State is a Reason for our renouncing all Softness and Indulgence in Pleasures.

H A D Christ wanted either Holiness or Sufferings, his Sacrifice had been wanting in an essential Part. If therefore we think to be accepted of God by Holiness, without Suffering, we seem to contradict the Nature of our Religion as much, as if we thought to be accepted through Sufferings without Holiness.

IT may perhaps be said, in the Words of our *Liturgy*, *That Christ having by his one Oblation of himself once offered, made a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction, for the Sins of the whole World,* that Christians have no Occasion to make any Suffering for Sin.

TO this it may be answer'd,

T H A T the Sacrifice of Christ is full and sufficient, first, as it takes away the Necessity of all the *legal Sacrifices*: Secondly, as it has no Need to be repeated again: And thirdly, as it fully reconciles God to accept of us upon the Terms of the New Covenant.

N O W there is no Occasion to suffer for Sin, in order to make the Sacrifice of Christ *more compleat*, or to add a farther Value to the Attonement for Sin; but then it is to be considered, that if Self-suffering for Sin be a good and reasonable Duty in it self, and proper for a Sinner, that the Fulness of Christ's Sacrifice has no more

taken away the Necessity of it, than it has taken away the Necessity of Humility, or any other Virtue.

CHRIST is as well said to be our *Sanctification*, our *Holiness* and *Righteousness*, as our *Attonement* for Sin, yet we should much mistake the Scripture, if we should think, that because he is our Holiness, therefore we need not endeavour to be Holy our selves.

YET this is as good a Conclusion, as to imagine, that we need not suffer for our Sins our selves, because Christ's Sufferings are a full Attonement for Sin.

FOR they are no otherwise a *sufficient Attonement* for Sin, than as Christ is our *sufficient Holiness*, so that we may as well trust to his Holiness, without labouring to be Holy ourselves, as trust to his Sufferings, without making our selves also Sufferers for Sin.

Let it now therefore be observed, that were there no particular Precepts or Doctrines, that expressly called us to a State of Self-denial, and Self-suffering, the very Nature of Religion, is an undeniable Argument, that the Way of Suffering, is the right and certain Way for Sinners to find God more Propitious to their Sin.

HE that can doubt of this, must suppose, that God required a Way of At-
tone-

tonement in Jesus Christ, that had nothing of Attonement in it ; for if it had, it must be undeniable, that all, who, as far as their Natures will allow, conform themselves to the Similitude of Christ's Sacrifice, must make themselves more acceptable to God.

T H A T Christ's Sufferings have not made all other Sufferings for Sin needless, is plain from hence, that all Christians are still left subject to *Death*. For surely it may with Truth be affirmed, that Death is a Suffering for Sin.

N O W since all Christians are to offer up their Bodies at Death, as a *Sacrifice* or *Suffering* for Sin, this plainly teaches us that a State of Self-denial and Suffering is the proper State of this Life. For surely it must be proper to make every Part of our Life suitable to such an *End*.

D O E S God unmake us, and dash our very Form into pieces? and can we think that a Life of Pleasure and Self-indulgence, can become us under such a Sentence?

W H A T plainer Proof can we have, that we are *devoted* Sufferers for Sin, than that we are devoted to Death? for Death hath no place in a State of allowed Pleasure and Enjoyment. When the Suffering for Sin is over, there will be no more Death; but so long as Death lasts, so long are all Beings that are subject to Death, in
a State

a State that requires Humiliation and Suffering; and they rebel against God, if they do not make their Lives conformable to that Mark of divine Displeasure, which Death signifies.

T H U S as the *Mortality* of our Condition, is a certain Proof that our Life is in *Disorder*, and *unacceptable* to God, so is it also a Proof, that we ought to refuse Pleasures and Satisfaction, which are the Pleasures of a State of Disorder, and stay for Joy and Delights till we are removed to such a State of Perfection, as God will delight to continue to all Eternity.

T H E Apostle tells us that *Flesh and Blood cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*, must we not therefore be very unreasonable, if we can cast about for Mirth in such a Condition, or give up our selves to the vain Pleasures and Indulgences of a *Flesh and Blood*, which are too corrupt too unholy to enter into the Kingdom of God?

T H I S may suffice to shew us the Excellency and Reasonableness of our Saviour's Doctrine.

H E said unto them all, if any Man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his Cross daily and follow me.

F O R

FOR whosoever will save his Life, shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his Life for my sake, the same shall save it.

HERE is a common Condition propos'd to all that would be Christ's Disciples, they are called to deny themselves, and take up their Cross daily. To shew us that this belongs to all Christians, the Apostle saith, *He said unto them all; St. Mark hath it thus, And when he had called the People unto him, with his Disciples also, he said unto them.*

THE Church of Rome refuses to give the Cup in the Holy Sacrament to the Laity. We reckon it a very good Argument against that Custom, that our Saviour when he delivered the Cup, said unto them, *Drink ye all of this.*

Now if it be an Argument that *all Christians* are to receive the Cup, because in the Institution of the Sacrament it is said, *Drink ye all of this*, is it not as good an Argument that all Christians are here called to deny themselves, and take up their Cross daily, because it is delivered in the same Manner, *He said unto them all, and again, When he called the People unto him with his Disciples also, he said unto them?*

To me this Place seems as general a Call to all Christians, as *Drink ye all of this*, is a general Command to all Christians.

LET any one try to evade the Obligation of this Text, and he will find, that he must use such Arguments, as will equally serve to get rid of any other Part of Holy Scripture.

IF this Passage only called the first Disciples of Christ to an external State of Sufferings, and Persecutions from other People, it might with some Pretence be supposed only to relate to People, when they are in such a State of Persecution.

BUT as it calls them to *deny themselves*, to take up their Cross daily, it is plain, that it calls them to a Suffering and Self-denial, which they were to inflict upon themselves.

NOW if they are called thus to deny themselves, and subject themselves to a voluntary Cross in order to be Christ's Disciples, it will be hard to shew, that Self-denials are not as lasting Terms of Christianity, as Baptism and the Lord's-Supper.

WATER-BAPTISM is Necessary because our Saviour has Instituted it, and the Reason for continuing it, is the same as for observing it at first. But still, it is but an external Rite, or Sacrament, which in its
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own Nature hath nothing relating to Holiness and Purification of the Soul, but has all its Excellency from the Institution of Christ.

THIS cannot be said of these Sort of Sufferings, for they have an *internal* and *essential* Relation to Holiness and Purification in the *present State* of Man.

I SAY in the *present State* of Man, because though these Self-denials or Mortifications, are proper only to Man whilst he is in this State of Corruption, yet they are as true Parts of Holiness, and as essential Virtues, as those which will last for ever.

CHARITY to the Poor is founded in the Necessities and Infirmities of this Life, yet is it as real a Degree of Holiness, and as much to be performed for its own Sake, as that Charity which will never have an End.

IT is the same in these Self-denials, they only belong to a State of Sin, but whilst such a State continues, they are the indispensable Duty of Sinners, and as necessary and acceptable to God as relieving the Poor.

THIS must be allowed, or we must deny, that there was any real Attonement for Sin in the Sufferings and Death of Christ; for if there was any real Attonement in the Sufferings of Christ, if his Sufferings rendered God propitious and reconciled

conciled to Sinners, it is undeniable, that all who suffer with the *same Spirit* that Christ suffered, must in their Degree recommend themselves to the Favour of God, on the same Account, and for the same Reasons that the Sufferings of Christ procured Peace and Reconciliation.

I F Christ the Lord of all, and Head of the Church, is still making Intercession for us at the Right Hand of God, does not this plainly teach us, that we cannot be accepted by God, unless we live in a State of Supplication and Prayer for our selves?

A N D if he who had no Sin of his own, was obliged to such Sufferings to make himself be heard as an *Advocate* for Sin; surely Sinners themselves cannot presume to sue for their own Pardon, without putting themselves in the *like State* of Humiliation and Suffering. For since the Attonement is made by Sufferings, this as truly recommends Sufferings to Sinners, as if it had been made by Prayer, that would have shewn the Way of Prayer to have been the Way of finding Pardon.

S E L F-D E N I A L therefore and Sufferings are Duties essential to the present State of Sin, and recommend us to God, as Holiness and Purity recommend us, by their own Nature and intrinsic Fitness, that is,
they

they are good, as Prayer, Humility, and Charity are good.

W H E N we shall be removed to a State that is free from Sin, Self-denial and Mortification will then be no Part of our Duty; but so long as this State of Sin lasts, so long does the Necessity and Reason of Self-denial and Mortification last; they are as necessary, as Prayers and Devotion, and are as truly essential Parts of Holiness, as Chastity and Humility.

F O R Repentance and Sorrow for Sin is as necessary to a being in a State of Sin, as necessary on its own Account, and from the Nature of the Thing, as the Love of God is necessary from a Being that receives all his Happiness from God.

F O R to express our Indignation, and inflict Punishment on that which displeases God, is as reasonable in it self, and as much an Act of Holiness, as to love and cherish that which God loves. So that all our Self-denials as Punishments of Sin, as Expressions of Sorrow for Guilt, and as Preventions of Temptation, may be considered as so many Instances of our Love of Purity.

W H I L S T therefore we continue in a State of Corruption, it is as necessary that we continue in a State of Repentance, Self-denial, and Sorrow, as it is necessary to
continue

continue our Desires and Endeavours after Purity.

IF we can find a Time when we have no Sin to lament, no Occasion for the Severities of Repentance, it may be granted, that that would be a Time for the abstaining from Self-denial, and voluntary Sufferings.

BUT if human Life knows of no such Season, if we can never look at our selves, but under the Weight of Sin, it is a Demonstration that Indignation at our selves, and a voluntary Suffering for Sin, is the necessary constant State of Christians.

INDEED if it be allowed that Repentance and Sorrow for Sin is necessary, and that it ought to be the constant Habit of a Christian's Mind, till this Life be at an End, we need no stronger Proof of the constant Necessity of Self-denial and Mortification.

FOR what Reason can there be for Sorrow and Grief for Sin, which is not the same Reason for Self-denial, and the daily Cross? Is not Grief and Sorrow for Sin, a *Suffering and Punishment* for Sin? Or can we grieve and afflict our selves for our Sins, unless we express that Grief by a hearty Indignation, and real Self-denial?

IF therefore we consider the Reason and Fitness of Repentance, we see the Reason
and

and Fitness of Self-denial, and voluntary Sufferings, and consequently we must acknowledge, that these Self-denials are not less necessary, nor less recommended to us, than Repentance and Sorrow for Sin.

F O R since they are of the same Nature, and for the same End, and also essential to true Repentance, it follows, that all Christians are obliged to be as constant in their Self-denials, and Mortifications, as they are to be constant in their Repentance.

B E C A U S E such voluntary Sufferings have the same essential Relation to Holiness, that Charity and the Love of God have.

F O R though Charity and the Love of God will never cease, but this Self-denial will have an End, yet is this Self-denial during this State of Sin, as essential to the Holiness of Persons in such a State, as any other Virtue.

I T being the same Degree of inward Purity, and as right a Spirit and Temper to *mourn and afflict* our selves for our Sins, as to *love* that which God *loves*, or be thankful for his Mercies.

N O W if a Person was to give himself up to *Sorrow* in a *State of Happiness*, or to Unthankfulness, though in the *Midst of Mercies*, he would act just as unreasonably,

N just

just as contrary to the Nature of Things, as he that gives himself up to Pleasures and Indulgences in a State of Corruption and Sin.

LET it therefore be carefully observed, that Self-denial and Mortification, are only other Words for Repentance and Sorrow for Sin, and he that can distinguish them from one another, may distinguish Grief from Sorrow.

HE therefore that can doubt, whether Christians are called to a daily Practice of Self-denial, seems to know as little of true Religion, as if he doubted whether they were called to a daily Repentance. For when we may live in a State contrary to *Repentance*, then, and then only, may we live in a State contrary to *Self-denial*.

LET a Christian ever cease from Self-denial, let him ever forbear the Mortification of his Appetites, and at that Time he ceases to consider himself as a *Sinner*, and behaves himself as though he were then free from the *Guilt* and *Danger* of Sin.

BUT as he never is in this State of Freedom, so if he acts as if he was so, he acts as falsely, as if he took himself to be an *Angel*.

THERE is therefore as much Reason that the *daily Cross*, or Self-denial, should be imposed upon Christians, as a daily Prayer,

Prayer, or Repentance; and there is the same Impiety, the same false Judgment in refusing a daily Self-denial, as in refusing or ceasing from a daily Devotion and Sorrow for Sin.

F O R a Man may as well imagine that he prays or gives Thanks to God, when he only repeats the Words of a Prayer or Thanksgiving, as that he repents for his Sins, unless his Repentance be a *real* Punishment, a *true State* of Mortification.

W E may now observe, that this Doctrine of Self-suffering is founded upon the most important fundamental Articles of our Religion.

I F we consider our Redemption as an Attonement made by Suffering, does not this shew us the Necessity of seeking Pardon by a Fellowship in the Sufferings of Christ?

N E E D we any other Argument, that there is no State so suitable to a Sinner as that of Suffering, when God has appointed Sufferings as the Attonement for Sin?

I F we consider that we are devoted to *Death*, and under a Necessity of falling into Dust, as a *Sacrifice* for Sin, does not this teach us the Necessity of making our Life conformable to the Intention of such a Death?

F O R could there be any *Necessity* that we should die as a *Sacrifice* for Sin, if we might lead a Life of a *contrary* Nature? Or could we act more contrary to God, than by making that Life a State of Pleasure and Indulgence, which he has laid under the *Curse* of Death? Ought we to indulge a Life which God considers as too unholy to continue in Being?

L A S T L Y, If we consider that Repentance is the chief, the most constant and perpetual Duty of a Christian, that our Holiness has hardly any other Existence, than what arises from a perpetual Repentance, can it be doubted, that Mortification and Self-denial are essential, perpetual Parts of our Duty?

F O R to suppose a Repentance without the Pain of Mortification, and the Punishment of Self-denial, is as absurd, as to suppose a Labour after Holiness, which takes not one Step towards it.

F O R if Repentance be not an Exercise of Mortification and Self-denial, it is no more a State of Repentance, than the lifting up our Hands, without our Hearts, is a State of Prayer and Devotion.

R E P E N T A N C E is a hearty Sorrow for Sin, Sorrow is a Pain or Punishment, which we are obliged to raise to as high a
Degree

Degree as we can, that we may be fitter Objects of God's Pardon.

So that Self-denial and Mortification is only another Word, for a *real Repentance*.

IF Christians will still so far forget the Nature and Design of their Religion, as to imagine that our Saviour's Call to a daily Cross and Self-denial was only a Call to his first Disciples to expect Sufferings and Death from their Enemies, they are governed by as little Reason, as if they should think, *Repent ye for the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand*, only obliged those to Repentance, who first entered into the Kingdom of God.

FOR there is nothing in the Nature of Repentance, that shews it to be a more constant Duty, or more essential to the Christian Life, than there is in this Mortification and Self-suffering.

IT is also very absurd to suppose, that a Command to deny themselves and take up their own Cross daily, should mean only the enduring and expecting of Sufferings from others.

LET us now suppose the contrary, that Christians are not called to this State of Mortification, or Denial of their Appetites. Let us suppose that Christian Churches are full of *sine gay* People, who spend their

Days in all the Pleasures and Indulgences which the Spirit of the World can invent.

CAN it in any Sense be said of such, that they live in a *State of Repentance and Sorrow* for Sin? May they not with as much Regard to Truth, be said to live in *Sackcloth and Ashes*? Can their Hearts feel any Sorrow, or be mourning for the Weight and Misery of Sin, who live only to the studied Enjoyments of Ease and Pleasure? Can they be said to grieve at Guilt, or be afraid of Sin, who pamper all their Appetites, and seek all the Enjoyments that lead to Temptation? Can they who live in the Gratifications of the Flesh, and Scenes of Pleasure, be said to be working out their Salvation *with Fear and Trembling*? May they not as justly be said to be walking bare-foot to *Jerusalem*?

IF therefore we will not destroy the whole State of Religion, if we will but own it to be a *State of Trial and Probation*, we must also allow, that Self-denial and Abstinence from Pleasures are daily essential Duties of it.

FOR a Life of Sorrow for Sin, and mourning for the Guilt of it, and a Life of Pleasure and Indulgence, are inconsistent States, and as necessarily destroy one another, as Motion puts an End to Rest.

REPENTANCE will have no Place in Heaven, because that will be a State of Perfection, and for the same Reason it ought never to be laid aside on Earth, because there is no Time, when we are not under the Guilt, and subject to the Danger of Sin.

THIS does not suppose, that we are always to be uttering *Forms of Confession* from our Mouths, but it supposes, that we are always to live with so much Watchfulness, as becomes penitent Sinners, and never do any thing, but what highly suits with a *State of Repentance*.

So that whenever we can abate our Self-denials, without abating our Sorrow for Sin, when we can find Pleasures that neither *soften* the Mind, nor make it *less fearful* of Temptation, then, and so far only, may we seek our Ease.

FOR Repentance whilst it is only a Lip-work at stated Times is nothing, it has not had its Effect, till it has entered into the State and Habit of our Lives, and rendered us as fearful of Sin in every Part of our Lives, as when we are making our Confessions.

Now this State of Penitence, which alone is suited to a State of Corruption and Infirmity, can no more exist without constant daily Self-denial, than we can daily

govern our Appetites, without daily looking after them.

To proceed. Our Saviour saith, *Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted.*

Now this is another direct Call to Self-denial and Abstinence from Pleasures, as must appear to every one, that knows Mourning to be different from Pleasure and Indulgence.

THE Blessedness that is here ascribed to Mourning, must be understood in relation to Mourning, as it is a *State of Life*, and not as to any transient Acts, or particular Times of Mourning.

FOR no Actions are valuable, or rewardable, but as they arise from a *State or Temper* of Mind that is constant and habitual.

IF it had been said blessed are the Charitable, it must have meant, blessed are they who live in a *State and Habit* of Charity. For the same Reason, are we to understand the Blessedness which is due to Mourning, to be only due to a *State and Life* of Mourning.

SECONDLY, *Blessed are they that mourn*, shews us that this Mourning concerns all Men as such, without any Distinction of *Time or Person*, so that its Excellency and Fitness must be founded upon something that

that is common and constant to all times and all Persons. For if there was any time, when we might change this State of Mourning, or were there any Persons that might be excused from it, it could not be said in general, *Blessed are they that mourn.*

I F therefore this Mourning be a reasonable and excellent Temper, that equally leads *all Orders* of Men to Blessedness, its Reasonableness must be founded in the common State and Condition of Man; that is, if Mourning be good for all Men, it must be, because the State and Condition of all Men as such, requires Mourning.

B U T if this Mourning be founded in the present State of Man, as suitable to his Condition in this Life, it must be always the same excellent and proper Temper, till Death changes his State, and puts him in a Condition, that requires another Temper.

N O W what can this State of Mourning be, but a godly Sorrow founded upon a true Sense and Feeling of the Misery of our State, as it is a State of *fallen Spirits*, living in Sin and Vanity, and *Separation* from God?

W H A T can it be, but a ceasing to enjoy and rejoyce in the false Goods and Enjoyments of this Life, because they delude
and

and corrupt our Hearts, increase our Blindness, and sink us deeper in our Distance from God ?

WHAT Mourning can be blessed, but such as mourns at that which displeases God, which condemns and rejects what the Wisdom of God rejects, which loosens us from the Vanity of the World, lessens the Weight of our Corruption, and quickens our Motions and Aspirings towards Perfection ?

THIS is not a Mourning that shews it self in *occasional Fits* of Sorrow, or Dejection of Mind, but it is a *regular Temper*, or rather a *right Judgment*, which refuses Pleasures, that are not only the Pleasures of a corrupted State, but such as also increase and strengthen our Corruption.

ONE constant Property of a true Mourning, is Abstinence from Pleasures ; and we generally reckon a Sorrow very near its End, when Diversions and Amusements begin to be relish'd.

THIS Mourning therefore to which this Blessedness is ascribed, must be a constant Abstinence from vain Joys ; it must preserve it self by rejecting and disrelishing all those worldly Delights and Satisfactions, which if admitted, would put an end to its State of Mourning.

N. o w

N O W what is all this, but that State of *Self-denial* and *Daily-cross* to which our Saviour called his Disciples ?

F O R we may imagine any thing, if we can imagine, that a State of religious Mourning is not a State of religious Self-denial.

U N L E S S therefore we will say, that the Blessedness of Mourning, was also only preach'd to Christ's first Followers, we must allow, that *all Christians* are equally call'd to that *Daily-cross* and *Self-denial*, which was then requir'd.

I T ought also here to be observed, that we are call'd to these Duties upon our Hopes of Happiness.

F O R *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted*, is the same thing as saying, Miserable and cursed are they that do not mourn, for they shall not be comforted. Again,

BLESSED are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

N O T H I N G can carry a greater Denial and Contradiction to all the Tempers and Ways of the World than this Doctrine ; it not only puts an end to all that we esteem wicked and immoderate Desires of worldly Satisfaction, but calls us from all worldly Satisfaction, which any way fasten the Soul to any false Goods, and make it
less

less ardent after true Happiness. As the Christian Religion regards only the Salvation of our Souls, and restoring us to a Life with God in Heaven, it considers every thing as ill, that keeps us in a State of any false Enjoyment, and nothing as good, but what loosens us from the World, and makes us less Slaves to its Vanities. *Blessed are the poor in Spirit*, because it is a Spirit of Disengagement and Disrelish of the World, that puts the Soul in a State of Liberty and Fitness, to relish and receive the Offers of true Happiness.

THE Doctrine of this Text, is purely the Doctrine of *Self-denial* and *Daily-cross*, to which our Saviour called his Disciples.

FOR let any one consider, how it is possible for a Man to be *poor in Spirit*, but by renouncing those Enjoyments, which are the proper Delights of such as are *high*, and *rich* in Spirit. Now a Man is *high* in Spirit, when his own State and Dignity give him a Pleasure, he is *rich* in Spirit who seeks and delights in the Enjoyments and Felicities which Riches afford, he is therefore *poor in Spirit*, that mortifies all vain Thoughts, rejects every Self-pleasure, and avoids and dislikes the empty Satisfaction which Riches and Fortune give.

Now this, which is undoubtedly the Doctrine of this Passage, is the very Essence

sence and Soul of all Self-denial and Mortification, which is nothing else but a constant checking all our vain Tempers, and a denying our selves such Enjoyments, as naturally strengthen and support them. So that the Blessedness of Poverty of Spirit, is the Blessedness of Self-denial and Mortification.

F O R surely if we are called to a constant Poverty of Spirit, we are called to a constant Refusal of all Enjoyments, but such as Poverty of Spirit requires.

F O R it is to be observed, that when it is said, *Blessed are the poor in Spirit*, that the Meaning is, *Blessed* are they that are governed by this Spirit, for that is only a Man's Spirit and Temper, which rules and directs his Actions,

A N ambitious Man, is one that is governed by his Spirit of Ambition, so a Man is poor in Spirit, when that is the Spirit that governs his Actions.

A S the rich in Spirit, are such as seek the Felicity and Gratifications of Riches, so the poor in Spirit is he, that avoids and dislikes all such Gratifications, and seeks such Things as properly suit with such a mortified Habit of Mind.

S O that no one is to reckon himself *poor in Spirit*, till it makes him not only reject all Instances of Pride and Self-enjoyment,
but

but till he seeks and desires things that are as proper to a Poverty of Spirit, as *Food* is proper to Hunger, or *Water* to Thirst.

F O R as Hunger is known by its being a Desire of *Food*, and Thirst by its Desire of *Liquor*, so Poverty of Spirit can only be known, by its seeking such things, as are as *true Signs* of it, as the seeking of Water, is a Sign of Thirst.

F O R this is undeniable, that every Spirit or Temper must only be known, by the Nature of the Things it covets.

I F we are High-minded, our Care will be exercised about high Things, and if we are lowly in Heart, we shall as certainly not only condescend, but seek after things that are lowly. Let a Man therefore, who would deal faithfully with himself, consider not only whether he is *Proud, Luxurious, Indulgent* of himself, and devoted to the Pleasures and Satisfactions of this Life, but let him consider whether he is *poor in Spirit*, whether the Things that he seeks, the Designs he has on foot, the Happiness he aims at, and the Course of his Life, be such as is really directed by a true Poverty of Spirit.

F O R he ought not to think that he is governed by this Spirit, till he finds himself an Enemy to every Pleasure, every Care, and every Labour that is contrary
to

to it. When he hates Self-indulgence, as the *Epicure* hates Self-denial, when he studies Humility, as the *ambitious* Man aims at *Greatness*, when he avoids the Vanities of the World, as the *Sailor* avoids *Rocks*, then may he reckon himself entitled to that Blessedness, which belongs to those who are *poor in Spirit*.

THIS is that Self-denial, Holy-discipline, Daily-cross, to which all Christians are called; that by thus losing their Lives, that is, thus ceasing to live the Life of this World, they may purchase to themselves a Life of endless Happiness in another State.

I BELIEVE there are few Christians, who do not acknowledge that Christianity is still in some Degree a *Doctrine of the Cross*; and that the Texts above-cited, have still some meaning with regard to all Christians; but then they believe this in some such loose and general Way, or live with so little regard to what they do believe of it, that they feel no Condemnation of themselves, whatever their Lives are, from hearing these Doctrines.

BUT notwithstanding all this, it is certain that Christians are as much oblig'd to conform exactly to these Doctrines of the Cross, as to the Observance of the Ten Commandments. For the Ten Com-
mandments

mandments were not more certainly Laws to the Jews, than the Doctrines of Self-denial and Poverty of Spirit are Laws to all Christians.

A N O T H E R plain and remarkable Instance of Self-denial, is to be seen in the following Words.

YE have heard that it hath been said, an Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth for a Tooth, but I say unto you, that ye resist not Evil, but whosoever will smite thee on thy right Cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any Man will sue thee at Law and take away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go with him a Mile, go with him twain.

O U R Blessed Saviour's first Proposal was this, *If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his Cross daily, and follow me.*

I N the Text before us, he instructs them in several Instances, wherein this Self-denial and Daily-cross consisted, which are now the common Terms of Salvation to all Christians.

W E are to deny our selves, in not demanding a *Tooth for a Tooth*, we are to take up our *Daily-cross* by turning our Cheek to the Smiter, and suffering such ill Usage, as we could prevent by Resistance.

WE are to deny our selves, in not defending our selves by Suits at Law; and must take up the Cross of one Injury after another, rather than appeal to the Contention of a Trial. This is sufficiently taught, by our being required to expose our selves to the farther Loss of our *Cloak*, rather than have recourse to Law to secure our *Coat*.

THE Words which deliver this Doctrine are so very plain and express, that they need no Illustration, it is as plain also, that they equally belong to all Christians of all Ages. The Manner of our Saviour's delivering himself upon these Points, puts it out of all question, that they were Doctrines of the *Cross*, which were to be perpetual Marks of his Followers.

YE have heard that it hath been said, an Eye for an Eye, &c. But I say unto you, that ye resist not Evil, &c.

IT was not possible for our Saviour to express himself in a more authouritative Manner than he has here done, or to shew us more plainly, that he was here acting as the *great Lawgiver* of Christians, and delivering Doctrines which should be *perpetual Laws* to all his Disciples, and such as should constantly distinguish them from all the World. Nor is it possible for any one to evade the literal and open Meaning of these Doctrines, but in such a way

as must destroy the Sense of any other Part of Scripture.

IF it could be shewn, that we are not obliged by the plain and express Doctrine of these Passages, it might as well be shewn, that the next Doctrine, *But I say unto you, love your Enemies, bless them that curse you*, does not oblige us in the plain and literal Sense of the Words.

FOR both the Passages are equally supported by the same Authority of our Saviour, expressed in the same manner, *I say unto you*. This Degree also of Love which we are to shew to our Enemies, is as much a Doctrine of the *Cross*, as contrary to all our natural Tempers, and worldly Interests, as that of Patience, Meekness, and Submission to those who treat us injuriously. These Virtues are also necessary to one another; we cannot thus Love and do good to our Enemy, unless we are thus patient under Sufferings, and deny our selves all Instances of Anger and Uneasiness at them.

IT is pretended by some that these Passages only forbid our Prosecution of *spightful* and *malicious* Suits at Law.

BUT such People might as well pretend, that the Eighth Commandment only forbids *wanton* and *spightful* Stealing, but allows it, when it is done Soberly and with no spightful Intention.

FOR

FOR the Case which our Saviour put, is directly intended against such a Pretence as this.

IT is the Case of a Man, who has a Suit commenced against him for his *Coat*, he is not allowed to consider that it is his *own Coat*, and that he enters no farther into the Trial, than to secure his *Coat*; he is not allowed to shew this Degree of Contention or Anger at Injustice, or Impatience under Suffering, but is patiently to permit his *Coat* to be taken from him, though that Patience be the Means of losing his *Cloak* also.

IT is not therefore spiteful Prosecutions, but the most seemingly reasonable Self-defence that is here forbidden. Farther, *Malice* and *Revenge* were not allow'd to the *Jews*, yet we are here commanded to deny our selves such Methods of Self-defence, and Rules of Justice as was allow'd to them.

IF Christians will still think that they may defend *all* their Rights, and enter into *all such Contentions* for them, as the *Laws* of the Land will support them in, if they will think that they need bear *no other* Injuries, but such as Courts of *Law* cannot redress, they are as much mistaken, as if they imagine, they need Præfice no other Charity or Worship of God, but such as humane Laws Demand.

FOR Christian *Meekness*, *Self-denial*, and *Patience* under Sufferings, are no more to be formed by the Standard of human Laws, than our Devotion to God.

IN these Things Jesus Christ is our *only Lawgiver*, and his Laws are to be complied with as the certain Terms of our Salvation.

NOTWITHSTANDING therefore we may be able either by personal Power or legal Contention to repel Injuries, return Evil for Evil, and demand a *Tooth* for a *Tooth*, yet as Disciples of Christ we are to turn our Cheek to the Smiter, let him that would take our Coat, have our Cloak also, and be rather content to suffer many Injuries, than by defending our selves, raise our Passions, embitter our Tempers, and destroy that Charity which we owe to our Neighbour.

Now this *Meekness* and *Self-denial* is highly suitable to the Spirit and Temper of Christianity.

IT is highly suitable to a Religion that restores Sinners to God by *Sufferings*, it is suited to such as have *forsaken all* to follow Christ, it is suited to such as are to be *dead* and *crucified* to the World, to such as are to be *meek* and *lowly* as Christ, it is suited to such as are commanded to *love* and do all Good to their most violent Enemies, and who are to love their Neighbour as themselves.

AND

AND whatever Pride, Self-love, or *humane Wisdom* may suggest against this Doctrine, may with equal Strength be Objected against all those other Doctrines, which are thus of a Spirit like unto it.

BUT let Christians consider, that it is of these Doctrines of the *Cross*, that our Saviour saith, *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my Words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own Glory and in his Father's, and of the holy Angels.* Farther,

THIS is my Commandment, saith Christ, *that ye love one another, as I have loved you.* Now this as plainly forbids all Strife and angry Contentions with others, as when we are commanded to part with our Coat rather than contend for it. For it is as impossible to love our Adversary whilst we are contending with him, as Christ loved us, as to follow Christ, and at the same time depart from him.

HIS Love towards Mankind (which is the Example for our Love) knew of no Enemies, nor refused any Sufferings, but was a continual Labour for the Salvation of all Men. If therefore we treat *any* Persons as our *Enemies*, or flie in the Face of those who injure us, and are impatient under Sufferings, we are fallen from that Love which is to govern all our Actions.

MEN may fancy what they please of the Charity of their Temper, whilst they are resisting Evil, and carrying on the Contentions of Law, as others may think they have their *Conversation in Heaven*, whilst they are labouring after Riches on Earth; but if they would consider, that Christian Charity is to be like the Charity of Christ, who died for his Enemies, they would soon find, that it must be a Charity of another Kind, that allows them to *contend* with their Enemies.

EVERY Resistance or Contention of any Kind, is a Quarrel, and necessarily begets some Degrees of Spight and Ill-will, and though they may often be carried on with some Shew of *external Decency*, yet the *inward Temper* partakes of the Contention, is tainted with some *little and unnatural* Resentments, and destroys that divine Spirit of Love to which we are called.

So that to talk of the Charity of resisting, and contentious Suits at Law, is almost like talking of the Charity of *Duels*.

THE only Way therefore to preserve our Christian Spirit, and shew our selves more like Christ than those who injure us, is to act as he did under Injuries, and bear them with Patience, for such Reasons as
rendered

rendered him patient. We are sure that whilst we follow him, we follow the *Way, the Truth, and the Life*, but as soon as we resent and form Designs of conquering our Oppressor, we partake of his Spirit, and offend against Meekness and Charity, as he offended against Justice.

WE must therefore bear with Injuries and Wrongs, not because it is difficult to redress them, but because it is difficult, and next to impossible, to resist and contend with our Adversaries, without forfeiting that Humility, Meekness, and Divine Love, to which we are called.

WE must suffer with Patience, because such Patience is an Exercise of our Self-denial, that renders us more like our Lord and Master.

THIS cannot be doubted of, since we are told of our blessed Saviour, *That though he were a Son, yet learned he Obedience, by the Things which he suffered.*

Now if this be true, is it not true in the same Degree, that we are not only to bear Sufferings with Patience, but even receive them with Thankfulness, as proper Means to teach us Obedience to the Laws of God?

FOR if he who was a Son, who was without Sin, and so full of Divine Knowledge, yet received *Instruction* from Sufferings,

ings, surely we who are poor infirm Creatures, must want that Instruction which is to be learnt from them.

F O R to suppose, that we can be obedient to God without Sufferings, is to suppose, that we can do our Duty without such Helps as the Son of God had. Sufferings are therefore to be considered amongst the Graces of God, which *purify* our Souls, *enlighten* our Minds with Divine Knowledge, and prepare us to *perfect Holiness in the Fear of God*.

B U T how contrary to the Spirit of Christ do we act, if our Sufferings provoke us into Methods of *Retaliation*, and instead of teaching us Obedience to God, lead us into a State of *Enmity* towards our Brethren.

F A R T H E R ; It became him, saith the Apostle, *for whom are all Things, and by whom are all Things, in bringing many Sons unto Glory, to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through Sufferings* (a).

W E are here plainly taught not only that Christ was made perfect through Sufferings, but that it was fit he should be made perfect that Way, as the only Way that could bring *many Sons unto Glory*.

(a) Heb. ii. 10.

So that we see one End of Christ's Sufferings before his being crowned with Glory and Honour, was to teach us, that Sufferings is the *Way* to arrive at Glory, and that those who desire to be Sons of Glory, must first be made perfect through Sufferings.

WE therefore forget the Nature of our Religion, we mistake the one great Design of Christ's Sufferings, we go out of the Road to Glory, if we do not patiently submit to Sufferings, if we are not thankful that we *suffer with Christ, that we may reign with him.*

MEN in vain pretend that they only defend themselves against *Injustice*. For these are the very Hardships which Christ suffered, and which they are, if they would be guided by his Spirit, to suffer with Patience.

St. PETER speaking to Servants, saith, *This is thank-worthy, if a Man for Conscience toward God endure Grief suffering wrongfully. If when ye do well and suffer for it; ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an Example, that ye should follow his Steps.*

HERE the Apostle founds the Duty of Servants being subject to Masters, that treat them injuriouſly, upon the common Doctrin
of

of Christianity; because to suffer *wrongfully* is thank-worthy before God, and because Christ's Example has called us to bear with Patience those injurious and wrongful Hardships.

LET it therefore be carefully observed, that as sure as the Apostle here speaks by the Spirit of God, so sure is it that our Behaviour is not thank-worthy or acceptable with God, unless we endure wrongful Sufferings with Patience, and that if we lay aside this Meekness, we leave the Example of Christ, who only saves such as follow his Steps.

I HAVE now gone through several Instances of that Mortification, Self-denial, and Suffering, to which the Christian are called.

IF the Doctrines of this Chapter seem hard and grievous, they can only seem so to such, as have wrong Notions of human Life.

Too many People imagine this Life to be something, that is substantial in it self, and valuable for its own Goods, and look upon Religion as something that is added to it, to make a worldly Life more easy, regular, and happy; and so embrace Religion with no other Spirit, nor to any farther Degree, than as it complies with
the

the Ease, Order, and Happiness, of that Way of Life in which they live.

O U R blessed Saviour has fully confuted this Opinion, by teaching us, that there is but *one Thing needful*. If therefore we are but so far Christians, as to believe that what our Saviour has here taught, is strictly true, then all the pretended Grievances of Self-denial and Suffering are all struck off at once.

F O R what though Meekness, Patience, and Humility, may often make us Sufferers, yet if such Sufferings make us only lose such Things as are *not needful* for us, where is any Ground for Complaint?

B U T farther, such Sufferings are not only without any real Hurt, but they promote our Happiness, and become Matter of real and solid Joy.

BLESSED are ye, when Men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil of you falsely for my Sake, rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven (a).

C H R I S T does not endeavour to comfort us in this State, as if it was a *hard* or *melancholy* State, which we must bear because it is made easier with Patience, or

(a) Mat. v. 11.

because God has pleased to impose it upon us, but he looks at it in quite another View, not as needing Comfort, but as having Matter fit for Congratulation.

WHAT Christians are they therefore, what Strangers to the Spirit of Christ, who reckon those Things amongst the Hardships of Religion, which Christ recommends to us as Reasons of *rejoicing*, and being *exceeding glad*?

THE whole Matter therefore plainly comes to this, if our Sufferings, our Injuries, or Hardships, be such as we undergo, because we dare not depart from that Meekness, and Patience, and Charity, which Christ has taught, because we had rather love our Enemies than be revenged of them, rather suffer like Christ, and be full of his Spirit, than avoid Sufferings by a contrary Temper, such Sufferings are our greatest Gains.

IF on the contrary, you know of any Meekness and Patience which is not after the Example of Christ, any Injuries or Sufferings which you can resist, and yet shew that you follow the Example of Christ's Patience, and Meekness, and Charity, the Doctrine of this Chapter has no Recommendation of such Sufferings.

YOU are only here exhorted to bear such Injuries and Sufferings as make you
more

more like Christ, such as are true Instances of that Meekness, Patience, and Charity, which were the principal Tempers of his Spirit.

NOW be the Hardships or Self-denials what they will, if they make us more like to Christ, they have done more for us, than all the Prosperity in the World can do; and he that defends himself at the Expence of any Temper, that was the Temper of Christ, has done himself an Injury, greater than the worst and most powerful of his Enemies can bring upon him.

AND all this is founded upon this one Reason, because there is but *one Thing needful*, the Salvation of our Souls. It is this that changes the Natures of all human Things, and makes every thing good or evil only so far as it promotes or hinders this *one End of Life*. The Salvation of the World is the only Happiness of the World, and he that has secured his Share in that, has secured to himself all the Joy and Gladness that can befall human Nature.

A CHRISTIAN therefore that is not content with Salvation, that wants to add a worldly Joy and Pleasure to the great Things of Religion, is more senseless than the Man, that should think he had hard Usage to be saved from a *Shipwreck*, unless he was carried off upon a *Cedar Plank*.



C H A P. VII.

*Some farther Considerations upon
the Reasonableness of Self-denial.*



BEFORE I proceed any farther in other Instances of Self-denial, it may be proper to shew in what the Duty of Self-denial is founded, or wherein the Reasonableness and Necessity of it consists.

EVERY Duty or Virtue of the Christian Life is founded in Truth and Reason, and is required because of its Fitness to be done, and not because God has Power to command what he pleases.

IF we are commanded to be meek and humble, it is because Meekness and Humility are as true Judgments, and as suitable to the Truth of our State, as it is a true Judgment and suitable to the State of every dependent Being to be thankful for Mercies.

IF we are bid to rejoice, it is at something that is truly joyful; if to fear, it is to fear something that is really dreadful. Thus we are called to no Tempers but such as are so many true Judgments, and as truly founded in the *Nature* and *Reason* of Things, as if we were bid to believe *two* to be the half Part of *four*.

GOD is Reason and Wisdom it self, and he can no more call us to any Tempers or Duties, but such as are strictly reasonable in themselves, than he can act against himself, or contradict his own Nature.

As we can say with Assurance, that God cannot lie, so we may with the same Certainty affirm, that he cannot enjoin any thing to rational Creatures, that is contrary to the Reason of their Nature, no more than he can enjoin them to love Things that are not lovely, or hate Things that are in their Nature not hateful.

WHEN God speaks, we are as sure that infinite Reason speaks, as we are sure there is a God.

A LITTLE Reflexion upon this Matter, will give us the utmost Assurance in such Reasonings as this.

As sure therefore as there is a God, so sure is it that a Religion from God has only reasonable Commands to reasonable
Creatures.

Creatures. No Tempers can be imposed upon us by Way of *Task* and *Imposition*, which we might as reasonably be without, if it was not required of us. God can only will, that reasonable Creatures should be more Reasonable, more Perfect, and more like Himself, and consequently can enjoin us no Duties, or Tempers of Mind, but such as have this Tendency. All his Commands are for our Sakes, founded in the Necessities of our Natures, and are only so many Instructions to become more Happy, than we could be without them.

A G O O D Man that enjoys the Use of his Reason, is offended at *Madmen* and *Fools*, because they both act contrary to the Reason of Things. The *Madman* fancies himself, and every thing about him, to be different from what they are; the *Fool* knows nothing of the Value of Things, is ridiculous in his Choices, and prefers a *Shell* before the most useful Things in Life.

N O W a good Man merely through the Love of Reason, is offended at their Conduct, and would do all that he could to abate the *Frenzy* of the one, and the *Stupidity* of the other.

L E T this a little represent to us the Conduct of God towards fallen Man. God is *Reason* it self, how highly therefore

fore must he be offended at the Follies and Stupidity of Mankind? If a *Madman* seems so unreasonable a Creature to us, because he fancies himself to be *something* that he is not, how unreasonable must fallen Man, who is fallen from all true Knowledge of himself, appear to him who is infinite Reason?

AGAIN, God is *Goodness* it self, if therefore human Goodness is inclined to endeavour the Cure of *Madmen* and *Fools*, must not Goodness it self be much more inclined to correct the Madness and Folly of fallen Man?

WE see that Men are said to be *Mad*, when they fancy themselves and the things about them to be different from what they are; they are said to be *Fools*, when they mistake the *Value* of Things. Now if this be true, as it most certainly is, it may serve to shew us, that Man in his present State of Disorder and Ignorance, must appear to God, both as *Fool* and *Mad*; for every Sinner is truly *Mad*, as he imagines himself, and all things about him, to be what they are not; he is really a *Fool*, as he is ridiculous in his Choices, and mistakes the *Value* of Things.

Now Religion is our *Cure*, it is God's merciful Communication of such Rules and Discipline of Life, as may serve to deliver us from the *Infatuation* and *Ignorance*

rance of our fallen State. It is to teach us the Knowledge of our selves, and all things about us, that we may no longer act like Madmen; it is to teach us the true *Value* of Things, that we may know our good and evil, and not be as *Idiots* in the Choice of Things.

Now Fools and Madmen have their Paradise, and are pleased with their imaginary Happiness; this makes them averse from all Methods of Cure.

FOR this Reason, God presses his Instructions upon us with Terrors and Threatnings, and makes those Virtues which are the natural Good and Cure of our Souls, such Duties to him, as he will punish the Neglect of them.

So that the Power of God is mercifully employed to move us to such a reasonable Way of Life, as is necessary for our Happiness.

SOME People are so weak, as to wonder, what we call Sin should be so odious to God, or what it can signify to God, whether we are *Wise* or *Foolish*.

LET such consider, that God is *Wisdom* and *Reason* it self, and consequently every thing that is contrary to Reason and Wisdom, is contrary to his Nature; so that a State of Sin, is a State of Contrariety to God. To ask therefore why God hates all Sin, is the same thing as to ask, why
God

God cannot tell any Sort of *Lye*, it is because every Deviation from Truth is contrary to his Nature, which is Truth it self, so every Instance of Sin, as it is an unreasonable Act, is contrary to his Nature, who is *Reason* it self.

T H E R E is therefore a necessity from the Nature of Things, that every Creature be delivered from Sin, before it can enter into the beatifick Presence of God; for if God could reward wicked Beings, and make them Happy by the Enjoyment of his Presence, he would as much cease to act according to the Nature of Things, as if he should punish a Being that lived in Innocence, for to punish Innocence, and to reward Sin, are equally contrary to the *Nature* and *Reason* of Things.

T H I S Observation may teach us to admire the Excellency of the Christian Religion, which restores Sinners to God by so *great an Attonement* for Sin, and which only admits the *Repentance* and *Devotion* of fallen Man, through the *Merits* and *Mediation* of the Son of God.

T O return, Let such People also consider, that even reasonable Men have a necessary Dislike of Fools and Madmen, they cannot possibly make them the Objects of their Pleasure and Affection.

B U T now if some things are so odious in themselves, that even the Reason of

Man cannot but abhor them, how much more odious, how much more contrary to the Perfection of the divine Nature, must the Folly and Madness of Sin be ?

T H U S if we consider what Reason is in our selves, that it necessarily dislikes unreasonable Persons as well as Things, we may have some Notion, how all Sin and Sinners, that is, all Beings which act contrary to Reason, must be in a State of the utmost Contrariety to God, who is the *highest Reason*.

G O D is Love, yet it is certain, that he can only love such Things, ~~that~~ are Lovely ; so God is Goodness, yet he cannot make Sinners Happy, because there is as much Contradiction to Reason and Perfection in making Sinners Happy, as in loving things that are not truly Lovely, or in hating things, that are not Hateful. This may serve to give us in some Measure a true Idea of the Nature of Religion and the Nature of Sin.

T H A T Religion is God's gracious Method of delivering us from the Unreasonableness and Corruption of our Natures, that by complying with its Rules and Discipline, we may be so altered in our Natures, so restored to Reason, as to be fit for the Rewards of an infinitely Wise and Perfect Being.

T H A T

THAT *Sin* is the Misery and Disorder, the Madness and Folly of our Nature, which as necessarily separates us from God, as God is contrary to all Unreasonableness.

IHAVE just mentioned these things; to help us to conceive rightly, what is meant by the Reasonableness and Necessity of those Tempers which Religion requires. And I hope this is sufficient to give any one a positive Assurance, that Religion is so far from being an Imposition upon us, consisting of needless Duties; that it is founded in the Nature and Reason of Things, and is as necessary to restore us to the Enjoyment of God, as it is necessary that God should love things according as they are Lovely.

FOR let any one carefully consider this Proposition, whether it be not absolutely certain, that God loveth all things, accordingly as they are Lovely. Is not this as certain as that God is Reason it self? Could he be infinitely Reasonable, or Reason in Perfection, if he did not regard things according to their Natures? hating only those things that are truly Hateful, and loving things so far as they are Lovely. To act by any other Rule, than the Reason and Nature of Things, is to act by Humour and Caprice.

LET this therefore teach us, that as we are in our selves, so we are necessarily either odious, or acceptable to God.

SO far as we cease from Sin, and suffer our selves to be made Wise and Reasonable, by the Wisdom and Reason of Religion, so far we make our selves Objects of the Love of that infinitely perfect Being, who necessarily loves Beings as they are lovely in their Nature.

AND so far as we continue in the Madness and Folly of Sin, and neglect the Rules of Religion which would deliver us from the Guilt and Slavery of it, so far we make it necessary for that perfect Being to hate us, who cannot but hate things accordingly as they are in themselves Hateful.

SOME People either through Self-love, or some confused Opinion of God and Themselves, are always fancying themselves to be *particular* Favourites of God, imagining all their little Successes, or Blessings in their Health and Circumstances above other People, to be distinguishing Marks of God's *particular* Kindness towards them.

BUT such Persons must consider, that God is *Reason* it self, that he is subject to no *particular* Fondness, no more than he is capable of Weakness, and that he can no
more

more love them, with any *particular* Love, that is not an Act of the highest Reason, than he can lye, or act contrary to the Truth.

THEY should consider that the Things of this Life, its Successes and Prosperities, are so far from being Marks of God's particular Favour, that Afflictions have a much better Claim to it, *for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, &c.*

WHEN such People fancy themselves in the *particular* Favour of God, they should consider, that to be loved by God, is to be loved by *infinite Reason* and Wisdom, and that Reason can only love or approve Things as they are conformable to it. To be approved by Reason, we must act conformably to Reason, and to be approved by the highest Reason, we must act conformably to the highest Reason.

So that when our Lives are conformable to the highest Reason, then may we believe that so far as they are such, so far are they in the Favour of God, who is the highest Reason. To fancy that any thing else can make us Favourites of God, is mere Ignorance and Pride, and owing to the same Vanity and Self-love, which makes some People think that they are

admired and esteemed by all that know them.

FOR so sure as God is Reason it self, so sure is it, that to be loved by God, and to be approved by the highest Reason, is the same thing; so that if he whose Life is not conformable to the highest Reason, imagines that he is particularly beloved by God, he is guilty of the same Absurdity, as if he believed that God is not the highest Reason, or Reason in Perfection.

IT is not more certain that there is but one God, than it is certain that there is but one Way of making our selves Objects of his Love, namely, by conforming and acting according to the highest Reason. When our Lives are agreeable to Reason, and the Nature of Things, then are our Lives agreeable to God.

NOW so far as we act conformably to Religion, so far we act according to the highest Reason, and draw near to God, by a Wisdom that comes from God, and was revealed unto us, that it might make us such reasonable Beings, as to be fit Objects of his eternal Love.

FOR a Religion from God must be according to the Nature of God, requiring no other Change of Thoughts or Actions, but such as is conformable to Truth and Reason.

NOW

NOW the Reasonableness of Actions consists in their Fitness to be done; there is a Reasonableness in being thankful for Mercies, there is a Reasonableness in rejoicing at Things that are joyful, and so in all other Actions or Tempers they are either reasonable or unreasonable, as they are agreeable or contrary to the Nature of Things.

THIS is what I would have understood by the Reasonableness of all religious Duties or Tempers; they are all required, because they are as suitable to the Nature and Reason of Things, as it is suitable to the Reason of Things, to be thankful for Mercies, or fear Things that are truly dreadful.

THUS for Instance, Humility is nothing else but a *right Judgment* of our selves, and is only so far enjoined, as it is suitable to the Truth of our State; for to think worse of our selves than we really are, is no more a Virtue, than to take *five* to be less than *four*.

ON the contrary, he that is proud, offends as much against Truth and Reason, and judges as falsely of himself, as the *Madman* who fancies himself to be a King, and the *Straw* to which he is chained, to be a *Throne* of State.

HAVING observed thus much concerning the Reasonableness of Tempers or Duties, which Religion demands, I proceed now to shew, wherein the Reasonableness and Necessity of Self-denial consists.

IF a Person was to walk upon a *Rope* cross some great River, and he was bid to deny himself the Pleasure of walking in *silver Shoes*, or looking about at the Beauty of the Waves, or listening to the Noise of Sailors, if he was commanded to deny himself the Advantage of *fishing* by the Way, would there be any Hardship in such Self-denial? Would not such Self-denials be as reasonable, as commanding him to love Things that will do him good, or to avoid Things that are hurtful?

STREIGHT is the Gate, and narrow is the Way that leadeth unto Life, saith our blessed Saviour. Now if Christians are to walk in a *narrow Way that leadeth to eternal Life*, the chief Business of a Christian must be, to deny himself all those Things which may either stop or lead him out of his narrow Way. And if they think that Pleasures and Indulgences are consistent with their keeping this narrow Way, they think as reasonably, as if the Man upon the Rope should think, that he might safely use *silver Shoes*, or stop in his Way to catch Fish.

AGAIN,

A G A I N, If a Man that was a Slave to Sottishness, and stupifying Pleasures, that rendered him averse from all Exercises of the Mind, was yet obliged in order to save his Life, to attain to such or such a Degree of mathematical Knowledge, must it not be as necessary for such a one to deny himself those Indulgences which increased his Stupidity, as it would be necessary to study the Relations of Figures?

N O W this is the Foundation of all Christian Self-denial; we are born and bred in Slavery to Sin and corrupt Tempers, and are only to be saved by putting off this old Man, and being renewed in Holiness and Purity of Life. The Denials therefore of Religion, are only the necessary Means of Salvation, as they are necessary to lessen the Corruption of our Nature, destroy our old Habits, alter the Taste and Temper of our Minds, and prepare us to relish and aspire after Holiness and Perfection.

F O R since our Souls are in a State of Corruption, and our Life is a State of Probation, in order to alter and remove this Corruption, it is certain, that every Thing and every Way of Life which nourishes and increases our Corruption, is as much to be avoided; as those Things which beget in us Purity and Holiness, are to be sought after.

A M A N

A M A N that wants his Health, is as well and for the same Reasons to avoid such Things as nourish his Illness, as he is to take Medicines that have a healing Quality. Self-denial is therefore as essential to the Christian Life, as Prayer is, it being equally necessary to deny our selves such Things as support our Corruption, as it is necessary to pray for those Things which will do us good, and purify our Natures.

T H E whole of the Matter is this, Christians are called from a State of Disorder, Sin, and Ignorance, to a State of Holiness, and Resemblance of the Divine Nature. If therefore there are any Things, or any Ways that corrupt our Minds, support our Vanity, increase our Blindness, or nourish Sensuality, all these are as necessarily to be avoided, as it is necessary to be holy.

I F there are any Denials or Mortifications that purify and enlighten the Soul, that lessen the Power of bodily Passions, that raise us to a heavenly Affection, and make us taste and relish the Things that be of God, these are as necessarily to be practised, as it is necessary to believe in Jesus Christ.

S O that the Matter comes to this, if there are no Indulgences in *eating* that do us Harm, then *fasting* is of no Use, but if there are, if they enslave the Soul, and
give

give it a sensual Taste, then we are as much obliged to abstain from what does us this Harm, as we are obliged to pray for any thing that can do us good.

No Christian that knows any thing of the Gospel, can doubt whether *fasting* be a common Duty of Christianity, since our Saviour has placed it along with secret Alms, and private Prayer. *When thou fastest, anoint thy Head, and wash thy Face, that thou appear not unto Men to fast, but to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly (a).*

So that the same Instructions and the same Reasons are given for *private fasting*, as for *secret Alms* and *private Prayer*, that thy Father which seeth in secret, may reward thee openly. Now as it is manifestly entituled to the same Reward, it is manifestly put upon the same Foot, as private Prayer, and as equally acceptable to God.

EATING and Drinking are the common Support of Life, but then as they are the Support of a corrupt Life, the Nourishment of a disordered Body that weighs down the Soul, whose Appetites and Tempers are in a State of Enmity with the Life

(a) Mat. vii. 15.

and Purity of the Soul, it is necessary that we take care so to support the Life of the Body, as not to occasion the Sickness and Death of the Soul.

THE Fall of Man consists very much in the Fall of the Soul into the Dominion and Power of the Body, whose Joy, and Health, and Strength, is often the Slavery, Weakness, and Infirmary, of the Soul.

How far our Bodies affect our Habits, or Ways of Thinking, may be seen by the Difference between Sickness and Health, Youth and Old Age. These different States of the Body, alter the whole Turn of our Minds, and give us new Ways of Thinking, all owing to the different Strength of bodily Appetites and Tempers. No sooner is the Body weakened by any Occasion, but the Soul is more at Liberty, speaks higher for it self, and begins to act more reasonably.

WHAT is the Reason that a *Midnight* Reflection goes generally deeper than a Thought at any other time? No Reason can well be assigned, but the Peace and Tranquillity of the Body, which gives the Soul a Liberty of seeing farther into Things, than at any other time.

THE Difference between the same Man full and fasting, is almost the Difference of two Persons; a Man that in the Morning
finds

finds himself fit for any Meditations, is after a full Meal changed into another Creature, fit only for idle Amusements, or the Yawnings of an Animal.

HE has not only created a Dulness in his Soul, but has perverted its Taste; for he can be pleased with a *Romance* or *impertinent* History, at the same time that he has no Relish for a Book of Devotion, that requires less Attention.

I MENTION this to shew, that *fasting* has a nearer Relation to all *religious* Tempers, than is generally thought, and that indulgent or full Feeding does not only dull the Mind, but more particularly gives it a Dulness towards the Things of Religion. If it were not thus, a Book of religious Reflections would be as acceptable at such Times, as those other Books which require as much, or more Attention.

AND the Reason of this is plain, because all our Tempers and Desires are always suitable to the State we are in; if we are in a State of sensual Joy, feeling the Happiness of a *full Stomach* and *heated Blood*, we relish or desire nothing but what suits with it. For this Reason *Plays*, and *Romances*, and vain Diversions, can entertain a Man that has eat as long as he could, but Lectures upon *Morality*, or Discourses

courses upon *Death* and *Judgment*, would tire him into Sleep. What we observe of the *Faundice*, that it makes us see all things *yellow*, is in a certain Degree true of every *State* of the Body ; it makes us conceive things with some Degree of Likeness to the Condition it is then in. Every Alteration in the Body, gives some Alteration to our way of conceiving the same Things.

As he therefore that would see things in their proper Colours, must first cure himself of the *Faundice*, so he that would apprehend things according to their Natures, must take care that his Body be so ordered, as to have as little a Share as possible in his Judgments.

WHEN a Man has his Stomach full of Wind, and feels no pleasant Enjoyment of his Body, you can hardly propose any thing to him, that will appear reasonable : Do but stay till his Stomach is altered, till he has had a full and chearful Meal, and he will be as naturally in a better Temper, as any other Animal that has fill'd its Belly.

WHEN Men have been unreasonably out of Temper, through the mere Motions of the Body, I believe they often condemn themselves afterwards, but then they do not consider, that the contrary
State

State, is a State of the same Slavery to the blind Motions of the Body, and liable to the same Condemnation. For if a *full and pleasant Meal*, makes us so *gay and chearful*, as to laugh and be pleased with the *vainest Things*, we are then as unreasonable, and as mere Slaves to our Bodies, as when a *cold or empty Stomach* shall make us angry at every thing.

FOR it is as great a Contradiction to Reason and Wisdom, to be pleased with Things or Persons, because our Body is in a State of Joy, as it is to be Angry and Displeas'd at Things or Persons, because an easterly Wind, or an indigested Meal has sower'd our Spirits.

NOW both these States, are equally States of Slavery to the Body, equally expose our Folly, and have the same Contrariety to Religion. A Man is as far from religious Wisdom, when *full feeding* has made him merry, *vain*, and *trifling*, as when a *contrary State* of Body makes him *soure, angry and fretful*.

IT is the Business therefore of Religion, to put an end to these States of Slavery, to deliver Man from these blind Laws of *Flesh and Blood*, and give him a Wisdom and Constancy, a Taste and Judgment suitable to the Reason and Wisdom of the Laws of God. To fill our Souls with

Q

such

such Principles of Peace, as may give us Habits of Tranquillity, superior to the changeable Tempers of our Bodies.

Now *Fasting*, as it is a Denial of *bodily Indulgences*, as it disciplines the Body into a State of Obedience, and contradicts its Appetites, is the most constant and universal Means of procuring Liberty and Freedom of Mind.

FOR it is the Love of our Body, and too much Care of its Enjoyments, that makes us too sensible of its Demands, and subject to its Tempers. Whatever we nourish and cherish, so far gains an Interest in us, and rules us in the same Degree, that it has got our Affections. Till therefore Religion has entered us into a State of Self-denial, we live in a State that supports the Slavery and Corruption of our Natures.

FOR every Indulgence of the Body in Eating and Drinking, is adding to its Power, and making all our Ways of Thinking subservient to it.

A MAN that makes every Day, a Day of *full and cheerful Meats*, will by Degrees make the Happiness of every Day depend upon it, and consider every thing with regard to it.

HE will go to *Church* or stay at home, as it suits with his *Dinner*, and not scruple to
tell

tell you, that he generally eats too heartily to go to the Afternoon-Service.

NOW such People are under a worse Disorder of Body, than he that has the *Faundice*, and have their Judgment more perverted, than he that sees all Things *yellow*.

FOR how can they be said to perceive the Difference of Things, who have more Taste for the Preparations of the *Kitchen*, than for the Joys and Comforts of the House of God, who chuse rather to make themselves *unfit* for Divine Service, than to baulk the Pleasure of a *full Meal*? And this not by Chance, or upon some unusual Occasion, but by a constant intended Course of Life.

LET such People deal faithfully with themselves, and search out their Spirit. Can they think that they are *born again* of God; that they have the *Spirit of Christ*, who are thus subject to the Pleasures of *Gluttony*? Can they be said to treat their Bodies as *Temples* of the Holy Ghost, who make them *unfit* for the holy Service of publick Worship? Can they be said to offer their Bodies unto God, as a *reasonable, holy, and living* Sacrifice? Can they be said to *love God with all their Heart, and all their Soul*, or to have *forsaken all* to follow Christ, who will not so much as forsake

half a Meal for the Sake of Divine Worship?

I KNOW it will be thought too severe that I have called this *Gluttony*, because it is the Practice of Numbers of People of Worth and Reputation; but I hope they will turn their Dislike of the Name, into a Dislike of the Thing, for it is as certainly *Gluttony*, as picking of Pockets is stealing.

THE Sin of *Gluttony* is the Sin of Over-eating, of being too much given to full Meals. Now this may be difficult in some Instances to state exactly, yet he that owns he eats so much as renders him *indisposed* for the publick Worship of God, has determined against himself, and put his own Case out of all Question. For if there be such a Sin, as the Sin of Over-eating, it must surely then be committed when we eat too much to attend upon the Service of the Church.

MEN may fancy that they are only chargeable with *Gluttony*, who eat till they *surfeit* their Bodies; they may think those only guilty of *Drunkenness*, who drink till they have lost their Senses. But there is a much surer Rule to go by, given them by the Spirit of God. *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.* All therefore in Eating and
Drinking

Drinking that is not within the Bounds of the Glory of God, is offered to something that is not the Glory of God, it is offered to the Corruption and Sensuality of our Natures, it is the Sin of Intemperance, and has the Sin of Indevotion added to it, when it is indulged at a time, that keeps us from the publick Worship of God.

LET such People examine their own Hearts, and see what Opinion they have of Divine Service. Can they look upon it, as doing God's Will on Earth as it is done in Heaven? Can they look upon it, as entering into the Presence of God, as approaching the Throne of Grace? Can they esteem it to be the Nourishment and Support of their Souls, a necessary Means of securing the Divine Assistance, as a most acceptable Way of pleasing God, and securing their eternal Happiness, who are not afraid to eat and drink till they are indisposed and unwilling to attend at it? If they still have just Notions of the Nature of Divine Service, let them think of these Words of our blessed Saviour, *If ye know these Things, happy are ye if ye do them.*

BUT if they look upon it as of less Concern than a *full Meal*, if they think that there is no Occasion for *Exactness* in it, it is time they were told, that they have *not the Love of God abiding in them.*

FOR if they did really *hunger and thirst after Righteousness*, which is the true Love of God, they would rejoice at every Opportunity of entering farther into his Favour; they would go to the House of God, the Abode of his Presence, with more Joy than to any other Place, and think those Days the most happy, that were most devoted to the Cares and Joys of a Life with God to all Eternity.

THEY would cut off a *right Hand*, or pluck out a *right Eye*, rather than be hindered from those Helps, which are to raise their Hope, enliven their Faith, and form their Souls to a Delight and Joy in God.

IF they want this Zeal towards God, they want a Zeal which is the Life and Spirit of a Christian, which distinguishes a Disciple of Christ from those who live without God in the World.

I HAVE spoke the more home to this Point, because it is so allowed a Practice, which as unavoidably destroys the true Spirit and Temper of Religion, as any Things that are notoriously sinful.

INDEED a constant Course of full Feeding is the Death of the Soul, and every Day that is a Day of such Happiness, is a Day lost to Religion.

WHEN a Man has rejoiced himself with full Eating and Drinking, he is like
any

any other *Animal*, dispos'd only to *Play* or *Idleness*. He has no more Feeling of Sin than he has of *Hunger*, can no more perceive himself to be a *miserable fallen Creature*, than he can perceive himself to be a *Beggar*, and consequently is no more affected with any *Forms of Confession* or Repentance, than if he was every Day to confess, that he was a *starving Beggar*.

FOR this Course of *Self-enjoyment* is as contrary to Humility, Contrition, and a true Sense of Sin, as it is contrary to a State of *Beggary and Want*, and consequently a Man in such Happiness, can no more sincerely deplore the *Weight of Sin*, than he can feel himself in the *Misery of Poverty*.

IF therefore Religion is to be the State and Temper of our Minds, if it is to be the ruling Taste and Relish of our Souls, if its Goods and Evils are to govern our Actions, it is as necessary to renounce Sensuality, and mortify our Bodies, as it is necessary to resist Temptations. For Abstinence or Self-denial is not only a good, advisable, and reasonable Practice, but is a constant, necessary, and universal Duty, and enters farther into the Cure of our Souls, than any other Practice. It is as necessary for a Christian that would get rid of the Disorders of his Nature, and lessen the Weight of Sin, as it is necessary for a Man

in a *Dropsy* to abstain from *Drink*, or a Man in a *Feaver* to refrain from such Things as *inflame* his Blood.

I N D E E D this Self-denial is the chief and most general Exercise of the Christian Life, and is the very *Form* and *Substance* of every Virtue; for so far as we deny our natural Tempers, so far we seem to be advanced in Virtue.

W E are so far humble, as we deny ourselves in the Instances of Pride, so far heavenly-minded, as we deny our earthly Inclinations, so far charitable, as we deny our Tempers of Self-love and Envy; and so in every Virtue, it seems to have its chief Foundation in the Denial of some corrupt Temper of our Natures.

I K N O W some People object, that *Fasting* is not an *universal* Duty, that it is rather like some particular *Medicine* or *Remedy*, that is only necessary for some particular Cases, and particular Constitutions.

T O this it may be answered, that if by *Fasting*, is meant an entire Abstinence from all Food for such or such a certain Space of Time, that Fasting in that Sense, is not an universal and constant Duty. But then it ought to be observed, that this is no more the Nature of Fasting, than any *particular Form* of Confession of such or such a
Length,

Length, is the precise Nature of Repentance.

F O R as Repentance does not consist in any stated fix'd Degrees of Sorrow and Pain for Sin, which is to be the *common* Repentance for *all* Men, in *all* States, and at *all* Times, but is such an Exercise of Grief and Contrition, as is suited to every one's particular State, so *Fasting* is not any *fix'd* Degree of Abstinence from *all* Food, which is to be the *common* Measure of Fasting to *all* Men, in *all* States, and at *all* Times, but is such an Exercise of Abstinence and Self-denial, as is proper to every one's particular State.

N O W if we understand Fasting in this Sense in which it ought to be understood, as an Abstinence from such Food and such Pleasures and Degrees of Feeding as are proper in every State of Life, to destroy Sensuality, lessen the Corruption of our Natures, and make us relish and taste spiritual Enjoyments, in this Sense Fasting is as *constant and universal* a Duty, as Repentance.

F O R as Repentance is an universal Duty, because the Reason of it is common to all Men, so this Fasting is necessary to all Men, because Sensuality, fleshly Lusts, and the Corruption of bodily Tempers, is the *universal* Corruption of all Men.

IT is sometimes also objected, that Fasting cannot be an universal Duty, because some Peoples Constitutions will not suffer them to eat enough for their Health.

TO this it may be answered, that some People may be so infirm, that they cannot attend at the *publick Worship* of God, yet surely *publick Worship* is an *universal Duty*, though some Peoples Constitutions may make them incapable of going to it.

SECONDLY, This Objection is only of Weight against Fasting, as it signifies an entire Abstinence from all Food for a certain Space of Time, but is of no Force against such an Abstinence, as I have shewn to be the *common Duty* of all Christians.

THIRDLY, Persons of weak and infirm Constitutions, have often as much Necessity of Self-denial, as others of the most healthful Bodies; for their very State, it may be, has taught them Indulgence, by being accustomed to so much Care of themselves, they become no better than perpetual Nurses of themselves, and consequently are too much devoted to that, which is not the *one Thing needful*.

WEAKLY People may as well be *Epicures*, and have the same *Sensuality* to conquer, as other People, and consequently have the same Necessity of their Degree of Abstinence and Denial, that others have.

LET

LET such People have recourse to the Example of *Timothy*, who was an apostolical Bishop. His History teaches us, that he was weakly, and subject to frequent Infirmities, who notwithstanding he may be supposed to have enjoyed the *extraordinary* Gifts of the Holy Ghost, yet in this State of Divine Greatness, and Bodily Weakness, he wanted the *Authority* and *Advice* of an Apostle to persuade him to drink any thing besides Water. This we are sufficiently taught, by the Apostle's giving this Advice in his Epistle to him, *Drink no longer Water, that is, nothing but Water, but use a little Wine for thy Stomach's Sake, and thine often Infirmities.*

LASTLY, The World abounds with People who are weakly and tender merely by their Indulgences; they have bad Nerves, low Spirits, and frequent Indispositions, through Irregularity, Idleness, and Indulgence.

Now these People, it is true, are not *fit for Fasting*, and perhaps if they were to deal faithfully with themselves, they would find that they are as unfit for most other Exercises of Religion; and consequently if their Condition might be pleaded as an Objection against the Necessity of Fasting, it might as well be pleaded against the
Necessity

Necessity of half the Duties of Christianity.

UPON the whole Matter it appears, that Fasting is a constant universal Duty, and that it is liable to no other Exceptions, than such as are common to several other great Duties of Religion.

IT is no *fix'd Degree* of Sorrow that is the common Repentance of all Men, it is no *particular Sum* of Money that is the common Charity of all Men, it is no *fix'd Form*, or *Length*, or *Hour* of Prayer, that is the common Devotion of all Men, yet all these are *constant* and *universal* Duties.

IN like Manner, though *Fasting* may be subject to all the same Variations, yet is it a *constant* and *universal* Duty.

JUSTUS is a grave sober Man, he is very angry at those People who neglect or ridicule *Fasting*; he thinks they know nothing of Religion.

THUS far *Justus* is very right, and knowing thus much, one would wonder that he is so inconsistent with himself, for presently after this, *Justus* will tell you, that he never fasts but upon *Good-Friday* and the *Thirtieth* of *January*.

IF *Justus* had lived before the Murder of King *Charles*, he had had but one Fast in the Year, yet in all Likelihood he would
have

have then stood up for the *Doctrine* of Fasting.

I F a Man was to be angry at those who neglect or despise the *Service of the Church*, as People that know nothing of Religion, and then tell you that he himself never goes thither, but on *Good-Friday* and the *Thirtieth of January*, you would say that he knew nothing of the Nature of Church-Service.

N O W *Justus* shews the same Ignorance of the Nature of *Fasting*.

F O R if Prayer and Repentance, and the *Service of the Church*, were not *common Acts* of Devotion, and right and necessary Ways of worshipping God, they would not be necessary upon *Good-Friday*, or any other particular Day.

I N like Manner, unless *Fasting* was a *common* and *necessary* Part of Religion, something that was always a proper Means of applying to God, it would neither be *necessary*, nor *acceptable*, on those particular Days.

F O R it is not the Day that makes the Duty to be *necessary*, but the Day happens to be a *proper* Occasion of exercising a necessary Duty.

S O M E great *Calamity* happens to you, you do very well to make it an Occasion of exercising great Devotion; but if you
stay

stay till some other Calamity happens, before you pray again, or think that Prayer is only *proper* in Times of *Calamity*, you know nothing of Devotion.

It is the same thing in *Fasting*; some great Occasion may justly call you to it, but if you forbear Fasting, till such great Occasions happen again, or think that Fasting is only *proper* for such *publick Occasions*, you know nothing of the Nature of Fasting.

IF *Justus* was to say that he never *repents* but on those publick Days, he might as easily defend himself, as when he says, he only *fasts* at those Times.

FOR is there any Benefit in Fasting on those particular Days? Does it add any thing to your Piety and Devotion? Does it make your Repentance and Sorrow for Sin more real and affecting? Does it calm and abate your Passions, lessen the Power of your Body, and put you in a better State of Devotion, than when you take your usual Meals? If it has not something of this Effect, where is the Use of it at such Times when you would have your Devotions the best performed? And if it has this Effect, how comes it that you will have but one or two such Days in the Year? Why will you not thus affect your Soul, thus assist your Devotions, thus discipline

pline your Body, thus allay your Passions, thus raise your Heart, thus humble your self till the Day comes, on which King Charles was Murdered? Is not this like staying till then, before you *repent*?

O U R Blessed Saviour saith, *But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine Head, and wash thy Face, that thou appear not unto Men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which is in secret shall reward thee openly* (a).

H E R E our Saviour's Advice relates wholly to *private Fasting*, to which other People are to be Strangers, to such a Fasting as is a secret Service to God, who will therefore highly reward it. Yet *Justus* tells you that he *fasts* only twice in the Year, and that on *publick* Days. Now what is this to be called, is it Weakness, or Perverseness?

I F you was to ask me whether *frequent, private Prayer*, be a necessary Duty, I should think it sufficient to read to you the following Passage, *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy Closet, and when thou hast shut thy Door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

(a) Mat. vi. 17.

NOTHING need be added to this Authority; the Necessity and Advantage of private Prayers is here so expressly taught, that there is no room left to doubt about it.

JUSTUS readily acknowledges all this, how comes it then, *Justus*, that you know nothing of the Necessity and Advantage of *private Fasting*? How comes it that the same Authority and the same Words do not teach you as much in one place as in another? Has not our Saviour express'd himself exactly in the same Manner, and given the same Advice, and propos'd the same Reward, to private Fasting; as to private Prayer?

FARTHER, when the Disciples of our Lord, could not cast the evil Spirit out of a Man, that was a *Lunatick*, he not only tells them, that it was through want of Faith, but also gives them a very important Instruction in these Words, *Howbeit this kind goeth not out, but by Prayer and Fasting (a)*.

Now does this look, as if Fasting was an occasional Thing, only for a Day or two in the Year? Is it ranked with Prayer as having the same *common Nature*, as

(a) Math. xvii. 21.

being equally prevailing with God? And is not this sufficient to teach us, that we must think of Fasting, as we think of Prayer; that it is a proper Way of Devotion, a right Method of applying to God? And if that Prayer is most prevailing, and enters farthest into Heaven, which is attended with Fasting, it is proof enough surely, that Fasting is to be a common ordinary Part of our Devotion.

Is it sufficient and powerful enough to cast out *Devils*, and cure *Lunaticks*, and shall we neglect it, when we pray against the evil Tempers and Passions which possess our Hearts? Shall we not pray to God in the most powerful prevailing Manner that we can?

If we were to Fast without Praying, would not this be a Way of Worship of our own Invention? And if we Pray and neglect Fasting, is it not equally chusing a Worship of our own? For he that has taught us the Use and Advantage of Prayer, has in the same Words taught us the same Things of Fasting, and has also joined them together, as having the same Power with God.

If therefore *Justus* will take his Religion from Scripture, he must own, that Fasting is of the Nature of Prayer, that it has

the same Authority from Christ, and that he who only Fasts on a publick Day or two in a Year, no more observes the whole Duty of Christian-fasting, then he who only attends some publick yearly Days of Prayer, can be said to fulfil the whole Duty of christian Devotion.

To proceed, we may also observe, that the Reason of Self-denial and Abstinence is constant and perpetual, because we are perpetually united to a Body, that is more or less fit to join with our Souls in Acts of Holiness, according to the State that it is in.

As therefore it is always necessary to take Care what Thoughts and Inclinations we indulge in our Minds, so it is equally necessary, that we be constantly careful, how we alter the State of our Bodies, or indulge them in such Gratifications, as may make them less fit for the Purposes of an holy Life.

FOR since there are *States* of the Body, which favour Holiness, and these States depend much upon our Manner of Living, it is absolutely necessary, that we avoid every Degree of Indulgence, every Kind of Irregularity and Idleness, or other Course of Life, that may make our Bodies less Active, less *Pure*, and less *conformable* to the Duties of Religion.

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AND this is to be done, as I said before, not only as a reasonable and advisable Thing, but as of the utmost necessity, it being as essential to Holiness, to purify our Bodies, and practice a strict Temperance, as it is necessary to practice a strict Charity.

Now christian Temperance is no more that, which may pass for Temperance in the Sight of Men, than christian Charity, is that which is visible to the World.

A WORLDLY Man may think himself sufficiently Temperate, when he only abstains from such Excesses, as may make him fitter to enjoy an healthful *Sensuality*.

BUT christian Temperance is of quite another Nature, and for other Ends, it is to put the Body into a State of *Purity*, and *Submission*, and give the Soul a divine and heavenly Taste.

It is therefore to be observed, that christian Temperance is never enough practised, but when it puts the Body in the fittest State for Devotion and other Acts of Holiness, when our Bodies have all that Good done to them, have all that Purification, and right Tempers which Abstinence and Self-denial can give them, then do we practice christian Temperance.

T H E R E is no other Rule than this to go by, for since christian Temperance is in order to Holiness, Purity, and heavenly Affection, he can only be said to be *truly* Temperate, whose Temperance is most serviceable to the *highest* Degrees of Holiness.

A N D to stop short of any known Degrees of Temperance, is like stopping short of any known Degrees of Charity. It is therefore as necessary to practice all the Exercises of Self-denial, and strict Abstinence, as it is necessary to aspire after real Holiness.

F O R as our Bodies are constant and Home-Enemies, and have a mighty Influence in all our Actions, so far as we preserve them in a State suitable to Holiness, so far we preserve our selves fit for the Exercise of Religion.

I T is out of all question that there is a Purity and Impurity of our Bodies, as well as of our Souls, that is, there are some States and Tempers of our Bodies, that favour and incline to Acts of Virtue, and others that as much incline to all Sorts of Sensuality.

T H I S is as certain, as that *Gluttony* and *Drunkeness* disposes Men to all Sorts of Sins, and give them a Disrelish for all Kinds
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