

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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of Holiness. For as these States of Life have the utmost Contrariety to Religion, so every *Approach* towards them, is in a *certain Degree* partaking of them.

A MAN that lives in such a State, as not to be called either a *Glutton*, or a *Drunkard*, may yet be so near them, as to Partake of those Tempers and Inclinations, which are the Effects of Gluttony and Drunkenness.

FOR there are such Degrees in these, as in other Ways of Life. A Man may be vain and uncharitable, yet not so as to be remarkable for his Vanity and Uncharitableness, so he may be also under the Guilt and evil Effects of Eating and Drinking, though not so as to be esteemed either a Glutton or Intemperate.

So that the only Security for a good Christian, is to make it the Care of his Life, to resist all Enjoyments that cherish Vanity and Uncharitableness; not only in such Degrees as are *scandalous* and *visible* in the Eyes of Men, but such as *inwardly* hurt the Humility and Charity of his Mind.

IN like manner as to eating and drinking, he is constantly to practice such Abstinence, as may secure him not only from Sensuality in the Sight of the World, but such as may best *Alter, Purify, and Humble*

his Body, and make it the holy Habitation of a Soul devoted to a spiritual Life.

S T. P A U L saith, *I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the Air. But I keep under my Body, and bring into subjection, lest that by any Means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a Cast-away (a).*

L E T it here be observed, that the Apostle practiced this Self-denial and Mortification, not only as a good and advisable Thing, and suitable to Holiness, but as of the last Necessity. It was not, as he was an *Apostle*, and that he might be fitter for the miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghost, but it was to secure his Salvation, lest when he had preached to others, he should be a *Cast-away*.

L E T it be considered that this Apostle, who lived in *Infirmities, in Reproaches, in Necessities, in Persecutions, in Distresses for Christ's Sake, who was also full of Signs, and Wonders and mighty Deeds, and who had been caught up into the third Heavens, yet reckons all his Virtues as unsecure, and his Salvation in Danger, without this severity of Self-denial; he thought all his other*

(a), 1 Cor. ix.

Advancements in Piety, without this, to be as vain a Labour, as *beating the Air* (b).

So run I, saith he, *not as uncertainly*, by which he plainly teacheth us, that he who does not thus run, who does not thus mortify the Body, runs uncertainly, and fighteth to as little Purpose; as he that beateth the Air.

CAN they therefore who live in Ease, and Softness, and bodily Indulgences, who study and seek after every Gratification, be said to be of *St. Paul's* Religion, or to be govern'd by that Spirit, which govern'd him?

AN Apostle preaching the Gospel with Signs and Wonders in the midst of Distress and Persecution, thought his own Salvation in Danger, without this Subjection of his own Body, and shall we who are born in the Dregs of Time, who have no Works like his to appeal to, think it safe to feed and indulge in Ease and Plenty?

A MAN may indeed practice the outward Part of a Christian, he may be Orthodox in his Faith, and regular in the Forms of Religion, and yet live in Ease and Indulgence. But if he would *put on Christ*,

(b) 2 Cor. xii.

and be cloathed with the Humility and Meekness of his true Disciples, if he would love his Enemies and be in Christ a *new Creature*, if he would live by *Faith* and have his Conversation in Heaven, if he would be *born again* of God, and *overcome* the World, he must lay the Foundation of all these Graces in the Mortification and Subjection of his Body. For not only Religion, but Reason, can shew us, that almost every ill Temper, every Hindrance of Virtue, every Clog in our Way of Piety, and the Strength of every Temptation, chiefly arises from the *State* of our Bodies.





C H A P. VIII.

The Subject of Self-denial further continued.



HERE are no Truths of Christianity more plainly delivered in the Scriptures, or more universally acknowledged by all Christians, than these two, *viz.* the *general Corruption* of human Nature, and the *absolute Necessity* of divine Grace. Now these two Doctrines make the Reason and Necessity of a continual Self-denial, plain and obvious to the meanest Capacity; and extend it to all those Things or Enjoyments, which either strengthen the Corruption of our Nature, or grieve the Holy Spirit of God, and cause him to leave us.

LET any one but reflect upon the Nature of these two fundamental Truths, and he will find himself soon convinc'd, that

that all those Enjoyments are to be abstained from, which either support our natural Blindness and Corruption, or resist and abate the Inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

HE will find also, that this Self-denial must extend it self to every Day of our Lives, unless he can find a Day when he is free from Weakness, or out of the Way of all Temptations, a Day which offers nothing suitable to the Corruption of his Nature, or nothing contrary to the good Motions and Directions of the Holy Ghost. Most People acknowledge this in general, they think it right to avoid Things which strengthen our Corruption, and grieve the Spirit of God, but then not conceiving this with any sufficient Exactness, they think that an Abstinence from gross Sins, is a sufficient Security.

BUT let such People consider, that the Corruption of our Nature is like any other bodily Illness, that never keeps at one Stand, but is either increasing or abating by every thing that we do.

A DROPSY or a *Gangrene* is not only increased by Drunkenness, or disorderly Indulgences, but receives constant Strength by all little Indulgences that suit with it.

NOW the Corruption of our Nature is an inbred Distemper, that possesses us in the Manner of a *Dropsy* or *Gangrene*; if
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we give into notorious Sins, we become Slaves to this Corruption, and are straight-way dead in Sin.

BUT though we keep clear of such great Offences, yet if we indulge or allow our selves in such Practices, as suit with the Corruption of our Nature, we as certainly nourish a slow Death, and destroy our selves by Degrees, as a Man in a *Dropsy*, who abstains from Drunkenness, yet allows himself in such Ways as will not suffer his Distemper to abate.

NOW as little Allowances that continually increase a Distemper, will as certainly in Time make it mortal, as if it had been urged on by violent Methods, so little Indulgences which increase the Corruption of our Nature, as certainly tend to a spiritual Death, as other more irregular Methods.

IT is therefore absolutely certain, that our *Self-denial* is to be as *universal* as the Means of our Corruption, that it is to last as long as our Disorder, and is to extend it self to every Thing and every Way of Life, that naturally increases it; and this, for as necessary a Reason, as a Man in a *Dropsy*, is not only to abstain from Drunkenness, but from every Indulgence that increases his Distemper.

A STATE of *Regimen* therefore, that is, a State of holy Discipline, is as necessary to alter the Disorder of our Nature, as it is necessary to remove any distempered Habit of Body.

LET it be considered, that the Corruption of our Nature is but very weakly represented, by comparing it to these Distempers; that they rather express the Manner of its Cure, and the Necessity of labouring after it, than set forth the Degree of the Disorder.

FOR a Man in these Distempers, may have only some Part affected with them; but the Corruption of our Natures is as extensive as our Natures: It is the Corruption of every Faculty and every Power, it is Blindness in our Understandings, it is Vanity in our Wills, Intemperance in our Appetites, it is Self-love, Anger, Lust, Pride, and Revenge, in our Passions, it is Falseness, Hypocrisy, Hatred, and Malice, in our Hearts. Now all this, and more than this, makes the miserable Corruption of human Nature.

So that it is as necessary that our Lives be a State of *Regimen*, that we live by such Rules as are contrary to this Variety of Disorders, as it is necessary for a Man under a Complication of habitual Distempers, to enter into a *Course* of Regularity.

I SUPPOSE it will be readily granted, that all Tempers are increased by Indulgence, and that the more we yield to any Disposition, the stronger it grows; it is therefore certain, that *Self-denial* is our only Cure, and that we must practice as many Sorts of Self-denial, as we have ill Tempers to contend with.

P R I D E, Hypocrisy, Vanity, Hatred, and Detraction, are all disorderly Indulgences, and have their only Cure in Self-denial, as certainly as Drunkenness and Sensuality.

To deny one's self all Indulgences of Pride and Vanity, all Instances of Falseness and Hypocrisy, of Envy and Spight; requires greater Care and Watchfulness, and a more continual Self-denial, than to avoid the Motives to Intemperance.

A N D he that thinks to render himself humble, any other Way than by *denying* himself all Instances of Pride, is as absurd as he who intends to be sober, without abstaining from all Degrees of Intemperance. For *Humility* as truly consists in the Practice of Things that are *humble*, as *Justice* consists in the doing Things that are *just*.

E V E R Y Virtue is but a *mere Name*, an empty Sound, till it shews it self by an Abstinence from all Indulgences of the
contrary

contrary Vice, till it is founded in this Self-denial.

NOW this is readily granted to be true in all sensual Vices, that they are only to be cured by a perpetual Self-denial.

BUT the Practice of the same Self-denial is as absolutely required, to destroy every ill Temper of the Mind, as any sort of Sensuality.

SELF-LOVE, Pride, Vanity, Revenge, Hypocrisy, and Malice, are acknowledged to be very gross Sins, and indeed they are of the very Nature of the Devil, and as certainly destroy the Soul, as Murder and Adultery.

BUT the Misfortune is, that we govern our selves in these Tempers, not by what is sinful according to the Principles of Religion, but by what is odious in the Eyes of the World. We don't labour to avoid the *Sin*, but are content to avoid what is *scandalous* in it.

THUS for Instance, People would not be thought proud, but then they are afraid of no Degrees of it, but such as the World condemns; they don't form their Lives by the Scripture-Rules of Humility, but only endeavour to be decent and fashionable in their Pride.

OTHERS would be very sorry to be remarked for an envious and malicious Spirit,

Spirit, who at the same time make the Faults of their Acquaintance the Pleasure of their Lives, and turn all their Conversation into Evil-speaking and Detraction.

NOW all this proceeds from hence, that they govern themselves by the Spirit of the World; the World allows of Evil-speaking and Detraction, and therefore they practice it openly, though it is as contrary to Religion, as Murder and Injustice.

AND thus it will be with all these wicked Tempers, till we practice an universal Self-denial, and labour after a religious Perfection in all our Ways of Life.

WE are certainly under Habits of Pride, till we are governed by Humility, and we are not governed by Humility, till we deny our selves, and are afraid of every Appearance of Pride, till we are willing to comply with every Thing and every State, that may preserve and secure our Humility.

NO Man is governed by a religious Justice, till he is exact in all Degrees of it, till he denies himself all Approaches towards Injustice, till he fears and abhors every Appearance of Fraud, and Crafty Management.

NOW it is this Temper and State of Mind that is the Measure of every Virtue.

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A COMMON *Liar* may hate some Sorts of Lies, an *unjust* Man may avoid some Sorts of Injustice, so a *proud* Person may dislike some Instances of Pride, but then he has no more Title to Humility, than an unjust Man has a Title to Integrity, because there are some Sorts of Injustice that he avoids.

So that it is not any single Acts, or any particular Restraints, but it is an uniform State and Temper of the Mind, that stands constantly disposed to every Degree of Humility, and averse from every Degree of Pride, that is to denominate a Person to be truly humble.

To measure any virtuous Temper by any other Standard than this, is not to measure our selves by Religion. How can any one be said to be religiously *chaste*, unless he abhors and avoids *all* Instances of Lewdness and Impurity? How could he be said to be *sincerely* pious, unless he was fearful of every Occasion of Sin?

MUST it not therefore be the same in Humility and every other Virtue? Can any one be reckoned *truly* humble, till he denies himself *all* instances of Pride?

SELF-DENIAL therefore is so universally necessary, that it is the Foundation of every Virtue; Humility and Charity re-
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quiring more Self-contradiction and Self-denial, than the strictest Temperance.

FROM these Observations we may be able to pass a true Judgment upon our selves as to our State of Virtue. If we are denying our selves, we are so far labouring after Virtue; but if *Self-love*, if *Idleness* and *Indulgence*, be the State of our Lives, we may be sure that we are as distant from true Religion, as the *Sot* is distant from strict Temperance.

A LIFE of Idleness, Indulgence, and Self-love, is an entire Resignation of our selves to every Vice, except such as cannot be committed without Trouble; and we may assure our selves, that if we are in this State, we are not only Strangers to Virtue, but ready for every Sin that suits with Ease and Softness.

PERSONS of this Turn of Mind, lose the very *Form* of Piety, and find it too great a Contradiction to their Idleness, to comply with the very outward Appearance of Religion. They would be oftener at *Church*, but it may be, their *Seat* is crowded, and they can sit with more Ease by their Fire-Side at Home. They would be more exact in kneeling when they are there, if they had always the same Ease in kneeling.

I MENTION these Particulars, as only small Instances of that general Deadness and Indisposition towards all Parts of Religion, which this Spirit of Idleness and Indulgence creates. For it affects People in the same Manner as to every other part of their Duty, and makes them incapable of attending to it. For a Person that is too idle and self-indulgent to undergo the *constant Trouble* of publick Worship, must be at a great Distance from those Virtues, which are to be acquired by *Care* and *Watchfulness*, which are to *crucify* us to the World, and make us alive unto God.

AMBITION and worldly *Cares* distract the Mind, and fill it with false Concerns, but even these Tempers are in a nearer State to Religion, and less indispose the Soul to it, than Idleness and Indulgence. For Ambition and worldly Cares, though they employ the Mind wrong, yet as they employ it, they preserve some Degree of Activity in it, which by some Means or other may happen to take a right Turn; but *Idleness* and *Indulgence* is the Death and Burial of the Soul.

I HAVE been more particular upon this Temper, because it is so common, and even acknowledged without Shame. People who would not be thought *Reprobates*, are yet not afraid to let you know that they

they hardly do any thing but *eat*, and *drink*, and *sleep*, and take such *Diversions* as suit with their Ease; whereas if such a State of Life be examined by the Rules of Reason and Religion, it will appear as dangerous and frightful, as any other Reprobate State of Sin. For it is a State that nourishes all the Corruption of our Nature, that exposes us to all the Vanity of the World, and resigns us up to all the Power of the Devil.

DID we design to set our selves in the fairest Posture for the Devil to hit us, we ought to chuse that of Idleness and Indulgence.

WATCH and pray, saith our Saviour, *that ye fall not into Temptation.* The Devil's Advice is, be idle and indulge, and then ye will yield to every Temptation. For if Watching and Prayer have any Tendency to prevent our falling into Temptation, it is certain that Idleness and Indulgence must in an equal Degree make us incapable of resisting them.

To return. 'Tis certain therefore as our Nature is in a State of Corruption, as certain as this Corruption consists in ill Tempers and Inclinations, so certain is it, that if we would not die in our Sins, we must enter upon such a Course of Life as is a *State of Denial* not only to this or that,

but to *all* those corrupt Tempers and Inclinations.

FOR since Man is only a Compound of corrupt and disorderly Tempers, it is as necessary to deny himself, as to resist Evil; and he is indeed only so far virtuous, as he has put off himself, and is guided and governed by another Spirit.

WHEN we speak of Self-denial, we are apt to confine it to Eating and Drinking; but we ought to consider that tho' a strict Temperance be necessary in these Things, yet these are the easiest and smallest Instances of Self-denial. Pride, Vanity, Self-love, Covetousness, Envy, and other Inclinations of the like Nature, call for a more constant and watchful Self-denial, than the Appetites of Hunger and Thirst.

TILL therefore we make our Self-denial as universal as our Corruption, till we deny our selves all Degrees of Vanity and Folly, as earnestly as we deny our selves all Degrees of Drunkenness, till we reject all Sorts of Pride and Envy, as we abhor all Kinds of Gluttony, till we are as exact in all Degrees of Humility, as we are exact in all Rules of Temperance, till we watch and deny all irregular Tempers, as we avoid all Sorts of Sensuality, we can no more be said to practice Self-denial,
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than he can be said to be Just, who only denies himself the Liberty of stealing.

A N D till we do enter into this Course of universal Self-denial, we shall make no Progress in true Piety, but our Lives will be a *ridiculous Mixture* of I know not what, *sober* and covetous, proud and *devout*, *temperate* and vain, *regular* in our Forms of Devotion, and irregular in all our Passions, circumspect in *little Modes* of Behaviour, and careless and negligent of *Tempers* the most essential to Piety.

A N D thus it will necessarily be with us, till we lay the Axe to the Root of the Tree, till we deny and renounce the whole Corruption of our Nature, and resign our selves up entirely to the Spirit of God, to think and speak and act by the Wisdom and Purity of Religion.

L E T it be supposed that Religion required us to forget a *Language* that we lov'd, and had been bred in, and constantly to speak in a Language that was *New* and *Difficult*.

C O U L D we possibly forget our former Language that we lov'd, and was natural to us, any other Way, than by denying our selves the Liberty of ever speaking it.

C O U L D we forget it by only forbearing to use it on some particular Occasions? Would it not be as necessary to abstain

from thinking, reading, and writing in it; as to abstain from using it in Conversation? Could we render our new Language any other Way habitual or natural to us, than by making it the Language of *all* Seasons?

Now this may teach us the absolute Necessity of an universal Self-denial, for tho' Religion does not command us to part with an old *Language* that we love, yet it commands us to part with an *old Nature*, and to live and act by a new Heart, and a new Spirit.

Now can we think to part with an *old Nature* by fewer Rules of Abstinence, than are necessary to get rid of an old Language? Must we not deny our selves the Liberty of ever acting according to it? Can we get rid of it by only denying it in particular Instances? Must it not be as necessary to abstain from all its Ways of thinking and wishing, liking and disliking, as to practise any Abstinence at all? For if the whole is to be changed, if a *new Heart* is to be obtained, we are doing nothing, whilst we only renounce it in part; and can no more be said to live by a new Heart, than they can be said to speak only a new Language, whose general Conversation is in their old natural Tongue.

I N D E E D

INDEED a little Attention to the Nature of Man, and the Nature of Christianity, will soon convince us, that *Self-denial* is the very Substance, the beginning and ending of all our Virtues. For,

FIRST, Christianity, is the *Cure* of the Corruption of our natural State. Now what is the Corruption of our natural State? Why it consists chiefly in *Tempers, and Passions, and Inclinations that fix us to bodily and earthly Enjoyments, as to our proper good.*

Now how is it that Christianity cureth this Corruption of our Nature? Why it cureth this Corruption of our Nature, by teaching us to live and act by *Principles of Reason and Religion.*

WHAT are these Principles of Reason and Religion?

THEY are such as these :

FIRST, That God is our *only Good*, that we cannot possibly be happy, but in such Enjoyment of him, as he is pleased to communicate to us.

SECONDLY, That our Souls, are immortal Spirits, that are here only in a *State of Trial and Probation.*

THIRDLY, That we must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of God, to receive the Sentence of eternal Life, or eternal Death.

THESE are the chief Principles of *Reason and Religion*, by which every Christian is to live; judging and thinking, chusing and avoiding, hoping and fearing, loving and hating according to these *Principles*, as becomes a Creature, that is sent hither to prepare himself to live with God in everlasting Happiness.

NOW who does not see, that this resolves all our Religion into a State of *Self-denial*, or Contradiction to our natural State?

FOR first, what can be a greater Self-denial, or more Contradictory to all our habitual Notions, and natural Sentiments, than to live and govern our selves, by a Happiness that is to be had in *God alone*? A Happiness, which our Senses, our old Guides, neither see, nor feel, nor taste, nor perceive? A Happiness, which gives us neither *Figure* nor *Dignity*, nor *Equipage*, nor *Power*, nor *Glory* amongst one another?

LOOK at Man in his natural State, acting by the Judgment of his Senses, following the Motions of his Nature, and you will see him acting, as if the World was full of infinite Sorts of Happiness.

HE has not only a thousand imaginary Pleasures, but has found out as many Vexations, all which shew, that he thinks
Happiness

Happiness is every where to be found, for no one is vex'd at any Thing, but where he thinks he is disappointed of some possible Happiness.

THE Happiness therefore of Religion, which is an Happiness in *God alone*, is a great *Contradiction* to all our natural and habitual Tempers and Opinions, not only as it proposes a Good, which our Senses cannot relish, but as it leads us from all those imaginary Enjoyments, upon which our Senses have fix'd our Hearts.

To think of Religion in any other Sense, than as a State of *Self-denial*, is knowing nothing at all of it. For its whole Nature is to direct us by a Light, and Knowledge, and Wisdom from God, which is all contrary to the Darkness, Ignorance, and Folly of our Natures.

It is therefore altogether impossible for any Man to enter into the Spirit of Religion, but by *denying himself*, by renouncing all his *natural Tempers* and Judgments, which have been form'd by the blind Motions of Flesh and Blood, and strengthen'd by the Example and Authority of the World. He cannot walk in the *Light* of God, but by rejecting the *Dreams* of his Senses, the *Visions* of his own Thoughts, and the *Darkness* of worldly Wisdom.

WE may let our Senses tell us, what we are to *eat* and *drink*, or when we are to *sleep*, we may let them teach us, how near we may draw to a *Fire*, how great a *Burden* we may carry, or into how deep a *Water* we may go; in these Things they are our proper Guides.

BUT if we appeal to them to know the *true Good* of Man, or the proper Happiness of our *rational* Nature, if we ask *them* what *Guilt* there is in Sin, or what *Excellence* there is in Piety, if we consult them as our Guides and instructors in these Matters, we act as absurdly, as if we were to try to *hear* with our *Eyes*, or to *see* with our *Ears*.

FOR our Senses are no more fitted to tell us our *true Good*, as we are Christians and rational Creatures, than our *Eyes* are fitted to instruct us in *Sounds*, or our *Ears* in *Sights*.

RELIGION therefore has just so much Power over us, as it has Power over our *natural Tempers*, and the Judgments of our Senses, so far as it has made us *deny* ourselves, and reject the Opinions and Judgments of *Flesh and Blood*, so far has it settled its Power within us.

HENCE appears the absolute Necessity of our Saviour's Proposal to Mankind, *If*
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any Man will come after me, let him deny himself and follow me.

FOR it plainly appears from the Nature of the Thing, that no Man can follow Christ, or walk in the Light that he walked, but by *denying himself*, and walking contrary to the Darknes and Errors of his own Heart and Mind.

ALL our Ways of thinking and judging of the Nature and Value of Things, are corrupted with the Grosness and Errors of our Senses.

WE judge of every Thing in the same Manner, that the *Child* judges of his *Play-things*, that is, it is by our Senses alone that we pass the Judgment, though we think that we act with the *Reason of Men*.

THE World is made up of *fine Sights*, Equipage, Sports, Shew and Pageantry, which please and captivate the Minds of Men, because Men have yet the Minds of *Children*, and are just the same Slaves to their Senses, that Children are.

As Children and Men see the *same Colours* in Things, so Children and Men feel the *same sensible Pleasures*, and are affected with external Objects in the same Manner.

BUT the Misfortune is, that we laugh at the little Pleasures, *poor Designs* and *trifling* Satisfactions of Children, whilst at
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the same time, the *Wisdom*, the *Ambition* and *Greatness* of Men is visibly taken up with the *same Trifles*.

A *COACH* and *Six* and an *Embroidered Suit* shall make a great *Statesman* as happy, as ever a *Go-cart* and *Feather* made a *Child*.

WHEN a Man thinks how happy he shall be with a great *Estate*, he has all the same *Thoughts* come into his *Head*, that a *Child* has, when he thinks what he would do with a great *Sum of Money*; he would buy twenty *little Horses*, he would have twenty *fine Coats*, and all *fine Sights*, and the like.

NOW promise but a Man a great *Estate*, and you will raise all these same *Thoughts* and *Designs* in his *Mind*.

NOW whence can all this proceed, but from this, that Men act with the *same Vanity* of mind, are under the *same poor* guidance of their *Senses*, are as ignorant of their *true Happiness*, as great *Strangers* to their *own Nature*, and as far from a true *Sense* of their *relation* to *God*, as when they first set out in *Life*.

AND is not this a plain *Argument* of the *Reasonableness* and *Necessity* of *Self-denial*? For to indulge our selves and live according to our *natural Tempers* and *Judgments*, is to grow old in the *Follies* of *Child-*

Childhood. And to deny our selves, is to save our selves, as it is denying such Tem- pers and Judgments as are contrary to our eternal Happiness.

To proceed, let us take another view of the weakness and disorder of our Na- ture, that we may still see a greater Ne- cessity of not walking according to it.

W H E N we see People *drunk* or in a violent Passion, we readily own, that they are, so long as that continues, in a State of *Delusion*, thinking, saying, and doing ir- regular Things by the mere *Force* of their Blood and Spirits. In these States we all see and acknowledge the Power of our *Bodies* over our Reason, and never suppose a Man capable of judging or acting wisely, so long as he is under the violence of *Pas- sion* or heated with *Drink*.

N O W this is more or less the constant State of all Mankind, who are by bodily Impressions, and the Agitations of the Blood and Spirits, in the same kind of *Delusion*, as Men that are *Drunk* or in a *Passion*, tho' not always in the same Degree.

A M A N that is *Drunk* has heated his Blood to that Degree, that it sends up Spirits to the Brain in too violent a Mo- tion, and in too great a quantity. This vi- olent Motion of the Spirits, raises so ma-
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ny Ideas in the Brain, and in so Disorder'dly a Manner, that the Man is every Minute different from himself, as fast as different or new Ideas are rais'd in his Head by the impetuous Course of the Spirits. This is the disorder of a Man that is *Drunk*.

Now this is the State of all People more or less, when they appear to one another as Sober.

FOR first, Drunkenness is a State of disorder and Delusion, because our Heads are then fill'd with a Crowd of Ideas, which we have little or no power over, and which for that Reason distract our Judgment.

Now this is in a certain Degree the State of all Men, whilst they are in the Body; the Constitution of our Bodies, and our Commerce with the World is constantly filling our Heads with Ideas, and Thoughts, that we have little or no Power over, but *intrude* upon our Minds, alter our Opinions, and *affect* our Judgments in the same Manner, as they disorder the Minds of those that are Drunk.

LET any one but try to *Meditate* upon any the most Important Doctrine of Religion, and he will find the Truth of this Observation, he will find a Thousand Ideas crowd in upon him, in spite of all his Care to avoid them, which will hinder
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his Meditation, and prevent his seeing Things in that Light in which he would see them, if his Mind was empty of other Thoughts.

NOW it is the same Cause that hinders him from Thinking *so well* as he would, that hinders the Drunken-man from Thinking *at all*; that is, an *Involuntary Succession of Ideas*.

So that every Man, so long as he is in the Body, is in some Degree weak and disordered in his Judgment, in the same Manner and for the same Causes, as People that are Drunk.

SECONDLY, Another Circumstance of *Drunkennes* is this, that Ideas and Thoughts are raised in a disorderly Manner, because the *Blood* is too much heated.

NOW this is another constant Circumstance that attends Men in every State of Life.

FOR first, it is the same Thing whether our Spirits be heated with Liquor, or any thing else, if they are heated, all the same Effects are produced.

THIS is undeniably true, because we daily see, that Passion will heat and disorder People in the same Manner, as they are, who are inflamed with Liquor.

THEREFORE our own *Thoughts* and *Imaginations* have the same effect upon our
Spirits

Spirits, as *Drink* ; so that it is the same Thing whether a Man be Drunk with Passion, or any violent Set of Thoughts, or heated with Liquor. There is the same Weakness of Mind, the same disordered Imagination, and the same wrong Apprehension of the Nature of Things.

NOW though all People are not at all Times Drunk with *Passion*, or some *Violent* Imagination, yet they are always in a Disorder of the same Kind ; they have something that affects and hurries their Spirits in the same Manner, that a Man's Spirits are affected in some violent Passion.

AND the Reason is, because Men are always in some *Passion* or other, though not to that Degree as to be visible, and give Offence to other People.

WE are always in a State either of *Self-love*, *Vanity*, *Pride*, *Hatred*, *Spight*, *Envy*, *Covetousness* or *Ambition*. Some one or other of these Passions is in some Degree affecting our Spirits in the same Manner, that any violent Passion, or heat of Liquor affects our Spirits, differing only in the Degree.

A SILENT *Envy*, a secret *Vanity*, which no body sees, raises Thoughts in our Heads, and disorders our Judgments in the same Manner, as more violent Passions.

BUT

Y O U may encrease the *Vanity*, and *Envy* till it ends in *Distraction* and *Madness*, as it sometimes happens, but then we may be sure, that it disorder'd our *Understanding* in the same *Manner*, and made us *Foolish* and *Extravagant* in some *Degree*, long before it came to *Madness*. Whilst therefore we are in the *Body*, we are constantly in a *State of Disorder*, like to those who are *Drunk* or in a *violent Passion*; we have some *Passion* or other, either of *Self-love*, *Vanity*, *Envy* or the like, that affects our *Spirits*, and disorders our *Judgment*, in the same *Manner*, tho' not in the same *Degree*, as their *Spirits* are affected, who are in the *heat of Drink*, or in some *violent Passion*.

THIR DLY, Another *Circumstance* of *Drunkenness* is this, that it *Forms* us to a *Taste* and *Temper* peculiar to it, so as to leave a *Dulness* and *Indisposition* in the *Mind* toward any *Thing* else. An *habitual Drunkard* has no *Pleasure*, like that *confus'd Hurry* and *Heat of Thoughts* that arises from *inflam'd Blood*. The repeating of this *Pleasure* so often has given him a *Turn of Mind*, that *Relishes* nothing but what relates to *Intemperance*.

N O W this is the *State* of all *People* in some *respect* or other, there is some way

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of Life that has got hold of them, and given them a Taste and Relish for it, in the same Manner that Drinking has Form'd the Drunkard to a peculiar liking of it. All People are not intemperate, but all are under Habits of Life, that affect the Mind in the same Manner, as Intemperance.

SOME People have indulged themselves so long in *Dressing*, others in *Play*, others in *Sports* of the Field, others only in little *gossiping* Stories, that they are as much Slaves to these Ways of Life, as the intemperate Man is a Slave to Liquor.

NOW we readily own that a Man who has enslaved himself to the Pleasures of Drinking and Intemperance, has thereby rendered himself incapable of being a *reasonable Judge* of other Happiness and Pleasure; but then we do not enough consider, that we are hurt in the same Manner, by any other Way of Life, that has taken hold of us, and given us a Temper and Turn of Mind peculiar to it.

IT is to as little Purpose to talk of Religion, or the Happiness of Piety, to a Person that is fond of *Dress*, or *Play*, or *Sports*, as to another that is intemperate; for the Pleasures of these particular Ways of Life make him as deaf to all other
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Proposals of Happiness, and as incapable of judging of other Happiness and Pleasure, as he who is enslaved to Intemperance.

A *LADY* abominates a *Sot*, as a Creature that has only the Shape of a Man; but then she does not consider that drunken as he is, perhaps he can be more content with the Want of *Liquor*, than she can with the Want of *fine Clothes*: And if this be her Case, she only differs from him, as one intemperate Man differs from another.

Thus it appears, that whether we consider the Nature, Circumstances, and Effects of Drunkenness, that all Mankind are more or less in the *same State* of Weakness and Disorder.

I HAVE dwelt the longer upon this Comparison, because it seems so easily to explain the Disorder of our Nature. For as every one readily sees how the bodily Disorders of Drunkenness, and violent Passion, blind and pervert our Minds, so it seems an easy Step from thence, to imagine how the Body, though in a *cooler State*, does yet disorder the Mind in the same Manner, though not in the same Degree. It is also easy to conceive, that if *violent Passion*, or a heated Imagination, confounds our Judgments, and gives us wrong Ap-

prehensions of Things, that therefore *all Passions*, though more *still* and *secret*, must yet influence our Minds, and make us weak and disordered in our Judgments, in the same Manner, though not in the same Degree, as those are, who are in a violent Passion. So that the meanest Capacity may by this apprehend, that so long as we are in the Body, we are in a State of Weakness and Disorder, that is full of such Blindness and Delusion, as attends a State of Drunkenness and Passion.

IT is intended by this Account of human Nature, to convince us of the *absolute Necessity* of renouncing our selves, of denying all our Tempers and Inclinations, and resigning our selves wholly to the Light and Wisdom of God. For since by our State of Corruption and Slavery to the Body, we are always under the Power of its *blind Motions*, since all our Inclinations and Judgments are only the Judgments of heated Blood, drunken Spirits, and disordered Passions, we are under as absolute a Necessity of denying all our natural Tempers and Judgments, as of refraining from Intemperance.

FOR must a Man that is in a Fit of *violent* Passion, silence that Passion before he can judge of the ordinary Things of Life? Is it a State of such Blindness as makes
him

him blind in the plainest Matters, and unable to judge rightly even of Things which he is acquainted with? And can we think, that our more *still* and *secret* Passions of Self-love, Pride, Vanity, Envy, and the like, make us less blind as to the Things of God, than a heated Passion does as to the Things of this World?

WILL an inflamed Passion disorder a Man too much to judge of any thing even in his own Business? And will not a Passion of *less Violence* disorder a Man's Judgment in Things of a spiritual Nature, which he never was rightly acquainted with, which he never saw or understood in the Manner that he ought, and which are all contrary to the Impressions of his Senses?

EVERY one sees People in the World whom he takes to be incapable of *sober* Judgments, and *wise* Reflections, for this Reason, because he sees that they are full of themselves, blinded with Prejudices, violent in their Passions, wild and extravagant in their Imaginations.

Now as often as we see these People, we should reflect that we see *our selves*; for we as certainly see a *true Representation* of our selves, when we look at such People, as we see a true Picture of our State,

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when we see a Man in the Sorrows and Agonies of Death.

Y O U are not *dying* as this Man is, you are not in his State of Sicknes and Extremity; but still his State shews you your own *true Picture*, it shews you that your Life is in the *midst of Death*, that you have in you the Seeds of Sicknes and Mortality, that you are dying, though not in his *Degree*, and that you are only at a little *uncertain Distance* from those, who are lying upon their last Beds.

W H E N therefore you see Men living in the Disorders of their Passions, blinded with Prejudices, swelling in Pride, full of themselves, vain in their Imaginations, and perverse in their Tempers, you must believe, that you see as true a Representation of your own State, as if you saw a Man in his last Sicknes.

Y O U, it may be, are not in the Extravagance of his disordered Tempers, you are at some *uncertain Distance* from his State, but if you fancy that you are not corrupted with *Self-love*, not weakened by Prejudices, not blinded with Pride, not vain in your Imaginations, not ridiculous in your Tempers, because you are not in such Disorders as you find some People, you think as absurdly, as if you was to imagine your self to be *immortal*, because you are
not

not in that *Extremity* of Death, in which you see some People.

A N D as the true Way of knowing and being rightly affected with the Weakness and Mortality of our State, is frequently to view the Condition of *dying Men*, as Pictures of our selves, so the most likely Means to affect us with a just Sense of the Corruption and Disorder of our Hearts, is to consider the Frailties, Corruptions, and Disorders, of other People, as certain Representations of the Frailty and Corruption of our own State.

W H E N therefore you see the Violence of other Men's Passions, the Irregularity of their Tempers, the Strength of their Prejudices, the Folly of their Inclinations, and the Vanity of their Minds, remember that you see so many plain Reasons for *denying* your self, and resisting your own Nature, which has in it the Seeds of all those evil Tempers, which you see in the most irregular People.

F R O M the foregoing Reflections upon human Nature, we may learn thus much, that Abstinence, as to Eating and Drinking, is but a small part of Christian *Self-denial*.

T H E Corruption of our Nature has its chief Seat in the Irregularity of our Tempers, the Violence of Passions, the Blindness of our Judgments, and the Vanity of

our Minds; it is as dangerous therefore to indulge these Tempers, as to live in Gluttony and Intemperance.

Y o u think it shameful to be an *Epicure*, you would not be suspected to be fond of *Liquor*, you think these Tempers would too much spoil all your Pretences to Religion; you are very right in your Judgment, but then proceed a Step farther, and think it as shameful to be fond of *Dress*, or delighted with *your self*, as to be fond of *Dainties*, and that it is as great a Sin to please any corrupt *Temper* of your Heart, as to please your *Palate*; remember that Blood heated with *Passion*, is like Blood heated with *Liquor*, and that the Grossness of Gluttony is no greater a Contrariety to Religion, than the Politeness of Pride, and the Vanity of our Minds.

I H A V E been the longer upon this Subject, trying every Way to represent the Weakness and Corruption of our Nature, because so far as we rightly understand it, so far we see into the Reasonableness and Necessity of all religious Duties. If we fancy our selves to be wise and regular in our Tempers and Judgments, we can see no Reason for denying our selves; but if we find that our whole Nature is in Disorder, that our Light is Darkness, our Wisdom Foolishness, that our Tempers and
Judg.

Judgments are as gross and blind as our Appetites, that our Senses govern us as they govern Children, that our Ambition and Greatness is taken up with *Gigaws* and *Trifles*, that the State of our Bodies is a State of Error and Delusion, like that of Drunkenness and Passion.

IF we see our selves in this true Light, we shall see the whole Reason of Christian *Self-denial*, of Meekness, and Poverty of Spirit, of putting off our old Man, of renouncing our whole Selves, that we may see all Things in God; of watching and Prayer, and mortifying all our Inclinations, that our Hearts may be mov'd by a Motion from God, and our Wills and Inclinations be directed by the Light and Wisdom of Religion.

RELIGION has little or no hold of us, till we have these right Apprehensions of our selves; it may serve for a little Decency of outward Behaviour, but it is not the Religion of our Hearts, till we feel the weakness and disorder of our Nature, and embrace Piety and Devotion, as the Means of recovering us to a State of Perfection and Happiness in God.

A MAN that thinks himself in *Health*, cannot lament the Sickness of his State.

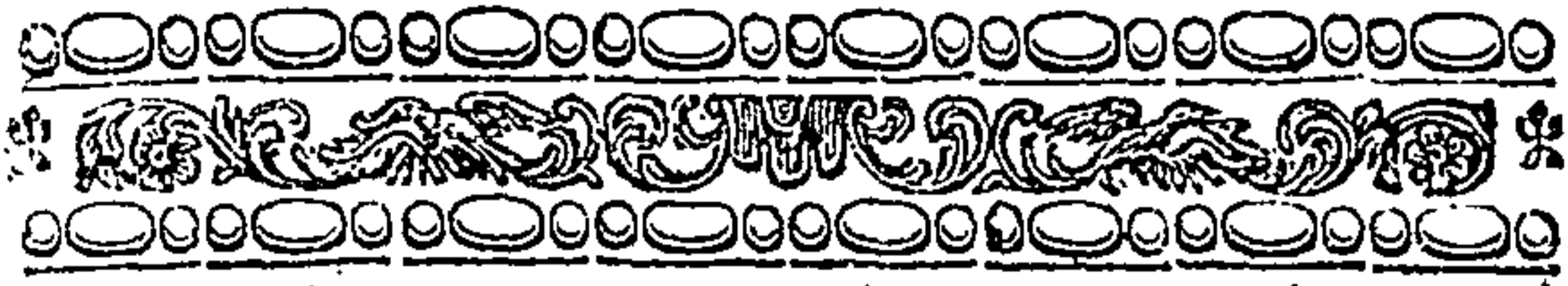
IF we are pleased with the Pride and Vanity of our Minds, if we live in Pleasure
fure

sure and Self-satisfactions, we shall feel no meaning in our Devotions, when we lament the Misery and Corruption of our Nature. We may have Times and Places to mourn for Sins, but we shall feel no more inward Grief, than *hired Mourners* do at a Funeral.

So that as the Corruption of our Nature, is the Foundation and Reason of Self-denial, so a right Sense and Feeling of that Corruption, is necessary to make us rightly affected with the Offices and Devotions of Religion.

I SHALL now shew, that the reasonableness and necessity of Self-denial, is also founded upon another fundamental Doctrine of Religion, namely, the *Necessity of Divine Grace*, which I shall leave to be the Subject of the following Chapter.





C H A P. IX.

*Of the Necessity of Divine Grace,
and the several Duties to which
it calleth all Christians.*



COME now to another Article of our Religion, namely, the *absolute Necessity of Divine Grace*, which is another universal and constant Reason of *Self-denial*.

THE invisible Operation and Assistance of God's Holy Spirit, by which we are dispos'd towards that which is good, and made able to perform it, is a confess'd Doctrine of Christianity.

OUR natural Life is preserved by some Union with God, who is the Fountain of Life to all the Creation, to which Union we are altogether Strangers; we find that we are alive, as we find that we think, but how, or by what Influence from God our Life is supported, is a Secret into which we cannot enter. It is the same Thing
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with Relation to our spiritual Life, or Life of Grace, it arises from some *invisible Union* with God, or Divine Influence, which in this State of Life we cannot comprehend. Our blessed Saviour saith, *The Wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the Sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of God* (a). This shews us, how ignorant we are of the manner of the Operations of the Holy Spirit; we may feel its Effects, as we may perceive the Effects of the Wind, but are as much Strangers to its manner of coming upon us, as we are Strangers to that exact Point, from whence the Wind begins to blow, and where it will cease.

THE Spirit of God is like the Nature of God, too high for our Conceptions, whilst we are in these dark Houses of Clay. But our blessed Saviour has in some Degree help'd our Conceptions in this Matter, by the manner of his giving the Holy Spirit to his Disciples. *And he breathed on them, and said unto them, receive the Holy Ghost.* Now by this Ceremony of breathing, we are taught to conceive of the Communications

(a) John iii. 8.

of the Holy Spirit with some likenesses to Breath, or Wind, that it's Influences come upon us in some manner most like to a gentle breathing of the Air. Representations of this kind are only made in Compliance with the Weakness of our Apprehensions, which not being able to conceive Things as they are in their own Nature, must be instructed, by comparing them to such Things as our Senses are acquainted with. Thus, the *Wisdom* and *Knowledge* that is revealed from God, is compared to *Light*, not because Light is a true Representation of the Wisdom of God, but because it serves best to represent it to our low Capacities. In like manner, the *Influences* of the Holy Spirit, are set forth by the Ceremony of *breathing* upon us, not because *Breath*, or *Air*, or *Wind*, are true Representations of the Gifts of the Spirit, but because they are the properest Representations, that yet fall within our Knowledge.

BUT that which is most necessary for us to know, and of which we are sufficiently inform'd in Scripture, is the *absolute Necessity* of this Divine Assistance.

WE are used to consider those only as *inspir'd* Persons, who are called by God to some extraordinary Designs, and act by immediate Revelation from him. Now as In-
spiration

piration implies an *immediate Revelation* from God; in this Sense there has been but few inspir'd Persons; but Inspiration, as it signifies an *invisible Operation*, or *Assistance* and *Instruction* of God's Holy Spirit, is the common Gift and Privilege of all Christians; in this Sense of Inspiration, they are all *inspir'd Persons*. Know ye not, saith St. Paul, *that your Body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you*. St. John likewise, *Hereby know we that he dwelleth in us by the Spirit, which he hath given us. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, are the Sons of God. Again, Now if any Man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his (a)*. From these and many other Passages of the like Nature, it is undeniably plain, that the Life which we now live, is a Life in and by the Spirit of God, and that they are only Sons of God, who are led by this Spirit. Now this Doctrine plainly proves the Necessity of a constant Self-denial, for it must be necessary; that we deny our selves all those Tempers and Ways of Life, which may make God withhold his Grace from us; and likewise all those Enjoyments and Indulgences, which may make us *less able* and *less disposed* to improve and co-operate with

(a) Rom. viii. 11.

those Degrees of Divine Grace, that are communicated to us.

O U R blessed Saviour saith, *If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him (a).* This teaches us, how we are to *invite* the good Spirit of God to dwell in us : We are to *Prepare* our selves for the Abode of this Divine Guest, by loving Christ and keeping his Commandments. Whence we also learn, that the Spirit of God does not *equally Visit* all Persons in all ways of Life, but that we must *Prepare* our selves for his Presence.

W E are also told, that *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.* This also explains to us the Method of Divine Grace, that it is bestow'd with regard to the *State* and *Temper* of Persons ; that there are some Dispositions which *separate* us from the Spirit of God, and others that procure to us a larger Share of its Gifts and Graces. We are also here Taught to consider *Pride*, not only as a Sin that has its particular Guilt, but as it has this certain Effect, that it *Extinguishes* the Divine Light, *deprives* us of

(a) Joh. xiv, 23.

God's Spirit, and leaves us to sink under the Corruption and Weight of our Nature.

WE are to consider *Humility* also, not only as it is a reasonable Duty, and proper to our State, but as it *qualifies* and *prepares* us for larger Degrees of Divine Grace, such as may Purify and Perfect our Souls in all Manner of Holiness. All Instances therefore of Pride are to be avoided, all Sorts of Humility to be practised, not only for their own Sakes, but as necessary *Preparatives* for Divine Grace, that we may be *fit Temples* for the Holy Ghost to dwell in. Now seeing we are none of Christ's, if the Spirit of Christ be not in us, seeing we are only so far Christians, as we are renew'd by the Holy Ghost, nothing can be more necessary to true Piety, than that we Form every Part of our Lives with regard to this Holy Spirit. That we consider all our *Tempers, Pleasures, Cares, Designs* and *Ways* of Life, whether they be such, as *suit* with the Wisdom and Heavenly Guidance of the Holy Spirit. This Doctrine shews us to our selves in a *new Point* of View, and may serve to teach us several Truths, which we should otherwise not so readily apprehend.

WHEN we are left to consider our Duty with relation to the express Commandments

ments of God; there are many ways of Life which we think our selves at Liberty to follow, because they seem to be no plain Breach of any Commandment. But we are to look to a farther Rule, and to consider our Pleasures and Cares, our Designs and Endeavours, not only whether they are contrary to the Letter of the Law, but whether they are according to the Spirit of God, for if they are contrary to the Spirit of God, if they suit not with his secret Inspirations, they are as truly to be avoided as if they were contrary to some express Commandment. For we are assured from Scripture, that they only are the Sons of God, *who are led by the Spirit of God*, and none can be said to be led by the Spirit of God, but they whose Lives are according to it, whose Actions, Cares and Pleasures, Hopes and Fears are such, as may be said to be guided by the Motions of the Holy Ghost.

WE are therefore to consider our selves as *inspired Persons*, that have no Knowledge, or Wisdom but what comes from God, and that this Wisdom will no longer dwell with us, than so long as we act and conduct our selves Conformably to it. So that we must not vainly deceive our selves in saying, where is the harm of such *Indulgences*, or such *Vanities* and idle *A-*

musements, but must consider, whether they are such as are Conformable to a Life that is to be directed by the Holy Ghost, whether they will *invite* his Assistance, and make him *delight* to dwell with us. In this Manner must we Examine and Try all our Ways of Life, as well our Cares as our Pleasures, and all our Tempers and Inclinations. For unreasonable Cares, as well as unreasonable Pleasures, are equally contrary to the Wisdom of the Holy Spirit, and equally separate us from him. People often think their Designs and Diversions Innocent because they are not *sinful* in their Nature, but they should also consider whether they are not *vain* and *foolish*, and *unsuitable* to the State and Condition of a Christian. For a Life of *Folly*, and *Vanity* and *trifling Designs*, is no more living by the *Spirit of God*, than a Life of *gross Sins*, is keeping the *Commandments*. So that the safest Rule to judge of our Actions by, is to consider them with relation to that Spirit, by which we are to be guided. Is this Design, or this Diversion according to the Wisdom of the Spirit of God? Am I in these Things improving the secret Inspiration of the Holy Ghost? Am I here govern'd by a Wisdom from above? Are these ways such as I can truly say, that I am
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led into them by the Spirit of God? Do I allow my self in them, because they serve to set forth the Glory of God; and are agreeable to the Condition of a Disciple of Christ? Are they good Proofs that the Spirit of God dwelleth in me, and that by thus Sowing to the Spirit; I shall of the Spirit Reap everlasting Life? This is the Rule of Perfection, by which Christians are to regulate their Thoughts, Words and Actions, for we are call'd by God to a State of Purity and Holiness; to act by the Motions of his Holy Spirit, and make no other Use of our selves, or the World we are in; than such as is conformable to that Dignity of Life; and State of Glory to which we are call'd. The Spirit of our Religion is to be the Spirit of our Lives, the constant Principle of all our Tempers and Inclinations, which is to render us Reasonable, and Wise and Holy in all our Progress through the World.

THE *Renewal* of our Hearts by the Spirit of God consists in *new Thoughts* and *new Desires*, in filling our Minds with great and sublime Truths, and in giving us Desires and Inclinations, Hopes and Fears, Cares and Pleasures suitable to them.

THIS is being born of the Spirit: Hence appears a plain Reason of an *universal Self-denial*, because the Spirit of the World and the Spirit of our corrupt Hearts, is in a State of Contrariety to this Spirit and Wisdom which is from above. So that it is to be the main Business and Labour of our Lives, to contradict those Motions of our Hearts, and those Tempers of the World, which are *contrary* to this Spirit, which is to be the Principle of our new Life in Christ.

WE must therefore deny our selves all those Ways of Life, all Cares and Enjoyments which too much possess our Minds, and render them insensible of these great Truths. We must Practice all that *Self-denial Temperance, Abstinence, Care and Watchfulness* which can any way fit and prepare our Minds to hear and receive, to comprehend and relish the Instructions and Doctrine which come from the Spirit of God. For all these Truths, every Thing that relates to God and Religion have a different Effect upon us, according to the State or Way of Life that we are in. As *Land* must be prepared to receive the best Seed, as *Rocks* can bring forth no Fruit, so unless our Minds are in some *proper State* and Disposition to *Co-operate* with the Holy Spirit, and receive his
 Instructi

structions, his Gifts and Graces will bring forth no Fruit.

'Tis acknowledged by all, that a Life of *Intemperance* and *Debauchery* makes us dead and senseless of Religion, and incapable of receiving its Truths: But then it is not enough considered, that the *Vanity* of the Mind, an Understanding busied in *Trifles*, an *impertinent Course* of Life, will as certainly produce the *same Effect*. If our Understanding is full of foolish Imaginations, devoted to *Trifles*, Religion can gain no Entrance. A Man may be so earnest in *picking Straws*; as to have no Leisure to think of his Salvation, nor any more Inclination to it, than one that is constantly in *Drink*. *Children* are incapable of Religion, not because they are *intemperate* and *debauched*, but because they have *little Minds*, that are taken up and employed with *little* and *trifling* Entertainments. Now if when we are Men, we have the Minds of Children, and have only changed our *Play-things*, we shall embrace and practice Religion just to as much Purpose as Children do: For a Mind taken up with *Giggles*, and *Trifles*, and impertinent Satisfactions, is in the same State, whether it be *four*, or whether it be *fifty Years* old. If it be made silly with *trifling* Concerns, and *false* Satisfactions, it is in a State of as

much Disorder, and as contrary to Religion, as a State of *Gluttony* and *Intemperance*.

THUS poor *Amusements*, vain *Arts*, useless *Sciences*, impertinent *Learning*, false *Satisfactions*, a wrong *Turn of Mind*, a State of *Idleness*, or any the vaineſt *Trifles* of Life, may keep Men at as great a Distance from the true Impressions of Religion, and from living by the Spirit of God, as the *Ignorance* of Childhood, or the *Debaucheries* of Intemperance.

TITIVS is temperate and regular, but then he is so great a *Mathematician*, that he does not know when *Sunday* comes: He sees People going to *Church*, as he sees others going to *Market*, he goes on studying, measuring, and calculating, and may as well be called a *Merchant*, as a *Christian*.

ALL Doctrines of Religion are disagreeable to *Philo*, he avoids them as he avoids *Party*; now what's the Reason of it? It is not because he is *debauched* and *intemperate*, but he is a *Virtuoso* devoted to polite *Literature*, his Soul is extended to all the *Curiosities* in the World, and thinks all Time to be lost, that is not spent in the Search of *Shells*, *Urns*, *Inscriptions*, and *broken Pieces* of *Pavements*. This makes the Truths of Religion, and the Concerns of *Eternity*, seem small Things in his Eyes, fit only for the
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the Enquiry of narrow, little, and unpolite Souls.

PATRONUS is fond of a Clergyman that understands *Musick, Painting, Statuary,* and *Architecture.* He is an Enemy to the *Dissenters,* and loves the *Church of England* because of the *Stateliness* and *Beauty* of its Buildings; he never comes to the *Sacrament,* but will go forty Miles to see a *fine Alter-piece.* He goes to Church when there is a *new Tune* to be heard, but never had any more serious Thoughts about *Salvation,* than about *Flying.* If you visit him when he is dying, you will hear his dying Thoughts upon *Architecture.*

EUSEBIUS would read Prayers *twice* every Day in his *Parish,* he would be often with the Poor and Sick, and spend much Time in charitable Visits; he would be wholly taken up in the *Cure* of Souls, but that he is busy in studying the *old Grammarians,* and would fain *reconcile* some Differences amongst them, before he dies.

LUCIA has no wicked or irreligious Temper, and she might be pious, but that she is too *easy, gay,* and *cheerful,* to admit of Care of any Kind. She can no more *repent,* than she can be *out of Temper;* and must be the same *sparkling cheerful* Creature in the *Church,* as in the *Play-house.* She might be capable of understanding the Mi-

fery of human Nature, and the Necessity of the Comforts of Religion, but that she is so *happy* every time she is *dress'd*.

MATRONA is old, and has been this *fifty Years*, eating and drinking, sleeping and waking, dressing and undressing, *paying* and *receiving Visits*. She has no *Prophaness*, and if she has no *Piety*, it is owing to this, that she never had a *spare half Hour* in all her *Life* to think about it. She envies her *Daughters*, because they will *dress* and *visit* when she is dead.

PUBLIUS goes to *Church* sometimes, and reads the *Scripture*, but he knows not what he reads or prays, his *Head* is so full of *Politicks*. He is so angry at *Kings* and *Ministers of State*, that he has no *Time* nor *Disposition* to call himself to account. He has the *History* of all *Parliaments*, *Elections*, *Prosecutions*, and *Impeachments*, and dies with little or no *Religion*, through a constant *Fear of Popery*.

SICCUS has neither *Virtues* nor *Vices*, he has been all his life-long *building* and *puling down*, making *Canals* and *Ditches*, raising *Walls* and *Fences*. People call him a good *Man*, because he employs the *Poor*; *Siccus* might have been a *religious Man*, but that he thought *building* was the chief *Happiness* of a rational *Creature*. He is all the *Week* amongst *Dirt* and *Mortar*, and
stays

stays at home on *Sundays* to view his *Contrivances*. He will die more contentedly, if his *Death* does not happen whilst some *Wall* is in building.

SILVIUS laughs at *preaching* and *praying*, not because he has any prophane Principles, or any Arguments against Religion, but because he happens to have been used to nothing but *Noise*, and *Hunting*, and *Sports*.

I HAVE mentioned these several *Characters*, to shew us that it is not only *Prophaness*, *Debauchery*, and *open Vices*, that keep Men from the Impressions of true Religion, but that the mere *Play-things* of Life, *impertinent Studies*, *vain Amusements*, *false Satisfactions*, *idle Dispositions*, will produce the same Effect. A *wrong Turn* of Mind, *impertinent Cares*, a Succession of the *poorest Trifles*, if they take up our Thoughts, leave no more Room for the Cares and Fears of true Piety, than gross Sensuality.

OUR blessed Saviour saith, *Wo unto you Pharisees, for ye love the uppermost Seats in Synagogues, and Greetings in the Markets (a)*. The Wisdom of this World would find little to condemn in such a Behaviour as this,

(a) Luke xi. 43.

but yet we see that the Wisdom of God condemns it with a *Wo*, teaching us, that every *wrong Turn* of Mind, every false Satisfaction, puts the Soul in a State that is *contrary* to Religion, and makes Men *unfit* to receive its Doctrines. This is the Reason why Religion calls us to a State of *Self-denial*, *Humility*, and *Mortification*, because it is a State that awakens the Soul into right Apprehensions of Things, and qualifies us to see, and hear, and understand the Doctrines of eternal Truth. We must deny our selves all our Ways of Folly and Vanity, let go every false Satisfaction, that the Soul may be at Liberty with its full Attention, to listen to the Instructions of Religion.

W O U L D we see any thing exactly, we must take our Eyes from every thing else, so if we would apprehend truly the Things of Religion, we must take our Minds from all other Objects; we must empty our selves of all false Satisfaction, or we shall never know the Want, nor feel the Excellency of our true Good.

W E see even in worldly Matters, that if we propose any thing to a Man when he is in the Pursuit of something else, he hardly hears, or understands us, we must stay for a Season of more Leisure and Indifference,

ference, till his Thoughts and Passions are at rest.

Now this holds much stronger in Matters of Religion, its Doctrines are neither heard nor understood, because it always finds us in the Pursuit of *something else*, it matters not what this *something else* is, whether it be *loving uppermost Seats in the Synagogues*, a Fondness for *Trifles*, a Joy in *Luxury and Idleness*, or a Labour after Riches; the Mind is equally employed wrong, and so not in a Condition to like, or at Leisure to listen to any other Happiness. If you were to propose the same Truths to a Man in another State, when Weariness or Disappointment has made him give up all Designs, or when Sickness or the Approach of Death shews him that he must act no longer in them, they would have quite another Effect upon him; then the great Things of Religion appear great indeed; he *feels* their whole Weight, and is *amazed* that he did not see them always in the same Manner. Now it is the great End and Design of *Self-denial*, to put a Stop to the Follies of Life, and mortify all our Passions, that our Souls may quietly consider, and fully comprehend the Truths which come from God, that our Hearts being at Liberty from a Crowd of foolish Thoughts, may be ready to obey and co-operate with
the

the *Inspirations* of that Spirit, which is to lead and quicken us in all Holiness; that *Death* and *Judgment*, *Heaven* and *Hell*, may make as deep Impressions upon our Minds in the Middle of our Lives, as at our last Hour; that we may be as wise and prudent as *sick* and *dying* Men, and live with such Apprehensions as most People die with, that we may see the Vanity of the World, the Misery of Sin, the Greatness of Eternity, and the Want of God, as they see it who stand upon the Brink of another World.

THIS is the great and happy Work of Self-denial, which is to fill us with a Spirit of Wisdom, to awaken us into a true Knowledge of our selves, and shew us who, and where, and what we are. Till this Self-denial has put a Stop to our Follies, and opened our Eyes, our Life is but a *Sleep*, a *Dream*, a mere Succession of *Shadows*, and we act with as little Reason and Judgment, as a Child that is pleased with blowing about a *Feather*. We must therefore not only deny our wicked and sinful Inclinations, but also all our Follies, Impertinencies, and vain Satisfactions; for as plain and known Sins harden and corrupt, so Impertinencies and false Satisfactions delude and blind our Hearts, and render them
 infen-

insensible of our real Misery, or true Happiness.

WE are true Members of the Kingdom of God, when the Kingdom of God is within us, when the Spirit of Religion is the Spirit of our Lives, when seated in our Hearts, it diffuses it self into all our Motions, when we are wise by its Wisdom, sober by its Sobriety, and humble by its Humility; when it is the Principle of all our Thoughts and Desires, the Spring of all our Hopes and Fears; when we like and dislike, seek and avoid, mourn and rejoice, as becomes those who are born again of God. Now this is the Work of the Holy Spirit in our Hearts, to give us a *new Understanding*, a *new Judgment*, Temper, Taste, and Relish, new Desires, and new Hopes and Fears. So far therefore as we *prepare* our selves by Self-denial, for this Change of Heart and Mind, so far we *invite* the Assistance, and *concur* with the Inspirations of the Holy Spirit. And so far as we nourish any foolish Passion, indulge any Vanity of Mind, or Corruption of Heart, so far we *resist the Graces* of God's Holy Spirit, and render our selves *indisposed* to relish and improve his secret Inspirations. Christians are therefore to consider themselves, not only as Men, that are to act by a Principle of Reason, but as spiritual

ritual Beings, who have a higher Principle of Life within them, and are to live by the *Wisdom* and *Instructions* of the Spirit of God.

As reasonable Men would do every thing that tended to strengthen and improve their Reason, so wise Christians ought to practice every Way of Life, that can fit them for farther Degrees of Grace, that can strengthen and preserve their Union with the Spirit of God. For as a Man without Reason has but the *Figure* of a Man, so a Christian without the Spirit of God, has but the *Form* of a Christian. And as the Perfection of a Man consists in the highest Improvement of his Reason, so the Perfection of a Christian consists in his Growth in Grace, in the *spiritual Turn* and *Temper* of his Heart and Mind. Here therefore must we fix all our Care and Concern, that we may remove all Hinderances of Divine Grace, and preserve this Kingdom of God within us; that we may be truly spiritual in all our Ways and Designs, and indulge no Tempers that may lessen our Union with the Spirit of God.

SOME Persons will perhaps refrain from *Grief*, when they find that it hurts their *Eyes*; they will avoid *Passion* and *Anger*, if it ends in Pains of the Head; but they would do well to consider that these Tem-
pers

pers are to be abstained from upon much greater Accounts. *Passion* may disorder our Bodies, waste our Spirits, and leave Pains in our *Heads*; but it leaves greater Marks of Injury in our better Part, as it throws us into a State of Madness, and *bannishes* the Holy Spirit of Peace and Gentleness, and *prepares* us for the Suggestions of the Spirit of Darkness. *Grief* may hurt our *Eyes*, but it much more hurts our *Souls*, as it sinks them into a State of Gloom and Darkness, which *expels* and *quenches* the Spirit of God; for Light may as well unite with Darkness, as the Spirit of God dwell with the gloomy Dulness and Horror of stupid Grief. What I have observed of these two Passions, ought to be concluded of every other *Passion* and *Temper*; we are to consider it as it *suits* with, or *resists* that new Spirit by whose holy Motions we are to be preserved in a State of Holiness.

Now seeing this Change of our Hearts, and *Newness* of Spirit is the whole of Religion, we must fear and avoid all *Irregularity* of Spirit, every *unreasonable Temper*, because it affects us in the Seat of Life, because it hurts us in our principal Part, and makes us *less capable* of the Graces, and *less obedient* to the Motions of God's Holy Spirit. We must labour after a State of
Peace,

Peace, Satisfaction and Thankfullness, free from the Folly of vain Hopes, idle Fears, and false Anxieties, that our Souls may be dispos'd to feel the Joys, to rejoice in the Comforts, and advance in the Graces of the Holy Ghost.

WITH what *Care* and *Exactness* we are to conduct our selves, with Regard to the Spirit of God, is fully set forth in the following Words: *Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouth, but that which is good to the Use of edifying, that it may minister Grace unto the Hearers, and grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are seal'd unto the Day of Redemption (a).* That we may not here mistake what is meant by *corrupt Communication*, that we may not fancy it only implies sinful and wicked Discourse, the Apostle adds; *but that which is good to the Use of edifying, that it may minister Grace unto the Hearers.* So that it is a Conversation that does not edify and profit the Hearer, that the Apostle condemns as corrupt, and such as is to be avoided. Let it be observed that the Apostle does not prohibit this kind of Conversation, because it is *useless*, impertinent, and better to be avoided, but for a Reason

(a) Eph. iv. 29.

of the utmost Consequence, that we may *not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.* This shews us, that we Christians are to govern our selves by no less a Rule, than a *Conformity* to the Spirit of God, that we are not only to deny our selves vain and foolish Actions, but also idle and unedifying Discourse, and conduct our selves in all our Behaviour, with such a Spirit of Wisdom and Purity, as may make the Holy Ghost *delight* to dwell in us. This Rule of Perfection is highly conformable to the Nature of our Religion. For as our Religion consists in a *new* Heart and *new* Spirit, it is certain that we are then only arriv'd to the true State of our Religion, when it governs our Words and Actions, and is the *constant Temper* of our Minds at all Times, and on all Occasions. A *covetous* Man is not only covetous when he is in his *Counting-Room*; he is the same Person, and govern'd by the same Temper and Way of thinking wherever he is. And the same Thing is equally true of every Way of Life, when it has once enter'd into our Heart, and become a settled Temper, it is not occasionally exercis'd in this or that Place, or at set Times; but is always in Being, and constantly disposing us to Thoughts, and Words, and Actions suitable to it.

SOME Persons seem to know so little of Religion, that they confine it to Acts of *Devotion*, and *publick Occasions* of Divine Service, they don't consider that it consists in a *new Heart* and *new Spirit*, and that Acts of Devotion, Prayer and Preaching, Watchings, Fastings and Sacraments, are only to fill us with this *new Heart and Spirit*, and make it the common constant Spirit of our Lives every Day and in every Place.

A MAN may be said to have some regard to Religion, who is *regular* at Places of Divine Worship, but he cannot be reckon'd of a *religious Spirit*, till it is his Spirit in every Place, and on every Occasion, till he lives and breaths by it, and thinks and speaks, and acts according to its Motions.

A MAN may frequent *Meetings for Mirth*, but yet, if when he is out of them, he gives himself unto Peevishness, Chagrin and Dullness, I presume no one will say, that such a Man is of a *cheerful Spirit*. It is easie to make the Application here, if we are only Attendants at *Places* of Religion, if when we are out of those Places, we are of another Spirit, I don't say Proud or Covetous, but Vain and Foolish, if our Actions are silly, and our Conversation trifling and impertinent, our Tempers vain and worldly,

worldly, we are no more of a *religious Spirit*, than a dull and peevish Man is of a *cheerful Spirit*, because he is regular at some set Meetings for *Mirth*.

IF a Person of *Pride* and *Vanity* in the general Course of his Life, should yet think himself *humble*, because he had his appointed Times of praying for *Humility*; we might justly say of him, that he knew nothing of the Nature of that Virtue: In like manner, if one, whose Conversation; whose Discourse and Carriage, and Temper in *common Life*, are not according to the Spirit of Religion, should yet think himself religious, because he had his appointed Places of Prayer, it might be justly said of him, that he was a Stranger to the Nature of true Religion. For Religion is not ours till we live by it, till it is the Religion of our Thoughts, Words, and Actions, till it goes with us into every Place, sits uppermost on every Occasion, and forms and governs our Hopes and Fears, our Cares and Pleasures. He is the religious Man who watches and guards his Spirit, and endeavours to be always in the Temper of Religion, who worships God in every Place by a Purity of Behaviour, who is as fearful of foolish Thoughts, irregular Tempers; and vain Imaginations, at one Time as at another, who is as Wise and Heavenly at

Home, or in the *Field*, as in the *House of God*. For when once Religion has got Possession of a Man's Heart, and is become as it ought to be, his ruling Temper, it is as agreeable to such a one in all Places, and and at all Times to speak and act according to its Directions, as 'tis agreeable to the *Ambitious* Man, to act according to the Motions of Ambition. We must therefore take it for granted, that if we are not Religious in our Conversation and common Temper, we are not Religious in our Hearts, we may have a *Formality* of Religion at certain *Times* and *Places*, but we are not of a *religious Spirit*.

WE see every body speaking and conversing according to their *Spirit* and *Temper*, the Covetous, the Ambitious, the Vain and Self-conceited have each of them their proper Language suitable to their Spirit and Temper, they are the *same Persons* in all Places, and always talk like themselves. If therefore we could meet with Persons of a truly Religious Spirit and Temper, we should find them like Men of other Tempers, the same Persons in *all Places*, and always Talking and Acting like themselves. We should find them Living by one Temper, and Conversing with Men with the same Spirit that they converse with God, not one Thing in one Place,

Place, and another in another, not formal and grave at a *Funeral*, and mad and frantick at a *Feast*, not listening to Wisdom at *Church*, and delighting in Folly at *Home*, not angry at one foolish Thing, and as much pleased with another, but steady and uniform in the same wise and religious Temper.

FARTHER, as we are not of a *religious Spirit* till it is the Spirit of our Life, and orders our Conversation; so it is carefully to be observed, that if our Conversation is Vain and Foolish, it keeps us in a State incapable of Religion, by *grieving* the *Holy Spirit*. For as we can do nothing without the Spirit of God, as it is our *Breath*, our *Life*, our *Light* and our *Strength*, so if we live in such a Way as *grieves* and *removes* this Holy Spirit from us, we are as Branches that are broke off from the Tree, and must perish in the Deadness and Corruption of our Nature. Let this therefore teach us to judge Rightly of the Sin and Danger of *Vain, Unedifying* and *Corrupt* Communication; it is not the Sin of *Idleness* or *Negligence*, it is not the Sin of a *Pardonable Infirmary*, it is not a *little Mistake* in spiritual Wisdom, but it is a Sin that stands between us and the *Tree* of Life, that opposes our whole Happiness, as it *grieves* and *separates* the Holy Spirit

Spirit from us. Let this also teach some People the Reason, why they are so *dead* and *senseless* of Religion, and hardly capable of an outward formal Compliance with it; they are not guilty of gross Sins, they have an aversion to *Cheating* and *Falseness*, but at the same time have no more feeling or relish of Religion, than mere *Reprobates*. Now the Reason of it is this, they live in such an *Impertinence* of Conversation, their own Communication is so constantly upon *silly* and *vain* Subjects, and they are so fond of those who have the Talent of conversing in the same Manner, that they render themselves *unfit* for the Residence of the Holy Spirit. Their whole Life is almost nothing else, but a Course of that *Filthiness*, *foolish Talking* and *Jesting*, which the Apostle forbids. Now this kind of Conversation may *grieve* the Holy Spirit, for these two Reasons, first, because it proceeds from too *disorder'd* a Soul, for the Holy Spirit to delight in; for such as our Conversation is, such is our *Heart*, for Truth itself has assured us, that *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*. If therefore we are delighted with idle *Raillery*, *foolish Jestings*, and ridiculous *Stories*, we must not think that we are only Foolish, so far as a *little talk* goes, but we must charge
our

our selves home, and be assured that it is a foolishness of Heart, a vanity of Soul that we labour under.

SECONDLY, Another Reason why this Conversation grieves the Holy Spirit, may be this, because it is of so great Consequence, and has so great an Influence in Life. We don't seem enough to apprehend, either how much *Good* or how much *Evil* there is in Conversation, and I believe it may be affirmed that the greatest Instructions, and the greatest Corruptions proceed from it. If some People were to give us their true History, they would tell us that they never had any Religion, since they had such Acquaintance, and others have been insensibly led into a *sincere Piety*, only by conversing with pious People. For Men's common Conversation and ordinary Life teach much more effectually, than any thing they say or do at set Times and Occasions.

WHEN a Clergyman Preaches, he is for the most part considered as doing his Duty, as Acting according to his Profession, and doing that which all Clergymen do, whether *good* or *bad*. But if he is the same wise and virtuous Man in his Communication, that he is in the *Pulpit*, if his Speech be *season'd with Salt*, that it may minister Grace unto the Hearers,

if the *common* and *ordinary* Actions of his Life be visibly govern'd by a Spirit of Piety. Such a one will make Converts to Holiness; he will be heard with Reverence on the *Sunday*, not so much for the Weight of what he says, as for what he says and does all the Week. And on the contrary, if a *Clergyman* when he comes out of the *Pulpit*, is but like other Men, as *Irregular* in his Tempers, as *Trifling* in his Conversation, as *Eager* in Diversions, and as *Ridiculous* in his Pleasures, as *Vain* in his Designs, as other People, he will mightily lessen his Power over the Hearts of his Hearers. A *Father* now and then gives his Son virtuous Advice, and the Son perhaps would be much the better for it, but that he never hears him talking Virtuously, but when he is giving him Advice, this makes him think, that he is then only Acting the Part of a *Father*, as when he is buying him *Clothes*, or putting him out to an *Employment*. Whereas if he saw his *Father's ordinary Life* and Conversation to be under the Rules of Religion, and his every-day Temper, a Temper of Piety, 'tis very likely, that he would be won into an Imitation of it.

A *MOTHER*, orders her Daughter to taught the *Catechism*, and desires that she
 may,

may have Books of *Devotion*, the Daughter would have imagined that she was to have formed herself by these Books, she would have read them when she was alone, but that she finds her Mother sits up at Night to read *Romances*, and if she is ill, must be read to Sleep with a *Play*. She might have had some Notion of religious *Modesty* and *Humility*, but that she sees her Mother eager after *all Diversions*, Impatient till she knows *all Intreigues*, fond of the Wit and Flattery of *Rakes*, pleas'd with the Gentility of *Fops*, and the Gracefulness of *Players*.

No w a Daughter educated with a Mother of this Temper and Conversation, is render'd almost incapable of Religion.

THIS therefore may be one Reason, why a vain unedifying Conversation *grieves* the Holy Spirit, *viz.* because it not only proceeds from a Corruption of Heart, a disorder'd State of the Soul, but because it is so powerful in its Influences, and does so much harm to those that we converse with. For it is our Communication, our *ordinary Temper*, and manner of *common Life* that affects other People, that either hardens them in Sin, or awakens them to a Sense of Piety. Let therefore all *Clergymen*, and *Masters* and *Mistresses* of Families,
look

look carefully to themselves, let them consider, that if their *ordinary Life*, their Communication be *vain, impertinent, and unedifying*, that they are not only in a corrupt State of Heart, but are guilty of corrupting and perverting the Hearts of those that belong to them. Let them not think, that they have sufficiently discharg'd their Duty, by seeing that those who relate to them, have their proper Instructions, for it is next to impossible for such Instructions to have their proper Effect, against the Temper and Example of those we converse with. If a *Clergyman Plays, and Drinks and Sports* with his Flock in the Week-Days, let him not wonder, if he preaches them asleep on *Sundays*. If a *Father is intemperate, if he Swears, and converses foolishly* with his Friends, let him not wonder, that his Children cannot be made virtuous. For there is nothing that teaches to any Purpose, but our ordinary Temper, our common Life and Conversation; and almost all People will be such as those, amongst whom they were born and bred. It is therefore the necessary Duty of all Christians in all States of Life, to look carefully to their *ordinary Behaviour*, that it be not the Means of poisoning and corrupting the Hearts of those that they converse with. They must consider, that all the Follies,
and

and Impertinencies of their ordinary Life and Conversation, have the Guilt of destroying Souls, and that the Blood of those, whom their Follies have destroy'd, will be required at their Hands.

IT is sometimes said of a *foolish, irregular and vain* Person, that he is only his *own Enemy*; but this is as absurd as to say, that a Person of *exemplary and eminent* Piety, is only his *own Friend*; for as his lively Piety will certainly communicate it self to those about him, so the Folly and impertinent Spirit of an irregular Man, will naturally infect those who are oblig'd to be near him.

A *MISTRESS* whose daily Conversation is a daily Proof to her *Maids*, that she is govern'd by a Spirit of true Piety in all that she says and does, whose regular Life is a continual visible Labour to *work out her Salvation with Fear and Trembling*, is a Blessing to all that stand about her; she communicates Happiness even to those who are born of her Servants; they will be educated in Piety, because their Parents learnt what Piety was, in waiting on such a *Mistress*.

A *GOOD-NATUR'D, drinking, sleeping, playing, swearing Master*, is a Curse to those who attend upon him; they are led into all Irregularities, by following his
Steps,

Steps, and are sent into the World hardened in Follies, and insensible of Religion, by having lived with such a *Master*. This therefore ought carefully to be considered by all Christians, as a mighty Encouragement to an exact Strictness and Regularity of Behaviour; that as a *holy Conversation* entitles us to a Reward for other People's Virtues, so an *evil Communication* and the Folly of our Lives, makes us liable to a Punishment for other Men's Sins. For we can neither live well or ill to our selves alone, but must of Necessity do either Good or Harm to others, by our Manner of Conversation. This is one great Reason why a vain corrupt Communication does so *grieve* the Holy Spirit, because it is so infecting an Evil, and does so corrupt the Manners of those that we converse with. This Doctrine of abstaining from corrupt Communication, that we may not *grieve* the Spirit of God, teaches us a high Aim and exalted Degree of Perfection, which is peculiar to Christianity. As Christianity lays the Design of uniting us to God, and raising us to a more intimate Participation of the Divine Nature, so we are to make the *Spirit* of our Religion, and the *Greatness* of its Designs, the *Rule* of our Perfection.

WE must not only conduct our selves by Rules of Morality, but pursue such Degrees of Purity, as can only be expressed by an *Imitation* of God, and aspire after such Wisdom, as is suggested to us, by considering that we are *Temples* of the Holy Ghost, and must live like Beings *consecrated* by the Spirit of Wisdom. If we were frequently to consider the Holy Presence of this God within us, and to ask our selves, Does this Discourse, this Behaviour, become one who is to act according to the *Inspirations* of the Divine Spirit? we should find, that the very Thought of this Dignity of our State, would determine several Points where no express Law condemns us; we should find such a Contrariety in many of our allowed Ways, to our Christian Greatness, to this Holy Spirit that is given unto us, as would sufficiently check our Behaviour, only by shewing us that we acted below our selves.

IT is common in Life to hear a Man say, this does not become a *Gentleman*, that does not become a Man of *Quality*: Now I would have us find out something like this in Religion; for certainly if any State of Life has its Dignity, which can excite Men to a suitable Greatness of Action, surely the State of a Christian, which is a State of such relation to God, which
unites

unites us to his Holy Spirit, ought to raise in us a Desire of acting suitable to so exalted a Condition. For who can so justly be afraid of acting *below himself*, as he that is made one with Christ? Who can so reasonably think that he is never wise, or holy, or pure enough, as he that is to walk with God in the Light of his Holy Spirit, whose Soul and Body is made a *sacred Temple* for the Divine Presence?

THE *Heathen Philosophers* exhorted Man to reverence his *Reason*, as a *Ray* of the Deity; but we can go much higher, we can exhort him to reverence the Deity that dwelleth in him, and to act with such Purity, as becomes Persons that are *inspired* by the Holy Ghost.

THIS is the Improvement that we are to make of this Doctrine of Divine Grace; it must make us exact and careful of our Behaviour, that we may walk worthy of that Holy Spirit that dwelleth in us.





C H A P. X.

The Necessity of Divine Grace, obligeth all Christians to a constant Purity, and Holiness of Conversation; wherein is shewn, the great Danger, and great Impiety, of reading vain and impertinent Books.



HAVE shewn in the foregoing Chapter, that the *Necessity of Divine Grace* is a mighty Argument for an universal Care and Exactness of Life and Conversation. I come now to speak to one remarkable Branch of it; *Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouth, but that which is good to the Use of edifying, that it may minister Grace to the Hearers, and grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the Day of Redemption.* Now if we are to let no corrupt Communication proceed
out

out of our Mouth, that we may not *grieve the Holy Spirit*, and separate him from us, then it follows, that we are also to deny our selves the Entertainment of all *corrupt, impertinent, and unedifying* Books. For if vain and idle Words are not to proceed out of our Mouths, we must be under the same Necessity of not letting them enter into our Hearts.

IF we would know what Books are to be avoided, as corrupt and grievous to the Holy Spirit, we must look back to the Rule of our Communication; for as that Communication is there said to be *corrupt*, that does not *edify* and minister Grace to the Hearers, so must we look upon all those Books as corrupt, which do not improve and confirm our Hearts in Virtue, or, in the Apostle's Words, such as do not *edify and minister Grace* to the Readers. Now this Book-entertainment is as certainly forbidden by the Apostle, as *Cheating* is forbidden by the *eighth* Commandment: For if I am not to say foolish and impertinent Things my self, because such a Communication *grieves* and removes the Holy Spirit of God, I am as certainly forbid the reading the corrupt and impertinent Sayings of other People. The Books which most-ly corrupt our Hearts, and fill us with a Spirit of Folly, are such, as almost all the
World

World allow themselves to read, I mean; Books of *Wit* and *Humour*, *Romances*; *Plays*, and other Productions of the *Poets*: Thus a *grave orthodox* old Gentleman, if he hears that his *Niece* is very good, and delights in Reading, will fill her Closet with Volumes of *Plays*, and Poems on *several Occasions*, on purpose to encourage her to spend her Time well. There is not perhaps a more surprizing Infatuation in the Conduct of Christians, than with regard to these Books.

A *FATHER* would be very much troubled to see his Daughter in Conversation pleased with the *lewd* Remarks of a *Rake*; he would be afraid that she had lost the Virtue of her Mind, if she could relish such a Turn of Conversation. Yet this same Father shall help his Daughter to a Volume of *Occasional Poems*, for her Closet-Entertainment, full of such *gross Immodesties*, as hardly any *Rake* would venture to express in any Conversation. It is perhaps a Collection of the *Poet's* finest, strongest, and most finish'd Thoughts in Lewdness and Immodesty. Every Wantonness of Imagination, every Transport of Passion, every Extravagance of Thought, which ever seiz'd him in his Life, is there preserved for the Meditation of the Christian Reader; as if *Profphaness*, *Blasphemy*;
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the grossest Descriptions of Lust, and the wildest Sallies of impure Passions, were made good and useful for a Christian, by being put into *Rhime* and *Measure*. And what shews this *Infatuation* in a yet higher Degree, is this, that it is still a prevailing Opinion in the World, that the reading virtuous Books is a great Means of improving in Virtue; whereas one would suppose, that the Books I have mentioned could only be allowed upon a Belief, that there was neither Good nor Harm to be got by Reading.

BUT however, let us remember that though the Way of the World which is thus inconsistent, may allow this *polite* kind of Entertainment, yet this is no Rule or Security for our Conduct, since we are no more to make the Spirit of the World our Guide, than we are to make the Riches of the World our Happiness. The Doctrines of the Scriptures are the only Rule by which we are now to live, and the Rule by which we shall hereafter be judged. Now if we will allow our selves in the reading *prophane, impure, and impertinent* Books, which have every thing in them that can *pervert* our Understandings, and *corrupt* our Hearts, though the Scripture forbids all *unedifying Discourse*, as a Thing that grieves the Holy Spirit, it must be
said,

said; that we act as contrary to Scripture; as if we indulged and pleased our selves in *Malice and Revenge.*

You read a *Play*, I tell you that you read *Ribaldry and Prophaness*, that you fill your Mind with extravagant Thoughts, lewd Intreagues, vain Fictions, wanton Ideas, and impure Descriptions. If you ask me where is the Sin of this, you may as well ask me where is the Sin of *Swearing and Lying*: For it is a Sin not only against this or that *particular* Text, but it is a Sin against the *whole Nature* and Spirit of our Religion; it is a Contradiction to all Holiness, and to all the Methods of arriving at it. For if evil unedifying Communication be forbidden in Scripture, and for this Reason, because it grieves the Spirit of God, then the Entertainment of such Books is certainly forbidden. For certainly the wild Rant, the prophane Speeches, filthy Jest, and impure Passions, which there abound, are an evil Communication in the highest Degree, and must therefore highly grieve and separate the Holy Spirit from us. Can therefore any Practice be forbid upon a more dreadful Penalty than this? For without the Spirit of God, we are but Figures of Christians; and must die in our Sins. If therefore we can prove it to be a small Matter to grieve

the Spirit of God, then we may allow that it is but a small Offence, to please our selves in reading those corrupt Books. Our Blessed Saviour saith, *Out of the Heart proceed evil Thoughts*, and that *these are the Things that defile a Man*; must it not therefore be a great Defilement to take evil Thoughts into our Hearts? Need we any other Motive than this, to watch and guard the Purity of our Minds? He that, notwithstanding this Doctrine of our Saviour's, dares to set apart Times for the reading the evil and impure Thoughts that are in these Books, does as plainly despise the Doctrine of Christ, as he that murders, despises the Doctrine of the Sixth Commandment.

Y o u will say perhaps, that you only read these Books now and then, for *Amusement*, and only to *divert* your Spirits, and that most of the Time which you devote to Reading, is spent in reading Books that may improve your Piety. If this be your Case, you can say that for your self which very few can; for the Generality of Readers make other Books their chief and most constant Entertainment. But to speak now to your Excuse, you only read such Books now and then, for your Amusement, and to divert your Spirits; that is, you entertain your Mind with *evil Thoughts*, you read, relish, and digest, the *Lewdness*,
Propba-

Prophaness, and *Impurity*, of these Books, not with a serious Design of making your self lewd, prophane, and impure, but only as it were in jest, and to have a little Pleasure from them. Now this is the plain Meaning of this Excuse, which is as absurd as any thing can well be supposed. It is as if a Man, who allows himself now and then to get *drunk*, and *swear*, and *rant*, should say in his Excuse, that he is for the most part very sober, and that when he takes these Liberties, it is not through any Desire or Liking of the Sin of Drunkenness, but only as it were in jest, and through the mere Gaity of his Spirits. You will ask, perhaps, if the Sin of reading *Plays* be like the Sin of *Drunkenness*. I answer, very like it, and perhaps equally grievous to the Spirit of God. For is not evil Thoughts, Vanity of Mind, and Impurity of Heart, the most dreadful State that we can be in? Can you therefore imagine that the *feeding* and *entertaining* your Mind with evil Thoughts, and impure Discourses, is a less Sin than *drinking* too much? What Rule of Reason or Scripture have you to go by in such a Judgment? You may fancy that there is something much more gross and shameful in Drunkenness, than in this Practice; but if you wou'd judge not by Fancy, but by the Light of

Religion, you would find, that it is a Drunkenness and Intemperance of the Mind, as *gross* and *shameful*, as abominable in the Sight of God, and as contrary to Piety, as that stupid Intemperance which consists in drinking too much.

ONE great Shame of Drunkenness, is this, that it fits us for *Ribaldry*, and all the *Folly* of Discourse; that it makes us say silly Things our selves, and be pleased with the most *foolish* Rant and *extravagant* Nonsense of other People. Are not you therefore doing that which is most *shameful* in Drunkenness? And is it not a Sign of greater Impurity, and greater Want of Piety, for you *cooly* and *soberly* to seek and relish such *Rant* and *Folly* of Discourse, such prophane Jest and Wantonness of Wit, as Men are most pleased with, when Drink has made them *half mad*. Now the liking of such Discourse as this, makes up great Part of the Guilt of Drunkenness, must it not therefore imply a greater Guilt in you, who like such foolish Discourse when you are sober? *Drunken* Men like ill Discourse, because Reason and Religion have then no Power over them; if therefore you have as false a Judgment, and relish a Discourse that is equally foolish and mad, must it not be owing to the same Thing, because *Reason* and *Religion* have then

then no Power over you? *Drunken* Men like any sort of Madness; they are not nice in their Taste; if a Discourse be but wild or lewd, they delight in it, but you like only a Madness that is put into *Verse*, you only delight in the impure Descriptions and Ravings of Lust, when they are adorned with *beautiful* Expressions and made *Musical* to the Ear. So that the Difference betwixt you and a *drunken* Man does not consist in this, that you have a more *religious Taste*, or *Purity* of Mind than he; but in this, that he likes *all Sorts* of Rant, and Wantonness of Discourse, but you do not like it, unless it be in *Rhime*, and divided into *Acts* and *Scenes*. He likes a Song because it is a *Song*, but you do not like it, unless its Impurity and Prophaness be made more Charming by soft and dying Sounds. If therefore a young Lady will go to Bed with her *Play*, she must not reckon herself better Employed, than her Brother who is at the same time *half Mad* over his *Bottle*. For it is impossible to shew, that the entertaining our selves with such *evil* Thoughts and *filthy* Communications is a less Sin, than to be Ranting over a *Bottle*. He that can do this, may also prove, that it is a less Sin to tell a Lye

when you are *Sober*, than when you are *Drunk*.

AGAIN, you say in your Excuse, that you only read these Books now and then, to divert your Spirits, and that you mostly read good Books. Now this Excuse carries its own Conviction, for it acknowledges all that is necessary to condemn it. For it owns that these Books are *Vain* and *Corrupting*, that they are of a contrary Nature to good Books, and naturally produce contrary Effects: And you reckon your self only secure from being hurt by them, for this Reason, because your Mind is so well Season'd and Strengthened by the Use of good Books. But pray consider the absurdity of all this. For this is saying, I venture into Temptations, not because I cannot avoid them, or am ignorant that they are Temptations, but because I know my self to be *Strong*. I read *impure* Imaginations, *filthy* Jest, and *Profane* Harrangues, not because they are an harmless, innocent Diversion, but because the Purity and Piety of my Mind is too great to receive the least Injury from them.

Now nothing can be conceived more Absurd and Irreligious than such an Excuse as this. Yet what Christian that reads *Plays* can possibly make a better. For to
say

say that our *Plays* are not full of *prophane Rant, filthy Fests* and *gross Discriptions* of Impurity, is the same Thing as to say that we have no *Plays* in English.

FARTHER, there is a proper Time for every Thing that is lawful to be done : Now can you tell me when it is proper for a Christian to Meditate upon these Books. Is it to be left to your Temper to entertain your self as it suits with you, or can your Reason point out the convenient Seasons for it ? If you are blindly to follow your Temper, then you are in no better State, than other People who are blindly following other Tempers. If your Reason can appoint any Time for such Entertainment, it must be because there is some Time that is proper for it. Now the different Times or States of our Mind may perhaps be all comprehended under some one of these.

THERE is a Time when our Hearts are more than ordinarily raised towards God, when we feel the Joys and Comforts of Religion, and enjoy a Peace that passes all Understanding. Now I suppose Reason will not allot this Time for the Diversion of such Books.

THERE is a Time, when either thro' the Neglect of Duty, Remorse of Mind, worldly Vexations, bodily Tempers, or
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the Absence of God's Spirit, that we sink into Dejection and Dulness, grow burdesome to our selves, and can hardly think of any thing with Satisfaction. Now if Reason is to judge, this is of all Times the most improper for such Entertainment. For if there is any Time that is more proper than another to think upon God, 'tis when we are *in Heaviness*.

WHEN we are *Sick*, it is time to apply to the *Physician*, when we are *Wearry* it is a proper Time to *Rest*; now there is the same natural Fitness in having recourse to God and Religion, when we are under any dejection of Mind. For it is not more the sole Property of Light to dispel Darkness, than it is the sole Property of Religion to relieve all Uneasiness. *Is any one Afflicted*, says the Apostle, *let him pray*. Now this we are to look upon, not only as a wise Advice of something that is very good to be done in Affliction, but as a strict Command, that leaves us no Choice of doing any thing in the stead of it.

It is as absolute a Command, as if he said, *Hath any one Sinned, let him Repent*. For an Application to God, is as much the one thing to be done in the Hour of Trouble, as Repentance is the one thing to be done in Time of Sin. Our Blessed Saviour saith, *Be of good comfort, I have overcome*

overcome the World. He therefore that in the want of Comfort, seeks for it in any thing else, but in the Redemption of Christ, in his Conquest over the World, is no more a true Christian, than he that does not believe in Christ.

Y o u seem to make Times of Dulness, the Occasion of your Reading those Books, by saying that you only read them to *divert* your Spirits. So that, that which you take to be a Reason for reading them, is a strong Objection against it. For it is never so improper to read those Books, as when you want to have your Spirits raised, or your Mind made easy to it self. For it is the highest Abuse you can put upon your self, to look for Ease and Quiet in any thing, but in right Apprehensions of God's Providence. And it is a Sin against the *whole Nature* of Religion, not to make it the whole Measure and Reason of all your Peace and Enjoyment in every Occurrence of Life.

I F you must amuse your self with a Volume of *Plays*, because you are laid up with a *Broken-leg*, or have *lost a Friend*, you are as far from Wisdom, as a *Child* that is to be made quiet with a *Rattle*, and not much more Religious than those, who worship *Idols*; for to seek to such things for Relief and Refreshment, is like
applying

applying to the Devil in *Distress*. A Man that drinks *Drams* every time he is dull or uneasy, is a *wise, prudent, and sober* Man, if compared to the Christian that in Seasons of Dejection, has recourse to *wanton Wit* and *prophane Rant* to divert his Spirits: He destroys the Religion and Purity of his Mind, much more effectually, than the other destroys the Constitution and Health of his Body.

SOME People think that in *great Distresses*, it is proper to seek Comfort in God and religious Reflections, but that in the *little Troubles* and Vexations of Life, any thing that can divert the Mind from them, is as well. But this is very absurd, for surely if God is our proper and sufficient Comfort in great Distresses, he must also be our *best Relief* in those that are smaller. Unless it can be said, that the Truths of Religion are able to make us bear *Persecution* and *Martyrdom* with content, but not great enough to make us easy in *little Trials*.

SECONDLY, To seek for Relief in foolish Diversions, is not only applying to a false Remedy, but is also destroying the chief Power of Religion. For as Religion has no Power over us, but as it is our Happiness, so far as we neglect, or refuse to make Use of its Comforts, so far we
lessen

lessen and destroy its Power over us. For it can no otherwise be the ordinary daily Care of our Lives, than by being our ordinary Happiness and Consolation in all the Changes and Chances of Life. A Christian therefore is to make his Christianity his Comfort, not only in Times of *great Trial* and Sufferings, but in all the *lesser Vexations* of Life, that by this Means every little Occasion of Grief or Disquiet, may be an Occasion of his being more affected with Religion, and made more sensible of its true Comforts.

THIRDLY, Those who are for driving away the ordinary Cares, and *little Vexations*, of human Life, by *Diversions*, don't enough consider the Nature of human Life. For the little ordinary Troubles of Life, make up the *whole Trouble* of Life, and the Reason why so many People are full of Trouble and Uneasiness, is, because they are unable to bear little ordinary Troubles; and they are unable to bear them, because they don't use the proper Means. For since every Disquiet is at something or other that concerns our State and Condition, there is no Way of relieving us from this Disquiet, but by getting right Notions of our Condition. If *Children* were capable of knowing themselves, or could be taught the Nature of Things,
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we should not use such Methods of pleasing them as we do ; but as they cannot think and reflect, we never endeavour to reason them into Content ; but if they have lost one *Play-thing*, we only promise them another. The Application is here very easy : For if *Men* will make themselves happy, as Children are made happy, not by considering the Nature of Things, but by a *Change of Amusements*, they must also expect to have the Vexations and Torments of Children, and be, like them, laughing and crying at they know not what, all the Days of their Life. For Children are only easily vexed, because they are easily pleased ; and it is certain, that they who can be pleased with Things without knowing their Worth and Value, must in the same Degree be liable to be displeas'd at Things, without knowing their Weight and Importance. And as this is the true State of Childhood, so whoever is in this State, whatever his *Age* may be, his *Office* or his *Dignity* in Life, is yet as truly in the State and Folly of Childhood, as he that is but four Years old. Take an Instance or two.

A *CHILD* whose Heart is half broken at some Misfortune, may perhaps be made easy with a Picture of a *Huntsman* and a *Pack of Hounds* ; but if you would comfort

fort the *Father* that grieves for his eldest Son, the *Hounds* must be all *alive*, they must *cry* and *run*, and follow a *Hare*, and this will make the Father as easy, as the *Picture* made the Child; such Happiness will make him bear the Loss of his Son.

A *MOTHER* comforts her little Girl with a *Pack of Cards* that are finely *painted*: By and by she wants to be comforted her self, some *great Calamity* has happened to her. Now you must not think to comfort her with *painted Cards*, or building Houses with them, her Grief is too great, and she has been too long a *Mother*, to be pleased with such Things; it is only *serious Ombre* that can dry her Eyes, and remove Sorrow from her Heart.

I MIGHT easily multiply Instances of this kind, but these are sufficient to shew us, that Persons of *Age* and *Authority* often differ only from Children, as one Child may differ from another. This is the true Reason why human Life is so full of Complaint, why it is such a *Mixture* of ridiculous Pleasures, and vain Disquiets; namely, because we live in an entire Ignorance of the Nature of Things, never considering why we are pleased with this, or displeas'd with that, nor any more appeal to Religion to correct our Judgments, than Children appeal to Reason to form their
Temper.

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Tempers. For if we will only *play*, or lull our selves into Repose, as Children are *rocked* to Sleep, it is not to be wondered at, if, like them, we *cry* as soon as we are *awake*. For every false Relief that is not founded in Reason, is only adding to the Weakness and Disorder of our Nature, and making us more liable to farther Vexations. For it is absolutely certain, that a Person who is made easy by vain and false Satisfactions, is in the same Degree capable of being made uneasy by vain and ridiculous Vexations. They therefore who don't think it necessary to apply to Religion in all the *common* and *ordinary* Disquiets of Life, mistake the Nature of human Life, not considering that it is our applying false Relief to these, that is the Occasion of all our Troubles, and that we are *weak* and *impatient*, *fretful* and *dissatisfied*, for no other Reason, but because we never made use of the right Remedy against the *ordinary Accidents* of Life; for had we but learnt to bear *little Troubles* and Disappointments upon right Reasons, because we are Christians, and Children of God, we should find but few Troubles that would have any great Trial in them. And the Reason why People *seemingly* religious, are subject to the same *Dulness* and *Peevishness*, to the same *Vexations*, and Variety of Grievs, that
other

other People are; is this, because they make no more Use of their Religion on these Occasions; than other People: They don't so much as intend to keep themselves *easy, thankful, and chearful*, by making Religion the *Measure and Standard* of all their Thoughts and Judgments, in all the common Chances of Life, any more than those do, who have no Thoughts about Religion. And this is the Reason why you see them as ridiculous in common Life, as vainly pleased; and as foolishly vexed, as other People.

F O R Religion makes no farther Difference betwixt People, than so far as it is applied. If one Man is constant at *Church*, and another is mostly absent, the Difference betwixt them may yet be only the Difference of frequenting and not frequenting the Service of the Church. For a Religion only carried thus far, makes no farther Difference betwixt People. You must not therefore expect that they must be different Persons in the ordinary Behaviour of their common Life, for they may, notwithstanding this Difference, be equally *vain and unreasonable* in their Ways, and equally Slaves to the Folly and Humour of their *particular Temper*. And all this for this plain Reason, because Religion, like

any thing else, can have no Effect but where it is applied.

SUPPOSE a Person had *lame Feet*, and *bad Eyes*, and that he had an *Oil* that was an infallible Cure for them both, when applied to both; if you saw him only using it for his *Eyes*, you would not wonder that it had not cured his *Feet*; you would know that his anointing his *Eyes*, could only cure his *Eyes*, and that there was no Ground to expect, that his *Feet* should be any better, till he anointed his *Feet*. And all this for this plain Reason, because Things, however good in themselves, can have no farther Effect than as they are applied. Now it is just thus in Religion. If it consists only in Devotions and *publick Worship*, it has made this Alteration in a Man, that it has taught him to attend to Devotion and publick Worship; it has operated so far as he has applied it. But why must you wonder that he is not of a *wise, virtuous, and religious* Temper, in all the Actions of his ordinary Life? Is not this wondering why the *Oil* has not cured a Man's *Feet*, when he has never applied it to them, but has only anointed his *Eyes*?

WHEN the regular Churchman as plainly makes Religion the *Measure* of his ordinary Life, as he makes it the *Rule* of his going to *Church*, when he as directly
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uses it to this Purpose, as a Man anoints his Eyes, who would be cured by anointing them; then you will see him as different in his *ordinary Life* from other People, as different in his Pleasures and Griefs, in his Cares and Concerns, as he is different from them in *Forms and Regularity* of Worship. But till Men do this, till they apply the Principles of Religion to all the Actions of *ordinary Life*, till they make it the *Measure* of all their daily Tempers, their Joys and Fears, till they think there is as much Piety in being *wise* and *holy* in their common Tempers, as in being *devout* at Church, as much Sin in being vainly pleased and foolishly vexed, as in neglecting the Divine Service; till they thus directly apply Religion to common Life, as a Man applies a Remedy to the Part that he would have cur'd, it is no more to be expected, that a Religion of *Forms of Worship* and Devotion, should make a Man religious in the common Judgments and Actions of his *ordinary Life*, than it is to be expected that an *Oil* which is only applied to our *Eyes*, should cure our *Feet*. So that it is the Manner of our *ordinary Life*, which carries on a Course of Fears and Cares, Pleasures and Amusements, Loves and Hatreds, suitable to our *Tempers* and *Condition* of Life; it is this Manner of our

ordinary Life, which we think is thus left to our selves, that makes Religion so insignificant in the World; it lies by, like a *Remedy* that is *unapplied*, it has no Effect, because it is used only as a *formal Thing*, that has its Devotions and Duties at *set Times* and Occasions; whereas it should be used and considered as the *Rule and Reason* of all our Judgments and Actions, as the *Measure* of all our Cares and Pleasures, as the *Life* of our Life, the Spirit of our Spirit, and the very Form and Essence of all our Tempers. It is to be in us, like a *new Reason* and Judgment of our Minds, that is, to reason and judge of every thing that we do, and to preside over, and govern, all the Motions of our Hearts. *Is any one merry*, saith the Apostle, *let him sing Psalms; is any one afflicted, let him pray.* This is Religion in the Apostle's Account; it is not only an Attendance at the publick Worship, but it is the *ruling Habit* of our Minds, something that constantly devotes us wholly to God, that allows of no Mirth in our common Life, but a Mirth proper for the Brethren of Christ, a Mirth that can express it self by a rejoicing in God; that allows of no other Cure for Grief or Vexation, than what is to be had from Recourse to God. And indeed, what can be more senseless and absurd, than to see a
Christian

Christian ever acting in any other Consideration than as a Christian? He is senseless to a Degree of Madness, when he indulges a Thought, or a Motion of his Heart, when he either takes a Pleasure, or relieves a Grief, where he cannot say, I do this as a Christian, as suitable to that State in which Christianity has placed me.

WE reckon a Man sufficiently *Mad* that fancies himself a *King*, and governing his Subjects, at the same Time that he is ty'd to a Bed of *Straw*. So that Madness consists in mistaking our Condition, in having a Set of Thoughts not suitable to it. Now a *Christian* repeats every Day, *I believe the Forgiveness of Sin, the Resurrection of the Body, and the Life Everlasting*, he thanks God for the *Redemption of Jesus Christ, for the Means of Grace, and for the Hope of Glory*. Yet at the same Time, in this State of *Greatness*, he fancies himself in a *thousand Wants and Miseries*. He cries and labours and toils for a Happiness, that has no Existence but in his *own Imagination*; he fancies himself a *Being*, that is to be made happy with *Sauces, and Ragaws, with painted Cloaths, and shining Diamonds*; he seeks the Pleasures of *Rakes and Libertines*, is griev'd and fretted like a Child at the loss of a *Feather*; and must be diverted as they are, with *Sherws and Plays,*

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and imaginary Scenes of Rant and Non-sense.

Now is not such a one *Mad*? Does he not know as little of his *State*, as the Man in *Straw*, that fancies himself a *King*. But for a Christian in Times of Dulness or Vexation, to seek Relief in foolish Amusements, in the loose, wild Discourses of *Plays*, when he should acquaint himself with *God*, and be at Peace, is a Degree of Madness that exceeds all others; it is acting as contrary to the Nature of Things, as if a Man that had lost the Use of his *Limbs*, should chuse to comfort his Lameness with *painted Shoes*, when he might have the Use of his Feet restor'd. For the Consolations of Religion relieve Uneasiness and Trouble, as a *lame* Man is reliev'd, when his *Limbs* are restor'd; they conquer Grief, not by cheating and deluding the Weakness of our Minds, but as the *Resurrection* conquers Death, by restoring us to a new and glorious Life. If you need any farther Conviction, that Times of Grief and Uneasiness are highly improper for these *Diversions*, let me desire you to suppose that you knew a Christian, who in his last Hours sent for *Buffoons* and *Jugglers* to divert his Mind from the Apprehensions of *Death*. I dare say you have religious Arguments enough, to prove such a Practice
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to be stupid and prophane in the highest Degree. But perhaps you are not aware, that every Argument against such a Practice as this, concludes as strongly against the same Practice at any other Time of our Life. Try therefore with your self, if every good Argument against such Folly when we are dying, will not be the same Argument against the same Folly in any other Part of our Life. For every Argument that shews the Impiety and Folly of applying to *foolish Diversions*, when we are under the Troubles of *Death*, will shew the same Impiety and Folly of applying to such Relief in any Troubles of Life. For to imagine, that we may be ridiculous and vain, and foolish in the *Troubles* of Life, but serious, holy, and religious in the *Troubles* of Death, is the same Folly and Absurdity, as to suppose, that we must be devout and penitent on our Death-Beds, but need not be devout and penitent in the other Parts of our Life. For as there is no Religion or Repentance on our Death-Bed, but what ought to be the Religion of our Lives; so is there no Wisdom, or Seriousness, or Application to God in the *Sorrows* of Death, but what is equally necessary and proper in all the *Sorrows* of Life. For we are oblig'd to live unto God in the same manner that we are to die unto God. For

why must I think rightly of Death? Why must I then apply to God? Why must I reason and judge rightly at that Time? Why may I not then divert my Mind with *loose* and *impertinent* Entertainments? Now give but the true Reason of this, and you will give the Reason why I am always to live in the same manner. For as the Reasons of Wisdom and Holiness are not founded in Death, so do they receive no Alteration by the Approach of Death; there is no Wisdom and Holiness but what is equally necessary, whither I am twenty *Years* or twenty *Days* from Death. Death may bring me into a greater Fear of Folly, but it does not bring me into a greater Necessity of avoiding it, than I was in before; because *all the Reasons* of Piety, Wisdom, and Devotion to God, have been *equally Reasons* all my Life; for the Holiness and Wisdom of Persons in Health, is as necessary, and as much the Terms of Acceptance with God, as the Holiness and Wisdom of dying Persons. And he that dares to be Foolish and Vain, and seek impertinent Entertainments, because he is *Strong and in Health*, is govern'd by the same Spirit, and sins against the same Reasons of Piety, as he that dares to be *vain, foolish,* and impertinent at the Approach of *Death*.
When therefore you think fit to amuse
your

your self with foolish Diversions, and drive away, what you may call, dull Hours, with the impertinent and wild Imaginations of *Plays, &c.* you must remember, that you are under the same Condemnation as they are, who apply to the same Relief to ease them of the Thoughts of Death. For as we always stand in the same Relation to God, as he is as much the true Happiness of *living*, as of *dying* Men, so Wisdom and Holiness, and right Dispositions of our Minds, are always Duties of the *same Necessity*.

IF it were ever lawful to forget our Happiness in God, and seek for a ridiculous Happiness in vain and extravagant Diversions, if it were ever proper to *live* in this Temper, it would be equally proper to *die* in the same Temper. For we are not upon any *new Terms* with God at our Death, nor under any other Obligations, but such as are equally necessary to make us live in his Favour.

WE often wonder at the Worldly-mindedness, the Hardness, Impenitence and Insensibility of *dying Men*. But we should do well to remember, that Worldly-mindedness, Folly, Impenitence, Vanity, and Insensibility, are as much to be wonder'd at in *living, healthful Men*; and that they are the same odious Sins, and as contrary
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to all Sense and Reason, and make as unlike to God, at one Time as at another. Either therefore you must say, that *Plays* and such like *Books* are proper Meditations for dying Men, that they keep up a *right Turn* of Mind, and do not render the Soul unacceptable to God, or else you must own that they are also improper at *all other Times*. For any Thing that indulges a State of Mind that is not according to the *Wisdom* and *Holiness* of Religion, is equally unlawful at *all Times*. Again, do but consider your own Notions that you have of *Plays*, and you will find, that if you was consistent with your self, you would never read them. Not only you, but the Generality of Readers, would think it very improper, and contrary to Piety, to read *Plays* on the *Sunday*. Now I would have you ask your self why it would be so irreligious, to read these Books on the *Sunday*? Is it because there is such a *Contrariety* betwixt the Subjects of such Books, and the Design of the *Sunday*? Is it because they are contrary to such Meditations, as we should make on that Day? Is it because they are vain and loose, and prophane, full of impure Thoughts and wanton Discriptions? There can be no possible Reason given, why we may not read these Books on the *Sunday*, but because they are thus
contrary

contrary to Piety. Need a Christian therefore have any other Argument to perswade him to refrain from these Books? Is it not a sufficient Proof, that they are never to be read, because they are not to be read when his Mind ought to have a religious Turn? Can these Books be more thoroughly condemn'd, than by being thought too bad to be open'd on the *Sunday*. Or need we only stay till *Monday*, to be *vain* and *foolish*, to put on a *new Temper*, and take delight in such Thoughts and Reflections, as we durst not touch the Day before? If therefore we would be consistent with our selves, we must either prove that *Plays* and such like *Books* are proper Meditations for pious Christians, fit for the Piety and Devotion of the *Sunday*, or else acknowledge that they are equally unfit for their Entertainment at any other Time: For it is manifestly certain, that we are to indulge *no Temper* of Mind on any Day, that we may not *improve* and *delight* in on the *Sunday*.

For to suppose, that we are to have a *new Heart*, and mind on the *Sunday*, different from that *Taste* and *Temper* which we may indulge all the Week, is the same Folly as to suppose, that we need only be *Christians* on the *Sunday*. The Difference betwixt *Sundays* and other Days, does not consist in any Difference in the *inward State* of
of

of our Minds, but in the outward Circumstances of the Day, as a general Rest from our lawful Callings, and a publick Celebration of divine Worship. This is the particular Holiness of the Sunday, which requires a particular Rest from Labour, and Attendance at divine Worship, but requires no particular *inward Holiness* of the Mind, but such as is the necessary Holiness of every Day. So that whatever is *contrary* to that Holiness, Purity, and Wisdom of Mind, which is to be our *Temper* on the Sunday, is as much to be abhorred and avoided all the Week as on the Sunday, because though Sunday differs from other Days in *outward Marks* of Holiness, yet Christians are to be every Day alike as to the *inward State* and Temper of their Minds.

T H E R E F O R E, though the *Labour* of our ordinary Employment and other Actions are to be forborn on the Sunday, and yet are very Lawful on other Days; yet the Case is very different as to these *Books*, they are *unfit* to be read at any time, for the *same Reason* that they are not fit to be read on Sundays. And the Reason is this, because though we may do things on the Week-Days, that we ought not to do on the Sunday, yet we must indulge *no Temper*, nor support any *Turn of Mind*,
that

That is contrary to that Purity of Heart and Mind, which we are to aspire after on the Sunday. We may *Labour* on the Week-Days, because Labour is an *external Action*, that is not contrary to any Purity or Holiness of Mind, but we must no more be *covetous* on the Week Days, than on Sundays, because Covetousness is a *Temper of the Mind*, a wrong *Disposition* of the Heart, that is equally contrary to Religion on *all Days*.

N o w reading is not the Labour of our *Hands*, or our *Feet*, but is the Entertainment and Exercise of the *Heart and Mind*; a Delight in either good or bad Books, is as truly a *Temper and Disposition* of the Heart, as *Covetousness* and *Pride* is a Disposition of the Heart. For the same Reason therefore that *Pride* and *Covetousness* are constantly to be avoided on every Day of our Lives, because they are *wrong Tempers* of the Mind, and *contrary* to essential Holiness: For the same Reason is the *Pleasure* of Reading *ill and corrupt* Books, always to be avoided at all times, because it is a *Temper and Disposition* of our Hearts, that is contrary to that State of Holiness which is essential to Christianity.

I F you was to hear a Christian say, that on Sundays he abstained from *evil Speaking*, and *corrupt* Communication, but not on
the

the Week-Days, you would think him either very Ignorant of the Nature of Religion, or very Prophane. Yet this is as Wise and Religious, as to forbear reading *ill Books* and *wanton Poems* only on Sundays, and to take the Liberty of Reading them at other times. For that Vanity of Mind, that Foolishness of Heart, that depraved Taste, which can relish the wild Fictions, the lewd Speeches, the prophane Language of mad Heroes, disappointed Lovers, raving in all the furious Expressions of Lust and Passion, and Madness, is as *corrupt a Temper*, as contrary to Holiness, and as odious on its own Account, as *evil Speaking* and *Malice*.

WHEN therefore you see a Person reading a *Play*, as soon as he comes from the Sunday's Solemnity of publick Service, you abhor his Prophaness, but pray be so just to your self, so consistent with common Sense, as to think every one liable to the *same Accusation*, that delights in the same Book on any other Time of the Week ; and that the Difference of reading *Plays* on Week-Days and not on Sundays, is only the Difference of *Speaking evil* on Week-Days, and not on Sundays.

FROM these Reflections, I hope, it sufficiently appears, that the reading vain and impertinent Books, is no Matter of Indif-

Indifferency, but that it is justly to be reckoned amongst our *greatest Corruptions*, that it is as unlawful, as *Malice* and *evil Speaking*, and is no more to be allowed in any Part of our Life, than *Pride* or *Covetousness*.

READING, when it is an Exercise of the Mind upon wise and pious Subjects, is, next to *Prayer*, the best Improvement of our Hearts. It enlightens our Minds, collects our Thoughts, calms and allays our Passions, and begets in us wise and pious Resolutions. It is a Labour that has so many Benefits, that does so much Good to our Minds, that it ought never to be employ'd amiss : It enters so far into our Souls, that it cannot have a little Effect upon us. We commonly say, that a Man is known by his *Companions* ; but it is certain, that a Man is much more known by the Books that he converses with. These *Closet-companions* with whom we chuse to be alone and in private, are never-failing Proofs of the State and Disposition of our Hearts.

WHEN we are abroad, we must take such as the World gives us, we must be with such People, and hear such Discourse, as the common State of our Life exposes us to. This is what we must bear with, because not altogether to be avoided. And

as it is not altogether Matter of Choice; so it is no Proof of what Temper we are of. But if we make our *Closet* an Entertainment of greater Vanity and Impertinence, than any Conversation we can meet with abroad, if *rakish, libertine* Writers are welcome to us in secret, if *Histories* of Scandal and *romantick* Intrigues are to be with us in our private Retirements, this is a plain Discovery of our *Inside*, and is a manifest Proof, that we are as vain, and foolish, and vicious, as the *Authors* that we chuse to read. If a *wanton Poem* pleases you, you may fairly reckon your self in the same State and Condition with him that made it. In like manner, if *Histories* of *Nonsense* and *Folly*, if Compositions of *Intrigue* and *Scandal* suit your Temper, such Books do as truly represent your Nature, as they represent the Nature of their Authors.

JULIA has buried her Husband, and married her Daughters, since that she spends her time in reading. She is always reading *foolish* and *unedifying* Books: She tells you every time she sees you, that she is almost at the End of the silliest Book, that ever she read in her Life; that the best of it is, it is very long, and serves to dispose of a good deal of her time. She tells you that all *Romances* are sad Stuff,
yet

yet is very impatient till she can get all that she can hear of. Histories of *Intreague* and *Scandal*, are the Books that *Julia* thinks are always too short. If *Julia* was to drink *Drams* in private, and had no Enjoyment of her self without them, she would not tell you this, because she knows it would be plainly telling you that she was a *poor disordered Sot*. See here therefore the Weakness of *Julia*; she would not be thought to be a *Reprobate*, yet she lets you know that she lives upon *Folly*, and *Scandal*, and *Impertinence*, in her *Closet*, that she cannot be in *private* without them, that they are the only Support of her dull Hours, and yet she does not perceive, that this is as plainly telling you, that she is in a *miserable, disordered, reprobate State* of Mind.

To return. It is reckoned very dangerous not to guard our Eyes; but it is much more dangerous not to guard our *Meditations*; because whatever enters that way, enters deeper into our Souls, than any thing that only affects our Sight. Reading and Meditation is that to our Souls, which Food and Nourishment is to our Bodies, and becomes a part of us in the same Manner; so that we cannot do our selves either a *little Good*, or *little Harm*, by the Books that we read.

Y O U perhaps think, that it is a *dull Task* to read only religious and moral Books, but when you have the Spirit of Religion, when you can think of God, as your only Happiness, when you are not afraid of the Joys of Eternity, you will think it a dull Task to read any other Books. Don't fancy therefore that your Heart is right, and that you are well enough affected with Religion, though you had rather read Books upon other Subjects; for it is there that you are to charge your *Dulness*; Religion has no hold of you, the Things of Eternity are not the Concerns of your Mind, it is *dull and tiresome* to you to be *wise and pious*, and that makes it a dull Task to read Books that treat only upon such Subjects. When it is the Care of your Soul to be humble, holy, pious, and heavenly-minded, when you know any thing of the Guilt and Misery of Sin, or feel a real Desire of Salvation, you will find religious Books to be the greatest Feast and Joy of your Mind.

I F you think it dull and tedious to be in wise, prudent, and sober *Company*, it is because you are neither *wise* nor *sober* your self: So if it is dull and tiresome to you to be often upon Subjects of Piety and Religion, it is as sure a Proof that you are neither *pious* nor *religious*. If therefore

you

you can suppose, that a wise and sober Man may be most delighted with the *Noise* and *Revellings* of Drunkenness, then you may suppose, that it is possible for you to be truly religious, and yet be most pleased with the *Folly* and *Impertinence* of corrupt and unedifying Books. You perhaps will say, that you have so much spare Time for reading, that you think you need not employ it all in reading good Books. It may be so, you may have also more Time than you need devote to Acts and Offices of *Charity*; but will you thence conclude, that you may at those Times do Things *contrary* to Charity, and indulge your self in *Spight* and *Mischief*?

IF you have every Day more Time than you can employ in Reading, Meditation, and Prayer; if this Time hangs upon your Hands, and cannot be turned to any Advantage, let me desire you to go to *sleep*, or *pick Straws*: For it is much better to do this, than to have recourse to corrupt and impertinent Books. Time lost in *Sleep*, or *picking Straws*, is better lost than in such Exercises of the Mind. Consider farther, that *idle* and *spare Time*, is a dangerous State, and calls for great Care and Watchfulness; to have recourse then to evil and impertinent Books, is like inviting the Devil because you are alone. If you could

read ill Books when you were in Haste, or in a Hurry of other Matters, it would do you much less Harm, than to read them, because your Time hangs upon your Hands. So that that Season which you take to be an Excuse for such *Reading*, is a stronger Argument against it; because evil Thoughts and vain Subjects have twice the Effect, and make double Impressions, when they are admitted at Times of Leisure and Idleness. Consider again, to what a miserable unchristian State you are reduced, when you are forced to have recourse to foolish Books, to get rid of your Time. Your Fortune perhaps has removed you from the Necessity of labouring for your *Bread*, you have been politely educated in Softness, you have no Trade or Employment to take up your Time, and so are left to be devoured by corrupt Passions and Pleasures. Whilst poor People are at hard Labour, whilst your Servants are drudging in the meanest Offices of Life, you oppressed with *Idleness* and *Indulgence*, are relieving your self with *foolish* and *impertinent* Books, feeding and delighting a disordered Mind with *romantick* Nonsense, and *poetick* Follies. If this be the Effect of *Riches* and *Fortune*, only to expose People to the Power of disorder'd Passions, and give them time to corrupt their Hearts with Madness and Folly,

ly, well might our blessed Lord say, *Wo unto you that are rich!*

W H E N you see a *poor Creature* drudging in the meanest Offices of Life, and glad of the dirtiest Work to get his *Bread*, you are apt to look upon him as a *miserable Wretch*, it raises a *Mixture* of Pity and Contempt in you, and you hardly know, whether you *pity* or *disregard* him most. But remember, that every time you see such a Person, you see a more reasonable Creature than your self, and one that is much more *nobly employed* than you are. He is acting *conformably* to the State of human Life, and bearing a hard Part with Patience; he is doing a Work, which, mean as it is, will be looked upon as done unto the Lord; whilst you, idling in *Softness* and *Pleasures*, are unable to bear your Time, unless it be stolen away from you by *foolish, corrupt, and unedifying Books*.

F A N S Y that you saw a *patient Christian*, old, broken, and crooked, with carrying Burdens all his Life; fancy that you saw another Christian lolling in *State* and *Softness*, and making every Day a Day of *Vanity* and *Impertinence*, of *foolish Readings*, and vain Imaginations; which of them do you think is most likely to die into the Hands of good *Angels*, and be carried into *Abraham's Bosom*?

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BUT after all, what a vain Imagination it is, to think that you have any such thing as *spare Time*? Is there any Time for which you are not accountable to God? Is there any Time which God has so left to your own Disposal, that you may sacrifice it to the Indulgence of vain Tempers, and the Corruption of your Heart? You can no more shew this, than you can shew that all your Time is your own. To talk therefore of *spare Time*, is to talk of *something* that never did nor ever will belong to any Christian. You may have a *spare Time* from this or that *Labour* or *Necessity*, you may abate, or change any *particular Exercise*, you may leave off this or that *Way*, you may take this or that *Refreshment*, you have all these *spare Times* from particular Actions, but you have no *spare Time* that releases you from the Laws of Christianity, or that leaves you at Liberty, not to act by the Principles of Religion and Piety.

Y O U have a *spare Time* to recreate and refresh your self, but this Time is to be governed by the same Principles of religious Wisdom, as the Time that is spent in Cares and Labours. For your Recreations and Pleasures are only lawful, so far as they are directed by such Wisdom and Piety, as is to direct your Cares and Labours.

bours. If therefore the Providence of God has placed you above the Necessity of labouring for your Livelihood, you must not think that you have so much *spare Time* to spend, as you please, but that you are as certainly called to some *other Labour*, as others are called to labour for their *Bread*. Great part of the World is doomed to Labour and Slavery, they have it not in their Power to chuse any other Way of Life, and their Labour is therefore an acceptable Service to God, because it is such as their State requires. Happy you, therefore, if you knew your Happiness, who have it in your Power to be always doing the *best Things*, who, free from Labour and Hardships, are at Liberty to chuse the *best Ways* of Life, to study all the Arts of *Self-improvement*, to practice all the Ways of doing Good, and to spend your Time in all the noblest Instances of Piety, Humility, Charity, and Devotion! Bless God therefore, not because you have *spare Time*, for that you have none, but that you have *spare Time* to employ in the best Ways that you can find, that whilst others are oppressed with Burdens, and worn out in Slavery, you have Time, and Leisure, and Retirement, to think and meditate upon the greatest and best of Things, to enlighten your Mind, to correct the Disorders

ders of your Heart, to study the Laws of God, to contemplate the Wonders of his Providence, to convince your self of the Vanity and Folly of the World, and to comfort and delight your Soul, with those great and glorious Things, which God has prepared for those that love him. This is the Happiness of being free from Labour, and Want; not to have *spare Time* to squander away in *Vanity* and *Impertinence*, but to have *spare Time* to spend in the Study of Wisdom, in the Exercise of Devotion, in the Practice of Piety, in all the Ways and Means of doing Good, and exalting our Souls to a State of *Christian Perfection*.

It is a Doctrine of Scripture, and highly agreeable to Reason, *That unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.* Consider therefore, that a Life of Leisure, and Freedom from Want and Hardships, is *as much* as can well be given you in this World, as it is giving you an Opportunity of living wholly unto God, and making all the Parts of your Life useful to the best Purposes. As sure therefore as it is a State, that has so many Advantages, that furnishes you with so many Means of being eminent in Piety, so sure is it that it is a State from which God expects Fruits that are worthy of it. Had it
been

been your *Lot* to labour in a *Mine*, or serve under some cruel Master, you must have served as unto God, and in so doing, you had finished the Work which God had given you. But as you are free from all these States of Life, you must look upon your self as God's *Servant*, as called to chuse that Way of labouring and spending your Time, which may most promote that which God desires to be most promoted. God has given you Liberty to chuse, but it is only that you may have the Blessedness of chusing the *best Ways* of spending your Time. Though therefore you are at Liberty from servile and mean Labour, yet you are under a Necessity of labouring in all good Works, and making all your Time, and Fortune, and Abilities, serviceable to the best Ends of Life. You have no more Time that is your own, than he has that is to live by constant Labour; the only Difference betwixt you and him, is this, that he is to be diligent in a poor slavish Labour, that oppresses the Body, and dulls and dejects the Mind; but you in a *Service that is perfect Freedom*, that renders your Body a *fit Temple* for the Holy Ghost, and fills your Soul with such Light, and Peace, and Joy, as is not to be found in any other Way of Life.

Do you think that a *poor Slave* would displease God by refusing to act in that painful Drudgery that is fallen to his Share? And do you think that God will not be more displeas'd with you, if you refuse to act your *full part* in the best of Labours, or neglect that happy joyful Business of doing Good, which your State of Life has call'd you to? Is it expected that *poor People* should make a right Use of their Condition, and turn all their Labour into a Service unto God? And can you think that you are not oblig'd to make the proper Improvement of your Condition, and turn all your *Rest*, and *Ease*, and *Freedom* from Labour, into a Service unto God? Tell me therefore no more, that you indulge your self in idle Amusements, in vain, corrupt, and unedifying Books, because you have *spare Time*; for it is absolutely false to say that you have any such thing; it is also saying, that because God has given you *spare Time* from servile Labour, that you may chuse the best Ways of Life, devote your self to the most Divine Exercises, and become eminent and exemplary in all the Instances of a holy and heavenly Life; therefore you presume to throw it away in Idleness and Impertinence.



C H A P. XI.

A farther Consideration of that Purity and Holiness of Conversation, to which the Necessity of Divine Grace calleth all Christians; wherein is shewn, that the Entertainment of the Stage, is a corrupt and sinful Entertainment, contrary to the whole Nature of Christian Piety, and constantly to be avoided by all sincere Christians.



H A V E shewn in the foregoing Chapter, that the reading of Plays, or any other Books of that kind, is a dangerous and sinful Entertainment, that corrupts our Hearts, and separates the Holy Spirit from us. You will now perhaps ask me, if it
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is unlawful for a Christian to go to the *Play-house*. I answer, that it is absolutely unlawful. As unlawful, as for a Christian to be a *Drunkard* or a *Glutton*, or to *Curse* and *Swear*. This I think, after what has been above observ'd, will be easily prov'd.

F O R let us resume the Doctrine of the 'Apostle, we are absolutely forbid all *corrupt Communication*, and for this important Reason, because it *grieves* and *separates* the Holy Spirit from us. Is it unlawful therefore to have any *corrupt Communication* of our own? And can we think it *lawful* to go to *Places set apart* for that Purpose? To give our Money, and *hire* Persons to corrupt our Hearts with ill Discourses, and inflame all the disorderly Passions of our Nature? We have the Authority of Scripture to affirm, That *evil Communication corrupts good Manners*; and that *unedifying Discourses grieve the Holy Spirit*. Now the *third Commandment* is not more plain and express against *Swearing*, than this Doctrine is plain and positive against going to the *Play-house*. If you should see a Person, that acknowledges the *third Commandment* to be a Divine Prohibition against Swearing, yet going to a *House*, and giving his *Money* to Persons, who were there met, to *Curse* and *Swear* in fine Language, and invent *musical Oaths* and *Imprecations*, would you not think
him

him Mad in the highest Degree? Now consider, whether there be a less Degree of Madnefs in going to the Play-house. You own, that God has called you to a great Purity of Conversation, that you are forbid all *foolish Discourse*, and *filthy Festings*, as exprefsly, as you are forbid *Swearing*; that you are to let no *corrupt Communication* proceed out of your Mouth, but *such as is good for the Use of edifying*; and yet you go to the *House set apart* for corrupt Communications, you hire Persons to entertain you with all manner of *Ribaldry*, *Prophaness*, *Rant*, and *Impurity* of Discourse; who are to present you with *vile Thoughts*, and *lewd Imaginations* in *fine Language*, and to make *wicked*, *vain*, and *impure* Discourse, more lively and affecting, than you could possibly have it in any ill Company. Now, is not this finning with as high a Hand, and as grossly offending against the plain Doctrines of Scripture, as if you was to give your *Money* to be entertained with *musical Oaths* and *Curses*? You might reasonably think that *Woman* very ridiculous in her *Piety*, that durst not Swear her self, but should nevertheless frequent *Places* to hear *Oaths*. But you may as justly think her very ridiculous in her *Modesty*, who, tho' she dares not to say, or look, or do an immodest Thing her self, shall yet give her *Money*,

ney, to see *Women* forget the *Modesty* of their Sex, and talk *impudently* in a publick *Play-house*. If the *Play-house* was fill'd with *Rakes* and ill *Women*, there would be nothing to be wonder'd at in such an Assembly; for *such Persons* to be delighted with such Entertainments, is as natural, as for any *Animal* to delight in its proper *Element*. But for Persons who profess Purity and Holiness, who would not be suspected of *Immodesty* or *corrupt Communication*, for them to come under the Roof of a *House devoted* to such ill Purposes, and be pleas'd Spectators of such Actions and Discourses, as are the Pleasure of the most abandon'd Persons, for them to give their Money to be thus entertain'd, is such a Contradiction to all Piety and common Sense, as cannot be sufficiently expos'd.

A G A I N, when you see the *Players* acting with Life and Spirit, Men and Women equally bold in all Instances of *Prophaness*, *Passion*, and *Immodesty*, I dare say, you never suspect any of them to be Persons of *Christian Piety*. You can't even in your Imagination join Piety to such Manners, and such a Way of Life. Your Mind will no more allow you to join Piety with the Behaviour of the *Stage*, than it will allow you to think *two* and *two* to be *ten*. And perhaps you had rather see your Son chain'd
to

to a *Galley*, or your Daughter driving *Plow*, than getting their Bread on the *Stage*, by administering in so scandalous a Manner to the Vices and corrupt Pleasures of the World. Let this therefore be another Argument to prove the *absolute Unlawfulness* of going to a *Play*. For consider with your self, is the Business of *Players* so contrary to Piety, so inconsistent with the Spirit and Temper of a true Christian, that it is next to a Contradiction to suppose them united? How then can you take your self to be *Innocent*, who *delight* in their Sins, and *hire* them to commit them? You may make your self a Partaker of other Men's Sins, by Negligence, and for want of reprovng them; but certainly, if you stand by, and assist Men in their evil Actions, if you make their Vices your Pleasure and Entertainment, and pay your Money to be so entertain'd, you make your self a Partaker of their Sins in a very high Degree. And consequently it must be as unlawful to go to a *Play*, as it is unlawful to approve, encourage, assist, and reward a Man for *renouncing* a Christian Life. Let therefore every *Man* or *Woman* that goes to a *Play*, ask themselves this Question, Whether it suits with their Religion to act the *Parts* that are there acted? Perhaps they would think this as inconsistent with that Degree of
Piety

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Piety that they profess, as to do the vilest Things. But let them consider, that it must be a wicked and unlawful Pleasure, to delight in any Thing that they dare not do themselves. Let them also consider, that they are really *acting* those Indecencies and Impieties themselves, which they think is the particular Guilt of the *Players*. For a Person may very justly be said to do that *himself*, which he *pays* for the doing, and which is done for his Pleasure. You must therefore, if you would be consistent with your self, as much abhor the Thoughts of being at a *Play*, as of being a *Player* your self, for to think that you must forbear the one and not the other, is as absurd, as to suppose, that you must be temperate your self, but may assist, encourage, and reward other People for their Intemperance. The Business of a *Player*, is prophane, wicked, lewd, and immodest, to be any way therefore approving, assisting, or encouraging him in such a Way of Life, is as evidently sinful, as 'tis sinful to assist and encourage a Man in *stealing*, or any other Wickedness.

To proceed. When I consider *Churches*, and the Matter of *Divine Service*, that it consists of holy Readings, Prayers, and Exhortations to Piety, there is Reason to think, that the House of God, is a natural

ful Means of Promoting Piety, and Religion, and rendering Men devout and sensible of their Duty to God. The very Nature of divine Assemblies thus carried on, has this direct Tendency: I ask you whether this is not very plain, that Churches thus employed should have this Effect.

C O N S I D E R therefore the *Play-house*; and the Matter of the Entertainment there, as it consists of *Love-intreagues*, *blasphemous Passions*, *prophane Discourses*, *lewd Descriptions*, *filthy Fests*, and all the most extravagant Rant of wanton, vile, profligate Persons of both Sexes, heating and inflaming one another with all the *Wantonness* of Address, the *Immodesty* of Motion, and *Lewdness* of Thought, that Wit can invent; consider, I say, whether it be not plain, that a House so employed, is as certainly serving the Cause of *Immorality* and *Vice*, as the House of God is serving the Cause of *Piety*? For what is there in our *Church-Service*, that shews it to be *useful* to Piety and Holiness, what is there in divine Worship to correct and amend the Heart, but what is directly *contrary* to all that is doing in the *Play-house*? So that one may with the same Assurance affirm, that the *Play-house*, not only when some very prophane Play is on the *Stage*, but in its *daily, common* Entertainment, is as certainly

ly the *House of the Devil*, as the Church is the *House of God*. For though the Devil be not professedly Worshipped by Hymns directed to him, yet most that is there Sung, is to his Service, he is there *obeyed and pleased* in as certain a Manner, as God is Worshipped and Honoured in the Church.

Y O U must easily see, that this Charge against the *Play-house*, is not the Effect of any *particular Temper*, or *Weakness* of Mind, that it is not an *uncertain Conjecture*, or *religious Whimsy*, but is a Judgment founded as plainly in the *Nature and Reason* of Things, as when it is affirmed that the House of God, is of Service to Religion. And he that absolutely condemns the *Play-house*, as wicked and corrupting, proceeds upon as much Truth and Certainty, as he that absolutely commends the *House of God*, as Holy, and tending to promote Piety.

W H E N therefore any one pretends to vindicate the *Stage* to you, as a proper Entertainment for holy and religious Persons, you ought to reject the Attempt with as much Abhorrence, as if he should offer to shew you, that our *Church-Service* was rightly formed for those Persons to join in, who are *devoted to the Devil*. For to talk of the *Lawfulness and Usefulness* of the *Stage*,
is

is fully as absurd, as contrary to the plain Nature of Things, as to talk of the *Unlawfulness* and *Mischief* of the Service of the Church. He therefore that tells you; that you may safely go to the *Play-house*; as an innocent, useful Entertainment of your Mind, commits the same Offence; against common Sense, as if he should tell you, that it was dangerous to attend at Divine Service, and that its *Prayers* and *Hymns* were great *Pollutions* of the Mind.

F O R the Matter and Manner of *Stage-entertainments*; is as undeniable a Proof, and as obvious to common Sense, that the House belongs to the Devil, and is the Place of his Honour, as the Matter and Manner of *Church-Service* proves that the Place is appropriated to God.

O B S E R V E therefore, that as you do not want the Assistance of any one, to shew you the *Usefulness* and *Advantage* of Divine Service, because the thing is plain, and speaks for it self. So neither, on the other hand, need you any one to shew you the *Unlawfulness* and *Mischief* of the Stage, because there the thing is equally plain, and speaks for it self. So that you are to consider your self, as having the same Assurance that the *Stage* is wicked, and to be abhorred and avoided by all Christians, as you have that the Service of the Church

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is Holy, and to be sought after by all Lovers of Holiness. Consider therefore, that your Conduct, with relation to the *Stage*, is not a Matter of *Nicety* or *scrupulous Exactness*, but that you are as certain that you do wrong in as notorious a Manner, when you go to the *Play-house*, as you are certain that you do right, when you go to *Church*.

Now it is of mighty Use to conceive things in a right Manner, and to see them as they are in their own Nature. While you consider the *Play-house*, as only a *Place of Diversion*, it may perhaps give no Offence to your Mind : There is nothing *shocking* in the Thought of it ; but if you would lay aside this Name of it for a while, and consider it in its *own Nature*, as it really is, you would find that you are as much deceived, if you consider the *Play-house*, as only a *Place of Diversion*, as you would be, if you considered the House of God only as a *Place of Labour*.

W H E N therefore you are tempted to go to a *Play*, either from your own Inclination, or the Desire of a Friend, fancy that you was asked in plain Terms to go to the Place of the *Devil's Abode*, where he holds his *filthy Court* of evil Spirits ; that you was asked to join in an Entertainment, where he was at the *Head* of it, where the
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whole of it was in order to his Glory, that Mens Hearts and Minds might be separated from God, and plunged into all the Pollutions of Sin and Brutality. Fancy that you was going to a Place that as certainly belongs to the Devil, as the *Heathen Temples* of old, where *Brutes* were Worshipped, where *wanton Hymns* were Sung to *Venus*, and *drunken Songs* to the God of *Wine*. Fancy that you was as certainly going to the Devil's Triumph, as if you was going to those *old Sports*, where People committed Murder, and offered Christians to be devoured by wild Beasts, for the Diversion of Spectators. Now whilst you consider the *Play-house* in this View, I suppose that you can no more go to a *Play*, than you can expressly renounce your Christianity.

C O N S I D E R therefore now, that you have not been frightening your self with *groundless Imaginations*, but that what you have here fancied of the *Play-house* is as strictly true, as if you had been fancying, that when you go to Church, you go into the House of God, where the heavenly Host attend upon his Service, and that when you there read the Scriptures, and Sing holy Hymns, you join with the Quires above, and do God's Will on Earth as it is

done in Heaven. For observe, I pray you, how justly that Opinion of the *Play-house* is founded. For, was it a Joy and Delight to the Devil to see *Idols worshipp'd*, to see Hymns and Adorations offer'd up to impure and filthy Deities? Were Places and Festivals appointed for such Ends, justly esteem'd Places and Festivals devoted to the Devil? Now give the Reason why all this was justly reckoned a Service to the Devil, and you will give as good a Reason, why the *Play-house* is to be esteemed his *Temple*. For, what though Hymns and Adorations are not offered to impure and filthy Deities, yet if *Impurity* and *Filthiness* is there the *Entertainment*, if immodest Songs, prophane Rant, if Lust and Passion entertain the Audience, the Business is the same, and the Assembly does the *same Honour* to the Devil, though they are not gathered together in the Name of some *Heathen God*.

FOR Impurity and Prophaness in the Worshipers of the true God, is as acceptable a Service to the Devil, as Impurity and Prophaness in any Idolaters, and perhaps a *lewd Song* in an Assembly of Christians gives him greater Delight, than if it had been sung in a Congregation of *Heathens*.

IF therefore we may justly say, that a *House* or *Festival* was the Devil's, because
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he was *delighted* with it, because what was there done, was an *acceptable Service* to him, we may be assured that the *Play-house*, is as really the House of the Devil, as any other House ever was. Nay, it is reasonable to think that the *Play-houses* in this Kingdom, are a greater Pleasure to him than any *Temple* he ever had in the *Heathen World*. For as it is a greater Conquest to make the Disciples of Christ delight in *Lewdness* and *Prophaness*, than ignorant Heathens, so a *House*, that in the Midst of *Christian Churches*, trains up Christians in *Lewdness* and *Prophaness*, that makes the Worshippers of Christ flock together in Crowds to rejoice in an Entertainment, that is as contrary to the Spirit of Christ, as *Hell* is contrary to *Heaven*, a House so employed, may justly be reckoned a more delightful Habitation of the Devil, than any Temple in the Heathen World. When therefore you go to the *Play-house*, you have as much Assurance, that you go to the Devil's peculiar Habitation, that you submit to his Designs, and rejoice in his Diversions, (which are his best Devices against Christianity) you have as much Assurance of this, as that they who worshipped filthy Deities, were in reality Worshippers of the Devil.

AGAIN, Consider those *old Sports* and *Diversions*, where Christians were sometimes thrown to wild Beasts, consider why such Sports might well be looked upon as the *Devil's Triumph*. I suppose you are at no stand with your self, whether you should impute such Entertainments to the Devil. Consider therefore, why you should not as readily allow the *Stage* to be his Entertainment.

FOR was it a Delight to the Devil to see Heathens sporting with the bodily Death of Christians? And must it not be a greater Delight to him to see Christians sporting themselves in the Death of their Souls?

THE Heathens could only kill the Body, and separate it from the Soul, but these Christian-Diversions murder the Soul, and separate it from God. I dare say, no Arguments could convince you, that it was *lawful* to rejoice at those Sports, which were thus defiled with human Blood; but then pray remember, that if the Death of the Soul be as great a Cruelty, as the Death of the Body, if it be as dreadful for a Soul to be separated from God, as to be separated from the Body, you ought to think it as entirely unlawful to enter that House where so many eternal Lives are sacrificed, or ever to partake of those
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Diversions which separate such Numbers of Souls from God.

HENCE it appears, that if instead of considering the *Play-house*, as only a Place of Diversion, you will but examine what Materials it is made of, if you will but consider the Nature of the Entertainment, and what is there doing, you will find it as wicked a Place, as sinful a Diversion, and as truly the peculiar Pleasure and Triumph of the Devil, as any wicked Place, or sinful Diversion, in the Heathen World. When therefore you are ask'd to go to a *Play*, don't think that you are ask'd only to go to a *Diversion*, but be assured that you are ask'd to *yield* to the Devil, to go over to his *Party*, and to make one of his Congregation; that if you do go, you have not only the Guilt of *buying* so much vain and corrupt Communication, but are also as certainly guilty of going to the Devil's House, and doing him the same Honour, as if you was to partake of some *Heathen Festival*.

Y O U must consider, that all the Laughter there, is not only vain and foolish, but that it is a Laughter amongst Devils, that you are upon *prophane Ground*, and hearing Musick in the very Porch of Hell.

T H U S it is in the Reason of the Thing, and if we should now consider the State
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of our *Play-house* as it is in Fact, we should find it answering all these Characters, and producing Effects suitable to its Nature: But I shall forbear this Consideration, it being as unnecessary to tell the Reader that our *Play-house* is in Fact the *Sink of Corruption and Debauchery*, that it is the general Rendezvouze of the most profligate Persons of both Sexes, that it corrupts the Air, and turns the adjacent Places into publick Nuisances; this is as unnecessary, as to tell him, that the *Exchange* is a Place of *Merchandise*.

Now it is to be observed, that this is not the State of the *Play-house*, through any accidental Abuse, as any innocent or good Thing may be abused; but that Corruption and Debauchery are the truly natural and genuine Effects of the *Stage-Entertainment*. Let not therefore any one say, that he is not answerable for those Vices and Debaucheries, which are occasioned by the *Play-house*, for so far as he partakes of the Pleasure of the *Stage*, and is an Encourager of it, so far he is chargeable with those Disorders which necessarily are occasioned by it. If Evil arises from our doing our Duty, or our Attendance at any *good Design*, we are not to be frightened at it; but if Evil arises from any thing as its *natural and genuine Effect*, in all such Cases, so

so far as we contribute to the Cause, so far we make our selves guilty of the Effects. So that all who any way assist the *Playhouse*, or ever encourage it by their Presence, make themselves chargeable in some Degree, with all the Evils and Vices which follow from it. Since therefore it cannot be doubted by any one, whether the *Playhouse* be a Nursery of Vice and Debauchery, since the evil Effects it has upon People's Manners, is as visible as the Sun at Noon, one would imagine, that all People of Virtue and Modesty, should not only avoid it, but avoid it with the utmost Abhorrence; that they should be so far from entering into it, that they should detest the very Sight of it. For what a Contradiction is it to common Sense, to hear a Woman lamenting the miserable Lewdness and Debauchery of the Age, the vicious Taste, and irregular Pleasures of the World, and at the same time dressing her self to meet the lewdest Part of the World, at the Fountain-Head of all Lewdness, and making her self one of that Crowd, where every abandon'd Wretch is glad to be present? She may fancy that she hates and abominates their Vices, but she may depend upon it, that till she hates and abominates the Place of vicious Pleasures, till she dare not come near an Entertainment which is
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the Cause of so great Debauchery, and the Pleasure of the most debauched People, till she is thus disposed, she wants the truest Sign of a real and religious Abhorrence of the Vices of the Age.

FOR to wave all other Considerations, I would only ask her a Question or two on the single Article of *Modesty*. What is *Modesty*? Is it a little *mechanical outside* Behaviour, that goes no farther than a few *Forms and Modes* at particular Times and Places? Or is it a *real Temper*, a rational Disposition of the Heart, that is founded in *Religion*? Now if *Modesty* is only a mechanical Observance of a little outside Behaviour, then I can easily perceive how a modest Woman may frequent *Plays*; there is no Inconsistency for such a one to be one Thing in one Place, and another in another Place, to disdain an immodest Conversation, and yet at the same time, relish and delight in immodest and impudent Speeches in a publick *Play-house*. But if *Modesty* is a *real Temper* and Disposition of the Heart, that is founded in the Principles of Religion, then I confess, I cannot comprehend how a Person of such *Modesty*; should ever come twice into a *Play-house*. For if it is Reason and Religion that has inspired her with a modest Heart, that makes her careful of her Behaviour, that makes

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her hate and abhor every Word, or Look, or Hint, in Conversation, that has the Appearance of Lewdness, that makes her shun the Company of such as talk with too much Freedom; if she is thus modest in *common Life*, from a Principle of Religion, a Temper of Heart, is it possible for such a one (I don't say to seek) but to bear with the Immodesty and Impudence of the *Stage*? For must not Immodesty and Impudence, must not loose and wanton Discourse be the same *hateful Things*, and give the same Offence to a modest Mind, in one Place, as in another? And must not that Place, which is the Seat of Immodesty, where Men and Women are trained up in Lewdness, where almost every Day in the Year, is a Day devoted to the foolish Representations of *Rant, Lust, and Passion*; must not such a Place, of all others, be the most odious, to a Mind that is *truly modest* upon Principles of *Reason and Religion*? One would suppose, that such a Person should as much abominate the Place, as any other filthy Sight, and be as much offended with an Invitation to it, as if she was invited to see an immodest Picture. For the Representations of the *Stage*, the inflamed Passions of Lovers there describ'd, are as gross an Offence to the Ear, as any Representation that can offend the Eye.

IT ought not to be concluded, that because I affirm the *Play-house* to be an Entertainment *contrary* to Modesty, that therefore I accuse all People as void of Modesty, who ever go to it. I might affirm, that *Transubstantiation* is contrary to all *Sense* and *Reason*; but then it would be a wrong Conclusion to say, that I affirmed that all who believe it are void of all *Sense* and *Reason*. Now as *Prejudices*, the Force of *Education*, the Authority of *Numbers*, the Way of the *World*, the Example of *great Names*, may make People *believe*, so the same Causes may make People *act* against all *Sense* and *Reason*, and be guilty of Practices which no more suit with the *Purity* of their Religion, than *Transubstantiation* agrees with *common Sense*.

To proceed. I once heard a young Lady thus excusing her self for going to the *Play-house*, that she went but seldom, and then in Company of her *Mother* and her *Aunt*, that they always knew their *Play* before-hand, and never went on the *Sacrament-Week*. And what Harm, pray, says she, can there be in this? It breaks in upon no Rules of my Life, I neglect no part of my Duty, I go to *Church*, and perform the same Devotions at Home, as on other Days. It ought to be observed, that this Excuse can only be allowed where the *Di-*
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version it self is *innocent*; it must therefore be first considered, what the Entertainment is in it self, whether it be suitable to the Spirit and Temper of Religion; for if it is right and proper in it self, it needs no Excuse; but if it be *wrong*, and *dangerous* to Religion, we are not to use it *cautiously*, but avoid it *constantly*.

SECONDLY, It is no Proof of the Innocency of a Thing, that it does not interfere with our *Hours of Duty*, nor break the Regularity of our Lives, for very wicked Ways of spending Time, may yet be consistent with a regular Distribution of our Hours. She must therefore consider, not only whether such a Diversion hinders the Regularity of her Life, or breaks in upon her Devotions, publick or private, but whether it hinders or any way affects that *Spirit and Temper*, which all her Devotions aspire after. Is it conformable to that Heavenly Affection, that Love of God, that Purity of Heart, that Wisdom of Mind, that Perfection of Holiness, that Contempt of the World, that Watchfulness and Self-denial, that Humility and Fear of Sin? Is it conformable to these Graces, which are to be the *daily Subject* of all her Prayers? This is the only way for her to know the *Innocency* of going to a Play. If what she there hears and sees, has no *Contrariety* to
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any *Graces* or *Virtues* which she prays for; if all that there passes be fit for the *Purity* and *Piety* of one that is lead by the Spirit of Christ, and is working out her Salvation *with Fear and Trembling*, if the *Stage* be an Entertainment, that may be thought according to the Will of God, then she disposes of an Hour very innocently, tho' her *Mother* or her *Aunt* were not with her. But if the contrary to all this be true, if most of what she there hears and sees, be as *contrary* to the *Piety* and *Purity* of Christianity, as *Feasting* is contrary to *Fasting*; if the House which she supports by her Money, and encourages by her Presence, be a notorious Means of Corruption, visibly carrying on the Cause of Vice and Debauchery, she must not then think her self excus'd for being with her *Mother*.

THIRDLY, The same Person would perhaps think it strange to hear one of her virtuous Acquaintance, giving the like excuse for going now and then to a *Masquerade*.

Now this Diversion is new in our Country, and therefore People judge of it in the manner that they should, because they are not blinded by *Use and Custom*; but let any one give but the true Reasons why a Person of Virtue and Piety should not give into such Entertainments, and the same
Reasons

Reasons will shew; that a Person of strict Piety, should keep at as great a Distance from the *Play-house*: For the Entertainment of the *Stage* is as directly opposite to the *Purity* of Religion, and is as much the *natural Means* of Corruption, and serves all bad Ends in as high a Manner as *Masquerades*, they only differ, as bad Things of the same kind may differ from one another. So that if the evil Use, the ill Consequences of *Masquerades*, be a sufficient Reason to deter People of Piety, from partaking of them, the same evil Use and ill Consequences of the *Stage*, ought to keep all People of Virtue from it. If People will consult their *Temper* only, they may take the Entertainment of one, and condemn the other, as following the same Guide, they may abhor *Intemperance*, and indulge *Malice*, but if they will consult Religion, and make that the Ground of their Opinions, they would find as strong Reasons for a constant Abhorrence of the *Stage*, as of *Masquerades*.

FARTHER, she that is for going only to the *Play-house* now and then, with this Care and Discretion, does not seem to have enough consider'd the Matter, or to act by Reason, for if the *Stage* be an innocent and proper Entertainment, if in its own Nature it be as harmless and useful, as *walk-*

ing, riding, taking the Air, or conversing with virtuous People, if this be the Nature of it, then there is no need of this Care and Abstinence, a virtuous Lady need not excuse her self, that she goes but very seldom. But if it be the very Reverse of all this, if it be that Fountain of Corruption and Debauchery, which has been observ'd, then to go to it at any Time admits of no excuse, but is as absurd, as contrary to Reason and Religion, as to do any other ill Thing with the same Care and Discretion. If you should hear a Person excusing her Use of *Paint* in this manner, that truly she painted but *very seldom*, that she always said her Prayers first, that she never us'd it on *Sundays*, or the Week before the *Communion*, would you not pity such a *Mixture* of Religion and Weakness? Would you not desire her to use her Reason, and either allow *painting* to be an innocent Ornament, suitable to the *Sobriety* and *Humility* of a Christian, or else to think it as unlawful at one time as at another? Would you not think it strange that she should condemn *painting* as odious and sinful, and yet think, that the Regularity of our Life, the Exactness of her Devotions, and her Observance of Religion, might make it lawful for her to *paint now and then*? I don't doubt, but you plainly see the Weakness

ness and Folly of such a Pretence for *painting* under such Rules at certain Times. And if you would but as impartially consider your Pretences for going sometimes to the *Play-house*, you would certainly find them equally Weak and Unreasonable. For *Painting* may with more Reason be reckon'd an *innocent Ornament*, than the *Play-house* an innocent Diversion; and it supposes a greater Vanity of Mind, a more perverted Judgment, and a deeper Corruption of Heart, to seek the Diversion of the *Stage*, than to take the Pleasure of a *borrow'd Colour*.

I KNOW you are offended at this *Comparison*, because you judge by your *Temper* and *Prejudices*, and don't consider the Things, as they are in themselves, by the pure Light of Reason and Religion. *Painting* has not been the Way of your *Family*, it is supposed to be the Practice but of *very few*, and those who use it, endeavour to *conceal* it, this makes you readily condemn it; on the contrary, your *Mother* and your *Aunt* carry you to a *Play*, you see *virtuous* People there, and the same Persons that fill our *Churches*, so that your *Temper* is as much engag'd to think it lawful to go sometimes to a *Play*, as it is engag'd to think the Use of *Paint* odious and sinful. Lay aside therefore these *Prejudices*

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for a while, fancy that you had been train'd up in some Corner of the World, in the Principles of Christianity, and had never heard either of the *Play-house* or *Painting*. Imagine now that you was to examine the Lawfulness of them by the Doctrines of Scripture. You would first desire to be told the Nature of these Things, and what they meant. They would tell you that *painting* was the borrowing of *Colours* from Art, to make the Face look more beautiful. Now tho' you found no express Text of Scripture against *painting*, you would find, that it was expressly against *Temper* requir'd in Scripture; you would therefore condemn it, as proceeding from a *Vanity* of Mind, a *Fondness* of Beauty; you would see that the Harm of *painting* consisted in this, that it proceeded from a *Temper* of Mind, contrary to the *Sobriety* and *Humility* of a Christian, which indeed is harm enough, because this Humility and Sobriety of Mind is as *essential* to Religion, as Charity and Devotion. So that in judging according to Scripture, you would hold it as unreasonable to *paint sometimes*, as to be sometimes *malicious, indervout, proud, or false*.

Y O U are now to consider the *Stage*, you are to keep close to Scripture, and fancy that you yet know nothing of *Plays*.

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You ask therefore first what the *Stage* or *Play-house* is. You are told that it is a *Place* where all Sorts of People meet to be entertained with *Discourses*, *Actions*, and *Representations*, which are recommended to the Heart, by beautiful Scenes, the Splendour of Lights, and the Harmony of Musick. You are told, that these Discourses are the Inventions of Men of Wit and Imagination, which describe imaginary *Intrigues* and *Scenes of Love*, and introduce *Men* and *Women* discoursing, raving, and acting in all the wild, indecent *Transports of Lust and Passion*. You are told that the *Diversion* partly consists of *lewd* and *Prophane* Songs, sung to fine Musick, and partly of extravagant *Dialogues* between *immodest Persons*, talking in a *Stile of Love and Madness*, that is no where else to be found, and entertaining the *Christian Audience*, with all the *Violence of Passion*, *Corruption of Heart*, *Wantonness of Mind*, *Immodesty of Thought*, and *prophane Jest*s, that the *Wit of the Poet* is able to invent. You are told, that the *Players*, *Men* and *Women*, are trained up to act and represent all the *Descriptions of Lust and Passion* in the *liveliest Manner*, to add a *Lewdness of Action* to *lewd Speeches*; that they get their *Livelihood*, by *Cursing*, *Swearing*,

and Ranting, for three Hours together to an Assembly of Christians.

Now though you find no particular Text of Scripture condemning the *Stage*, or *Tragedy*, or *Comedy*, in exprefs Words, yet, what is much more, you find that such Entertainments are a gross Contradiction to the *whole Nature* of Religion. They are not contrary to this or that particular Temper, but are contrary to that *whole Turn* of Heart and Mind which Religion requires. *Painting* is contrary to *Humility*, and therefore is always to be avoided as sinful. But the Entertainment of the *Stage*, as it consists of *blasphemous* Expressions, *wicked* Speeches, *Swearing*, *Cursing*, and *Prophaning* the Name of God, as it abounds with *impious* Rant, *filthy* Jest, *distracted* Passions, gross Descriptions of *Lust*, and *wanton* Songs, is a *contradiction* to every *Doctrine* that our Saviour and his Apostles have taught us. So that to abhor *Painting* at all Times, because it supposes a *Vanity* of Mind, and is contrary to *Humility*, and yet think there is a lawful Time to go to the *Play-house*, is as contrary to common Sense, as if a Man should hold that it was lawful sometimes to offend against *all the Doctrines* of Religion, and yet always unlawful to offend against *any one* *Doctrine* of Religion.

IF therefore you was to come (as I supposed) from some Corner of the World, where you had been used to live and judge by the Rules of Religion, and upon your arrival here, had been told what *Painting*, and the *Stage* was ; as you would not expect to see Persons of *religious Humility* carrying their Daughters to *Paint-shops*, or inviting their *pious Friends* to go along with them, so much less would you expect to hear, that *devout, pious* and *modest* Women carried their Daughters, and invited their virtuous Friends to meet them at the *Play*. Least of all could you imagine, that there were any People *too pious* and *devout* to indulge the Vanity of *Painting*, and yet not devout or pious enough to *abhor* the Immodesty, Prophaness, Ribaldry, Immorality, and Blasphemy of the *Stage*.

To proceed. A *polite Writer* (a) of a late Paper thought he had sufficiently ridiculed a certain Lady's Pretention to *Piety*, when speaking of her *Closet*, he says,

*Together lie her Prayer-book and Paint,
At once t' improve the Sinner and the Saint.*

Now whence comes it that this *Writer* judges so rightly, and speaks the Truth so

(a) Spectator, N^o 79.

plainly in the Matter of *Painting*? Whence comes it that the generality of his Readers, think his Observation just, and join with him in it? It is because *Painting* is not yet an *acknowledged Practice*, but is for the most Part reckoned a *shameful Instance* of Vanity. Now as we are not prejudiced in Favour of this Practice, and have no Excuses to make for our *own Share* in it, so we judge of it impartially, and immediately perceive its Contrariety to a religious Temper and State of Mind. This *Writer* saw this in so strong a Light, that he does not scruple to suppose, that *Paint* is as natural and proper a Means to improve the *Sinner*, as the *Prayer-book* is to improve the *Saint*.

I SHOULD therefore hope, that it need not be imputed to any *Soreness* of Temper, religious *Weakness* or *Dulness* of Spirits, if a *Clergyman* should imagine, that the *Prophaness*, *Debauchery*, *Lewdness*, and *Blasphemy* of the *Stage*, is as natural a Means to improve the *Sinner*, as a *Bottle of Paint*; or if he should venture to shew, that the *Church* and the *Play-house* are as ridiculous a Contradiction, and do no more suit with the *same Person*, than the *Prayer-book* and *Paint*.

AGAIN, Suppose you were told that the *holy Angels* delight in the *Repentance* and *Devotion* of *Christians*, that they at-

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tend at God's *Altar*, and rejoice in the Prayers and Praises, which are there offer'd unto God ; I imagine you could easily believe it, you could think it very agreeable to the Nature of such good Beings, to see *fallen Spirits* returning unto God. Suppose you were told also, that these same heavenly Beings delighted to be with Men in their *Drunkenness, Revellings, and Debaucheries*, and were as much pleased with their Vices and Corruptions, as with their Devotions, you would know, that both these Accounts could not possibly be true ; you could no more doubt in your Mind, whether *good Angels* that delight in the Conversion and Devotion of Christians, do also delight in their Vices and Follies, than you can doubt, whether the same Person can be *alive* and *dead* at the same time. You would be sure, that in Proportion as they delighted in the *Piety* and *Holiness* of Men, they must necessarily in the same Degree abhor and dislike their *Vices* and *Corruptions*. So that, supposing the Matter of our *Church-Service*, the Excellency of its Devotions, its heavenly Petitions, its lofty Hymns, its solemn Praises of the most High God, be such a glorious Service as invites and procures the Attendance of that *blessed Quire*, if this be true, I suppose you are as certain

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as you can be of the plainest Truth, that the *Filthiness*, the *Rant*, *Ribaldry*, *Prophaness*, and *Impiety* of the *Stage*, must be the Hatred and Aversion of those *good Spirits*. You are sure, that it is as impossible for them to behold the *Stage* with Pleasure, as to look upon the *Holy Altar* with Abhorrence.

CONSIDER a while on this Matter, and think how it can be lawful for you to go to a *Place*, where if a *good Angel* was to look with Pleasure, it would cease to be good? For as that which makes Angels good, is the same *right Temper* which makes you good, so the same Tempers which would render Angels evil, must also render you evil. You may perhaps tell me, that you are not an *Angel*. I grant it, neither are you Jesus Christ, neither are you God, yet you are called to be *Holy* as Jesus Christ was *Holy*, and to be *Perfect* as your *Father* which is in *Heaven* is *Perfect*. Though you are not an *Angel*, yet it is Part of your glorious Hope, that you shall be *as the Angels of God*, so that as you are capable of their Happiness; you must think your self obliged to be as like them in your Temper, as the Infirmary of your present State will permit. If *Angels* are to rejoice in singing the Praises of God, though their Joy may exceed

exceed yours, yet you are as much obliged to your Degree of Joy in this Duty, as they are. Angels by the Light and Strength of their Nature, may abhor all manner of Sin with stronger Aversion, a higher Degree of Abhorrence, yet you are as much obliged to abhor all manner of Sin, as they are. So that it is no more lawful for you to delight in impure, profane Diversions, which *good Angels* abhor, than it is lawful for you to hate those *Praises* and *Adorations* which are their Delight.

Y O U are to consider also, that these *contradictory Tempers* are no more possible in the *same Men*, than in the *same Angels*; 'tis no more possible for your Heart truly to delight in the Service of the Church, to be in earnest in all its Devotions, and at the same time delight in the Entertainment of the *Stage*, than it is possible for an *Angel* to delight in them both.

Y O U may fancy that you relish these Entertainments, and at the same time relish and delight in the Service of God, and are very hearty in your Devotions; you may fancy this, as *cruel Men* may fancy themselves to be *merciful*, the *covetous* and *proud* may fancy themselves to be *humble* and *heavenly-minded*; but then take Notice, that it is all but mere Fancy: For it
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is as impossible to be really devout with your Reason and Understanding, and at the same time delight in the Entertainment of the *Stage*, as 'tis impossible to be really *charitable*, and delighting in *Malice* at the same time. There is indeed a *Falseness* in our Hearts, a *Mechanism* in our Constitution, which will deceive those, who do not constantly *suspect* themselves. There are *Forms of Devotion*, little Rules of Religion, which are fixed in us by *Education*, which we can no more part with, than we can part with any other Customs, which we have long used. Now this makes many People think themselves mighty pious, because they find it is not in their Nature to forbear or neglect such and such *Forms of Piety*; they fancy that Religion must have its Seat in their Heart, because their Heart is so unalterable in *certain Rules* of Religion. Thus a Person that is exact in his Times of Prayer, will perhaps think himself much injured, if you was to tell him that it is his *want of Piety*, that makes him relish the Diversion of the *Stage*: His Heart immediately justifies him against such an Accusation, and tells him how constant he is in his Devotions; whereas it is very possible, that he may have but little more Piety, than what consists in some *Rules and Forms*, and that his Constancy to such
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Rules, may be owing to the same Cause, which makes others constantly *sleepy* at such an Hour, that is, the mere *Mechanism* of his Constitution, and the Force of *Custom*. This is the State of Numbers of People, otherwise it would not be so common, to see the same People constant and unalterable in *some Rules* of Religion, and as constant and unalterable in *Pride, Passion, and Vanity*.

AGAIN; there are many other Instances of a false Piety: Some People feel themselves capable of *religious Fervours*, they have their Passions frequently affected with *religious Subjects*, who from thence imagine, that their Hearts is in a true State of Religion. But such a Conclusion is very deceitful. For the mere *Mechanism* and natural Temper of our Bodies, and our present Condition, may be the chief Foundation of all this. Thus a *Lady* may find her self, as she thinks, *warm* in her Devotions, and praise God at *Church* with a Sense of Joy; she thinks she is very good because she finds her self thus *affected* and *pleased* with the Service of the *Church*; whereas it may be, the very Reason why she is more than ordinarily devout, and thinks it a Pleasure to praise God, is, because she is going to a *Ball*, or a *Play*, as soon as Divine Service is over. This agreeable

able Expectation has so put her Spirits in Order, that she can be very *thankful* to God all the time she is at Church.

ANOTHER has been pleased with the Compliments paid to her Person, she finds her self very *finely dress'd*, she is full of Joy under *such Thoughts*, and so can easily break out into *Fervours of Devotion*; and rejoice in God at a Time, when she can rejoice in *any thing*. These frequent Starts of Devotion, makes her think her self to be far advanced in Piety, and she does not perceive that the *Height* of her Devotion, is owing to the *Height* of her Vanity. Let her but be *less pleased* with her self, let her be *unregarded, undressed*, without such *pleasing Reflections*, and she will find her self sunk into a strange *Dulness* towards Devotion.

THE same Temper is very frequent in *common Life*; you meet a Person who is very fond of you, full of Affection, and pleased with every thing you say or do; you must not imagine that he has more *Friendship* for you, than when he saw you last, and hardly took any Notice of you: The Matter is only this; the Man is in a *State of Joy* at something or other, he is pleased with *himself*, and so is easily pleased with you, stay but till this *flow of Spirits* is gone off, and he will shew you no more

more Affection, than he us'd to do. This is the Religion of *Numbers* of People; they are devout by *Fits* and *Starts*, in the same Manner as they are pleased by *Fits* and *Starts*, and their Devotion at those very Times is no more a Sign of true *Piety*, than the Civility and Compliments of a Person *over-joyed*, are Signs of true *Friendship*. But still these little Flashes of Devotion make People think themselves in a State of Religion.

TAKE another Instance of a false Piety of another kind: *Junius* has been orthodox in his Faith, a Lover of Churchmen, a Hater of Hereticks, these several Years; he is the first that is sorry for a *dangerous Book* that is come out, he is amazed what People would be at by such Writings, but thanks God there is Learning enough in the World to confute them. He reads all the Confutations of *Atheists*, *Deists*, and *Hereticks*, there is only one sort of Books, for which *Junius* has no Taste, and that is, Books of *Devotion*. He freely owns that they are not for his Taste, he does not *understand their Flights*.

IF another Person was to say so much, it would be imputed to his want of Piety; but because *Junius* is known to be an Enemy to Irreligion, because he is constantly at Church, you suppose him to be a pious Man,

Man, though he thus confesses that he wants the *Spirit of Piety*. It is in the same Manner that *Junius* deceives himself, his Heart permits him to neglect Books of Devotion, because his Heart is constantly shewing him his *Zeal* for Religion, and *Honour* for the Church; this makes him no more suspect himself to want any Degrees of Piety, than he suspects himself to be a Favourer of *Heresy*. If he never thinks any ill of himself, if he never suspects any Falseness in his own Heart, if he is prejudiced in favour of all his own Ways, it is because he is prejudiced in favour of all *orthodox Men*. *Junius* reads much Controversy, yet he does not take it ill, that you pretend to inform him in Matters of *Controversy*; on the contrary, he never reads Books of Devotion, yet is angry if you pretend to correct him in Matters of that kind. You may suppose him mistaken in something that he is always studying, and he will be thankful to you for setting him right; but if you suppose him mistaken in Things that he never applies himself to, if you suppose that any Body knows what *Humility*, *Heavenly-mindedness*, *Devotion*, *Self-denial*, *Mortification*, *Repentance*, *Charity*, or the *Love* of God is, better than he, you provoke his Temper, and he won't suffer himself to be informed by you.

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Great Numbers of People are like *Junius* in this Respect; they think they are very religious by listening to Instruction upon certain Points, by reading certain Books, and being ready to receive farther Light, who yet can't bear to be instructed in Matters where they are most likely to be deceived, and where the Deceit is of the utmost Danger. They will be thankful for your telling them the particular Times in which the *Gospels* were writ; for explaining the Word *Euroclydon*, or *Anathema Maranatha*; they will be glad of such useful Instruction, but if you touch upon such Subjects as really concern them in a high Degree, such as try the *State* and *Way* of their Lives, these religious People, who are so fond of religious Truths, cannot bear to be thus instructed.

WHAT is the Reason that when we consult *Lawyers*, it is not to hear Harangues upon the *Law*, or its several *Courts*; it is not to hear the Variety of Cases that concern other People, but it is to be instructed and assisted in our *own Case*? Why do we thank them for dealing impartially with us, for searching and examining into the true State of our *Case*, and informing us of every Thing that concerns us? What is the Reason that we apply to *Physicians*, not to hear the Rise and Progress of *Physick*, or

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the History of Disputes amongst them, not to hear of other People's Distempers, but to tell them our own *particular State*, and learn the *Cure* of our own Distempers? Why do we thank them for being *nicely exact* in searching us out, for examining into every Part of our Lives, our Ways of *eating, drinking, and sleeping*, and not suffering us to deceive our selves with wrong Opinions and Practices? What is the Reason why we act thus consistently, and in the same Manner, in both these Instances? Now the only Reason is this, because in both these Instances we are *really in earnest*. When you are in earnest in your Religion, you will act as consistently and in the same Manner there. When you desire *solid Piety*, as you desire *sound Health*, your chief Concern will be about your *own Disorders*; you will thank *Divines* and *Casuits* for making you their chief Care, you will be glad to have them examine and search into your Ways of Life, to be rightly informed of the Follies, Vanities, and Dangers, of your State. You will be glad to read those Books, and consult those *Casuits*, which are most *exact* and *faithful* in discovering your Faults, who question and examine all your Ways, who discover to you your *secret* Corruptions, and *unsuspected* Follies, and who are best able to give you the

the surest Rules of arriving at Christian Perfection ; when you are in earnest in your Religion, you will as certainly act in this Manner, as you act in the same Manner with the *Lawyer* or *Physician*. Take this also for an undeniable Truth, that till you do act in this Manner, you are not in earnest in your Religion. This therefore is a good Rule to examine your self by. Do you find that you act in Religion as you do in other Cases, where you are in earnest ? Are you as suspicious of your self, as fearful of Mistake, as watchful of Danger, as glad of Assistance, as desirous of Success, as in other Matters where your Life or Fortune are at stake, or where your Heart is engaged ? Never imagine that your Religion is founded in a true Fear of God, and a hearty Desire of Salvation, till you find your self acting as you do in other Matters, where your Fears are great, and your Desires hearty. If you had rather read Books that *entertain* the Mind, than *correct* the Heart, if you had rather hear a *Casuist* examine other People's Lives, than your's, if you had rather hear him talk of the Excellency and Wisdom of Religion, than be exact in trying the Excellency and Wisdom of your way of Life, you must take it for granted, that you are not in earnest in the Reformation of your Life, and that there

are *some Tempers* in you more strong and powerful, that more rule and govern you, than the Fear of God, and a Desire of Salvation. To return now to my Subject.

I H A D observed that People who are religious upon a true Principle, who are devout with their *Reason* and *Understanding*, cannot possibly either *relish* or *allow* the Entertainment of the *Stage*. I observed that these contradictory Tempers, a Delight in the Offices and Divine Services of the *Church*, and a Delight in the Entertainments of the *Stage*, are no more possible to be in the same *good Men*, than in the same *good Angels*. This made it necessary for me to step a little aside from my Subject, to consider some *false Appearances* of Religion, which are chiefly founded in *natural Temper, Custom, Education*, and the *Way* of the World; which yet so far deceive People, as to make them fancy themselves in a good State of Religion, while they live and act by another Spirit and Temper.

N o w I readily own, a Man may come up to these Appearances of Religion, he may carry on a Course of such Piety as this, and yet *relish* the Diversion of the *Stage*. It is no Contradiction for a Man to like to say his Prayers, to be often delighted with the Service of the *Church*, to
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hear *Sermons*, to read *Divinity*, to detest *Hereticks*, and yet find a constant *Pleasure* in the vain *Entertainments* of the *Stage*. The World abounds with Instances of People who *swear*, *drink*, and *debauch*, with all these *Appearances* of Religion. Now as we are sure that where we see these Vices, those Persons have only an *Appearance* of Religion, which is founded in something else than a true Fear of God; so wherever we see sober and regular People, Lovers of the Church, and Friends to Religion, taking the *Pleasure* of the *Stage*, we may be as sure that their Religion is *defective*, and founded in something that is *weak*, and *false*, and *blind*, that permits them to act so inconsistently. For the reasoning is full as strong in one Case as in the other. Now although I would not have People to be solely guided by what they feel, or think they feel in their own Minds, yet this we may depend upon, as certain in our Tempers, that we never *love* or *affect* any thing *truly*, but we *hate* and *avoid* all that is *contrary* to it in an equal Degree. So that we may be assured, that all that *Love*, or *Zeal*, or *Affection*, that we pretend for any thing, is but mere Pretence, and a *blind Motion*, unless it appears by a zealous, lively Abhorrence of every thing that is *contrary* to it. Upon this Ground I

again affirm, that it is impossible for truly religious People to *bear* the Entertainments of the *Stage*. For consider only the Matter in this short View. A truly religious Person is to love and fear, and adore God, with *all his Heart, and with all his Soul, and with all his Strength*; now I ask you, who it is that has this true Love of God? Is it he that delights in Prophaness at *all Times*? Or is it he that can bear with Prophaness *sometimes*? Or is it he that abhors and avoids it at *all Times* and in *all Places*? Which of these three hath a Right to be esteemed a true Lover of God? Now he that goes to a *Play* at any time, though he may say that he does not delight in *Prophaness*, yet he must own, that he can sometimes, and in some Places, bear with Prophaness. For Prophaness of some kind or other, is in most of our *Plays*, almost as common, as the Name of God in Scripture. But I will suppose it were only now and then, and that no Prophaness either of Thought or Expression happened *above twice or thrice* in an Entertainment, yet this is *Prophaness*, and he that can bear with *so much*, that can seek the Entertainment as a Pleasure, must acknowledge, that though he does not delight in Prophaness as such, yet he can *bear* with Prophaness for the Sake of *other Delight*. Now ask your
self,

self, has not he a truer Love of God, whose Piety will not suffer him to bear with Prophaness at any Time, or in any Place, or for any Pleasure? Am I not therefore supported by plain Reason and common Sense, when I affirm, that it is for want of true Piety, that any People are able to bear the Entertainment of the *Stage*?

Y O U see also that no higher Degree of Piety, is required to fill one with a constant Abhorrence of the *Stage*, than such a Piety, as implies an Abhorrence of Prophaness at *all* Times, and in *all* Places.

W H E N you are thus pious, when you thus love God, you will have a Piety, a Love of God that will not suffer you to be at an Entertainment that has any *Mixture* of Prophaness. Now as there must be this manifest Defect in true Piety, before you can bear with the Prophaness of the *Stage*; so if you consider every other Part of the Character of a truly religious Man, you will find, that there must be the same Defect run through the whole of it, before he can be fit for such Diver-
sion.

Y O U tell me that you love the *Church*, and rejoice at the Returns of Divine-Ser-vice, though you now and then go to a *Play*. Now consider what it is which

these Words mean, *If you love and delight in the Service of the Church*, then you love to be in a *State of Devotion*, you love to *draw near* to God, you love to be made sensible of the *Misery, Guilt, and Weight* of Sin, you love to *abhor and deplore* your Iniquities, and to lament the *Misery and Vanity* of human Life ; you love to hear the Instructions of *Divine Wisdom*, to *raise* your Soul unto God, and *sing* his Praises ; you love to be on your Knees *praying* against all the *Vanities and Follies* of Life, and for all the *Gifts and Graces* of God's Holy Spirit.

Now all this is implied in the true Love of *Church-Service* ; for unless you love it *for what it is*, and because you feel its Excellency, your Love is only a *blind, mechanical* Motion ; but if you love it in Truth and Reality, if you are thus affected with it, because all its Parts so highly suit the Condition of human Nature, whilst you are thus disposed, you can no more relish the *wicked Spirit and foolish Temper* of Stage-Entertainments, than *sincere, dying* Penitents can delight in the *Guilt* of their Sins.

NEVER imagine therefore, that you are sincerely affected with the *Confessions* of the Church, or that you are truly glad for the Return of those Hours, which hum-
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ble you in the Sight of God, never imagine that you truly feel the Misery and Weight of Sin, or sincerely lament the Corruption of your Nature, whilst you dare go to the Fountain-head of Corruption, the Place where Sin reigns, and exercises its highest Power.

NEVER imagine that you have the Spirit of Devotion, that your Heart is renewed with the Holy Ghost, that it truly rejoices in the Means of Grace, and the Hope of Glory ; never imagine that it is your Joy and Delight to worship God in the Beauty of Holiness, to send up your Soul to him in Prayers and Praises, so long as the Way of the *Stage*, its *impious* Nonsense, *vile* Jests, *prophane* Passions, and *lewd* Speeches, are not your utter Abhorrence. For it is not more absurd to believe, that a *corrupt* Tree may bring forth *good Fruit*, than to believe, that a pious Mind, truly devoted to God, should taste and relish the Entertainment of the *Stage*. For the *Taste* and *Relish* of the Mind is a more certain Sign of the State and Nature of the Mind, than the Quality of *Fruit* is a Sign of the State and Nature of *Trees*.

HAD the *impure Spirits* which asked our Blessed Saviour, to suffer them to enter into the *Herd of Swine*, said at the same time, that it was their only *Delight* and
Joy

Joy to dwell in the Light and Splendour of God, no one could have believed them, any more than he could believe Light and Darknes to be the same Thing.

WHEN you have the Spirit of Christ, when you are devoted to God, when Purity, Holiness, and Perfection is your real Care, when you desire to live in the Light of God's Holy Spirit, to act by his Motions, to rise from Grace to Grace; till you are finished in Glory, it will be as impossible for you, whilst you continue so disposed, either to *seek* or *bear* the Entertainment of the *Stage*, as it is impossible for *pure* and *holy Spirits* to ask to enter into a *Herd of Swine*. If you want the Delight of so corrupt an Entertainment, so contrary to the *Spirit* and *Purity* of Religion, you ought no more to believe yourself, when you pretend to true Piety and Devotion, than you ought to have believ'd those *impure Spirits*, if they had pretended to have been *Angels of Light*. For this is absolutely certain, and what you ought carefully to consider, that nothing ever gives us any Pleasure, but what is *suitable* to the *State* and *Temper* of Mind that we are then in. So that if the *Corruption*, the *Immorality*, the *prophane Spirit* and *wanton Temper* of the *Stage-Entertainment* can
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give you any Pleasure, you are as sure that there is *something* like *all these Vices* in your Heart, as you can be of any thing that relates to a human Mind.

LASTLY, Ask your self, when you think that you have a true Love for Divine-Service, whether he is not a truer Lover of it, whose Soul is so *fashioned* to it, so *deeply affected* with it, that he can delight in nothing that is *contrary* to it; who can bear with *no* Entertainment that is made up of *Speeches, Passions, Harangues,* and Songs so *opposite* to the Wisdom, the Discourses, Instructions, and Hymns, of Divine-Service. This I believe, you cannot deny, and if this cannot be denied, then it must be owned as a certain Truth, that he who can bear with the *Stage-Entertainment*, has this farther Defect, that he wants the *true Love* of Divine-Service.

AGAIN, it is Part of a truly religious Man, to *love* the Scripture, and *delight* in reading them; you say this is your Temper, though you go to *Plays*. I answer, that it is for want of a true Love and Delight in the Scriptures, that you are able to relish *Plays*. You may perhaps so love the Scriptures, that you may think it your Duty to read them; and desire to
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understand them. But when you once so love the Scriptures, as to *love to be like* them, to desire that the Spirit and Temper of Scripture, may be the *one Spirit and Temper* of your Life: When, for Instance, you love this Doctrine, *strive to enter in at the straight Gate. If thy right Eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee.* When you are of the same Mind with this Scripture, *be sober, be vigilant, because your Adversary the Devil, as a roaring Lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour* (a).

W H E N you are intent upon this Truth, for we must all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his Body (b). When this Text has taken Possession of your Heart, seeing then that all these things must be dissolved, what Manner of Persons ought ye to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness (c)?

W H E N you resign up your whole Soul to this Exhortation, *Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in Heart* (d). When your Heart can truly bear you witness to this Doctrine, that you put on the whole Armour of Christ,

(a) 1 Pet. iii. 8.

(b) 2 Cor. v. 10.

(c) 2 Pet. v. 6.

(d) Mat. xi. 29.

that

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that you may be able to stand, that you live by Faith and not by Sight, pressing after the Prize of your high Calling. When you thus love and delight in the Scriptures, when you thus enter into its Spirit and Temper, when its Purity is your Purity, its Fears, and Hopes, and Joys, are your Fears, and Hopes, and Joys, you will find your self one of those, who constantly and at all Times abominate the Folly, Impertinence and Prophaness of the Stage.

LET me desire you, when you are dress'd for a *Play*, to read over our Saviour's Divine Sermon on the *Mount* before you go; try whether your Soul is full of the Spirit that is there taught, examine whether you then feel in your Heart such a Love of the Scripture, as to love those Conditions of Blessedness that are there describ'd, *Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, blessed are they that Mourn, blessed are they that Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness.* Do you find your self in these Heights of Holiness? Is your Soul reform'd, purify'd and exalted according to these Doctrines? Or can you imagine, that you are conforming your self to those Doctrines, that you depart from none of them, when you are preparing your self for a Pleasure, which is the proper Pleasure of the most corrupt and debauched Minds? *Blessed are the pure in Heart*

Heart for they shall see God. Can you think that you are rightly affected with this Doctrine, that you are labouring after this Purity, that you are preparing to see God, when you are going to an Entertainment, to which they ought only to go, who have no Thoughts of seeing God, nor any Desires after that Purity which prepares us for it?

LASTLY, Another Virtue essential to Christian Holiness is *Chastity*, our Blessed Saviour has given us the Measure of this Virtue in these Words. *But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a Woman to lust after her, hath committed Adultery with her already in his Heart.* We are sure therefore that this Virtue is not preserv'd, unless we keep our selves clear from all immodest Thoughts and impure Imaginations; we are sure also that the Guilt of these, is like the Guilt of Adultery. This is the Doctrine of Christ. Look now into the *Play-house*, and think whether any Thing can be imagin'd more contrary to this Doctrine?

FOR, not to consider the monstrous Leudness and Immodesty of the *Stage*, take it in its *best State*, when some admir'd *Tragedy* is upon it. Are the extravagant Passions of *distracted Lovers*, the impure Ravings of *inflam'd Heroes*, the tender Complaints; the Joys and Torments of Love, and gross
Descriptions

Descriptions of Lust; are the *indecent* Actions, the amorous Transports, the *wanton* Address of the Actors, which make so great a Part of the *most sober and modest* Tragedies, are these Things an Entertainment consistent with this Christian Doctrine? You may as well imagine, that Murder and Rapine are consistent with Charity and Meekness. I hope it will not now be said, that I have spent too much Time upon a Subject, that seems not necessary in a Treatise upon *Christian Perfection*. For tho' these Things are generally look'd upon as *little* because they are called *Pleasures* and *Diversions*, yet they may as justly be called *Vices* and *Debaucheries*; they affect Religion, as *Lies* and *Falshood* affect it, in the very Heart and Essence, and render People as incapable of true Piety, as any of the grossest Indulgences of Sensuality and Intemperance. And perhaps it may be true, that more People are kept Strangers to the true Spirit of Religion, by what are called *Pleasures*, *Diversions*, and *Amusements*, than by *confess'd Vices*, or the Cares and Business of Life. I have now only one Thing to beg of the *Reader*, that he would not think it a sufficient Answer to all this, to say in general, that it is a Doctrine too *strict* and *rigid*, but that he would consider every Argument as it is in it self, not whether it be strict and rigid, but whether it be false Reasoning,

Reasoning, or more strict and rigid than the Doctrine of Scripture: If it prescribes a Purity and Holiness which is not according to the Spirit and Temper of the Scriptures, let it be rejected, not as too strict and rigid; but as a Species of false Worship, as vain and ridiculous as *Idolatry*: But if what is here asserted, be highly conformable to the most plain Doctrines of Scripture, the saying that it is too strict and rigid, is of no more Weight against it, than if it was said, that it was *too true*. It is not my Intention to trouble the World with any particular Notions of my own; or to impose any unnecessary Rules, or fancy'd Degrees of Perfection upon any People. But in declaring against the *Stage*, as I have done; I have no more follow'd any particular Spirit or private Temper, or any more exceeded the plain Doctrine of Scripture, than if I had declared against *Drunkenness* and *Debauchery*. Let a Man but be so much a *Christian*, as not to think it too high a Degree of Perfection, or too strict and rigid to be in earnest in these two Petitions, *Lead us not into Temptation, but deliver us from Evil*; and he has Christianity enough to persuade him, that it is neither too high a Perfection, nor too strict and rigid, constantly to declare against, and always to avoid the Entertainment of the *Stage*.



C H A P. XII.

Christians are called to a constant State of Prayer and Devotion.



It is one principal Article of our Religion, to believe, that our Blessed Saviour is now at the Right Hand of God, there making *perpetual Intercession* for us, till the Redemption of Mankind is finish'd. Prayer therefore is undoubtedly a proper Means of drawing near to God, a necessary Method of restoring Sinners to his Favour, since he who has conquer'd Sin and Death, who is constituted Lord of all, is yet, as the *great Advocate* for Sinners, oblig'd to make *perpetual Intercession* for them.

WHENEVER therefore, we are in the Spirit of Prayer, when our Hearts are lifted up to God, breathing out Holy Petitions to the Throne of Grace, we have this Encouragement to be *constant* and *fer-*
vent in it, that we are then joining with

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an Intercession at the Right Hand of God, and doing that for our selves on Earth, which our Blessed Saviour is perpetually doing for us in Heaven. This Reason of Prayer is perhaps not much consider'd, yet it certainly contains a most powerful Motive to it. For who, that considers his Redemption, as now carrying on by an *Intercession* in Heaven, can think himself so agreeable to God, so like his Saviour, as when the Constancy of his own Prayers bears some Resemblance to that never ceasing Intercession which is made above? This shews us also, that we are most of all to desire those Prayers, which are offer'd up at the *Altar*, where the Body and Blood of Christ are joined with them. For as our Prayers are only acceptable to God through the Merits of Jesus Christ, so we may be sure, that we are praying to God in the most prevailing Way, when we thus pray in the Name of *Christ*, and plead his Merits in the *highest Manner* that we can.

DEVOTION may be consider'd, either as an Exercise of publick or private Prayers at set Times and Occasions, or as a Temper of the Mind, a State and Disposition of the Heart, which is rightly affected with such Exercises. Now external Acts of Devotion, are like other external Actions, very liable to Falseness, and are only so far
good

good and valuable, as they proceed from a right Disposition of Heart and Mind. Zealous Professions of *Friendship* are but the more abominable Hypocrisy, for being often repeated, unless there be an equal Zeal in the Heart; so solemn Prayers, rapturous Devotions, are but repeated Hypocrisies; unless the Heart and Mind be *conformable* to them. Since therefore it is the Heart only, that is devout, since the Regularity and Fervency of the Heart, is the Regularity and Fervency of Devotion; I shall consider Devotion chiefly in this Respect; as it is a *State* and *Temper* of the Heart. For it is in this Sense only, that Christians are called to a *constant State* of Devotion, they are not to be always on their Knees in Acts of Prayer, but they are to be always in the State and Temper of Devotion.

FRIENDSHIP does not require us to be always waiting upon our Friends in external Services, these Offices have their Times and Seasons of Intermiſſion, it is only the Service of the Heart, the Friendship of the Mind, that is never to intermit; it is not to begin and end, as external Services do; but is to persevere in a Constancy like the Motion of our Heart, or the Beating of our Pulse. It is just so in Devotion, *Prayers* have their *Hours*, their Beginning and Ending; but that Turn of Mind, that Dis-

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position

position of the Heart towards God, which is the Life and Spirit of Prayer, is to be as constant and lasting as our own Life and Spirit.

THE repeating of a *Creed* at certain Times, is an Act of Faith, but that Faith which *overcometh* the *World*, stays neither for Times nor Seasons, but is a living Principle of the Soul, that is always believing, trusting, and depending upon God. In the same Manner, verbal Prayers are Acts of Devotion, but that Prayer which saveth, which openeth the Gates of Heaven, stops not at *Forms* and *Manuals* of Devotion, but is a Language of the Soul, a Judgment of the Heart, which worships, adores, and delights in God, at all Times and Seasons.

THE *Necessity* and *Reason* of Prayer, is like all other Duties of Piety, founded in the Nature of God, and the Nature of Man. It is founded in the Nature of God, as he is the sole Fountain and Cause of all Happiness; it is founded in the Nature of Man, as he is weak and helpless, and full of Wants. So that Prayer is an *earnest Application or Ascent of the Heart to God, as to the sole Cause of all Happiness*. He therefore that most truly feels the Misery, Corruption, and Weakness, of his own Nature, who is most fully convinced that a
Relief

Relief from all these Disorders, and a true Happiness, is to be found in God alone, he who is most fully convinced of these two Truths, is most fully possessed of the Spirit of Prayer. There is but one Way therefore, to arrive at a true State of Devotion, and that is, to get right Notions of our selves, and of the Divine Nature, that having a full View of the Relation we bear to God, our Souls may as constantly aspire to him, as they as constantly aspire after Happiness. This also shews us the absolute Necessity of all those foremention'd Doctrines of *Humility, Self-denial, and Renunciation of the World.* For if Devotion is founded in a Sense of the Poverty, Misery, and Weakness of our Nature, then nothing can more effectually destroy the Spirit of Devotion, than *Pride, Vanity, and Indulgence,* of any kind. These Things stop the Breath of Prayer, and as necessarily extinguish the Flame of Devotion, as Water extinguishes common Fire.

IF Prayer is also founded in right Notions of God, in believing him to be the sole Fountain and Cause of all our Happiness, then every thing that takes this Truth out of our Minds, that makes us *less sensible* of it, makes us so far *less capable* of Devotion; so that worldly Cares, vain Pleasures, false Satisfactions, are all to be renounced, that we may be able to pray.

For the Spirit of Prayer has no farther hold of us, than so far as we see our Wants, Imperfections, and Weakness, and likewise the infinite Fulness and All-sufficiency of God; when we thoroughly feel these two great Truths, then are we in the true Spirit of Prayer. Would you therefore be in the State and Temper of Devotion, you must practice all those Ways of Life, that may humble you in your own Sight; you must forbear all those Indulgences and Vanities which blind your Heart, and give you false Notions of your self; you must seek that Way of Life, accustom your self to such Practices as may best convince you of the Vanity of the World, and the Little-ness of every thing but God. This is the only Foundation of Prayer. When you don't enough see either your own Little-ness, or the Greatness of God, when you either seek for Pleasure in your self, or think that it is any where to be found, except in God, you put your self out of a State of Devotion. For you can desire nothing, but what you think you want, and you can desire it only in such a Degree, as you feel the Want of it. It is certain therefore, that whatever lessens or abates the Feeling of your own Wants, whatever takes you from looking to God, as the only possible Relief of them, so far lessens and
abates

abates the Spirit and Fervour of your Devotion.

WE sometimes exhort People to Fervour in Devotion, but this can only mean as to the outward Acts of it; for to exhort People to be Fervent in Devotion, as that implies a Temper of the Heart, is to as little Purpose, as to exhort People to be *Merry*, or to be *Sorry*. For these Tempers always follow the Judgments and Opinions of our Minds, when we perceive Things to be, as we like them, then we are *Merry*; when we find Things in a contrary State, then we are *Sorry*. It comes to pass after the same manner in *Devotion*, bid a Man be fervent in Devotion, tell him it is an excellent Temper, he knows no more how to go about it, than how to be merry, because he is bid to be so. Stay till *old Age*, till *Sickness*, *Misfortunes*, or the Approach of *Death*, has convinc'd him that he has nothing good in himself, that there is nothing valuable in the World, that all that is good, or great, or glorious is in God alone, and then he will find himself as dispos'd to Devotion, and zealous Desires after God, as the Man is dispos'd to Cheerfulness, who sees Things in that State in which he would have them to be. So that the one and only way to be devout, is to see and feel our own Weakness, the Vanity

of the World, and the Greatness of God, as dying Men see and feel them. It is as impossible to be *devout* without seeing Things in *this View*, as it is impossible to be *cheerful* without perceiving something in our Condition, that is according to *our Mind*. Hence therefore we may learn to admire the Wisdom and Divinity of the Christian Religion, which calls all its Members to *Humility, Self-denial*, and a Renunciation of *worldly Tempers*, as a necessary Foundation of Piety and Devotion. It was in these Practices that our Saviour first instituted his Religion; it was on these Conditions that the Apostles embrac'd it, and taught it to others; it was in these Doctrines that the primitive Christians became such worthy Followers of our Saviour and his Apostles. These Doctrines are still in the Gospel, and till they are to be found in our Lives, we shall never find our selves in a State of Devotion. For I must again repeat, what my Reader cannot too much reflect upon; that since Devotion is an earnest Application of the Soul to God, as the only Cause and Fountain of Happiness, that it is impossible for the Soul to have this Desire, without having such Reasons to produce and support it, as are necessary to produce and support other Tempers of the Mind.

Now

No w it is impossible for a Man to *grieve* when he finds his Condition answering his Desires ; or to be *overjoyed* when he finds his State to be full of Misery, yet this is as possible, as consistent with our Nature, as for a Man to *aspire* after, and *delight* in God as his only Happiness, whilst he is *delighting* in himself and the Vanity of the World. So that to pretend to Devotion without great *Humility*, and an entire Renunciation of all *worldly Tempers*, is to pretend to Impossibilities ; 'tis as if a Man should pretend to be *cheerful*, whilst he is in Vexation and Impatience ; he must first bring himself to a State of Satisfaction and Contentment, and then Cheerfulness will flow from it ; so he that would be devout, must first be humble, have a full View of his own Miseries and Wants, and the Vanity of the World, and then his Soul will be full of Desires after God. A *proud*, or *vain*, or *worldly-minded* Man, may use a *Manual* of Prayers, but he cannot be *devout*, because Devotion is the Application of an *humble* Heart to God, as its only Happiness.

H E N C E we may also perceive, why People of *Learning* and great Application to *Books*, who seem to have retired from the Corruptions of the World, to spend their time in their Studies, are yet often
not

not Devout. The Reason is, because Devotion is founded in great Humility, and a full Sense of the Vanity and Little-ness of *every Thing* but God. Whereas it is often the *same Vanity* that wears out some Scholars in their *Studies*, that wears out other People at *Court*, in the *Camp*, or at *Sea*. They do not want to be *Merchants*, or *Colonels*, or *Secretaries of State*, but they want to be *Criticks*, *Grammarians*, and *Historians*. They, it may be, disregard *Riches* and *Equipage*, despise the *Sports* and *Diversions* of the *present Age*, avoid the Folly of *Conversation*, but then it is to contemplate the *Riches* and *Equipage*, the *Sports* and *Diversions* of the ancient *Romans*.

THE Vanity of some *Ladies* and *Gentlemen* would be touched, if you should tell them, that they did not understand *Dress*: Some great *Scholars* would be more dejected, if you should suppose them Ignorant of a *Fold* in the *Roman Garments*.

THE *Bulk* of Mankind are so dull and tasteless, so illiterate, as to set their Hearts upon *current Coin*, large *Fields*, and *Flocks* and *Herds of Cattle*. Great Learning has raised some Men above this grossness of Taste, their Heart only beats at the Sight of a *Medal* and *ancient Coins*, they are only afraid of dying before they have out-
done

done the World, in their Collections of *Shells, Skins, Stones, Animals, Flies, and Insects.*

Y O U would not expect that a *Merchant* should be devout because he traded in all Parts of *Europe*, or that a *Lady* should be pious, because she understands all Sorts of *fine Work and Embroidery.* Now if you was to look into the Business of many profound Scholars, if you was to consider the Nature of such Learning as makes the greatest Figure in the World, you will find no more Tendency in it to Piety and Devotion, than there is in *Merchandise or Embroidery.*

W H E N Men retire into their Studies to *change* their Nature, to *correct* and *reform* their Passions, to find out the Folly, the Falseness, the Corruption and Weakness of their Hearts, to *penetrate* into the Vanity and Emptiness of all worldly Attainments, when they read and meditate to fill their Souls with religious Wisdom and heavenly Affections, and to raise their Hearts unto God, when this is *Learning*, (and what else deserves the Name) then Learning will lead Men unto God, learned Men will be very Devout, and great *Scholars* will be great *Saints.*

H E N C E we also learn, why so many People seemingly Religious, are yet Strangers

gers to the Spirit of Devotion. *Crito* buys *Manuals* of Devotion, he finds nothing in them but what is according to the Doctrines of Religion, yet he is not able to keep pace with them, he feels nothing of what he reads, and throws them by, as something that does not *suit* his Taste: He does not consider that the *fault* is in himself, and that these *very same* Books will *suit* him when he is *dying*. He does not consider, that whilst he is so well pleased with himself, so fond of the World, so delighted with a Variety of Schemes that he has on foot, it is as impossible for him to be Devout, as for a *Stone* to hang by it self in the Air, or a Building to stand without any thing to stand upon. If *Crito* was to begin his Devotion to God, with *Humility*, *Self-denial*, and a Renunciation of all *worldly Tempers*, he would shew that he used common Sense in his Religion, that he was as wise as that Builder, who begins his House by laying a Foundation. But to think of adding Devotion to a Life that does not naturally lead to it, that is not so ordered, as to be so many Steps towards it, is as absurd, as if a Man should think of getting to the End of his Journey, without going thro' any of the Way that leads to it. For as it is a Temper of the Mind, it must arise from the State of our Mind, and
must

must have its proper Causes to produce it, as all other Tempers have.

SUPPOSE you was to call a Man from some joyful Feast, from the Pleasures of *Songs, Musick, and Dancing*, and tell him to go into the next Room to *grieve* for half an Hour, and then return to his Mirth; suppose you was to tell him that he must mourn that half Hour from the Bottom of his Heart, that it was a very excellent Thing, and highly becoming a rational Creature. It is possible he might obey you so far, as to go into the Room appointed for Mourning, he may be able to sit still, look grave, sigh and hang down his Head, and stay out his *half Hour*, but you are sure that he cannot *really grieve*, and for this Reason, because he is in a State of festival Joy, and is returning to his Feast. Now this is the State of *Crito*, and great Numbers of Christians, they are always at a *Feast*; their Life is nothing else but a Succession of such Pleasures, Satisfactions, and Amusements, as affect and hurry their Minds, like the festival Joys of *Drinking, Musick, and Dancing*. So that when they go to Devotion, they are just as capable of it, as a Man that is rejoicing at a Feast, is capable of mourning at the same time. Let not the Reader imagine, that this is
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the Case only of such great People, as live in such a constant Scene of Pleasure, as their Fortunes can procure, for it is a Case that equally concerns almost all States of Life. For as a Man rejoicing at an ordinary Feast, is as indisposed for Grief, as one that is merry at a more splendid Entertainment; so that Course of Pleasures and worldly Delights, which falls in with lower States of Life, may render such People as *Incapable* of Devotion, as they are, who have other Entertainments provided for them. Now no one wonders that he cannot *put on* Grief, when he is rejoicing at a *Feast* of any kind, because he knows there is sufficient Reason for it, because his Mind is then otherwise engaged. But if *Crito* would but deal thus faithfully with himself, he would as readily own, that he cannot *relish* Strains of Devotion, that his Heart does not enter into them, for this Reason, because it is *otherwise* engaged. For People certainly *relish* every thing that *suits* with the State of Life that they live, and can have no Taste or Relish, but such as arises from the Way and Manner of Life that they are in. Whoever therefore finds himself unable to relish Strains of Devotion, dull and unaffected with them, may take it for certain, that it is owing to the *Way*
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and *State* of Life that he is in: He may also be farther assured, that his Life is wanting in the Virtues of *Humility, Self-denial,* and a *Renunciation of worldly Goods,* since these Virtues as naturally *prepare* and *dispose* the Soul to aspire to God, as a *Sense of Sicknes*s disposes People to wish for *Health.*

LET us now put these Things together; it is certain, that Devotion, as a Temper of the Mind, must have something to produce it, as all other Tempers have, that it cannot be taken up at Times and Occasions, but must arise from the State of the Soul, as all other Tempers and Desires do. It is also equally certain, that Humility, Self-denial, and a Renunciation of the World, are the only Foundation of Devotion, that it can only proceed from these, as from its proper Causes. Here therefore we must fix our Rule to take the just Measure of our selves. We must not consider how many Books of Devotion we have, how often we go to Church, or how often we have felt a Warmth and Fervour in our Prayers, these are uncertain Signs; but we must look to the Foundation, and assure our selves, that our Devotion neither is, nor can be, greater than our Humility, Self-denial, and Renunciation of the World. For as it must proceed

ceed only from these Causes, so it can rise no higher than they carry it, and must be in the same State of Strength or Weakness that they are. If our Humility is false, our Self-denial hypocritical and trifling, and our worldly Tempers not half mortified, our Devotion will be just in the same State of Falseness, Hypocrisy, and Imperfection. The Care therefore of our Devotion, seems wholly to consist in the Care of these Duties; so far as we proceed in them, so far we advance in Devotion. We must alter our Lives, in order to alter our Hearts, for it is impossible to *live* one way, and *pray* another.

THIS may teach us to account for the several false Kinds of Devotion which appear in the World, they cannot be otherwise than they are, because they have no Bottom to support them. Devotion is like *Friendship*, you hear of it every where but find it no where; in like manner, Devotion is every where to be seen in *Modes* of Worship, in *Forms* of Speech, in outward Adorations, but is in *reality* scarce to be found. Hence also it is, that you see as much difference in the Devotion, as in the Faces of Christians, for wanting its true Foundation, being like an affected Friendship, it has as many *Shapes*, as there are *Tempers* of Men. Many People are
thus

thus far sincere in their Devotions, that they would be glad to pray Devoutly, they strive to be Fervent, but never attain to it, because they never took the only possible Way. They never thought of altering their Lives, or of living different from the rest of the World, but hope to be Devout, merely by reading over Books of Devotion. Which is as odd a Fancy, as if a Man should expect to be Happy, by reading Discourses upon Happiness. When these People dare take Christianity as it is offered to them in the Gospel, when they deny themselves, and renounce the World, as our Saviour exhorted his Followers, they will then have begun Devotion.

TREBONIUS, asks how often he shall pray : He thinks the nicety of the Question shews the *Piety* and *Exactness* of his Heart ; but *Trebonius* is deceived, for the Question proves that he is a stranger to Devotion. *Trebonius* has a Friend, he is constantly Visiting him, he is never well out of his Company ; if he is absent, Letters are sent at all Opportunities. Now what is the Reason that he never asks how often he shall Visit, how often he shall delight in, how often he shall write to his Friend ? It is because his Friend has his Heart, and his Heart is his faithful and sufficient Instructor. When *Trebonius*

has given his Heart to God, when he takes God to be as great a Good, as substantial a Happiness, as his Friend, he will have done asking how often he shall pray.

JULIUS goes to Prayers, he confesses himself to be a miserable Sinner, he accuses himself to God with all the Aggravations that can be, as having *no health* in him, yet *Julius* cannot bear to be informed of any Imperfection, or suspected to be wanting in any Degree of Virtue. Now can there be a stronger Proof, that *Julius* is wanting in the Sincerity of his Devotions? Is not this a plain Sign, that his Confessions to God are only Words of *Course*, an humble *Civility* of Speech to his Maker, in which his Heart has no Share?

IF a Man was to confess that his *Eyes* were bad, his *Hands* weak, his *Feet* feeble, and his *Body* helpless, he would not be angry with those that supposed he was not in perfect Strength, or that he might stand in need of some Assistance. Yet *Julius* confesses himself to be in great Weakness, Corruption, Disorder, and Infirmary, and yet is angry at any one, that does but suppose him defective in any Virtue. Is it not the same thing as if he had
said,

said, *You must not imagine that I am in earnest in my Devotions?*

It would be endless to produce Instances of false Devotion; I shall therefore proceed no farther in it, but rather endeavour to explain and illustrate that which is true. Devotion, we see, *is an earnest Application of the Soul to God as its only Happiness.* This is Devotion considered as a *State and Temper* of the Mind. All those Texts of Scripture which call us to God, as our true and only Good, which exhort us to a Fullness of Faith, of Hope, of Joy, and Trust in God, are to be considered as so many Exhortations to Devotion. Because Devotion is only another Name for the Exercise of all these Virtues. That Soul is devoted to God, which constantly rises and tends towards God in Habits of Love, Desire, Faith, Hope, Joy, and Trust. The End and Design of Religion, as it proposes to raise Man to a Life of Glory with Christ at the Right Hand of God, carries a stronger Reason for Devotion, than any particular Exhortation to Prayer. Beloved, saith St. *John*, *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.* St. Paul also saith, *As we have borne the*

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Image of the Earthly, we shall also bear the Image of the Heavenly (a).

Now these and such like Texts seem to me to carry the most powerful Motives, to awaken the Soul into a State of Devotion. For as the Apostle saith, *He that hath this Hope, purifieth himself, even as he is Pure.* So he that hath this Hope of being taken into so glorious an Enjoyment of the divine Nature, must find his Heart raised and enlivened in thinking upon God. For these Truths cannot be believed without putting the Soul into a State of Prayer, Adoration, and Joy in God. The seeing thus far into Heaven, is seeing so many Motives to Praise and Thanksgiving.

It was this View of future Glory that made the Apostle break out in this Strain of Thanksgiving, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us to a lively Hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead, to an Inheritance undefiled and that fadeth not away (b).* And would we Praise and Adore God with such Thanksgiving, as filled the Heart of this Apostle, we must raise it from a Contemplation of the same

(a) 1 Cor. xv.

(b) 1 Pet. i. 3.

Truth; that *incorruptible Inheritance* that is prepared for us.

AGAIN, the same Apostle saith to the *Philippians*, *Our Conversation is in Heaven*; and as the Reason and Motive to this heavenly Conversation, he addeth, *Whence we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile Body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious Body (a)*. So that the most powerful Motive to Heavenly-mindedness, the plainest Reason for our Conversation in Heaven, is our Expectation of Christ's glorious Appearance, when he shall come to put an *End* to the Miseries of this Life, and cloath us with Robes of Immortality. These Truths much more effectually raise the Heart to God, than any particular Precepts to Prayer, they do not so much exhort, as carry the Soul to Devotion: He that feels these Truths, feels himself Devout, they leave a Light upon the Soul, which will kindle into holy Flames of Love and Delight in God.

THE way therefore to live in true Devotion, is to live in the Contemplation of these Truths; we must daily consider the End and Hope of our Calling, that

(a) Phil. iii. 20.

our Minds may be formed and raised to such Tempers and Desires as are suitable to it, that all little Anxieties, worldly Passions, and vain Desires may be swallowed up in one great Desire of future Glory. When the Heart is in this State, then is it in a State of Devotion, tending to God in such a Manner as justly suits the Nature of our Religion. For whither should our Hearts tend, but where our Treasure is? This Devotion to God, is signified in Scripture, by living by *Faith and not by Sight*, when the invisible Things of the other Life, are the Reason, the Motive, and the Measure of all our Desires and Tempers. When Christians are thus settled in right Judgments of Things, and tending towards God in such Motions and Desires as are suitable to them, then are they devout Worshippers of God every where; this makes the common Actions of their Life, Acts of Religion, and turns every Place into a *Chappel*. And it is to this State of Devotion, that we are all called, not only by particular Precepts, but by the whole Nature and Tenour of our Religion.

Now as all States and Tempers of the Mind must be supported by Actions and Exercises suitable to them, so Devotion, which is an earnest Application of
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the Soul to God, as its only Happiness; must be supported and kept alive, by Actions and Exercises suitable to it, that is, by *Hours* and *Forms* of Prayer both publick and private. The Devotion of the Heart disposes us to observe set Times of Prayer, and on the other Hand, set Times of Prayer as naturally encrease and enliven the Devotion of the Heart. It is thus in all other Cases; Habits of the Mind dispose us to Actions suitable to them, and these Actions likewise strengthen and improve the Habits, from whence they proceeded.

It is the habitual Taste for *Musick*, that carries People to *Consorts*, and again it is *Consorts* that encrease the habitual Love of *Musick*. So it is the right Disposition of the Heart towards God, that leads People to outward Acts of Prayer, and on the other Side, it is outward Acts of Prayer, that preserves and strengthens the right Disposition of the Heart towards God. As therefore we are to judge of the Significancy of our Prayers, by looking to the State and Temper of our Heart; so are we also to judge of the State of our Heart, by looking to the *Frequency*, *Constancy*, and *Importunity* of our Prayers. For as we are sure that our Prayers are insignificant, unless they proceed from a right Heart, so unless our Prayers be *frequent*, *constant*, and

full of *Importunity*, we may be equally sure that our Heart is not right towards God.

O U R Blessed Saviour has indeed condemn'd one sort of long Prayer. *But when ye pray, use not vain Repetitions, as the Heathens do; for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking* (a). Now it is not *Length* or a *Continuance* of Prayer that is here forbid, but *vain Repetitions*, when instead of praying, the same Words are only often repeated. *Secondly*, the *Heathens* are not here condemn'd for being *importunate* and *persevering* in their Prayer; but for a *wrong Judgment*, a false Devotion, in that they thought they were heard, because they *spoke much*, that is, often repeated the same Words. So that all that Christians are here forbid, is only this, they are not to think that the *Efficacy* of Prayer consists in vain and long Repetitions, but are to apply to God upon a better Principle, a more enlighten'd Devotion. Now tho' is plainly all that is here condemn'd, yet some People imagine that a *Continuance* and *Importunity* of Prayer is here reprov'd, and thence conclude that *Shortness* is a necessary Qualification of Prayer.

a. Math. vi. 7.

BUT how willing must such People be to be deceiv'd, before they can Reason in this manner. For the Words have plainly no Relation to *Length* or *Shortness* of Prayer, they no more condemn the one than the other, but speak altogether to *another* Matter. They only condemn an Opinion of the *Heathens*, which supposed, that the Excellency and Power of Prayer consisted in a Multitude of Repetitions. Now to think, that a short Prayer is better, because it is *short*, is the same Error as to hold with the *Heathens*, that a Prayer is more powerful, the longer the same Words are repeated. It is the same Mistake in the Nature of Devotion.

BUT supposing the Meaning of these Words was something obscure (which it is not) yet surely it is plain enough, that our Saviour has *expressly* taught and recommended a *Continuance* and *Importunity* in Prayer. And how perversly do they read the Gospel, who can find his Authority against such kind of Devotion! For can he who was so often retiring to *Deserts*, to *Mountains*, to *Solitary* Places to pray, who spent *whole Nights* in Prayer, can he be supposed to have left a Reproof upon such as should follow his Example? But besides the Authority of his great Example, his Doctrine is on no Point more plain and certain,

tain, than where he teaches Frequency, Continuance, and Importunity in Prayer. He speak a Parable unto them, to this End; that Men ought always to pray, and not to faint. Saying, there was in a City a Judge which fear'd not God, nor regarded Man. And there was a Widow in that City, and she came unto him, saying, avenge me of my Adversary. And he would not for a while: But afterwards he said within himself, tho' I fear not God, nor regard Man, yet because this Widow troubleth me, I will avenge her. And shall not God avenge his own Elect, which cry Day and Night unto him? The Apostle tells us, that this Parable was to teach Men to pray always, and not to faint, and it is plain to any one that reads it, that it has no other intent, but to recommend Continuance and Importunity, as the most prevailing Qualifications of Prayer. The Widow is reliev'd, not because she ask'd Relief, but because she continued asking it, and God is said to avenge his Elect, not because they cry to him now and then, but because they cry Day and Night. Our Blessed Saviour teacheth the same Doctrine in another Parable, of a Person going to his Friend to borrow three Loaves of him at Mid-night, where it thus concludes, I say unto you, tho' he would not rise and give him, because he is his Friend, yet because of his

his Importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. Here again the sole Scope of this Passage is to shew, the great Power and Efficacy of Continuance and Importunity in Prayer.

C O N S I D E R farther in what manner Prayer is mentioned in Scripture. *St. Paul* does not command us to pray, but to *pray without ceasing* (a). The same Doctrine is thus taught in another Place, *continue in Prayer* (b). And again, *Praying always with all Prayer and Supplication in the Spirit* (c). It is said of *Anna, That she served God in Fasting and Prayer Night and Day.* Now who can imagine that *Shortness* is any Excellency of Prayer?

C L I T O says, he desires no more Time for rising, dressing, and saying his Prayers, than a Quarter of an Hour. He tells this to his Friends, not to shew his want of Religion, but that he may be thought to understand Devotion. You tell him that our Saviour's Parables teach *Continuance* and *Importunity* in Prayer, that the Apostles exhort to *pray without ceasing*, to *pray always*, and that devout Persons are recorded in Scripture, as praying *Night and Day.* Still *Clito* is for short Prayers. He at last finds

(a) *Thef. v. 17.*

(b) *Collof. iv. 2.*

(c) *Eph. vi. 17.*

a Text of Scripture, and appeals to the Example of the *Angels*, they only said, *Glory be to God on High, and on Earth Peace; Good-will towards Men.* Clito takes this to be an Argument for short Prayer, because the *Angels* had done so soon. But Clito must be told, that this is no Prayer. It is only a joyful Proclamation to Men. And surely the manner of *Angels* speaking to Men, can be no Rule or Measure of the Devotion of Men speaking to God. The *Angels* had no more to tell the World, than this Message of Joy, but does it therefore follow, that Sinners are to be as short in their Addresses to God? The Scripture tells us sometimes of *Voices* from Heaven, but it would be strange, to make the Things that were then spoken, the Measure of our Prayers when we call upon God. If Clito must have an Example from Heaven, he might have found one much more proper than this, where it is said, *That they rest not Day and Night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty, which was and is, and is to come (a).*

OUR Blessed Saviour saith, *But thou, when thou prayest enter into thy Closet, and when thou hast shut thy Door, pray unto thy*

(a) Rev. iv. 8.

Father, &c (b). Now here is indeed no mention of the Time that Prayer is to be continued, but yet this Preparation for Prayer, of *entering* into our Closet, and *shutting* the Door, seems to teach us that it is a Work of some Time, that we are not hastily to open our Door, but to allow our selves time to continue and be importunate in our Prayers.

How long and how often all People ought to pray, is not to be stated by any one particular Measure. But this we may take as a general Rule, that relates to all Particulars, that every Christian is to pray so often and so long, as to shew a Perseverance and Importunity in Prayer, as to shew that he prays *without ceasing*, that he prays *always*, and that he *cries* to God *Night and Day*, for these are essential Qualifications of Prayer, and expressly requir'd in Scripture. One would think it impossible for People to be sparing in their Devotions, who have read our Saviour's Parables, which teach us that the Blessings of Heaven, the Gifts and Graces of God's Holy Spirit are given to such as are importunate in their Prayers. I shall now only

(b) Math. vi. 6.

add a Word or two in Favour of frequent and continued Prayers.

FIRST, *Frequent and continued Prayers*, are a likly Means to beget in us the *Spirit* of Prayer. A Man that is often in his Closet, on his Knees to God, tho' he may for some Time perform, but a *Lip-labour*, will, if he perseveres, find the very Labour of his Lips altering the Temper of his Heart, and that he has learn'd to pray, by praying often.

THIS we find to be true in all Parts of Life, that we catch a Spirit and Temper from such Conversation and Ways of Life as we allow our selves in. Use is called a second Nature, and Experience teaches us, that whatever we accustom our selves to, it will by Degrees transform our Spirit and Temper into a Likeness to it.

CREDULA was for some Time a tender Mother, friendly and charitable to her Neighbours, and full of Good-will towards all People; she is now spiteful, malicious, envious, and delights in nothing but Scandal. How came *Credula* thus chang'd? Why she has been for several Years spending her Time in *visiting*, she enter'd into *Scandal* and *evil Speaking* at first meerly for the Sake of *Talk*, she has gone on talking, till she has talked her very Heart and Spirit into a Taste for nothing else; at first she
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only detracted from her Neighbours and Friends, because she was visiting, but now she visits for the Sake of Detraction. *Credula* is hardened and cruel in evil Speaking, for the same Reason, that *Butchers* are unhuman and cruel, because she has been so long used to murder the Reputation of her Neighbours. She has killed all her own Family over and over, and if she seeks new Acquaintance, it is to get fresh Matter for Scandal; now all this change in *Credula*, is purely owing to her *indulging* a talkative Temper.

Now every thing that we use our selves to, enters into our Nature in *this Manner*, and becomes a *part* of us before we are aware. It is common to observe, that some People tell a Story so long, till they have forgotten that they invented it. This is not as is supposed, through a bad Memory, but because the things which we make *constant* and *familiar*, will by Degrees steal the Approbation of the Heart. If therefore we would but be often on our Knees, putting up our Prayers to God, though for a while it was only *Form* and *outward* Compliance, yet our Hearts would by Degrees learn the *Language* of our Mouths. The Subject of our Prayers would become the Subject of our Hearts, we should pray our selves into Devotion,
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and it would become a part of us, in the same manner that all other ways enter into our Nature. Our Reason and Judgment would at last consent to our Lips, and by saying the same things often, we should come to *believe* and *feel* them in a proper Manner. For it is a very reasonable Thing, to judge of the Effects of good Customs, by what we see to be Effects of bad ones. They therefore who are *hasty* in their Devotions, and think a little will do, are Strangers both to the Nature of *Devotion* and the Nature of *Man*; they do not know that they are to *learn* to pray, and that Prayer is to be learnt, as they learn all other things, by *Frequency*, *Constancy*, and *Perseverance*.

SECONDLY, There is another great Advantage in frequent and continued Prayers.

THE Cares and Pleasures of Life, the Levity, Vanity, and Dulness of our Minds, make us all more or less unfit for our Devotions. We enter into our *Closets* thus unprepared for Prayer; now if our Petitions are very short, we shall end our Prayers before our Devotion is begun, before we have time to collect our Minds, or turn our Hearts to the Business we are upon.

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Now continuance in Prayer, is as great relief against these Indispositions, not only as it gives the Heart leisure to fall from worldly Cares and Concerns, but as it Exercises the Mind upon such Subjects, as are likely to abate its Vanity and Distraction, and raise it into a State of Seriousness and Attention. It is the Case of all People; to find themselves Inconstant in their Prayers, joining heartily with some Petitions, and wandering away from others; it is therefore but common Prudence to continue our Prayers, that our Minds which will wander from some Parts, may have others to join in. If we were Masters of our Attention, and could be as Fervent as we pleased, then indeed fewer Words might serve for our Devotion, but since our Minds are weak, inconstant, and ungovernable, we must endeavour to catch and win them to Devotion, by such Means as are suited to such a State of Weakness, Dulness, and Inconstancy. He that goes to his Closet in a hurry, only to repeat a short Form of Words, may pray all his Life without any Devotion, and perhaps he had been a devout Man long ago, if it had ever entered into his Head, that Meditation and Continuance in Prayer are necessary to excite Devotion. If a Man was so make it a Law, to himself, to Medi-

tate a while before he began his Prayers, if he was to force his Mind to think, what Prayer is, what he prays for, and to whom he prays ; if he should again make it a Rule to stop in some Part of his Prayers, to ask his Heart, whether it really prays, or to let his Soul rise up in silence unto God ; prayers thus performed, thus assisted by Meditation and Continuance, would in all likelihood soon render the Mind truly Devout. It is not intended by this, to impose *any particular* Method upon all People ; it is only to shew us, that there are *certain Means* of assisting our Devotion, some Rules, though *little* in themselves, yet of *great use* to render our Minds Attentive and Fervent in our Applications to God. It is the Business therefore of every sincere Christian, to be as wise as he can in these Arts and Methods of Self-government. As we our selves know most of the Falseness of our own Hearts, of the Temper of our Minds, and the Occasion of our Defects, so if we would but be so wise, as to think the Amendment of our Hearts, the best and greatest Work, that we can do, every one's Reason would help him to such useful Rules, as had a peculiar fitness to his own State. *Self-reflection* is the shortest and most certain
Way

Way of becoming truly Wise, and truly Pious.

T H E R E are *two Seasons* of our Hearts, which if we would but reflect upon, we might get much Knowledge of our selves, and learn how to assist our Devotion. I mean the *time* when we are *most affected* with our Devotions, and the *time* when we are *most indisposed* to pray. Both these *Seasons* equally serve to instruct us in the Knowledge of our selves, and how to govern the Motions of our Hearts.

R E F L E C T with your self, how it was with you, what *Circumstances* you was in, what had *happened* to you, what you had been *doing*, what *Thoughts* you had in your Head at such a Time, when you found your self *so affected* with your Devotions. Now if you find out what State you was then in, when you was disposed to pray so Fervently, then you have found out a certain Way of raising your Devotion at another time. For do but put your self in the same State, recal the same Thoughts, and do as you had then been doing, and you will find the same Causes will again produce the same Effects, and you will be again in the same Temper of Devotion. If you was then to put down in *Writing*, some short Remembrances of the *chief Things*, that ever raised your Heart to Fer-

vency of Prayer, so that you might have Recourse to a full View of them, as often as your Mind wanted such Assistance, you would soon find a Benefit, that would well Reward your Labour. On the contrary, whenever you have found your self *very much Indisposed* for Prayer, reflect with your self, what *State* you was then in, what had *happen'd* unto you, what *Thoughts* you had in your Head, what *Passions* were then awakened, what you had been *doing*, or were *intending* to do ; for when you have found out the State that you was then in, you have found out the real Hindrances of your Devotion, and are made certain what things you are to avoid, in order to keep your self in a Temper of Devotion.

IF you was here again to make short Remembrances in *Writing*, of the chief Things which at such times rendered you indisposed for Prayer, and oblige your self frequently to read them and reflect upon them, you would by this Means, set a *Mark* upon every thing that did you any Hurt, and have a constant, faithful Information of what Ways of Life, you are most to avoid. If in Examining your State, you should find that sometimes *impertinent Visits*, *foolish Conversation*, or a Day idly Spent in *civil Compliances* with the Hu-
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mours and Pleasures of other People, has rendered your Mind *dull* and *indisposed*, and less *affected* with Devotion, than at other times, then you will have found, that impertinent Visits, and ceremonious Compliances in spending our time, are not *little, indifferent* Things, but are to be numbered amongst those Things which have a *great effect* upon our Minds, and such as are to be daily watched and guarded against, by all those who are so wise as to desire, to be daily alive unto God in the Spirit and Temper of Devotion.

I P A S S now to another Observation upon the Benefit of frequent Prayers.

T H I R D L Y, *Frequent* and *continued* Prayer is the best Remedy against the Power of Sin. I do not mean as it procures the Divine Grace and Assistance, but as it naturally *Convinces, Instructs, and Fortifies* the Mind against all Sin. For every endeavour to pray, is an endeavour to *feel* the Truth of our Prayers, to *convince* our Minds of the Reasonableness and Fitness of those Things, that are the Subject of our Prayers, so that he who prays most, is one that most labours to convince his Heart and Mind of the Guilt, Deformity, and Misery of Sin. Prayer therefore considered merely as an *Exercise* of the Heart upon such Subjects, is the most *certain*

way to destroy the Power of Sin ; because so far as we pray, so far we *renew* our Convictions, *enlighten* our Minds, and *fortify* our Hearts by fresh Resolutions. We are therefore to consider the Necessity and Benefit of Prayer, not only as it is that which God *bears*, but also as it is that, which by its natural Tendency *alters* and *corrects* our Opinions and Judgments, and forms our Hearts to such Ways of Thinking, as are suitable to the Matter of our Prayers.

Now this is an unanswerable Argument for *frequency* and *continuance* in Prayer, since if Prayer at all convinces the Mind, frequency and continuance in Prayer, must be the most certain way to establish the Mind in a steady well-grounded State of Conviction. They therefore who are for short Prayers, because they suppose, that God does not *need* much intreaty, ought also to shew, that the Heart of Man does not need Assistance of *much Prayer*, that it is so regular and uniform in its Tendency to God, so full of right Judgments and good Motions, as not to *need* that Strength and Light, and Help, which arises from *much praying*. For unless this be the State of our Hearts, we shall want much Prayer to *move* and *awake* our selves, though but little was necessary to *excite*
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the Goodness of God. If therefore Men would consider Prayer, not only as it is an *Invocation* of God, but also as it is an *Exercise of holy Thoughts*, as it is an endeavour to *feel* and be affected with the great Truths of Religion, they would soon see, that though God is so good, as not to *need* much calling upon, yet that Man is so weak as to need much Assistance, and to be under a constant Necessity of that Help, and Light, and Improvement which arises from praying much.

It is perhaps for this Reason, that God promises to give to those who are *importunate* and ask *without ceasing*, to encourage us to practice that Exercise, which is the most natural Cure of the Disorders of our Souls. If God does not give to us at our first asking, if he only gives to those who are importunate, it is not because our Prayers make any *Change* in God, but because our Importunity has made a change in *our selves*, it has *altered* our Hearts, and render'd us proper Objects of God's Gifts and Graces. When therefore we would know how much we ought to pray, we must consider how much our Hearts want to be altered, and remember that the great Work of Prayer, is to work upon our selves; it is not to *move* and affect God, but it is to *move* and affect our own Hearts,

and fill them with such *Tempers* as God de^slights to reward.

PRAYER is never so good a Preservation against Sin, it never so corrects and amends the Heart, as when we extend it to all the *Particulars* of our State, enumerating all our Wants, Infirmities, and Disorders, not because God needs to be informed of them, but because by this Means we inform our selves, and make our Hearts in the best Manner acquainted with our true Condition. When our Prayers are thus particular, descending to all the Circumstances of our Condition, they become by this Means a faithful Glass to us, and so often as we pray, so often we see our selves in a true Light.

THIS is the most likely Means to raise in us proper Affections, to make us feel the Force and Truth of such Things, as are the Subject of our Devotions. Don't be content therefore with confessing your self to be a *Sinner*, or with praying against Sin in *general*, for this will but little affect your Mind, it will only shew you to your self in such a State as all Mankind are in; but if you find your self out, if you confess and lay open the Guilt of your own *particular Sins*, if you pray constantly against such particular Sins, as you find your self most subject to, the *frequent Sight* of your
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own Sins, and your *constant deploring* of their Guilt, will give your Prayers Entrance into your Heart, and put you upon Measures how to amend your Life.

IF you confess your self only to be a *Sinner*, you only confess your self to be a *Man*, but when you describe and confess your *own particular* Guilt, then you find Cause for your own *particular* Sorrow, then you give your Prayers all the Power they can have, to affect and wound your Hearts. In like manner, when you pray for God's Grace, don't be satisfy'd with a general Petition, but make your Prayers suitable to your Defects; and continue to ask for such Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit, as you find your self most Defective in, for this will not only give Life to your Petitions, and make your Heart go along with them, but will also be the surest Means to fit and prepare you for such Graces, as you pray for.

LASTLY, This Particularity in our Prayers, is the greatest Trial of the *Truth* of our Hearts.

A *MAN* perhaps thinks he prays for Humility, because he has the Word, *Humility*, in his Prayers. But if he was to branch out Humility into all its *particular* Parts, he would perhaps find himself not dispos'd to pray for them. If he was to
repre-

represent to himself the several Particulars, which make a Man *poor in Spirit*, he would find his Heart not desirous of them. So that the only way to know the Truth of our Hearts, and whether we really pray for any Virtue, is to have all its Parts in our Prayers, and make our Petitions ask for it in all its Instances. If the *proud* Man was to pray daily, and frequently for Humility in all its Kinds, and to beg of God to remove him from all Occasions of *such Pride*, as is common to his *particular State*, and to disappoint him in all his Attempts, that were contrary to Humility, he would find, that such Prayers, would either conquer his Pride, or his Pride would put an End to his Prayers. For it would be impossible to live long in any Instances of Pride, if his daily and frequent Prayers, were Petitions against those particular Instances. Now every one may make his private Devotions thus useful to him, if he has but Piety enough to intend it. For every one may know his own State if he will; we indeed commonly say, that People are blind to themselves, and know the least of their true State. We pass this Judgment upon People, because we see them pretending to so many Virtues, which do not belong to them, and declaiming against Vices, to which they are the most subject. Therefore

fore we say, that Men don't know themselves, but this is false Reasoning.

WE see People often pretending to be *Rich*, now this is not, because they don't know their State, but because they would not have you to know it, and they presume it possible to impose upon you. Now the Case is just the same in all other Pretences. The false, the proud, the worldly Man that pretends to Fidelity, Humility, and heavenly Affection, knows that he is neither Faithful, nor Humble, nor Heavenly-minded; he no more thinks he has these Virtues, than a Man thinks he has a great Estate, when he endeavours to be thought rich; he knows that he only affects the Reputation of these Virtues, and is only blind in this, that he imagines he imposes upon you, and passes for the Man he is not.

EVERY Man therefore has Knowledge enough of himself, to know how to make his Prayers particularly fitted to the Corruption and Disorders of his Heart, and when he is so desirous of Salvation, as to enter into such a Method of Prayer, he will find, that he has taken the best Means, to make his Prayers effectual Remedies against all his Sins. Let me now only add this one Word more, that he who has learn'd to *pray*, has learn'd the greatest Secret of a holy and happy Life. Which
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way soever else we let loose our Hearts, they will return unto us again *empty* and *wearry*. Time will convince the *vainest* and *blindest* Minds, that Happiness is no more to be found in the Things of this World, than it is to be dug out of the Earth. But when the Motions of our Hearts, are Motions of Piety, tending to God in constant Acts of Devotion, Love and Desire, then have we found Rest unto our Souls, then is it, that we have conquer'd the Misery of our Nature, and neither Love nor Desire in vain, then is it, that we have found out a Good suited to our Natures, that is equal to all our Wants, that is, a constant Source of Comfort and Refreshment, that will fill us with Peace and joyful Expectations here, and eternal Happiness hereafter. For he that lives in the Spirit and Temper of Devotion, whose Heart is always full of God, lives at the *Top* of humane Happiness, and is the farthest removed from all the Vanities and Vexations, which disturb and weary the Minds of Men, that are devoted to the World.





C H A P. XIII.

All Christians are required to imitate the Life and Example of Jesus Christ.



OUR Religion teaches us, that as we have *born the Image of the Earthly*, so we shall bear the *Image of the Heavenly*, that after our Death we shall rise to a State of Life and Happiness, like to that Life and Happiness, which our Blessed Saviour enjoys at the Right Hand of God. Since therefore it is the great End of our Religion to make us Fellow-Heirs with Christ, and Partakers of the same Happiness, it is not to be wonder'd at, that our Religion should require us to be like Christ in this Life, to imitate his Example, that we may enter into that State of Happiness, which he enjoys in the Kingdom of Heaven.

FOR how can we think that we are going to the Blessed Jesus, that we are to be hereafter as he is, unless we conform
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to his Spirit in this Life, and make it our great Endeavour to be what he was, when he was here. Let it therefore here be observd, that the *Nature* of our Religion teaches us this Duty in a more convincing Manner, than any particular Precepts concerning it. For the most ordinary Understanding must feel the Force and Reasonableness of this Argument. You are born to depart out of this World, to ascend to that State of Bliss, to live in such Enjoyment of God to all Eternity, as our Blessed Saviour now enjoys, you are therefore to live in the Spirit and Temper that he liv'd, and make your selves first like him here, that you may be like him hereafter. So that we need not look for particular Texts of Scripture, which command us to imitate the Life of Christ, because we are taught this Duty by a Stronger and more convincing Authority; because as the End and Design of our Religion, is to make us one with Christ hereafter, Partakers of the same State of Life, so it plainly calls us to be one with him here, and to be Partakers of that same Spirit and Temper in which he liv'd on Earth. When it is said that we are to imitate the Life of Christ, it is not meant that we are called to the same manner of Life, or the same sort of Actions, for this cannot be, but it is certain that we
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are called to the same Spirit and Temper, which was the Spirit and Temper of our Blessed Saviour's Life and Actions. We are to be like him in Heart and Mind, to act by the same Rule, to look towards the same End, and to govern our Lives by the same Spirit. This is an Imitation of Jesus Christ, which is as necessary to Salvation, as it is necessary to believe in his Name. This is the sole End of all the Counsels, Commands and Doctrines of Christ, to make us like himself, to fill us with his *Spirit* and *Temper*, and make us live according to the Rule and Manner of his Life. As no Doctrines are true, but such as are according to the Doctrines of Christ, so it is equally certain, that no Life is regular or christian, but such as is according to the Pattern and Example of the Life of Christ. For he liv'd as infallibly as he taught, and it is as irregular, to vary from his Example, as it is false, to dissent from his Doctrines. To live as he liv'd, is as certainly the one sole Way of living as we ought, as to believe as he taught, is the one sole Way of believing as we ought. I am, saith the Blessed Jesus, *The Way, the Truth, and the Life, no Man cometh unto the Father but by me.* Christians often hear these Words, and perhaps think that they have enough fulfill'd them by believing in Jesus Christ. But they

they should consider, that when Jesus Christ saith he is the *Way*, his meaning is, that his way of Life is to be the way, in which all Christians are to live, and that it is by living after the manner of his Life, that any Man cometh unto the Father. So that the Doctrine of this Passage is this, that however we may call our selves Christians, or Disciples of Christ, yet we cannot come unto God the Father, but by entering into that way of Life, which was the way of our Saviour's Life. And we must remember, that there is no other way besides this, nothing can possibly bring us to God, but that way of Life, which first makes us one with Christ, and teacheth us to walk as he walked. For we may as well expect to go to a Heaven where Christ is not, as to go to that where he is, without the Spirit and Temper which carry'd him thither. If Christians would but suffer themselves to reflect upon this Duty, their own Minds would soon convince them of the Reasonableness and Necessity of it. For who can find the least Shadow of a Reason, why he should not imitate the Life of Christ, or why Christians should think of any other Rule of Life? It would be as easy to shew that Christ acted amiss, as that we need not act after his Example. And to think that these are Degrees of Holiness, which

which tho' very good in themselves, are yet not necessary for us to aspire after, is the same Absurdity as to think, that it was not necessary for our Saviour to have been so, perfect himself as he was. For, give but the Reason why such Degrees of Holiness and Purity became our Saviour, and you will give as good a Reason for us to aspire after them. For as the Blessed Jesus took not on him the Nature of Angels, but the Nature of Man, as he was in all Points made like unto us, Sin only excepted, so we are sure, that there was no Spirit or Temper that was Excellent in him, that recommended him to God, but would be also Excellent in us, and recommend us to God, if we could arrive at it.

If it should be said, that Jesus was the *Saviour* of the World, that he was born to *redeem* Mankind, was the *Son of God*, and therefore in a Condition so different from ours, that his Life can be no Rule of our Life. To this it may be answer'd, That these Differences don't make the Life of Christ to be less the *Rule* and *Model* of all Christians. For, as I observ'd before, it is the *Spirit* and *Temper* of Christ, that all Christians are to imitate, and not his particular Actions, they are to do their *proper Work* in that Spirit and Temper, in which Christ did the Work on which he was sent.

So that altho' Christians are not Redeemers of the World as he was, tho' they have not his extraordinary Powers, nor that great Work to finish which he had, yet they have their Work to do in the manner that he did his; they have their Part to act, which tho' it be a different Part, must not be perform'd with a different Spirit, but with such Obedience to God, such Regard to his Glory, for such Ends of Salvation, for such Good of others, and with all such Holy Dispositions, as our Blessed Saviour manifested in every Part of his Life. A *Servant* of the lowest Order is in a very different State from his Master, yet we may very justly exhort such a one, to follow the Example of a pious and charitable Master, not because he can perform the *same Instances* of Piety and Charity, but because he may shew the *same Spirit* of Piety and Charity in the Actions, which are proper to his State. This may shew us, that the different State of our Lord and Master leaves him still the *exact Rule and Pattern* of his lowest Servants, who tho' they cannot come up to the Greatness of his Actions, may yet act according to that Spirit from whence they proceeded; and then are they true Followers of Christ, when they are following his Spirit and Temper, acting according to his Ends and Designs, and doing that in their several States, which Christ did in his.

THE Blessed Jesus came into the World to save the World; now we must enter into this same Design, and make *Salvation* the greatest Business of our Lives; tho' we cannot, like him, contribute towards it, yet we must contribute all that we can, and make the Salvation of our selves and others, the one only great Care of our Lives.

THE *poor Widow's Mites* were but a small Matter in themselves, yet as they were the utmost she could do, our Blessed Saviour set them above the larger Contributions of the Rich. This may encourage People in every State of Life to be contented with their *Capacity* of doing good, provided that they do but act up to it. Let no one think that he is too low, too mean and private to follow his Lord and Master in the Salvation of Souls, let him but add his Mite, and if it be all that he hath, he shall be thought to have done much, and be reckon'd amongst those that have best perform'd their Master's Will. It is not meant by this, that all People are to be Preachers and Teachers of Religion, no more than all are to be *Apostles, or all Prophets, or all Workers of Miracles*. Christians are like Members of one and the same Body, they are as different from one another as Hands and Eyes, and have as different Offices to perform, yet may their different

Parts serve and promote the same common End. As the *Eye cannot say to the Hand, I have no need of thee, nor again the Head to the Feet, I have no need of you* (a), So neither can the learned Teacher say he hath no need of the private unlearned Person. For the Work of Salvation is carried on by all Hands, as well by him that is taught, as by him that teacheth. For an *unlearned* Person by being desirous of Instruction, and careful to comply with it, may by these very Dispositions promote Salvation in as true a Degree, as he that is able and willing to instruct. This teachable Disposition may more effectually draw others to a like Temper of Mind, than another Man's Ability and Care of teaching. And perhaps in many Instances, the Success of the Teacher is more owing to the Manners and Example of some Person that is taught, than to the Power and Strength of the Teacher. Therefore tho', as the Apostle saith, all have *not the Gifts of Healing*, tho' all do not *speak with Tongues*, yet all have *some Part* that they may act in the Salvation of Mankind, and may follow their Lord and Master in the great Work, for which he came down from Heaven.

(a) 1 Cor. xii. 2.

We must not therefore think, that it is only the Business of *Clergymen* to carry on the Work of Salvation, but must remember, that we are engag'd in the same Business, tho' not in the same Manner. Had the *poor Widow* thought her self excus'd from taking Care of the Treasury, had she thought that it belong'd only to the *Rich* to contribute to it, we find that she had been mistaken, and had lost that great Commendation which our Saviour bestow'd upon her. Now it may be that some Widows may be so very poor, as not to have so much as a *Mite* to give to the Treasury, who must therefore content themselves with the Charity of their Hearts; but this can never happen in the Business of Salvation, here no one can be so poor, so destitute, so mean and private, as not to have a *Mite* to contribute towards it. For no Circumstances of Life can hinder us from being *Examples* of Piety and Goodness, and making our Lives a *Lesson* of Instruction to all that are about us. And he that lives an exemplary Life, tho' his State be ever so *poor* and *mean*, is *largely* contributing to the Salvation of others, and proving himself the *best* Follower of his Lord and Master.

THIS therefore is the first great Instance in which we are to follow the Example

and Spirit of our Blessed Saviour. He came to save the World, to raise Mankind to a Happiness in Heaven, we must therefore all consider our selves as called to carry on this *great Work*, to concur with our Saviour in this glorious Design. For how can we think our selves to be his *Followers*, if we do not follow him in that for which alone he came into the World? How can we be like the Saviour of the World, unless the *Salvation* of the World be our chief and constant Care? We cannot save the World as he sav'd it, but yet we can contribute our Mite towards it. *How knowest thou, O Wife, saith the Apostle, whether thou shalt save thy Husband? Or how knowest thou, O Man, whether thou shalt save thy Wife?* This shews very plainly, that *all Persons* may have a great Share in the Salvation of those that are near them, and that they are to consider themselves as expressly called to this great Work. For the Apostle uses it as the same Argument both to Husband and Wife, which supposes that it is a Business, in which one is as much concern'd as the other. The *Woman* we know is not allow'd to speak in the *Church*, yet is she here intrusted with *some*

(a) 1 Cor. vii. 16.

Share in the Salvation of the World, she is called to this great Work, and suppos'd equally capable of saving the Husband, as the Husband of saving the Wife. Now what is here said of Husband and Wife, we must extend to *every State* and Relation of this Life; *Brothers* and *Sisters*, *Relations*, *Friends*, and *Neighbours* must all consider themselves as called to the *Edification* and Salvation of one another. How knowest thou, O *Sister*, whether thou shalt save thy *Brother*? How knowest thou, O *Man*, whether thou shalt save thy *Neighbour*, is a Way of thinking that ought never to be out of our Minds. For this would make *Brothers* and *Sisters* bear with one another, if they consider'd that they are to do that for one another, which Christ has done for all the World. This Reflection would turn our Anger towards bad Relations into Care and Tendernefs for their Souls, we should not be glad to get away from them, but give them more of our Company, and be more exact in our Behaviour towards them, always supposing it possible, that our *good Conversation* may some time or other affect them, and that God may make use of us as a Means of their Salvation.

EUTROPIUS is very good and pious himself, but then his Fault is, that he seeks only the Conversation of pious and good People; he is careful and exact in his Be-

haviour towards his virtuous Friends and Acquaintance, always studying to oblige them, and never thinking he has done enough for them; but gets away from, and avoids those that are of another Temper. Now *Eutropius* should recollect, that this is acting like a *Physician* that would take care of the *Healthy*, and disregard those that are *Sick*. He should remember, that his irreligious Friends and Relations are the very Persons that are fallen to his Care, to be edify'd by him, and that he is as directly called to take care of their Salvation, as the Husband to take care of the unbelieving Wife. *Eutropius* therefore, if he would imitate his Lord and Master, must apply to the *lost Sheep of the House of Israel*, and endeavour by all the innocent Arts of pleasing and conversing with his Friends, to gain them to Repentance. We must not excuse our selves from this Care, by saying that our Relations are obstinate, harden'd, and careless of all our Behaviour towards them, but must support our selves with the Apostle's Argument, how knowest thou, O Man, whether it will be always so, or whether thou mayst not at last save thy Relation?

THE Apostle saith, *Destroy not him with thy Meat for whom Christ died (a)*. We

(a) Rom. xiv. 15.

may therefore justly reason thus with our selves, that as it lies much in our Power to hinder the Salvation, so it must be in our Power in an equal Degree to edify and promote the Salvation of those whom Jesus Christ died to save. Destroy not therefore by thy Negligence, by thy Impatience, by thy Want of Care, that Relation for whom Christ died, nor think that thou hast done enough to save those that relate to thee, till there is no more that thou canst do for them. This is the State in which all Christians are to consider themselves, as appointed by God in their several Stations to carry on that great Work, for which Christ came into the World. *Clergymen* are not the only Men that have a *Cure* of Souls, but every Christian has some People about him, whose Salvation he is obliged to be careful of, with whom he is to live in all Godliness and Purity, that they may have the Benefit of his Example and Assistance in their Duty to God. So that all Christians, though ever so *low* and *mean*, and *private*, must consider themselves as *hired* by Christ to work in his *Vineyard*; for as no Circumstances of Life can hinder us from saving our selves, so neither can they hinder us from promoting the
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Salvation of others. Now though we have according to our different Stations different Parts to act, yet if we are careful of that Part which is fallen to our Share, we may make our selves equally Objects of God's Favours.

THOU, it may be, art not a *Prophet*, God has not honoured thee with this Post in his Service, yet needest thou not fall short of this Happiness; for our Saviour hath said, *That he that receiveth a Prophet in the Name of a Prophet, shall receive a Prophet's Reward.* Now this shews us that though all Men have not the same Part to act in the common Salvation, yet that none will be losers by that State they are in, if they be but true to the particular Duties of it. If they do all the Good they can in their *particular State*, they will be looked upon with such Acceptance as the *poor Widow* that gave all that she had. Hence we may learn the Greatness of their Folly, who neglecting the exact Performance of such Duties as fall within their Power, are pleasing themselves with the great Things they would do, were they but in another State.

CLEMENS, has his Head full of imaginary Piety. He is often proposing to himself what he would do if he had a great Estate; he would outdo all charitable

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ble Men that are gone before him : He would retire from the World, he would have no Equipage, he would allow himself only Necessaries, that Widows and Orphans, the Sick and Distressed, might find Relief out of his Estate. He tells you that all other Ways of Spending an Estate is Folly and Madness.

N o w *Clemens* has at present a moderate Estate which he spends upon himself in the same Vanities and Indulgences, as other People do : He might live upon one Third of his Fortune, and make the rest the Support of the Poor, but he does nothing of all this that is in his Power, but pleases himself with what he would do, if his Power was greater. Come to thy Senses, *Clemens*, do not talk what thou wouldst do, if thou wast an *Angel*, but consider what thou canst do as thou art a *Man*. Make the best Use of thy *present State*, do now as thou thinkest thou wouldst do with a great Estate, be *sparing*, deny thy self, *abstain* from all Vanities, that the Poor may be better maintained, and then thou art as Charitable as thou canst be in any Estate. Remember the poor *Widow's Mite*.

FERVIDUS, is a regular Man, and exact in the Duties of Religion, but then
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the Greatness of his Zeal to be doing Things that he cannot, makes him overlook those little Ways of doing Good, which are every Day in his Power. *Fervidus* is only sorry that he is not in Holy Orders, and that his Life is not spent in a Business the most desirable of all Things in the World. He is often thinking what Reformation he would make in the World, if he was a *Priest* or a *Bishop*; he would have devoted himself wholly to God and Religion, and have had no other Care, but how to save Souls. But do not believe your self, *Fervidus*, for if you desired in earnest to be a Clergyman, that you might devote your self entirely to the Salvation of others, why then are you not doing all that you can in the State that you are now in? Would you take extraordinary Care of a *Parish* or a *Diocese*, why then are you not as extraordinary in the Care of your Family? If you think the Care of other Peoples Salvation, to be the happiest Business in the World, why do you neglect the Care of those who are fallen into your Hands? Why do you shew no Concern for the Souls of your Servants? If they do their Business for which you hired them, you never trouble your Head about their Christianity. Nay, *Fervidus*, you are so far from labouring to make those

those that are about you truly Devout and Holy, that you almost put it out of their Power to be so. You hire a *Coachman* to carry you to Church, and to sit in the Street with your *Horses*, whilst you are attending upon Divine Service. You never ask him how he supplies the loss of Divine Service, or what means he takes to preserve himself in a State of Piety. You imagine that if you was a *Clergyman*, you would be ready to lay down your Life for your Flock, yet you cannot lay aside a *little State* to promote the Salvation of your Servants. It is not desired of you, *Fervidus*, to die a *Martyr* for your Brethren; you are only required to go to Church on Foot, to spare some *State* and *Attendance*, to bear sometimes with a little *Rain* and *Dirt*, rather than keep those Souls which are as dear to God and Christ as yours is, from their *full Share* in the common Worship of Christians. Do but deny yourself such small Matters as these, let us but see that you can take the least Trouble, to make all your Servants and Dependants true Servants of God, and then you shall be allowed to imagine, what Good you would have done, had you been devoted to the Altar.

EUGENIA, is a good young Woman, full of pious Dispositions; she is intending,
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if ever she has a Family, to be the *best Mistress* of it that ever was, her House shall be a *School* of Religion, and her Children and Servants shall be brought up in the strictest Practice of Piety; she will spend her time, and live in a very different Manner from the rest of the World. It may be so, *Eugenia*, the Piety of your Mind makes me think that you intend all this with Sincerity. But you are not yet at the Head of a Family, and perhaps never may be. But, *Eugenia*, you have now one Maid, and you do not know what Religion she is of; she dresses you for the Church, you ask her for what you want, and then leave her to have as little Christianity as she pleases. You turn her away, you hire another, she comes, and goes no more instructed or edified in Religion by living with you, than if she had lived with any Body else. And all this comes to pass, because your Mind is taken up with greater Things, and you reserve yourself to make a whole Family Religious, if ever you come to be Head of it. You need not stay, *Eugenia*, to be so extraordinary a Person, the Opportunity is now in your Hands, you may now spend your time, and live in as different a Manner from the rest of the World, as ever you can in any other State. Your *Maid*
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is your Family at present, she is under your Care, be now that religious Governess that you intend to be ; teach her the *Catechism*, hear her read, exhort her to pray, take her with you to Church, persuade her to love the Divine Service, as you love it, edify her with your Conversation, fill her with your own Notions of Piety, and spare no Pains to make her as Holy and Devout as your self. When you do thus much Good in your present State, then are you that extraordinary Person that you intend to be, and till you thus live up to your present State, there is but little Hopes that the altering of your State, will alter your Way of Life.

I MIGHT easily produce more Instances of this Kind, where People are vainly pleasing themselves with an *imaginary* Perfection to be arrived at some time or other, when they are in different Circumstances, and neglecting that real Good which is proper to their State, and always in their Power. But these are, I hope, sufficient to shew my Reader how to examine his own Life, and find out himself, if I have not done it for him.

THERE is no Falseness of our Hearts, that leads us into greater Errors, than imagining that we shall some time or other be
better

better than we are, or need be now ; for *Perfection* has no Dependance upon *external* Circumstances, it wants no *Times* or *Opportunities*, but is then in its highest State, when we are making the *best Use* of that Condition in which we are placed. The *poor Widow* did not stay till she was *rich*, before she contributed to the Treasury, she readily brought her Mite, and, little as it was, it got her the Reward and Commendation of great Charity. We must therefore all of us imitate the Wisdom of the poor Widow, and exercise every Virtue in the same Manner, that she exercised her Charity. We must stay for no Time or Opportunities, wait for no *Change* of Life, or *fancied Abilities*, but remember that every time is a time for Piety and Perfection. Every thing but Piety has it Hindrances, but Piety, the more it is hindered, the higher it is raised. Let us therefore not vainly say, that if we had lived in our Saviour's Days, we would have followed him, or that if we could work Miracles, we would devote ourselves to his Glory. For to follow Christ as far as we can in our present State, and to do all that we are able for his Glory, is as acceptable to him, as if we were working Miracles in his Name.

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THE Greatness that we are to aim at, is not the Greatness of our Saviour's *particular Actions*, but it is the Greatness of his Spirit and Temper, that we are to act by in all Parts of our Life. Now every State of Life, whether *publick* or *private*, whether *bond* or *free*, whether *high* or *low*, is capable of being conducted and governed by the same *Spirit* and *Temper*, and consequently every State of Life may carry us to the same Degree of Likeness to Christ. So that though we can in *no respect* come up to the Actions, yet we must in every respect act by the Spirit and Temper of Christ. *Learn of me*, saith our Blessed Lord, *for I am meek and lowly in Heart*. He doth not say, be ye in the State and Condition that I am in, for that was impossible, yet though ever so different in State and Condition, he calls upon us to be like him in Meekness and Lowliness of Heart and Spirit, and makes it necessary for us to go through our particular State with that Spirit and Temper, which was the Spirit and Temper of his whole Life. So far therefore as we can learn the Heart and Spirit of our Saviour, so far as we can discover the Wisdom, Purity, and Heavenliness of his Designs, so far we have learn'd of what Spirit and Temper we ought to be of, and must no more

think our selves at liberty to act by any other Spirit, than we are at liberty to choose another Saviour. In all our Actions and Ways of Life we must appeal to this Rule, we must reckon our selves no farther living like Christians, than as we live like Christ, and be assured, that so far as we depart from the Spirit of Christ, so far we depart from that State to which he has called us. For the Blessed Jesus has called us to live as he did, to walk in the same Spirit, that he walked, that we may be in the same Happiness with him when this Life is at an end. And indeed who can think that any thing but the *same Life*, can lead to the *same State*?

W H E N our Blessed Saviour was upon the Cross, he thus prayed for his Enemies, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do* (a). Now all Christians readily acknowledge that this Temper of Christ, is to be the *exact Rule* of our Temper on the like Occasion, that we are not to fall short of it, but must be perfectly like Christ in this Charity towards our Murderers. But then perhaps they do not enough consider, that for the very same Reason, every other Temper of Christ, is

(a) Luke xxiii. 34.

as much the *exact Rule* of all Christians, as his Temper towards his Murderers. For are we to be thus disposed towards our Persecutors and Murderers, because Christ was so disposed towards his? And is it not as good an Argument that we are to be so, and so disposed towards the World and all wordly Enjoyments, because Christ was so disposed towards them? He was as right in one case as the other, and no more erred in his Temper towards *worldly Things*, than in his Temper towards his *Enemies*. Should we not fail to be good Christians, if we fell short of that forgiving Spirit, which the Blessed Jesus shewed upon the Cross? And shall we not equally fail to be good Christians, if we fall short of that humble and meek Spirit which he shewed in all his Life? Can any one tell why the Temper of Christ towards his Enemies, should be more the *exact Measure* of our Temper, than any other Spirit that he shewed upon any other Occasion? Think, *Reader*, if thou canst find a Reason, why thou mayst not as well forgive thy Enemies less than Christ forgave his, as to love the World more than he loved it? If thou canst tell why it is not as dangerous to be wanting in the Humility, Meekness, and other Tempers of Christ, as to be wanting in his Char-

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ty, towards his Enemies. We must therefore either own, that we may be good Christians, without the *forgiving Spirit*, which Christ then exercised, or we must own that we are not good Christians, whenever we depart from the Spirit of Christ in any *other Instances*. For the Spirit of Christ consisted as much in Meekness, Humility, Devotion, and Renunciation of the World, as in the *forgiving* his Enemies: They therefore who are contrary to Christ in any of these Tempers, are no more like to Christ, than they who are contrary to him in this forgiving Spirit. If you was to see a Christian dying without this Temper towards those that destroyed him, you would be frightened at it; you would think that Man in a dreadful State, that died without that Temper in which Christ died. But then remember, that he judges as rightly, who thinks it equally dreadful to live in any other Spirit, that is not the Spirit of Christ. If thou art not living in that *Meekness* and *Lowliness* of Heart, in that *Disregard* of the World, that *Love of God*, that *Self-denial* and *Devotion* in which our Saviour lived, thou art as unlike to him, as he that *dies* without that *Temper*, in which he died.

THE short of the Matter is this, the Spirit and Temper of Christ, is the *strict Measure*.

Measure of the Spirit and Temper of all Christians. It is not in this or that particular Temper of Christ, that we are to follow his Example, but we are to aspire after his whole Spirit, to be in all things as he was, and think it as dangerous to depart from his Spirit and Temper in one Instance, as in another. For besides that there is the same Authority in all that our Saviour did, which obliges us to conform to his whole Example : Can any one tell why we should have more value for this World, than our Saviour had ? What is there in our *State* and *Circumstances*, that can make it proper for us to have more affection for the Things of this Life, than our Saviour had ? Is the World any more our *Happiness* than it was his Happiness ? Are Riches, and Honours, and Pleasures, any more our *proper Good*, than they were his ? Are we any more born for this Life, than our Saviour was ? Are we in less danger of being *Corrupted* by its Enjoyments, than he was ? Are we more at leisure to take up *our rest*, and spend our time in worldly Satisfaction than he was ? Have we a work upon our Hands that we can *more easily* finish, than he could finish his ? That requires of us less *Mortification* and *Self-denial*, less *Devotion* and *Watching*, than our Saviour's

required of him? Now as nothing of this can be said, so nothing can be said in our Excuse, if we follow not our Saviour's Temper in this Respect. As this World is as little our Happiness, and more our Danger, than it was his, as we have a Work to finish that requires *all our Strength*, that is as *contrary* to the World, as our Saviour's was, it is plain, there was no Reason or Necessity of his Disregard of the World, but what is the same Reason and Necessity for us to disregard it in the same Manner.

A G A I N, take another Instance of our Blessed Saviour's Spirit, *I came down from Heaven, saith he, not to do my own Will, but the Will of him that sent me* (a).

A N D again, *My Meat and Drink is to do the Will of him that sent me*. Now can any Christian shew, why he may think otherwise of himself, than our Saviour here thought? Or that he need be *less devoted* to the Glory of God than he was? What is there in our *Nature and Condition* to make any Difference of this Kind? Do we not stand in the same Relation to God that our Saviour did? Have we not the same Nature that he had? Are we

(a) John vi. 38.

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too great to be made Happy in the same Way that he was? Or can any thing else be the Happiness of our Nature, but that which was the Happiness of his? Was he a *sufferer*, a *looser*, did he leave the true Happiness of *human Life*, by devoting himself to the Will of God? Or can this be our Case, though it was not his, can we be *loosers*, by looking to God *alone*, and *devoting* our selves to his Glory? Was it not the Greatness and Happiness of our Saviour that he lived to God alone? And is there any other Happiness or Greatness for us, but by making that the End and Aim of our Life, which he made the End and Aim of his Life? For we may as well seek out for another God, as for another Happiness, or another Way to it, than that in which Christ is gone before us. He did not mistake the Nature of *Man*, or the Nature of the *World*, he did not overlook any *real Felicity*, or pass by any *solid Good*, he only made the best Use of human Life, and made it the Cause of all the Happiness and Glory that can arise from it. To find a Reason therefore, why we should live otherwise than he lived, why we should less seek the Glory of God than he sought it, is to find a Reason why we should less promote our own Greatness and Glory.

For our State and Condition in this Life lays us under *all the Obligations*, that our Saviour was under to live as he did, his Life is as much our *right Way*, as it was his, and his Spirit and Temper is as *necessary* for our Condition, as it was for his. For this World and all the Things of the World signify as *little* to us, as they did to him; we are no more in our *true State*, till we are got out of this World, than he was; and we have no other way to arrive at true Felicity and Greatness, but by so *devoting* our selves to God, as our Blessed Saviour did. We must therefore make it the great Business and Aim of our Lives; to be like Christ, and this not in a *loose* or *general* Way, but with great *Nicety* and *Exactness*, always looking to his *Spirit*, to his *Ends* and *Designs*, to his *Temper*, to his *Ways* and *Conversation* in the World, as the *exact Model* and *Rule* of our Lives.

AGAIN, *Learn of me*, saith our Blessed Saviour, *for I am Meek and Lowly of Heart*. Now this Passage is to be considered, not as a Piece of good Advice, that would be of use to us, but as a *positive* Command requiring a *necessary* Duty. And if we are commanded to learn of Christ Meekness and Lowliness, then we are commanded in the same positive Manner, to learn *his Meekness* and *Lowliness*.

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For if we might take up with a Meekness and Lowliness of Heart, that was *not his*, then it would not be necessary to learn them of him. Since therefore we are commanded to learn them of him, it is plain, that it is his Meekness and Lowliness that we are commanded to learn; that is, we are to be Meek and Lowly, not in any *loose* or *general* Sense of the Words, not according to the *Opinions* and *Practices* of Men, but in such *Truth* and *Reality* as Christ was Meek and Lowly.

It ought also to be observed, that there must be something very *Extraordinary* in these Dispositions of the Heart, from the manner in which we are taught them. It is only in this Place, that our Saviour says expressly, *Learn of me*; and when he says, *Learn of me*, he does not say, for I am just and equitable, or kind or holy, but *I am meek and lowly of Heart*; as if he would teach us, that these are the Tempers which most of all *distinguish* his Spirit, and which he most of all requires his Followers to learn of him. For consider, does Christ when he describes himself, choose to do it by *these Tempers*? When he calls upon us to learn of him, does he only mention *these Tempers*? And is not this a sufficient Proof that these are Tempers, which the Followers of Christ, are most of all oblig'd to

to learn, and that we are then most *unlike* to Christ, when we are wanting in them? Now as our great Lord and Master has made these Characters, the *distinguishing* Characters of his Spirit, it is plain, that they are to be the *distinguishing* Characters of our Spirit, for we are only so far his, as we are like him. Consider also, was he *more lowly* than he need have been? Did he practice any Degrees of Humility that were *unnecessary*? This can no more be said, than he can be charged with Folly. But can there be any Instances of Lowliness which became him, that are not necessary for us? Does our State and Condition excuse us from any kind of Humility, that were necessary for him? Are we higher in our Nature, more rais'd in our Condition, or more in the Favour of God than he was? Are there *Dignities, Honours, and Ornaments* of Life which we may delight in, tho' he might not? We must own these Absurdities, or else acknowledge, that we are to breath the same *lowly Spirit*, act with the same *Meekness*, and practice the same *humble* Behaviour that he did. So that the Matter comes plainly to this Conclusion, either that Christ was more humble and lowly than his Nature and Condition requir'd, or we are under the same Necessity of as great Humility, till we can prove
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that we are in a higher State than he was.

Now as it is plainly the Meekness and Lowliness of Christ, that we are to Practice, why should we think, that we have attain'd unto it, unless we shew forth these Tempers in *such Instances*, as our Saviour shew'd them? For, can we suppose, that we are Meek and Lowly as he was, if we live in *such Ways* of Life, and seek after *such Enjoyments* as his Meekness and Lowliness would not allow him to follow? Did he mistake the *proper Instances* of Lowliness? If not, it must be our great Mistake not to follow his Steps. Did his Lowliness of Heart make him disregard the Distinction of this Life, avoid the Honours, Pleasures, and Vanities of Greatness? And can we think that we are living by the same lowly Spirit, whilst we are seeking after all the Dignities and Ornaments both of our Persons and Conditions? What may we not think, if we can think after this Manner? For let us speak home to this Point, either our Saviour was *wise, judicious*, and govern'd by a *Divine Spirit* in these Tempers, or he was not; to say that he was not, is horrid *Blasphemy*, and to say that he was, is saying, that we are neither *wise, nor judicious*, nor govern'd by a *Divine Spirit*, unless we shew the same Tempers.

pers. Perhaps you will say, that tho' you are to be *lowly in Heart* like Christ, yet you need not disregard the Ornaments, Dignities, and Honours of Life, and that you can be as truly meek and lowly in the *Figure and Shew* of Life, as in any other State.

ANSWER me therefore this one Question. Was our Saviour's Lowliness, which shew'd it self in an utter disregard of all *Pomp and Figure* of Life, a *false Lowliness* that mistook its *proper Objects*, and shew'd it self in Things *not necessary*? Did he abstain from Dignities and Splendour, and deny himself Enjoyments which he might with the *same Lowliness* of Heart have taken Pleasure in? Answer but this Question plainly, and then you will plainly determine this Point; if you justify our Saviour, as being *truly* and *wisely* Humble, you condemn your self, if you think of any *other* Humility, than *such* as he practis'd. Consider farther, that if you was to hear a Person reasoning after this Manner in any other Instance, if he should pretend to be of an *inward Temper* contrary to the *outward Course* of his Life, you would think him very absurd. If a Man that liv'd in an outward Course of *Duels* and *Quarrels*, should say, that in his Heart he forgave all Injuries, and allow'd of no Resentments.

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If another whose common Life was full of *Bitterness*, and *Wrath*, and *Evil-speaking*, should pretend that in his Heart he lov'd his Neighbour as himself, we should reckon them amongst those, that were more than a little touch'd in their Heads. Now to pretend to any Temper contrary to our *outward Actions*, is the same Absurdity in one Case as in another. And for a Man to say, that he is lowly in Heart, whilst he is seeking the *Ornaments*, *Dignities*, and *Shew* of Life, is the same Absurdity, as for a Man to say, that he is of a *meeke* and forgiving Spirit, whilst he is seeking and revenging *Quarrels*. For to disregard and avoid the Pomp and Figure, and vain Ornaments of worldly Greatness, is as essential to Lowliness of Mind, as the avoiding of *Duels* and *Quarrels* is essential to Meekness and Charity. As therefore there is but *one way* of being charitable as our Saviour was, and that by such outward Actions towards our Enemies as he shew'd, so is there but *one way* of being lowly in Heart as he was, and that by living in such a Disregard of all vain and worldly Distinctions, as he liv'd. Let us not therefore deceive our selves; let us not fancy that we are truly Humble, tho' living in all the *Pride* and *Splendour* of Life; let us not imagine that we have any Power to
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render our selves Humble and Lowly any other way, than by an humble and lowly Course of Life. Christ is our *Pattern* and *Example*, he was content to be *one Person*, he did not pretend to *Impossibilities*; to reconcile the *Pride* of Life with the *Lowliness* of Religion, but renounced the one; that he might be a true Example of the other. He had a Power of working Miracles, but to *reconcile* an humble and lowly Heart with the vain *Ornaments* of our Persons, the Dignities of *State* and *Equipage*, was a *Miracle* he did not pretend to. It is only for us great Masters in the Science of Virtue, to have this mighty Power; we can be humble, it seems, at *less Expence* than our Saviour was, without supporting our selves in it by a way of Life suitable to it. We can have *Lowliness* in our Hearts, with *Paint* and *Patches* upon our Faces, we can deck and adorn our Persons in the Spirit of Humility, make all the Shew that we can in the *Pride* and *Figure* of the World, with Christian *Lowliness* in some *little Corner* of our Hearts.

BUT suppose now that all this was possible, and that we could preserve an humble and lowly Temper in a way of Life contrary to it, Is it any advantage to a Man to be one Thing in his *Heart*, and another