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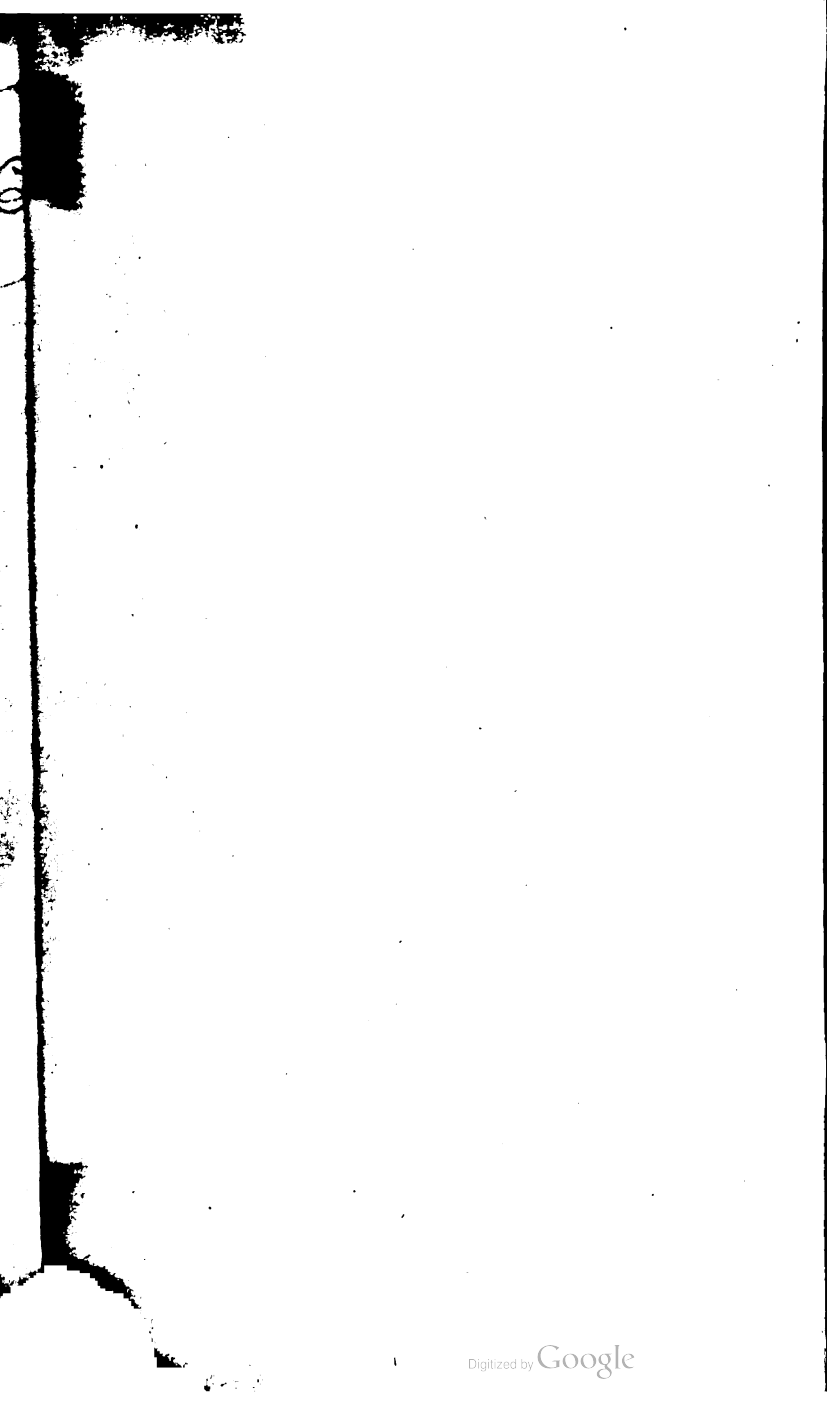




Cambridge Platonists

1076





Christian Blessedness:
O R,
Practical Discourses
Upon the
BEATITUDES
Of our LORD and SAVIOUR
JESUS CHRIST.

WITH
Three other Volumes of
PRACTICAL DISCOURSES.

By JOHN NORRIS, M. A. Rector of
Bemerton-near Sarum.

The Tenth Edition.



L O N D O N :

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Thomas To my much Honoured *Gottes*

Friend and Patron

JOSEPH LANGTON, Esq;

S I R,



IS a Maxim of Prudence given by some of the Nicer Describers of the Bounds of *Gratitude*, That it ought to be temper'd between a total Neglect and a full and just Requitall. To strike off *all* Scores is, they say, as uncivil as to discharge *none*, and every whit as disingenuous not to *suffer*, as not to *acknowledge* an Obligation.

Now, Sir, 'tis one of the proper Happinesses of my little Fortune to be necessarily call'd upon this Measure. I am got too far in your *Accounts* to be able to requite to the full; some part of them I must ever leave *uncrossed* as a standing *Hold* upon me; and tho' my *Gratitude* it self be never so strong and pregnant, yet the most forward Instance of it can rise no higher than an *Acknowledgment*.

A 2

AND

The Epistle Dedicatory.

AND as this is the utmost I can do, so of doing this too I have so few Capacities and Opportunities, that I am the less willing to let go any that offer themselves; which indeed has given a speedier Issue to my Deliberation, whether I ought to Address these Discourses to your Patronage or no, which perhaps without the Formality of a *Dedication*, would of Right belong to you, as falling within your District, and being the Fruits of that Retirement which by your *Free Bounty* I enjoy.

As an Acknowledgment therefore of this and your other constant Favours, I presume to put these Discourses into your Hands, which I hope will be able to do both *You* and *Me* that Justice as to convince the World, that as you proceeded by generous and uncorrupt Measures in disposing of this Publick Trust, so you was not altogether mistaken in your Choice, when you thought fit to Oblige

Your Humble Servant,

Newton St. Loe.
April 21. 1690.

JOHN NORRIS



G. L.
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TO THE

R E A D E R .



HERE commend to thy serious Perusal a Set of Select Discourses upon the Beatitudes, which were at first undertaken, and are now publish'd for the Publick Benefit of all well-disposed Christians. The Subjects themselves are as Great and Noble as any perhaps that occur in all Practical Divinity, being the Prime and Capital Aphorisms of our Saviour's excellent Sermon upon the Mount, and containing the Fundamental Principles of all Christ's Practical Instructions, and of a true Christian Temper and Life.

Here we may see (what the Philosopher so much desired) the true Living Idea of Vertue and Goodness; nay more, what 'tis to be a Christian, an Interior Christian, a Christian indeed. And I heartily wish that those whose Orthodoxy is chiefly employed in giving out Marks and Signs of Conversion and Saintship, wherein their End seems rather to be the distinction of a Party, than any real Promotion of Godliness, would choose rather to dress their Interior by this Glass, and afterwards try it by this Measure.

To the READER.

sure. For here they will find that Real Christianity consists in Poverty of Spirit, Humility, Self-denial, Mortification, Meekness, Mercifulness, Purity of Heart, Peaceableness, and such like inward Dispositions of Soul, and not in a few outward Formalities, Sighs and Groans, Looks and Postures, Words and Phrases, and such other affected Badges of a fond Distinction.

And as the Subjects themselves are Great and Noble, so I hope these Discourses will be found in some measure to rise up to their Dignity. I am sure there has been no Care wanting on my part to make them worthy of their Subjects, to which I have endeavoured to do the utmost Justice. But however I may fail of that, yet I hope the Reader will not be altogether disappointed of his Expectations, or repent of his Labour, but will find here sufficient Entertainment both for his Speculation, and for his Devotion.

It may perhaps be a Surprize to some to see me appear again so soon in publick. To this, if there needs any Apology, that which I shall offer is, That if these Discourses be not worthy of publick View, then 'tis not fit they should ever be sent abroad; but if they be, I cannot understand how they can be publish'd too soon. The Truth is, considering the shortness and uncertainty of Life, I have been lately very much of Opinion, That a Man can never live too fast, (the Heathen will tell you Never fast enough) nor make too much haste to do good; especially when a Man's Sphere is such, that he has but Few Ways and Opportunities of doing it, which by Experience I am well convinc'd to be my Case.

TO the READER.

I am afraid (where-ever the fault lies) that it will not be my Happiness to be able to do that good where I am, which I might have done in some other Station. Which makes me the more frequent in Publick, that I may supply this Defect by the Service of my Pen, having some Reason to hope that my Discourses will meet with better liking Abroad, than they usually do at Home; and that there are some in the World to whom I shall not be a Barbarian.

What has been here the Performance of my Pen, was (as I learn from Dr. Ruft) intended, and in part performed by the Excellent Bishop Taylour, who while he was meditating upon the Beatitudes, was receiv'd up into the Enjoyment of them. And I have lately spoken with a Gentleman, who told me, That he himself saw a Manuscript of it in the Bishop's own Hand. I am very sensible how much the Subject has lost by the Change of its Author. All that I can say is, That I have done my Best, and I hope God will accept of my good Intention, and that the World will be something the better for my Performance.

JOHN NORRIS.

THE

T H E . .

C O N T E N T S .

| | |
|--|--------|
| D iscourse the First, on <i>Matth. V. Ver. iii.</i> | Pag. 1 |
| Discourse the Second, on <i>Matth. V. Ver. iv.</i> | p. 22 |
| Discourse the Third; on <i>Matth. V. Ver. v.</i> | p. 42 |
| Discourse the Fourth, on <i>Matth. V. Ver. vi.</i> | p. 66 |
| Discourse the Fifth, on <i>Matth. V. Ver. vii.</i> | p. 91 |
| Discourse the Sixth, on <i>Matth. V. Ver. viii.</i> | p. 109 |
| Discourse the Seventh, on <i>Matth. V. Ver. ix.</i> | p. 132 |
| Discourse the Eighth, on <i>Matth. V. Ver. x, xi, xii.</i> | p. 153 |
| The Conclusion of the whole, in a Discourse concerning the <i>Beatitudes</i> in general. | p. 177 |
| Cursory Reflections upon a Book call'd, <i>An Essay concerning Human Understanding.</i> | p. 1 |
| Remarks upon the <i>Athenian Society</i> in the Supplement to the Third Volume. | p. 33 |

Christian



Christian Blessedness :
O R,
DISCOURSES
UPON THE
BEATITUDES.

V O L. I.

DISCOURSE the First.

M A T T H. V. Ver. iii.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.



HUS the Divine Angel of the Covenant, Christ Jesus, begins that Great and Noble Institution of Christian Philosophy, his Sublime Sermon on the Mount. This was he that was pointed at by the eminent Prophecy, *I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee, and*

B

will

will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him, Deut. 18: And now it was that this Prophecy had its full Accomplishment; Christ was now entering upon his Prophetick Office, and was to shew himself a Prophet like unto *Moses*. This great Trust he discharged with as great Care and Fidelity, and (as the Author to the *Hebrews* observes) was faithful to him that appointed him, as also *Moses* was faithful in all his house, Heb. 3. 2. As therefore *Moses* gave a Digest of Laws to the People with whom he was intrusted, so it became this Divine Prophet also to give Laws and Precepts for the Instruction and Order of his Disciples. He was to be a Law-giver, as well as *Moses*; and to carry on the Proportion yet farther, he thought fit to imitate him in the very Manner and Circumstance of delivering his Law, and, accordingly ascended up into a Mountain, from whence he show'd down his Heavenly Manna upon his Hearers: So also making good another Instance of Resemblance relating to *Moses*, who speaks thus of himself, My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew; as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass, Deut. 32. 2.

BUT the Parallel will not run throughout: For the Divine Oracles were not now accompanied with *Thundrings* and *Lightnings*; with *Blackness*, and *Darkness*, and *Tempest*; but were deliver'd in the small still Voice of *Blessing* and *Consolation*. 'Twas with a *Beatitude* that *David* began

began his Collection of Divine Hymns; and in like manner does the Son of *David* usher in his sublime Instructions. And this was very suitable and agreeable, both to the Character of his *Person*, and to the Genius of his *Doctrin*. As to his *Person*, Blessing became the Mouth of him, who was the Reconciler of God and Man, the great Ambassador of Peace, the Author of Salvation and Happiness, and at whose Nativity the Angels sang Peace on Earth, and Good Will towards Men. And as to his *Doctrin*, The Precepts he was to deliver were of so refined and high-raised a Nature, so little agreeable either to the Maxims of the World, or to the grosser Relishes of the Animal Life, that they would have found but cold Entertainment, had they not come recommended with a Reward, and been guarded on each side with a Beatitude.

'T WAS requisite therefore that the *Duty* and the *Blessing* should go hand in hand; and accordingly, our Lord, who well understood the Temper of the Sons of Men, how passionately we pursue any thing that looks like *Happiness*, and how apt we are to ask that Question, *Who will shew us any Good?* thought it expedient to join them both together in his Discourse, as they will be in the *Event*; and to pronounce *them* Blessed here, whom he intends to pronounce so hereafter, when he shall say, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,* Mat. 25.

AND the better to win us over to the Practice of his Divine Sermon, our Lord, like a wise Master-builder, lays the Foundation of his *Discourse* where we must lay that of our *Obedience*, and assigns the first Place among his Beatitudes to *Humility*, and Poverty of Spirit; for Humility is the Foundation of Obedience: We must be first poor in Spirit, before we can be rich in Good Works; first humble before we can obey; and first obey before we can reign. And therefore with good Reason does our Lord lay down this as the first Principle and Ground-Work of his Institution, *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

+ IN my Discourse upon these Words I shall,

I. RESOLVE what we are to understand by Poor in Spirit.

II. SHEW that this Poverty of Spirit is a Christian Duty; and the Reasonableness of it.

III. SHEW the Happiness of those who are so disposed.

As to the Resolution of the First, I consider, that this Poverty of Spirit here recommended by our Saviour, is not a State of *Life*, but a State of *Mind*; and we may take it either in Opposition to *Covetousness*, or in Opposition to *Pride* and *High-Mindedness*. If in Opposition to *Covetousness*, then to be poor in Spirit, is, to have our Souls so disposed, as, *First*, Not to be eagerly carried out in our Desires after any created

ated Good ; particularly, the good Things of this lower World, whether Honours, Pleasures or Profit ; especially, not to be greedy and craving in our Desire of Riches. But *Secondly*, To be so moderately and indifferently affected towards all these, as to be well contented without them, and also ready to resign and part with them when either God shall think fit to deprive us of them, or when we can no longer retain them with a good Conscience. This is to be *poor in Spirit*, considered in Opposition to *Covetousness*.

BUT it may also be considered as opposed to *Pride* or *High-mindedness* ; and then to be *poor in Spirit* will denote, *First*, A just, that is, a low and mean Sense and Apprehension of our own selves, of our Souls, and of our Bodies ; of our Intellectuals, and of our Morals ; of our Acquirements, and of our Performances. And *Secondly*, As a Consequent of this, a Contentedness whenever any or all of these are disesteemed or disparaged, either tacitly and interpretatively, by Affronts, and dishonourable Treatments ; or else directly, by express Undervaluations, a Readiness to prefer others before our selves, and a Willingness that the same Preference should be given them by others ; an utter *Captivation* of our Understandings to the Obedience of *Faith*, and a modest *Submission* of them, in all doubtful Cases, to the Dictates of our *Superiors* ; a Declining of Fame and Popularity, and a studious Concealment of our own Praises and Excellencies ; but when either the Glory of God, or the

Good of our Brother is concern'd in the Publication. In short (to use the Description of the Psalmist) he is truly *poor in Spirit*, who from his Heart can say to the Searcher of Hearts, *Lord, I am not high-minded, I have no proud looks; I do not exercise my self in great Matters, which are too high for me; but I refrain my soul and keep it low, like as a Child that is weaned from his mother: yea, my soul is even as a weaned Child;* Pſal. 131.

HAVING thus briefly shewn what it is to be *poor in Spirit*, both with respect to *Covetousness*, and with respect to *Pride* and *High-mindedness*, I come now, in the second Place, to shew, that this *Poverty of Spirit* is a Christian Duty; and withal, the greater Reasonableness of it. And, *First*, That *Poverty of Spirit*, according to the *first* Acceptation of it, is a Christian Duty, 'twould be Conviction enough to consider how often we are call'd upon in Scripture to withdraw our Affections from the Creature, *Colos. 3. 1. To seek those things which are above; to set our affection on things above, not on things of the earth; to mortifie our members which are upon earth;* among which is reckon'd *inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.* Again, We are bid to *beware of Covetousness*, *Luk. 12. 15.* and to have both our *Treasure* and our *Hearts* in Heaven; *Luk. 12. 33.* to be as indifferent in the very Enjoyment of any Worldly Good, as if we enjoyed it not, *1. Cor. 7. 29.* and if in the *Enjoyment*, then certainly much more in the

the *Desire*. Lastly, to add no more, We are cautioned by St. *John* not to love the World, neither the Things that are in the World. And lest we should take this only as a Matter of *Advice* and *Counsel*, not express *Command*, he farther adds, *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*, 1 John 2. 15.

BUT that 'tis a Christian Duty to be thus *poor in Spirit*, will be farther evident from the very *Nature* and *Design* of the Christian Institution. The grand Thing intended in the Christian Religion was, to reduce straying Man to his true Good and Happiness, to sublimate, refine and spiritualize his Nature, to loose him from the Cords of Vanity, and from his fast Adhesions to created Good; to purge him from all Earthly Concretions and Alloys; to disengage and separate him, not only from the World about him, but even from one Part of himself: In one Word, to raise him from Earth to Heaven, not only by a *Local*, but by a *Moral* and *Mental* Elevation. X

INDEED, 'twas much otherwise under the *Jewish* Dispensation; There was then great Indulgence afforded to the Animal Inclinations and Worldly Affections of Men; and their very Religion was endeared to them by Temporal Promises and Blessings. Not that God intended hereby to express any Liking or Approbation of Covetousness and Earthly-mindedness, but only to comply with the Infirmary of that gross, stupid People, which rendered them incapable

capable of being won upon by more noble Proposals. And besides, it being a received Notion among the Idolatrous Inhabitants of the Land, (as is observ'd by a late learned Author) that the Worship of their Idols, and false Gods, did procure them fruitful Seasons, and increase of all manner of Store; it was in proportion requisite, that God also should promise *his* Votaries the like Worldly Affluence, to keep them from running over to the *Gentile Superstitions*.

UPON these, and the like Accounts much was indulged to the *Jewish* State and People; They were never expressly required to abstract their Desires from the Things of the World; nor, unless they proceeded to covet *unjustly*, that is, what belonged to another, were they ever taxable for a too Earthly and Downward Disposition of Soul. Not but that Earthly-mindedness was as much an Imperfection in it self as it is now, and was really forbidden according to the more retired and involute Sense of the Law; but the Letter did not reach it, because then was the Time and State of Imperfection; and it was the only *Handle* which that People could be took hold of by, whose *Hardness* of Heart was the Occasion of this, as well as of some other Indulgencies.

BUT now, they that shall think themselves obliged to no higher Measures of Perfection under the Christian State, know not what manner

manner of Spirit they are of. Christ, as he has introduced a *better Hope*, Heb. 7. 19. so has he annexed to it more excellent, and more exalted *Precepts*; and as his Kingdom was not, so neither is his Religion of this World. The Christian Law is *Lex Ignea*, a Law of Fire, a Law that purifies and refines, that warms, actuates and enlightens, that separates also and dissolves those strong Ties whereby the Soul sticks glued to the Earth. And therefore the Apostle calls the Christian Institution *the law of the Spirit of life*; Rom. 8. 2. and in another Place, *the ministration of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. 3. And what our Saviour said of some Words of his, may truly be applied to all, *The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life*, Joh. 6. 63. ✠

THIS therefore being the Design of the Christian Dispensation, to perfect Holiness, to advance the Interest of the Divine Life, to elevate us to the utmost Degree of Moral Perfection our Nature is here capable of, and, as far as is possible, to make us Partakers of the Divine, 'tis utterly inconsistent with the *End* of such a Law as this to suffer us to lie groveling with our Faces on the Earth, to seek Rest and Happiness in Things more ignoble than our selves, and to grow one, as it were, with the dirty Planet upon which we live; We ought rather, (as the Philosopher speaks) *ἐφ' ὅσον ἐσθ' ἕτα ἀπαθανάττειν*, aspire to the Measures of Immortality, shake off the Clogs of Earth that

that weigh us down, and make haste to be Angels as fast as we can. We are obliged by the *Design*, as well as by the *Rule* of our *Religion*, to be as loose from the Creature as may be, not to love the World, nor the Things of the World, whether the Lust of the Flesh, or the Lust of the Eye, or the Pride of Life; but to be poor in Spirit, and empty of the Creature, that we may be rich towards God, and filled with the Fulness of him that fills all in all.

X AND NOW that to be thus *poor in Spirit* is a *reasonable* Duty, as well as a *necessary* one, will sufficiently appear upon these two Grounds:

I. BECAUSE these Worldly Enjoyments are not our True Good.

II. BECAUSE they hinder and divert us from that which really is so.

THAT they are not our True Good is certain; for, if they were, we should then find *Rest* and *Satisfaction* in them. But this we are so far from doing, that we are as dissatisfied *under* our Enjoyments, as *without* them. For, tho' by Fruition our Appetite be abated as to that particular Object which we prosecuted, yet still we desire on farther, and our *general* Thirst after Happiness is as unsatisfied as ever. Which plainly argues, that our True Good is not to be found in these things, but that they are altogether *Vanity* and *Vexation*. To place therefore
our

our Happiness in such Objects is utterly absurd, and against Reason, and argues us to be grossly ignorant of one of the two Things, either of *our selves*, or of the Things of *the World*. We are either ignorant of the Dignity and Excellence of our Natures, of the Designs and Ends of our Creation, and of the Strengths and Capacities of our Appetites, which can be satisfied with nothing less than Infinite: Or, if we do know and consider all this, then are we so much the more grossly ignorant of the World about us, to think there is any thing to be had in this Circle of Vanity, that may satisfy the Importunity of such craving and capacious Appetites. Poverty of Spirit therefore is reasonable, because the Things of the World are not our *True Good*.

BUT this is the least part of their Charge: They are not only insufficient to be our True Good themselves, but they also, *Secondly*, hinder and divert us from that which really is so. For, not to mention the many Snares and Temptations of a great Fortune, and what a dangerous thing it is to be always furnish'd with all the Possibilities and Opportunities of Sin and Folly; I only observe, that the very *Desire* of these Earthly Things diverts us, and takes us off from the Love of God. When our Love is divided, even among *Created* Objects, the Force of it will be much abated in respect of each; but much more will the Love of the Creature diminish from the Love of God: For there is so vast a Disproportion betwixt the *Kinds*, as well as the

the *Degrees* of the two Goods, that he that once comes to relish one, will find but little Taste in the other. And therefore, says St. *Austin*, *Monemus ne mundum ametis, ut eum qui fecit mundum libere ametis: Our Advice is, that you love not the World, that so you may love its Maker freely.* The Truth is, to love God *freely*, we should love him *entirely*; for, every Advance we make towards the Creature, so much we recede from God; for these are two contrary Terms of Motion: And there is so great a Contrariety between the Love of God, and the Love of the World, that they do not only abase each other, but are in some Degrees utterly inconsistent. For so St. *John*, *if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*, Joh. 2. 15. And if this be the Consequence of loving the World, I think the less we have to do with it, the better; and that there is a great deal of Reason to be *Poor in Spirit*.

THUS far have we consider'd the Duty and Reasonableness of Poverty of Spirit, as it signifies an Indifferency of Desire to the Things of the World: I come now to consider it, as it denotes Humility, and Lowliness of Mind; whereof I am also to shew,

I. THE DUTY.

II. THE REASONABLENESS.

THE DUTY of Humility is plain in all the Scripture, but more frequently and earnestly inculcated

inculcated in the New Testament; infomuch that it may be reckoned among the *distinguishing* Doctrines of the Christian Religion. The Heathen Morals almost overlooked it, and in the Old Testament Writings 'tis but sparingly recommended; but in the Christian Institution we every where meet with it in Capital Characters, as a Precept of the first Magnitude, *Jam. 4. 6. God resisteth the Proud*, saith St. James; and, *1 Pet. 5. 5. be ye clothed with Humility*, says St. Peter. And our Lord himself, who was a perfect Example of all Moral and Divine Perfection, and in whom the Fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily, seems yet to commend himself to our Imitation, chiefly upon the Account of his *Humility*; *Learn of me*, says he, *for I am meek, and lowly in heart*, Matth. 11. 29.

BUT there needs no Multiplication of Scripture for the Proof of this. I shall therefore only farther observe; That the greatest Personages that ever were in the World were always most eminent and conspicuous for this Excellency. Out of many, I shall select three Instances, which may well deserve our Consideration. The first shall be the great Fore-runner of our Blessed Saviour, the *Holy Baptist*. This Great and Holy Person, when the *Jews* sent Priests and *Levites* from *Jerusalem*, to demand of him who he was, not only disclaim'd the Titles of *Christ*, of *Elias*, and of *that* Prophet, (this his humble Spirit was not content with) but went farther, and gave this strange and mortified Account of himself,

self, *I am*, says he, *the voice of one crying in the wilderness*, Joh. 1. 23. The Prophet *David*, indeed, had said before of himself, That he was a *Worm*, and *no Man*, Psal. 22. 6. And this, one would think, was a sufficient Stretch of Humility: But the *Baptist* speaks in a Strain below him, allowing himself to be no more than a *Voice*. The same holy Person thought himself unworthy to baptize his Saviour; nay, what makes that less admirable, not worthy so much as to unloose the very Latchet of his Shoes.

THE next Instance I shall mention, is the ever-blessed *Mother* of our *Lord*. She, if ever any Creature, had Cause to be *proud*: 'Tis impossible even to imagin a stronger Temptation. She was saluted by an Arch-Angel, said to be a Person highly favoured with God, and blessed among Women; and in particular, That she should be Mother to the Son of the Highest, and that too by the Power of the Most High. Was not here enough to betray a poor innocent Virgin into Pride and Vanity? Had the Angels half so much Reason for their Pride and Haughtiness, when they fell from the Heights of Glory? Well, how did she behave her self under the *dangerous* Salutation? Why, she seemed to make it rather Matter of *Obedience* and *Resignation*, than of *Triumph* and *Boasting*. Behold, says she, *the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word*, Luk. 1. 38.

BUT the most stupendous Instance of Humility that ever was, or can be, was in the Person
of

of our *Blessed Lord*; whether we consider him in the Mystery of his Incarnation, or in the mean Circumstances of his Birth, or in the humble Method of his Life; whether we consider him as emptying himself of his Eternal Glories, and drawing a Cloud over his Brightness; or as forbidding the Devils to publish his Divinity, and Men to declare his Miracles, and his Disciples to tell of his Transfiguration; or as washing his Disciples Feet, or as riding upon an Ass, or as conversing among Sinners; and lastly, chusing to die between Thieves. These, and many other Instances of Condescension, argue the most profound Humility. that can be imagined; and withal, how concerned our Lord was to commend and endear this most excellent Duty to the Practice of Men. Of all the Vertues and Excellencies in the World, one wou'd have thought this of Humility least capable of being *practised* and *exemplified* by the Son of God. Commend it, indeed, he might by *Precept*, as well as any other, but sure, one would think, not by *Example*. But see what rare Arts and Mysteries God has found out to teach us this Lesson. And therefore we may well conclude, that there is *Excellency* and *Necessity* in it, as well as *Difficulty*; and how much it concerns us to *learn*, what God has been so peculiarly sollicitous to *teach*.

IT is then a Christian Duty to be thus *poor in Spirit*: And the *Reasonableness* of it is as great as the *Obligation*. This I might shew from the
good

good Consequences and happy Effects of this Disposition of Spirit; but this falling in more properly under the Third Partition of my Discourse, I shall for the present content my self with some other Consideration, taken from the Condition of Man; whom I shall consider,

I. As a *Creature*.

II. As a *Sinner*.

FIRST then, Man is a *Creature*, and this is a very reasonable Ground for Humility, and Poverty of Spirit. We usually think it a very *humbling* Consideration to re-mind a Person of the Meanness of his Original. But now, What Original can be so mean, as to be from *Nothing*? It is enough to take down the Spirit of the brightest Intelligence, to consider, that nothing was his Original; a State more vile and dishonourable than the Chaos it self. Now, this is the Condition of Man: He had his Rise from nothing, and derives his Pedigree, by his *Mother's Side*, from *Darkness* and *Emptiness*: And though now, by the Omnipotency of his Creator, he is something; yet still he holds his Being as precariously as he first received it, and depends as much for his Existence upon the Will of his Creator, as Light does upon the Sun, or the Image in the Glass upon the Presence of the Body. If God does but turn his Face from him, and cease to behold him, he will vanish into nothing. God spake the Word, indeed, before he was made, but to unmake him there needs no *contradictory Fiat*; he need only

only be *silent*, and not sustain him by the *Word of his Power*. And shall that Being be proud, which was once Nothing, and has still such a *Natural Bent* towards *Annihilation*, as to need only a bare *Negative* to make him Nothing again? No, says the Wise Man, *Pride was not made for man, nor furious anger for them that are born of a woman*. Man must forget his Extraction, to give the least Admittance to Pride; and he need but study and consider that, to have the most *inward and feeling* Sense of Humility.

THIS Consideration is yet farther improveable, if we admit the Hypothesis of those who say, that to be a Creature involves a State of Nothing, as well as an *Origination* from Nothing; that there is nothing *Real* or *Positive* in any Creature, but what is from God; and that though a Creature be something as of God, yet he is nothing as of himself, nor can exert any positive Act or Operation from himself, as a distinct Principle of Action; being still, as to *that*, as much a *Nothing* as before. If this be true, (and he that shall consider, and well understand, what is alledged by *M. Poiret*, in Defence of this Notion, will scarce find it in his Power to think otherwise) certainly Man has infinite Reason to be *poor in Spirit*, and to descend into the lowest Abyss of Humility and *Self-Abdication*, as becomes a Being that not not only *was once*, but *is still* a mere *Nothing*.

Lib. 4. Cogitat. Ration. de Deo, p. 574.

MAN therefore, as a *Creature*, has sufficient Reason to be humble, and *poor in Spirit*. But if we consider him *2dly*, as a *Sinner*, he has Cause, not only to be humble, but to lie down flat upon his Face, and look upon himself to be more base and vile than the very Dust whereof he was form'd, and whereon he treads. To be a Sinner is much more vile than to be the meanest *Creature*; and the Non-Entity of *Sin* is more dishonourable than that of *Nature*. This latter, tho' it cannot actually conform, yet it is not disobedient to the Will of God: But the former *Nothing* contradicts and *resists* his Will. This is, as I think one of the *Fathers* calls it, *Nihil Rebelle, & in Deum armatum*, an *Armed Nothing*. Indeed, to be a *Creature*, involves Weakness and Imperfection in it; but then it also involves Good, because nothing can be, but by partaking of the Perfection of God. But now, to be a Sinner involves nothing but pure and unmixed Evil; and is withal, a farther remove from Good than to be nothing, since it is, not only *negatively*, but *contrarily* opposed to it. 'Tis indeed the greatest Monstrosity and Deformity in the World, the greatest Contradiction to Order and Harmony, to Reason and Proportion, to Well-being and Happiness: In one Word, 'Tis the only thing which God hates. What great Reason then has Man to be humble, and *poor in Spirit*; poor even to Emptiness, and Self-Annihilation, who is not only a *Creature*, but a *sinful Creature*!

HAVING

HAVING now shewn the Duty and Reasonableness of Poverty of Spirit, in the full latitude of the Word, I proceed to shew, in the Third Place, the Happiness of those who are so disposed. *Blessed are the poor in spirit*, says our Saviour, *for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* That's the only Blessedness which is here expressly mentioned: But they are happy also in other regards: For, in the first place, What an happy Disposition of Soul must it be, always to carry about one such a strong and lively Conviction of the Vanity of all created Good, as not to run out into vehement Desires after it? For, Desire it self, to go no farther, is always a great Torment: 'Tis the same to the Soul, that *Thirst* is to the Body; and *Hope deferr'd* (as the Wise Man tells us) *makes the heart sick*, Prov. 13. But that is not all; for here will come in the Trouble of *Disappointment*, as well as of *Desire*: Not that which the World generally understands by Disappointment, the not compassing what you designed, (tho' that also will often happen) but the not *enjoying* what you have compassed, the *Disappointment of Fruition*.

BUT now, to be *poor in Spirit* is the Way to avoid all this. Such a Person expects no Happiness from the Creature; and consequently, not to find it there, will be to him no Disappointment. He does not lean upon any created Good with any *Stress*; and therefore, tho' it should fail under him, his Fall will be but slight and easie. And, indeed, it is not to be imagined what a deal of

Anxiety, Care, Restlessness, Disappointment, Sorrow, fruitless Labour and Endeavour are saved by this Poverty of Spirit. And I think this is no small Degree of Happiness.

AGAIN, Is it not a great Happiness to be so moderately and indifferently affected towards the World, as to be contented with any Condition in it? to be of a quiet, sedate, resigned and disinterested Disposition? He that is thus disposed, is above, or rather below the reach of calamitous Accidents. The Storm flies over his Head, he has nothing for Fortune to take hold of: Nor will he be under the Hazard of parting with his Religion, to secure his worldly Interest. No; he can do his Duty, tho' at the Expence of Martyrdom; and tho' highly *deserving* of the *best* Times, may yet be *trusted* in the *worst*.

THEN as to the Happiness attending upon Poverty of Spirit, as it stands for Humility, there is no one Vertue that is more her own Reward than this: Pride is the most *uneasie* thing in the World; and withal, the most *odious*; *uneasie* to the *Patient*, and *odious* to the *Observer*. And, as it is *uneasie* in it self, so is it the Parent of many troublesome and *uneasie* Passions; such as Anger, Contention, Revenge, Envy, Impatience, &c. So that it is hard to determin whether the proud Man be more *ridiculous* or *miserable*.

BUT now, to be humble, is to be wise, to understand the true Proportion and Measure of a Creature, to be serene, to be contented, to be thankful, to be pleasant and chearful, to be calm
and

and untroubled, to be dispassionate and unconcerned. In short, No Man enjoys what he really is, so much as he that does not fancy himself what he is not. And besides, the humble Man is sure to get that very Honour which he declines, and because he declines it. I end this with the Observation of *Plato*, That a Man that does not rightly know himself can neither be *prudent*, *good*, nor *happy*; which is all that goes to the Perfection of Man: And he that does, is sure to be all this.

THUS far of the Happiness belonging to the two Kinds of Poverty of Spirit *severally*. There remains yet one more belonging to them both in *common*; and that is, *the Kingdom of Heaven*, which I suppose to comprehend both *Grace* and *Glory*. As to *Grace*, we are told by the Apostle, that *God has chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith*. And in the same place where God is said to resist the Proud, he is said also to give *Grace* to the *Humble*, *Jam. 4. 6*. Indeed, *Humility* is the proper Foundation of *Grace*, and the Theatre of all Divine Operations. This State of Nothingness, and Self-emptiness, is as much a Preparation to the *New*, as the *Void* and *Inform Space* was to the *Old Creation*: 'Tis the true and proper *first Matter* in the Spiritual World, into which the Form of the *New Creature* will be introduced: And if Man does but contain himself in this *Nothing*, God will not fail to work All, and to be All in him; having promised his Special Presence to the Man of an *humble Spirit*, *Isa. 57. 15*.

THEN, as for Glory, 'tis highly equitable, that they who have humbled themselves here, should be exalted hereafter; and that they who have renounced this World, should have their Portion in the next. And to convince the slow-hearted and distrustful World, that thus it shall be, God has already given a Specimen of it, in the Example of his Son, who was particularly eminent for this double Poverty of Spirit; for *renouncing* the World, and for *debasing* himself; whom therefore God has *highly exalted*, *giving him a name above every name*, Phil. 2. 9. and has also placed him on his own Right-hand, *Angels, and Authorities, and Powers being made subject unto him*, 1 Pet. 3. 22.

DISCOURSE the Second.

MATTH. V. Ver. iv.

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.



THEY are the Words of him who was himself a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief; and who was also acquainted with *Happiness* too, with the Joys of Religion, with the Refreshments of Angels, with the Antepasts of Glory,

Glory, and with that Peace of God which now passes all Understanding, and shall hereafter satisfy all Desire: He had tasted of both Cups, the *Cup of Trembling*, and the *Cup of Salvation*: He had tried both the Miseries of Human Nature, and the Glories of the Divine; and so well knew what Proportion the Consolations of God have to the Infelicities of Man; and how little the Sufferings of this present Time are, in comparison of the Glory that shall be reveal'd to them that with Meekness bear them, and with Fruitfulness improve under them. He therefore having tried both the *Worst*, and the *Best*, must needs be a proper Judge in the Case, whether Happiness may consist with Affliction, or no. And he is so far from discouraging his Disciples from treading in the same thorny, rugged Way that he did, that he rather gives them all the Invitation in the world to do so, casts a *Glory* round the Head of the Sorrowful, and represents Grief as a very lovely thing, by telling them, that *Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

BUT are all those blessed that mourn? And does Grief entitle all that are under its Dominions, to Happiness and Consolation? This, indeed, wou'd be good News to this our World, where there is so much of it; which is a Valley of Tears, and a Region of Sadness; where there are a Thousand Sighs, for one Smile; and where *the mourners go about the streets*, Eccl. 12, 5. But it is not all Mourning that comes with-

in the Circle of this Beatitude; nor shall all that sow in Tears, reap with Joy. As there are some that *sorrow without Hope*, so there is some kind of Sorrow, concerning which we can hope nothing. There is a Sorrow that proceeds from no Human and Moral Principle, but from Natural and Necessary Causes; as from the Influence of External Impressions, from the Grossness of the Spirits and Blood, from Melancholy, and the like. Again, There is a Sorrow, which tho' of an Human and Moral Extraction, yet springs from no good or laudable Principle, but is altogether of a neutral and indifferent Nature. Again, There is a Sorrow that proceeds from an ill Principle; as, from Malice, Envy, Covetousness, Ambition, Servile Fear, and the like: And which tends also to an ill End; as, to Revenge, Impatience, Despair, &c. Accordingly the Apostle tells us of a *Wordly Sorrow*, and of a Sorrow that worketh *Death*, 2 Cor. 7. So far is all Mourning from being Christian Mourning, or from giving us a just Title to this Beatitude.

HERE therefore it will concern us to consider Three Things:

I. THAT there is such a Thing as the Duty of Christian Mourning.

II. WHO these Christian Mourners are.

III. WHEREIN consists their Blessedness.

AND

AND First, I say, that there is such a thing as *Christian Mourning*. This must needs seem a strange Paradox to the Philosophy of those who make the Pleasures of the Animal Life the End of Man, and think that now we have nothing to do but to enjoy them, and that God sent *Man* into the World to the same Purpose as he placed the *Leviathan* in the Sea, only to take his Pastime therein. 'Twould be but a cold Employment to go about to convince such Men, either of the *Necessity*, or of the *Blessedness* of Mourning; whose Answer would be in the Language of those Sinners in the Book of Wisdom, *Come on, let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures, as in our youth. Let us fill our selves with costly wine, and ointment; and let no flower of the spring pass by us. Let us crown our selves with rose-buds before they be withered, let none of us go without his part of our Voluptuousness, let us leave tokens of our joyfulness in every Place; for this is our Portion, and our lot is this.*

THIS is the Style of the *Epicurean School*. And there are also some Christians, who, tho' they do not make the Pleasure of the Animal Life their End, Lot and Portion, as do the other, yet they think they may allow themselves a great Scope and Compass in it, that they may indulge themselves to the full in all the Mirth and Jollity of the World, and that there is no need of any such thing as Mourning in *Sion*. These Men seem to have the same Notion of
Christ's

Christ's Religion, that the Jews had of his Person. They looked upon him under the Character of a great Temporal Prince; and dreamt of nothing under his Reign but Victories, and Triumphs, and Festivals, and Vine-yards, and Olive-yards. And so some think of his Religion. They look upon it as a fine, gay, secular, jolly Profession; as a State of Freedom and Emancipation, of Ease and Pleasantness; as if the Children of the Kingdom had nothing to do, but to eat, drink, and be merry, and that Mourning had no more place in *This*, than it is to have in the *New Jerusalem*, wherein, as the Evangelical Prophet tells us, *All tears shall be wiped away from mens eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain*, Rev. 21, 4.

It is, indeed, most certain, that Religion has its Joys and Pleasures, and that the Christian Religion has the most of any, and that they are such too as by far transcend all others; that the best Life is also the most pleasant Life; and that 'tis worth while to live well, if it were only for the meer Pleasure of doing so.

And there is a great deal of Truth in that noble Saying of Hierocles, *μὴ μόνον τῷ καλῷ, &c.* The good Man excels the wicked Man, not only in Goodness, but also in Pleasure it self; for whose Sake only the other is wicked. Nay farther; The Pleasures of good Men are not only greater than those of ill Men, but such as they cannot enjoy

OF

or relish, and have no manner of Notion of. As there are some Things of God, so there are Pleasures of Religion, which the Animal Man does not perceive: For *the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and the stranger does not intermeddle with their joy.* Nay, farther yet, No Man has any Ground or Pretence for 'Rejoicing, but a good Man. 'Tis the most usurping and daring Piece of Impudence in the world, for an ill Man to laugh, or be merry. What has he to do with Mirth, who has the Wrath of God abiding on him, and Hell open to receive him? It does not belong to him, 'tis none of his Part. Mirth is the Reward of a good Conscience, the Prerogative of Innocence, and the peculiar Right of good Men: And they not only *may* be joyful and chearful, but are also *commanded* to be so. Thus in the Law, *Deut. 16. 11. Thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God,* says Moses to the Jewish Votary. So again the Psalmist, *Psal. 33. Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous; for it becometh well the just to be thankful.* Again, *Psal. 68. Let the righteous be glad, and rejoice before God: let them also be merry and joyful.* And again, *Psal. 100. Serve the Lord with gladness.* And says our Blessed Lord, in his Farewel-Discourse to his Disciples, *Joh. 15. 11. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.* And we are exhorted to rejoice evermore by the Apostle, *1 Thes. 5.* who also reckons

kons Joy among the *Fruits of the Holy Spirit*, Gal. 5. 22.

Now all this is true, and I not only confess, but also recommend the Thing hitherto pleaded for. But then 'tis also to be considered what the Wise Man says, that *to every thing there is a season*; and that there is a Time to weep and mourn, as well as a Time to laugh and dance, Eccles. 3. And this not only from *Natural*, but also from *Moral Necessity*: For the Circumstances of Human Life are such, as make it our *Duty*, as well as *Fate*, to mourn, and be sorrowful. Religion has its gloomy, as well as bright Side; and there are to be Days of Darkness, as well as Days of Light, in the Christian Kalendar.

THIS is intimated to us by several *Expressions*, and by several *Examples*, in Holy Scripture. Thus the Church in general is, in the Divine Song of *Solomon*, compared to a Dove; which, tho' considerable for some other Qualities, is yet for nothing so remarkable as for her continual Mourning. So far was that Wise Man from the Opinion of those who make Temporal Prosperity, a Mark of the True Church. Again, says the same wise Preacher, *It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting. And again, Sorrow is better than laughter.* Where you see he not only inculcates the Practice of Mourning, but also expressly prefers it before its Contrary. And he gives this Reason for it, because *by the*
sadness

sadness of the countenance is the heart made better, Eccl. 7. 3. And therefore he makes this the Measure of Wisdom and Folly, by telling us in the next Verse, *That the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools in the house of mirth.* This Practice of Mourning is every where inculcated in the Writings of the Prophets, but especially of the Prophet *Jeremy*, who has writ a whole Book of *Lamentations*. But, above all, 'tis remarkable what our Lord himself says of Mourning, in the 16th of St. *John*, where he seems to make it the great Mark of Difference between his Disciples and the Men of this World, *Verily, verily, says he, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice.*

NOR do there want *Examples* of this Holy Mourning in Scripture. Thus the Devotion of *Hannah* is expressed by her being a Woman of a sorrowful Spirit, 1 *Sam.* 1. 15. The Royal Prophet spent his whole Time almost in Mourning and Sorrow, which he also indulged and fomented with Music and Divine Hymns: And yet he was a Man wise and learned, and a Man after God's own Heart; and withal, a Man of great Business, and publick Occupation. Thus again, the Prophet *Jeremy* was a great Mourner; a Man as insatiable in his Sorrow, as some are in their *Luxury*. He was so full of Grief, as not to be satisfied with the natural and ordinary Ways of expressing it: And therefore says he, *Oh, that my head were waters,*
and

and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night, Jer. 9. 1. More I might instance in, but I close all with the great Example of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, who, as the Text says, was a *Man of Sorrows*, and acquainted with Grief; and that not only in his last Passion and Agony, when his Soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto Death; and when, as the Author to the *Hebrews* says, *Heb. 5. 7. He offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears*; but also throughout the whole Course of his Life. We oftentimes read of his Weeping and Sorrowing, as upon his Prospect of the City *Jerusalem*, at the Grave of *Lazarus*, and a little after his last Supper, when, as the Text says, *Mat. 26. he began to be sorrowful, and very heavy*; and in the Garden, where he wept Tears of Blood. But we never read that he ever laughed. Once, indeed, 'tis said, *Luk. 18. that he rejoiced*; but then it was not with an outward, sensitive and tumultuous Joy; but with an inward, spiritual and silent Exultation: *He rejoiced in Spirit*. And what was it for? Not upon any Animal or Secular Account, but upon an Occasion altogether Spiritual and Divine. 'Twas for the abundant Grace of his Father, bestowed upon his Disciples; and for their good Use of it, and Improvement under it.

I do not intend in all this, such rigid Measures as are practised and exacted by some of the Religious Orders of the *Roman Church*; where

where a Man is not allowed so much as to laugh, or say any thing but *Frater memento mori*, for several Years together. This would be to turn Society into a *dumb Shew*, to make Life a Burthen. and withal, to bring an ill Report upon the good Land of Promise, and to discourage Men from the Christian Religion. But that which I stand for is this, That we ought not so to give our selves over to Secular Mirth and Jollity, but that we are still to remember that we are in the Vail of Tears; that there is a Time for Mourning, as well as for Rejoicing; and that this is that Time, now we are in our Exile, and in the midst of Dangers and Fears; and that therefore Sorrow must sometimes have its Turn, as well as Joy; and that there is such a Thing as Christian Mourning.

NOR need we be troubled that we have discover'd such an ungrateful Duty, since there is a *Beatitude* annexed to it. But because, as was before remarked, all manner of Mourning will not come within its Compaſs, it will concern us, in the second Place, to consider who these Christian Mourners are. This, I think, cannot be resolved by any better Measure, than by considering what are the true and proper Causes why a Christian ought to mourn. Now to this I shall answer,

I. IN *General*.

II. IN *Particular*.

IN *General*, I say, that then a Christian mourns for a due and proper Cause, when the
Princi-

Principle of his Sorrow is either Zeal for the Honour and Glory of God, or a Concern for the Good of Mankind: Nothing less than this can either deserve his Sorrow, or derive any Virtue or Excellency upon it. So that, in short, *Piety* and *Charity* will be the two Principles into which all true Christian Mourning must be at last resolved.

BUT because this may be exemplified in variety of Instances, it will not be amiss to consider some of the more remarkable of them. I answer therefore more particularly, That one very proper and reasonable Cause why a Christian should mourn, is, the *Consideration of Sin*. For a Man to consider seriously what a great and strange kind of Evil Sin is; how contrary to God, to his Nature, to his Will, to his Commands, to his Goodness, to his Justice, to the wise Order of his Grace and Providence, and especially to the great Mystery of Godliness: Then to consider how contrary it is to Man, to his Nature, to his Reason, to his Rational Instincts and Inclinations, to his inward Peace and Satisfaction; and lastly, to his Interest, both Temporal and Spiritual, Private and Publick, Present and Future: Then again, to consider, how prone we are to commit it, and that we our selves are the Authors of this Prone-ness: And lastly, how much of this great, strange Evil there is in the World; how Iniquity abounds, and the Love of many waxes cold; that the whole World, as *St. John* says,
Joh.

Joh. 5. 19. lies in wickedness; that there are but few that pretend to any Strictness or Regularity of Living, and yet fewer that discharge their Pretensions truly and sincerely. I say, For a Man to consider all this, to consider it seriously and thoroughly, must needs be a sad Scene of Contemplation, and such as will justly call for his Sorrow and Mourning. It was so to God himself, who is brought in by *Moses* as grieved at his very Heart for the Abundance of Wickedness which he beheld in the Old World. And I question not, but that, among the bitter Ingredients of our Lord's Passion, this was none of the least, to foresee that there would be so many, who by their final Impenitence, and persevering in Wickedness, would receive no Benefit from it. And, if we may judge by Proportion, the Angels in Heaven, who rejoice at the Conversion of one Sinner, do also *mourn* and *lament* for the irreclaimable Wickedness of so many Millions as are in the World. 'Tis a Thing worth our Considering, and worth our Lamenting. And therefore says the Psalmist, *Psal. 119. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law.* And again, *It grieveth me when I see the transgressors.* This is a vertuous and laudable Sorrow, as proceeding from a good and noble Principle, from Piety and Charity: And he that mourns upon this Consideration, is a true *Christian Mourner.*

AGAIN, Secondly, Another very proper and reasonable Cause why a Christian should mourn,

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is the Consideration of the *Miseries of Human Life*. 'Tis a most deplorable thing to consider what a deal, and what Variety of Misery there is in the World at once. *Many Things* must occur to make us tolerably *happy*; but *one Thing* alone is oftentimes enough to make us very *miserable*. And how unhappy then must Human Life be, among such a Multitude of Evils as are incident to it! I shall not go about to recount or describe them: They are too many to be number'd, and too various to be reduced to any Method. This only I say, That should a Man, by some compendious Device, have an united Prospect of the Miseries of the World, as our Saviour, by the Devil's Artifice, had of the Glories of it, 'twould be the most dismal Landscape that ever was drawn, or can be imagined. 'Twas for this that some of the Ancients reckoned an early Death among the greatest Blessings of Heaven. *Quem Dii diligunt, Adolescens moritur, The Favourite of the Gods dies young*, says the Comedian. But *Solomon* goes farther, *Eccles. 6.* and prefers an *untimely Birth* before a Man that has spent many Years in this World. To be short, Such is our Condition here, that we see God has not thought fit to trust us with the least Fore-knowledge of what is coming upon us, lest, like Men upon a deep Precipice, we should be amazed, confounded, and fall down at the dreadful Prospect. And if the private Circumstances of each single Man's Life be so black and disconsolate, that 'tis thought

thought fit he should see no farther than he goes, what shall we think of the Miseries of all Mankind put together? If any thing be worth our Sorrow, certainly this is. Our compassionate Saviour wept over the approaching Ruin of-perishing *Jerusalem*: And shall not a Christian mourn for the Miseries of the whole World? We suspect the Good Nature of him that can endure to sit out a deep Tragedy with dry Eyes: And can we stand and look upon a miserable World without mourning? There are some Men of Rocky Hearts, and impassible Tempers, that could stand by, and see the whole World in Flames without any Concern, were but their own little selves secure from the Ruin. And this some are pleased to call *Philosophy*. But certainly, Christian Charity, that obliges us to sympathize with the Miseries of each particular Man, to weep with those that weep, as the Apostle speaks, does much more require us to lament the common Miseries of Human Life. This therefore is a very proper Cause of *Christian Mourning*.

As is also, in the Third Place, the Consideration of the *Vanity* and *Emptiness* of all Worldly and Created Good. The general Cause of most of the Discontent and Melancholy that is in the World, is because Men cannot get so much of Worldly Good as they desire; not at all questioning its *Vanity*. But on the contrary, supposing that if they could *compass* such and such Things, they should be happy; and their only

Trouble is, that they cannot *get* them. Now this is properly Worldly Sorrow, and comes from an ill Principle, either from Covetousness, Lust, or Ambition. But now there may be a virtuous and laudable Discontent; as well as a vicious and fordid one: and that is, When a Man mourns, and is troubled; not because he cannot *compass* such and such Created Goods: No; perhaps he would not eat of the Fruit, if he could reach it; but purely because they are all *empty* and *vain*, and cannot satisfy. He does not grieve because he *wants them*, for it may be he chuses to be without them; but because they are wanting in *themselves*, and have not that in them which can ever make him happy. And, indeed, it is enough to cast a Damp upon the Spirit of any Considering Man, to think that what is substantial and satisfactory is out of his Reach, and that all is Vanity and Vexation that lies within it; that the former he cannot *enjoy*, and that the latter cannot *satisfie*. To be thoroughly and inwardly convinced that all Fruition is a Cheat, and so to have nothing in Expectation, no one Glimpse or Prospect of Enjoyment before one, to invite one to live longer: This is a sad Reflection, and such as must needs cause Sorrow and Mourning. But then, 'tis a very laudable one, and such as proceeds from an excellent Principle. 'Tis a Sorrow that arises from *Increase of Wisdom*, Eccles. 1. 18. from a right Notion and Understanding of Things, from Contempt of the World,

World, from a due Consciousness of our own Powers and Capacities, and from the more than ordinary Aspirings of the Soul to God, who alone is able to satisfy her. And, to be sorry upon such Principles as these, is to sorrow in a Rational Way, and after a Godly Sort.

To instance one more: Another very proper Cause why a Christian should mourn, is the Consideration of the *Uncertainty* of our *Salvation*, and the infinite Misery of those who shall miscarry in so momentous a Concern. As to the Certainty of our Salvation; it is not so great as some are apt to imagin: For, though I can be assured of this Proposition with a Certainty of Divine Faith, it being Matter of express Revelation, that the Faithful and Penitent shall be saved; yet that I believe and repent, can be known to me only on the Grounds of Experimental Knowledge, which is an Human, and therefore Fallible Testimony: And consequently, the Conclusion always following the weaker Part, I cannot be assured of my Salvation with a Certainty of Divine Faith, but only with an Human and Moral Assurance; which, indeed, to call it by a right Name, is no more than an high Probability, a strong Presumption.

BUT yet, if even even this Moral Assurance were *Absolute* and *Irreversible*, and were to take in the *Future*, as well as the *Present*, 'twere yet a considerable Stay and Security. But it is not so with us: That Assurance which we have

is absolute only for the Present, and reaches not the Future, but only upon Condition, supposing that we persevere in the present Disposition; which, considering the Mutability of our Wills, and the Multitude of our Temptations, and the frequent Examples of Apostacy, is a Thing not only of *uncertain*, but of *hazardous* Consequence.

AND as we are not, cannot be absolutely sure that we shall not miscarry, so, on the other hand, 'tis most certain, that we shall be unspeakably miserable if we do. For a Man to fall off from his last End, and only true Good, without any Hopes or Possibility of Recovery, is a thing that can hardly be thought of without Confusion and Amazement. Now let a Man put these two things together, That whether he shall be saved, or no, is a Matter of a depending and uncertain Issue; and that if he miscarry, his Case is intolerable; and then tell me whether this be not a just Cause for Trouble and Sadness; and whether this Salvation, this uncertain Salvation, be not to be wrought out with *Sorrow* and *Mourning*, as well as with *Fear* and *Trembling*?

CERTAINLY it is: And were it not for this, it would be no easie thing to give an Account, why Gravity, Seriousness, and Sobriety of Spirit should be such decent and commendable Qualities in Men. For otherwise, Why should not a Man give himself up to the utmost Gaiety and Jollity, and express it in all manner

manner of odd Postures and Gestures, up to the Height of an *Antick Dissoluteness*? I say, Why should not a Man do this? But only because this is not agreeable to the Part he is to act; who being in a State of Probation and Doubtfulness, and having so great an Interest depending, ought rather to temper and correct the Luxuriancy of his Spirit, with some Grains of Sadness, and Pensiveness; and beware of laughing too much here, lest it should be his Turn to weep and mourn hereafter.

THESE are the principal Causes of *Mourning*. And from hence we may gather, who the *Christian-Mourners* are, who are concern'd in this Beatitude; those, namely, whose *Mourning* proceeds upon these, or such like Grounds; which are at last reducible to either of these two Principles, Zeal for the Honour and Glory of God, or a Concern for the Good of Mankind. They who mourn upon the Score of *Piety* or *Charity*, are true *Christian-Mourners*.

IT remains that we now consider, in the last place, wherein consists their Blessedness. *St. Austin*, in his Confessions and Meditations, very frequently speaks of the *Grace of Tears*; and as often prays for it: And well he might, since it is attended with such happy Effects, and has such a Blessedness intailed upon it. Its Blessedness is both present, and to come. What the present Blessedness is, we may learn from the Wise Man, who tells us, That *by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better*. It is so;

for by this it becomes more soft and tender for all Divine Impressions, for the Love of God, for Devotion, for Charity to our Neighbour, for Mercy and Compassion, for Repentance, and the like. It is also hereby made more serious, more considerative and reflecting, more recollected, more settled and composed; which is to be considerably *better*. For, as Sorrow is the Principle of Consideration, so is Consideration the Principle of Repentance and Well-living, according to that of the Psalmist, *I considered my own ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies*, Psal. 119.

AND of all this we have a very signal Example in the Nation of the *Jews*, who, till the Time of the *Babylonish* Captivity, were very gross and carnal, notwithstanding so many *Miracles* of God, both in their Deliverance out of *Egypt*, and in their Passage through the Wilderness. And when they were brought into the Land of *Canaan*, tho' they had such open and clear Testimonies of the Divine Presence among them; so many Prophecies, so many Miracles, and so many Apparitions of Angels; yet we find them ever now and then relapsing into Idolatry. But after the Captivity, when they had gone through a Course of Sorrow and Affliction, they presently began to behave themselves more orderly; and seem'd, like Gold, to *refine* upon the Trial of the Furnace: For we do not read, that after that Time they ever fell into Idolatry. And accordingly, God began to

to deal with them now no longer as Children, but as Persons of some *Maturity*, by withdrawing from them his *Visible Presence*, and the *Spirit of Prophecy*; thinking them to have learnt enough already in the School of Affliction, to supersede all other Methods of Instruction and Discipline. And from that Time forwards, the *Minds of Men* began to be more generally erected towards Heaven, and the Good Things of a better Life; when they saw that the strictest Observers of the Law fell oftentimes into those Evils which were denounced against the Transgressors of it. By which means they were, by degrees, prepared for the Reception of the Gospel.

THIS is the present Blessedness of those that mourn: What the future is we are told by our Saviour; who says, they shall be *comforted*; that is, shall be received into a *State or Place* of Bliss and Happiness, Joy and Delight; and be infinitely rewarded in Heaven for all their pious and charitable *mourning* upon Earth: According to that of the Psalmist, *Psal. 126. He that now goes on his way sorrowing, and bringeth forth good seed, shall, doubtless, come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him.* They shall be received into the City of God, the *New Jerusalem*, where there is no more *Mourning*, nor Cause of *Mourning*; and where not only all *Sin*, but even those very *Vertues* which are founded upon the least *Imperfection* shall be done away. Here therefore there will be no Room left even for

for *Godly Sorrow*; but all shall be Joy and Gladness, Harmony and Thanksgiving. And, Blessed are they who so mourn here, that they may enter into this Joy of their Lord hereafter.

DISCOURSE the Third.

MATTH. V. Ver. v.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Earth.



THE Judgment of God differs so very widely from that of Man, that his Thoughts are seldom as our Thoughts, nor his Ways as our Ways. But in nothing is the Difference so signal, as in the Conclusions concerning *Good and Evil, Happiness and Misery*. Our Judgments are seldom conformable to the Divine in Matters of mere Truth and Notion, but much seldomer in Practical Maxims, and Moral Resolutions. Here, if any where, is chiefly to be found that *vain Philosophy*, which we are caution'd against by the Apostle, *Col. 2. 8.* and that *Tradition of Man*, and those *Rudiments of the World*, which are not after Christ. Herein it is that the Wisdom of God, and the Wisdom
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of the World, which seldom meet in one Point, stand yet most divided and opposed to each other; and tho' the latter be always, in some Respect or other, Foolishness to the former, yet never so much as in her Resolutions concerning Good and Evil, Happiness and Misery; the World, for the most part, calling that Evil which God calls Good, and those Miserable whom God pronounces in an especial Manner Happy. This is very remarkably verified in the *Matter* now before us: For, tho' there has been great Diversity of Sentiments in the Gentile Philosophy, about the Objects of Human Happiness; some placing it in one thing, and some in another; yet, among all their Variety, we do not find any that placed it in *Humility* or *Meekness*. These they scarce acknowledged as Vertues, much less to be such as wherein the Happiness of Man should in great part consist. Nay, they rather looked upon these as mean, servile Dispositions, such as were fit for *Men* of low Fortunes, and lower Minds; and which were so far from conducing to Happiness, that they rather exposed Men to Misfortunes and Miseries. But now, these are the Dispositions of *Mind* which our Lord and Saviour, who was the *Wisdom of his Father*, and the *Light of the World*, singles out, and marks, for a peculiar Excellency and Happiness.

NOR need we wonder over-much at the Singularity of this Christian Paradox, since the whole Course of our Saviour's Life and Do-
ctrine

Strin was a direct Contradiction to the Maxims and Practice of the World. Thus Men hate to unsay or undo what they have either done or said, and to confess their former Folly by an After-Retractation. But now, this is the principal thing of our Saviour's Institution, whose whole Gospel is a Doctrin of *Repentance*, which is a *Retractation* of Judgment and Choice. Thus, again, Men love Riches, but Christ chose to be Poor: They are altogether for Honours and Greatness, but he hid himself that he might not be made a King: They, again, greedily pursue after Pleasures, but both his Life and Doctrin was all over Rigour and Mortification. The World thinks Affronts intolerable, and it is reckoned a piece of Gallantry and Honour to revenge them; but our Wise and Good Lord chose to be revil'd, and spit upon: They are impatient of Calumnies and Slanders, but He chose to be condemned being innocent: They, lastly, (as the Prophet complains) *Mal. 3. 15. call the proud happy*, and despise the meek Man, as a miserable Slave and Fool; whereas, says our Lord, in Opposition to the former, *Blessed are the poor in spirit*; and, in Opposition to the latter, *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*

FROM the Words, I shall discourse of these two Things in general, the *Duty*, and the *Blessedness* of Meekness. In treating of the first it will be requisite,

- I. To consider what Meekness is.
- II. To shew that it is a Christian Duty.
- III. To state the Measures of its Obligation in its more general Cases.
- IV. To enforce the Practice of it, as far as it obliges.

FIRST therefore, As to the Notion of Meekness. *Aristotle* has long since defined it to be a *Mediocrity* about *Anger*: *μεγέθυς ἢ ἐπι μέσους αἰεὶ ὄντων*, are his Words in the Fourth of his *Ethicks*. This Definition, tho' it be true as far as it goes, yet, like the rest of his, it runs in such general Terms, that a Man is little the wiser for it: And, indeed, it rather serves to tell us the Meaning of the Word, than to discover the Nature of the Thing. To do this therefore I should rather think fit to say, That it is such a Temper, or Disposition of Mind, whereby a Man so moderates and commands the Passion of Anger, as not to be carried to any such Degree of it, as may either discompose himself, or injure his Neighbour. Call this a Definition, or Description, or what you please, I think it is such as may give a sufficient Idea of the Thing we are discoursing about.

THIS therefore being settled, our next Business is, to shew, That to be thus meek, is a Christian Duty. That it is so, might sufficiently appear from this General Consideration, that it is an Instance of *Charity*, which, as we well know, is the Life and Substance of the
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Christian Law. And it is a very considerable Instance too: For, since Charity obliges us to promote both our own, and our Neighbour's Happiness, it must, by Consequence, oblige us to moderate and govern those Passions which have any Influence upon either of them. Now, among all the Passions, there is none, in the Exercise of which, either our own, or our Neighbour's Happiness, is so often, and so much concerned, as in this of Anger. So *often*, it being a thing of daily Incurfion. So *much*, because upon this depends all the Strength and Stability both of private and publick Peace. And consequently, such a due Moderation of this Passion as may secure both (which is what we call Meekness) is a very considerable Instance of Charity, and therefore also of the Christian Law, which is so much a Law of Charity, that, as the Apostle tells us, *Gal. 5. 14.* it is *fulfilled* by it. And accordingly we may observe, that among the several Excellencies and Properties of Charity, reckoned up by the Apostle, these are particularly insisted upon, that it suffers long, and is kind; *1 Cor. 13.* that it is not easily provoked; and that it bears all things; which are also some of the chief Properties of Meekness.

BUT that Meekness is a Christian Duty, and one of the first Order too, may be more particularly shewn from the Express Doctrin and Example of our Divine Law-giver. As to his Doctrin, he not only commands it, but seems

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to resolve all that Moral Excellency which he either had in himself, or would have in us, to these two, *Humility* and *Meekness*: *Come unto me, says he, and learn of me.* But what? Not to make Worlds, not to cure the Sick, not to restore Light to the Blind, or Life to the Dead, (to use the Remark of the excellent Cardinal *Bona*) but learn of me, for I am *meek and lowly in heart.*

Manuducto
ad Cœlum, &
32. p. 40.

WHAT! Was it that our Lord had no other Vertues; or that he excelled in these two more than in any of the rest, that when he bids us learn of him, he proposes no other to our Imitation? Neither of these can be said. Not the Former, because in him dwelt the Fulness of the Godhead, which is not consistent with the Absence of any one Grace or Vertue. Not the Latter, because he was uniformly, as well as entirely good, and had every Vertue in its utmost Perfection, having (as the Scripture says of him) received the Spirit of God without measure. 'Tis true, indeed, he might be, and was more remarkable for the outward Exercise of one Vertue than another, according as Opportunities and Circumstances might require: But as to the inward Habits and Dispositions themselves, he was equally perfect in them all, and did not excel in one, more than in another. Why then does he recommend only these two to be learnt by his Disciples? It must be partly because he was the only Master that could teach

teach such Divine Dispositions, and partly because of some special Excellency in the Vertues themselves, above any other of the Christian Law. And therefore also our Lord puts them for the whole of it, by calling them his *Yoke* : *Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ; for I am meek, and lowly in heart, Mat. 11. 29.*

NOR are we less obliged to this by the *Example*, than by the *Precept* of our Lord : For, as his Example was a Living Law, so was the Practice of his Vertue a very eminent Part of his Example. This he himself intimates to us, by assigning this for the Reason why we should learn of him. And of this we may be farther informed from the whole Story and Process of his Life. Never was any Man's *Meekness* so much tried as his was : For, as the *real* Excellency and Dignity of his Person heightned every Affront and rude Treatment that was offered him, to an incomparable Pitch, so the *outward* Lowness and Meanness of it exposed him to a great many of them : And yet, notwithstanding the Number and Heinousness of his Provocations, we do not find that he was ever in the least discomposed, or put into a Passion by them.

MOSES, indeed, was a Man very eminent for this Vertue ; insomuch that the Scripture gives this Character of him, *That he was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth, Numb. 12.* And yet we find that, with all his Meekness, he could not bear with the

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the Crossness and Perverseness of that untractable People the Jews, who (as the Psalmist's Observation is) *so provoked his spirit, that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips*, Psal. 106. Now our Lord had to deal with the very same stubborn and cross-grain'd Generation of Men, only now under infinitely greater Prejudices and Disaffections; and suffered more Indignities from them, than either were, or could be offered to *Moses*; and yet none of all their ill Usages could ever raise such a thing as Anger or Resentment in him, though they did so in those who stood by, and beheld his Abuses. Thus the Unkindness of the rude *Samaritans* could not so much as strike a Spark into his Divine Breast, when at the same time it made his two zealous Disciples, *James* and *John*, kindle to that Degree, as to desire Fire from Heaven to consume them, *Luk. 9. 54*. And so again, the rough Seizure of his Sacred Person by the Soldiers could not extort from him so much as an angry Look, when yet the very Sight of it made his warm Disciple draw his Sword.

AND with the same Meekness he went on with his Sufferings, with which he begun them; as may appear from that mild Answer which he returned to the Officer that struck him, *Joh. 18. If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?* What could have been said more mildly and dispassionately, or that could argue a more sedate and well-govern'd Spirit? His greatest

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Apostle

Apostle could not be half so moderate under a far less urging Occasion: For, when not actually smitten, but only commanded to be so by the Order of *Ananias* the High-Priest, he returned him this sharp and warm Answer, *God shall smite thee, thou whited wall. For sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten, contrary to the law?* There was, indeed, nothing in his Answer, but what, perhaps, might have been justified by the Oddness of the Provocation; but yet you cannot but observe a great Difference between the Behaviour of the *Disciple*, and of the *Master*.

BUT if you would see a perfect Example of *Meekness*, look upon him under the Shame, and Dishonour, and Pains of the Cross; encountering at once with the Agonies of Death, the Contradictions and Revilings of Sinners, and the Vengeance of an Almighty God; and all this without any the least Shew of Impatience, or Discomposure of Spirit. So that I think I may well enlarge the Question of the Prophet, and to that, *Is there any sorrow like to my sorrow?* add this also, *Is there any meekness like to my meekness?*

AND here I cannot but make a Stand, and with Sorrow reflect upon a certain Order of Men, how little they have of the true *Spirit* of *Christianity*, how little they have learnt, either by the Precept, or by the Example of him whose Religion and Imitation too they profess, and by whose Venerable Name they have
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thought fit to distinguish themselves; who, instead of this Meekness and Gentleness, are all made up of Passion and Violence, Fury and Out-rageousness; mere Fire-brands in Society, that kindle and lay waste where-ever they come, and seem more like *Granada's* shot into a Town, than *Inhabitants* of it, by thus raging where they light, by thus burning, destroying and tearing all about them. How unlike are these Men to the Temper of the meek Lamb of God! As unlike, certainly, as Wolves and Tygers. And yet it is an Unlikeness they are so little sensible of, that they will yet pretend to the Name and Practice of Christians; yea, to the very Name of *Jesus*: And he had need be a bold Man, or at a good distance from them, that shall dare to contradict them.

BUT certainly, as *Wrath worketh not the Righteousness of God*, Jam 1. 20. so neither is such an allowed Course of it consistent with it. And as he cannot be a good Man who is so inordinate in the Use of a Passion, wherein both his own and his Neighbour's Peace and Quiet is so much concerned; so much less can he be a good Christian, who is of a Frame of Spirit so directly contrary to that of the Holy *Jesus*, and who wants this great Christian Qualification, the Spirit of Gentleness and Meekness, which is so considerable an Instance of Charity, and so strictly enjoined by the Precept, and so strongly recommended by the Example of *Christ*.

BUT because the *Limits* of this Duty are not so plain as the Obligation of it, I proceed, in the Third Place, to state the Measures of its Obligation in its more general Cases. And here, in the first place, it may be demanded, Whether all Anger be contrary to Meekness, and consequently unlawful? The Affirmative is stiffly contended for by the *Stoic*; but I think the Negative sufficiently warranted by the Apostolical Caution, *Be angry, and sin not*, Eph. 4. 26. Which plainly implies, that there may be Anger without Sin: And it is also plain, from the Nature of the Thing, that there may; for Anger is a Natural Affection, implanted in us by God, from whom nothing can proceed that is simply, and as such, evil. And besides, the Office of Meekness is not utterly to destroy this Passion, but only to regulate it; whereby 'tis supposed that it is not, in its whole Kind, evil; for, what is so, cannot be regulated, and must be destroyed.

SINCE then Anger is supposed not wholly to be destroyed by Meekness, as being Evil, but only to be regulated, lest it become so, the next thing to be considered is, by what *Measures*. Now, these *Measures* may either respect Anger as to the inward Passion, as within a Man's own Breast, or, as to the outward Acts, Effects, and Expressions of it.

AND *First*, As to those *Measures* which respect Anger as to the inward Passion, as lodged within a Man's own Breast. These, I think, will

will be sufficiently comprized within these four Circumstances; the Cause or Occasion, the Object, the Degree, or the Time. As to the Cause, to render that justifiable, it will be requisite, *First*, That it be something weighty and considerable, something wherein either the Glory of God, or the publick Good, or else some very great private Interest is concerned. 'Tis not every little impertinent Trifle that can warrant our Anger. *Secondly*, 'Twill be requisite that our Anger owe its Birth to some competent *Measure* of previous Counsel and Deliberation: For, if all our Actions are to be governed by Reason, certainly our Passions ought not to be wholly exempted from it: I am sure they need it most of all. And if a Man thinks not before he gives himself leave to be Angry, tho' the Ground of it should prove never so just and proper in it self, yet, as to him, his Anger was brutish, and unreasonable. As it will also be if, *Thirdly*, it be not conceived for a due End; such as either the Vindication of the Divine Honour and Glory, the Procurement of Good to our Neighbour, or the Prevention and Suppression of Sin. And so much to qualifie our Anger, with respect to the *Cause*.

BUT *Secondly*, To the farther Regulation of it, 'twill be requisite that it have a due *Object*; for all are not so. There are some Things that cannot, some that ought not to be the Objects of Anger; that cannot with Reason, and that

ought not for Religion. Thus we ought not to be angry with God, as it is said *Caligula* was; who being vex'd at the Thunder for disturbing his Banquet, rose up from the Table, and provoked *Jupiter* to fight with him. Neither ought we to be angry with *inanimate*, senseless Things; as *Cyrus* was with the River, for drowning one of his sacred Horses. It argues a Mind overcome and blinded with Passion, to be so prodigal of it where it can signify nothing. Nor ought we to be angry with those, who, either by Chance, or Necessity, or probable Ignorance, or common Frailty, have offended us. Nor are we to be angry with those, who, though they have none of these Excuses to qualify their Trespas, yet acknowledge their Fault, beg our Pardon, and promise Amendment. Repentance is the Measure of God's Forgiveness; and so it ought to be of ours. Nor, lastly, should we let loose our Anger against *Brute* Creatures, Children, Fools, or Mad-men, or any other that are under any great Defect or Disorder of Understanding. But we are to be angry with such only as are impious and wicked, and that are neither ashamed nor repent of their Wickedness. And even here also we ought rather to be angry with the *Fault*, than with the *Person*. For so *Moses* was exceeding angry at the *Idolatry* of the *Israelites*, when at the same time he prayed for the *Idolaters*.

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AND thus far of the *Object*. The two last Circumstances whereby our Anger is to be qualified, are, *Degree* and *Time*. As to *Degree*, this may receive a double Measure; one from the Person who is the *Object* of Anger, and another from the Person who is the *Subject* of it. That with reference to the *Object* is this, That our Anger should not exceed the Quality of the Offence committed. That with reference to the *Subject* will be this, That it should not be so great, let the Offence be what it will, as to discompose the Mind of him who conceives it, and thereby unfit him for the Discharge of such Offices as he owes either to God, his Neighbour, or himself.

THEN as to the *Time* of our Anger: This we find already stated by the Apostle, who limits it within the Compass of a *Day*. 'Tis a Passion that ought to be so short-lived, that the Sun must not go down upon it, *Eph. 4. 26*. For, indeed, it is not safe trusting our selves with such a dangerous Guide in the *Dark*, nor to nourish a Passion which, tho' in its own Nature innocent, borders so nicely upon Hatred, that with a little keeping it will grow so stale, fowre and inveterate, as to commence Malice.

AND thus far of those Measures which respect Anger, as to the *Inward Passion*. Proceed we now to those who respect it as to the outward Acts, Effects and Expressions of it. And here, among other Things too obvious to be

insisted on, two Enquiries offer themselves more principally to be considered. One is, concerning the Propulsion or Repelling of Injuries; the other is, concerning the Revenging of Injuries already done. Of both these it may be demanded, how far they are consistent with the Vertue and Duty of Christian Meekness.

AS to the Former, it is to be considered, that Injuries are either Publick; as, when the Magistrate oppresses his Subjects; or Private, when one Subject injures another; or, Lastly, such as are on both sides Publick, as when one King or State injures another. This premised, I answer, *First*, That an Injury offered from one Kingdom or State to another, may, and ought to be repelled by that other; this being one of the main Ends and Uses of the Civil Sword, to protect those who are subjected to it; which when it does, it is duly employed. To which it may be added, that distinct Kingdoms, being under no common Jurisdiction, have no other Expedient whereby to right themselves: Either therefore they must always suffer, which would be intolerable to Society, or they must right themselves by the Sword. *Secondly*, That in case the Supreme Magistrate oppresses his Subjects, 'tis by no means consistent with Christian Meekness for them by Force to repel the Injury. We are, indeed, to *obey* him only in *some* Cases, but to *resist* him in *none*. This is certainly a true, tho' to some an hard Saying; *wherefore ye must needs be subject: and they*

they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation, are as plain Words as any in the Bible. But Men are very slow to understand what they have no mind to practise; otherwise one would think there should need no other Decision in the Case, than the Example of our meek Lord and Master, who patiently submitted himself to an ordinary Magistrate, commanded his rash Disciple to *sheath his sword,* and would not suffer his Angelical Legions to *draw theirs,* Mat. 26 53.

BUT *Thirdly,* As to private Injuries between Man and Man, I answer, *First,* That these are never to be forcibly repelled by a private Defence, when a publick one may be had; in defect of which, a private one may be used. But then we are to consider *Secondly,* That either this private Injury reaches only to our Goods and Possessions, &c. without hazard of Life; and here a good Man would go very far in yielding from his Right, and in patiently undergoing Injuries: Or else 'tis with extream Danger of Life; and then, indeed, he not only may, but perhaps is obliged by the Law of Self-preservation, by the utmost Force to repel the Injury. And thus much to be observed in *Repelling of Injuries.*

I come now, in the Second Place, to consider the *Vindication* of Injuries already done. And here I take notice of a Two-fold Extream. One is, of those who stand for the highest Vindication of Injuries, without any Measure, or
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Moderation: Which seems to have been the Fault of the *Jews* of Old, who, by the Law of Retaliation, thought they might exact any thing; an Eye for an Eye, or a Tooth for a Tooth. The other is, of the *Anabaptists* and *Socinians*; who so extol the Law of Charity, as not to allow any place for the Vindication of Injuries; not permitting it either to private Persons, or publick; and so taking from the Magistrate both the Right and the Use of the Civil Sword.

THESE I take to be Extreame; and that the Truth lies between them, which I suppose is, That publick Vindication of Injuries is not only lawful, but necessary; so far from being against Charity, that it is a great Instance of it, and required by it: For, without this there would be no living, and Human Society could never stand. But as to private Vindication of Injuries, that which we more especially call *Revenge*, this I shall readily allow to be utterly unlawful, and so make appear upon these Grounds. *First*, Because Vengeance is proper to God, and therefore to be committed either to him, or else to those whom he has impow-ered, who are therefore stiled Gods. *Secondly*, Because Vengeance is an Act of Judgment, and consequently a publick Act, and therefore not to be exercised by a private Person, who also must not be allowed to be a Judge in his own Cause. *Lastly*, Because Vengeance cannot belong to them, by whom the Ends of it cannot

not be obtained : But now, by a private Hand they cannot, as may appear by considering what these Ends are ; which I suppose to be chiefly these Three ; To amend him that is punished, To better others by his Example, and To procure to the Injured Party, and others, Security for the future. But now private Revenge reaches none of these Ends. For, *First*, It does not amend or reform the Adversary, but rather provokes him farther. Nor, *Secondly*, does it tend to the bettering of others, but rather corrupts and scandalizes them by an ill Example. Nor, *Lastly*, does the private Avenger procure Safety either to himself or others, but rather Danger to both ; and to himself Vexation and Trouble for the present, and Fear for the future, lest his Enemy should revenge himself again. Private Revenge therefore is universally to be condemned, as utterly unlawful, and altogether inconsistent with the Duty of *Christian Meekness*.

AND thus have we stated the Measures of this Vertue, in its more general Cases. But this is a thing that needs to be *inforced*, as well as *explained*. Consider therefore, *First*, That God has expressly forbidden us all undue Anger, and has prescribed the contrary Offices of Charity and Meekness. Consider again, that all Injuries befall us by God's special Providence, and may, if we hinder not its Course, turn to our greater Good. Consider again, that God uses an incredible Patience and Long-suffering

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toward the worst of Men, and particularly towards our selves; by the former setting us an Example of Lenity, and by the latter making it very reasonable for us to follow it. Consider again, that all Vengeance belongs to God, who has said, *Vengeance is mine*: And that therefore, he that avenges himself, assumes the Part of God; yea, withal, of a Judge, of an Accuser, of a Witness, and of an Executioner, all at once; against all Sense and Reason, Equity and Justice. This may be considered with reference to God.

THEN, again, as to our Neighbour. Consider, that he is nearly related, both to God, and to our selves: To God, as made after his Image; and to our selves, as cast in the same Mould with us, and partaking of the same common Nature. Consider again, what we would have done by our Neighbour, to our selves; and how reasonable it is that we should do the same to him. *Lastly*, Consider what we have already done to him; whether we have not been guilty of the same, or greater Injuries towards him, than those which we so warmly resent from him.

THEN *Lastly*, With reference to our selves. Consider, *First*, how much by our unjust Anger we expose our selves to the just Displeasure of God, who, by his Son, has told us, that *Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment*, Mat. 5. 22. Consider again, That we may easily, and do often

often mis-interpret Men's Minds and Intentions by their outward Demeanour; and think our selves affronted by them, when there is no such thing intended; and that therefore, even upon this Account, it is very reasonable we should be *slow to wrath*. Consider again, How much causeless and intemperate Anger unfits us for all the Parts of Divine Worship, which can neither be well performed by, nor will be accepted from a Heart flaming with this strange Fire. And therefore, says the Apostle, speaking of Prayer, *1 Tim. 2. Lifting up holy hands, without wrath*; implying, that a Vacancy from Wrath is a necessary Qualification for Prayer. To which purpose it is very considerable, that when King *David* would have erected a Temple for the publick Worship of God, though a Man otherwise of a sweet and gentle Disposition, and only accidentally, and innocently too, engaged in Circumstances of Anger and Contention; yet he was refused, and the Work imposed upon one not of a more meek Spirit, but only of a calmer and more serene Life. And if God would not accept an *House of Prayer* from a Man of a Military Way and Character, much less will he accept those *Prayers* which proceed from a Soul disturb'd with Anger. Consider again, How it unfits us for the Business of our Calling, how it hinders the free Exercise of our Thoughts, how it prejudices our Health, disturbs the Tranquility of our Minds, renders us odious and uneasy to all about

bout us; in one word, how utterly it unfits us, both for enjoying our selves, and from being delighted in by others. Consider, *Lastly*, to what mean and fordid Principles within us this Passion owes its Rise; such as Pride, Self-love, vain Curiosity and Suspicion, rash Credulity, Negligence and Inadvertency, Ambition, Lust, Envy, and the like. So that, besides its own proper Illness, 'tis farther to be detested upon the Scandal of its Parentage.

HAVING thus far discoursed of the Duty of Meekness; *First*, By shewing what it is. *Secondly*, By shewing that it is a Christian Duty. *Thirdly*, By stating the general Measures of its Obligation. And *Lastly*, By proposing such Considerations as may recommend its Practice. I come now briefly to discourse of its *Blessedness*; which may also serve as another distinct Consideration to enforce the Practice of it. *Blessed are the meek*, says our Saviour, *for they shall inherit the earth*: The only Beatitude which has a Temporal Promise annexed to it; wherein our Lord seems to imitate *Moses*, who in his Law had also one Commandment with a Temporal Promise. And there seems to be great Resemblance between them: One is, *That thy days may be long in the earth*; and the other, *They shall inherit the earth*. Here therefore we are to do two Things: *First*, We must enquire into the Sense and Meaning of the Beatitude. *Secondly*, Into the Truth of it. That is, We must *First* enquire, What is meant by the

the Meek's inheriting the Earth ; And *Secondly* shew, That they do so inherit it.

AND *First*, by their inheriting the Earth, I suppose, cannot be meant, that they shall have large Portions of it, that they shall raise great Estates, that they shall take Root, and spread, and, as the Prophet expresses it, *Isa. 5. joyn house to house, and lay field to field.* This, I suppose, cannot be meant :

I. BECAUSE this is not true : The Meek do not inherit the Earth according to this Sense.

II. BECAUSE if they did, this would not be a proper Ground for their being pronounced Blessed.

AND *First*, This Sense is not true; the Meek do not *thus* inherit the Earth. We rather find that the World is made for the Bold and the Violent, for the Rough-spirited and Turbulent, for the Furious and Boisterous ; and that they have commonly the greatest Share of it, who deserve the least. And therefore we commonly urge this as one Argument against the Goodness of Riches, That they frequently fall to the Lot of the worst Men. And therefore, says the Psalmist, *Psal. 74. Lo, these are the ungodly, these prosper in the world, and these have riches in possession :* While, in the mean time, the Meek are oppressed and devoured by these Beasts of Prey ; and are so far from inheriting the Earth, that it is as much as many of them can do to *live* upon it, and more than some of them can do to find Room *under* it.

BUT

BUT *Secondly*, Suppose they did thus inherit the Earth, by having great Portions of it, yet this would not be a proper Ground for their being pronounced Blessed: For, Are Clods of Earth a suitable Good for Man? Or, Is Happiness to be measured by the Acre? Do we find that rich Men are so very much happier than others? Or, Do we think that the Earth has Mines of Happiness, as it has of Gold? But, whatever we think, Is it at all probable, that our Blessed Lord, who himself made choice of Poverty, who but in a Line or two before pronounced the Poor blessed, who tells us that his own Kingdom was not of this World, who bids us beware of Covetousness, and warns us of the great Danger of Riches, by telling us how hard it is for one that has them to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; who dehorts us from laying up Treasures on Earth, and who, lastly, recommends to his Disciples nothing more than the Contempt of the World, by assuring them, that the Life of Man does not consist in the Abundance of Things which he possesses: I say, Is it imaginable that our Lord, after all this, should therefore pronounce the meek Man blessed, for having great Possessions?

THIS therefore cannot be the Thing meant by the Meek's inheriting the Earth; which I take, rather to signify the *Manner* of Possessing, than the *Greatness* of their Possessions; and to import thus much, That the Meek shall enjoy what they have, be it little or great, with Comfort,
and

and Satisfaction, and Tranquility of Mind ; whereas those of a contrary Disposition, tho' they may *possess* a great deal, may yet be truly said to *enjoy* little or nothing. And this seems to be the Sense of the Psalmist, when, in Words directly parallel to these of our Lord, he says, *The meek-spirited shall possess the earth, and shall be refreshed in the multitude of peace,* Psal. 34. 11. That is, They shall have Comfort and Pleasure, Peace and Content, with whatever they have ; which, how little soever, shall yet carry a true Relish, and yield more real Satisfaction to them, than the otherwise-affected can reap from their ample Revenues. According to what the Psalmist, in the same place, immediately subjoins, *Psal. 34 16. A small thing that the righteous has, is better than great riches of the ungodly.*

THIS I take to be the *Sense* and *Meaning* of this Beatitude. As to the *Truth* and *Reality* of it, there is this double Security for it ; the Natural Tendency of the Vertue of Meekness, and the Blessing of God upon it. As to its Natural Tendency, Meekness is a very decent, amiable and winning thing ; and, accordingly, the Apostle calls it, *The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.* And by this, in all probability, the meek Man will sweeten and indear even his very Enemies to him, and so gain himself Peace *without* by his quiet and inoffensive Behaviour. But however this be, yet he is sure to have Peace *within*, with himself, and with God. And having this, he is in a very fit Condition

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of Mind to enjoy himself, and to take Comfort in what he possesses.

WHICH he will be farther enabled to do, *Secondly*, by the Blessing of God. And this again the Psalmist takes notice of, some few Verses after the fore-cited ones: *Vers. 22. Such as are blessed of the Lord shall possess the land*, says he; implying, that as the Meek, whom he just before spoke of, should possess the Earth, so it is through a special Blessing of God that they should do so. And these are two great Securities for a Life of Comfort, and Self-Enjoyment; the Peace of a sedate Spirit within, and the Blessing of God without. And both these the meek Man has, whom therefore we may venture to pronounce Blessed; and therefore Blessed, because he shall *thus* inherit the Earth: Which yet shall be but a Type and Pledge of his future Inheritance with the Saints in Light.

DISCOURSE the Fourth.

MATTH. V. Ver. vi.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.



HO' God has provided *Entertainment* for all the Appetites which he has made, yet there are but two Appetites of Man which he intends to gratifie to the *height*, and to bless with a full and lasting

lasting Satisfaction ; and those are, the Desire of being happy, and the Desire of being good. There are some Appetites of Man which are never satisfied ; for, says the Wise Man, *Eccl. 1. 8. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.* Seeing and Hearing are the most refined of all the Senses ; and those Appetites which are most spiritual and refined, and come nearest to the Elevations of the Intellectual Nature, are always hardest to be satisfied : And the Intellectual Nature it self, when it is more raised and elevated, as in the State of Separation, will have a more enlarged Appetite, and a sharper Edge of Desire, and so will be harder to be satisfied than it is now. Which, by the way, I take to be the Reason why those Sensual Spirits, which now feel no great Uneasiness from the Absence of the Supreme Good, will, notwithstanding, hereafter be extremely miserable, in being exiled from his Beatifick Presence. As for the *grosser* Appetites of the Animal Nature, such as Hunger, Thirst, and the like ; these, indeed, have this Advantage above the *Finer*, that they may be satisfied for some time, and (such is the Brutishness of Man) are too often over-charged. But then they will return again in certain Periods, like the Tide, and be as importunate as ever for new Supplies ; and, as our Saviour told the Woman of Samaria, *Joh. 4. 13. Whosoever drinks of this Water shall thirst again.* The Appetite may be laid asleep for a while, but it will infallibly awake again into its former Eagerness.

BUT it is not the Unhappiness of Man to have *all* his Appetites like these, such as will either *never*, or not *finally* be satisfied. There are two that are designed for a full and lasting Satisfaction; the Desire of being happy, and the Desire of being good and vertuous; but still with this material difference between them, That the Desire of Happiness is not absolutely secure of Satisfaction, but only upon Condition. The Satisfaction of this Desire is suspended upon the Quality of our Moral Conduct: But now, the Desire of Goodness and Vertue has, by the Grace and Indulgence of God, an absolute Title to Satisfaction, and is sure to be throughly gratified: For, says our Saviour, *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Shall be filled*, without any farther Condition, or Reserve.

THAT we may the better comprehend the *Sense* and *Truth* of this Beatitude, it will be necessary

I. TO enquire what Righteousness that is, which if we hunger and thirst after, we shall be filled.

II. WHAT kind of Hunger and Thirst that is, to which this Promise of Repletion is made.

III. TO make good the Proposition it self, that those who do hunger and thirst after Righteousness shall be filled.

To

To satisfy the first Enquiry, I shall not critically weigh all the Acceptations of the Word *Righteousness* in Scripture; thinking it sufficient to the Business in hand, to consider the general *Kinds* and *Degrees* of Righteousness. This therefore may be considered either in a *Judicial*, or in a *Moral* Sense. Righteousness in a Judicial Sense imports as much as a Legal Discharge, whereby the Person impleaded becomes Right in the Court, or Righteous. Which Legal Discharge may be again two Ways, either by remitting a Criminal, or by acquitting suspected or accused Innocence. These are the two Ways of a Legal Discharge; and then is a Person judicially righteous, when he is discharg'd either of these two ways, either by the Remission of his Guilt, or by the Declaration of his Innocence. The latter of these is properly Justification; tho' the former be *that* Justification whereby Christians must expect to stand in the Judgment of God, since, in the other Sense, no Man living shall be justified: For we are not justified as *innocent* Persons, but as *Sinners*; and, accordingly, are not *acquitted*, but *pardoned*.

RIGHTEOUSNESS, in a *Moral* Sense, may be supposed to import all those Divine and Moral Vertues which are required by the Christian Law, consisting of the whole Duty of Man, to God, himself, and his Neighbour. This latter kind of Righteousness may again be considered, either *Materially* and *Abstractedly* for the bare Vertues themselves, as they are certain supposed

Actions which naturally tend to the Good and Perfection, both of Human Nature, and of Human Society ; or else *Formally* and *Concretely* for such and such Vertues as subjected in Man ; or for the habitual Will of doing such supposed Actions, which is formal Vertue, and whereby the Man is denominated vertuous or righteous.

THIS is not one of those Distinctions which are without any *Difference* : For the Difference is very clear and great. As for Instance, When it is said, *I love or practise Vertue*, and, *I am proud of my Vertue*, 'tis plain that the Word Vertue does not bear the same Notion in both Propositions. For, when it is said, *I love and practise Vertue*, there it is plain that Vertue is taken *Materially*, for the Abstract Idea of Vertue, which is supposed to be the Object of my Love. But when it is said, *I am proud of my Vertue*, here 'tis as plain that Vertue is taken *Formally*, for my Habit of Willing it ; whereby I am denominated vertuous: For I cannot be supposed to be proud of Vertue in its Abstract Idea, but only of the Love I have towards it. To be short, Moral Vertue may be taken either for the Things which are fit to be done, or for the habitual Will of doing them. The former is the Righteousness of the Law, prescribing what ought to be done: The latter is the Righteousness of the *Man*, willing to do what is so prescribed. These are the general Kinds of Righteousness.

Now

Now to the Question; What kind of Righteousness that is, which if we hunger and thirst after, we shall be filled? I answer, *First*, That the Righteousness here intended cannot be Judicial Righteousness, since the mere Desire of Pardon or Justification is not of it self sufficient to procure it, or to avert the Sentence of Condemnation. It must therefore be *Moral* Righteousness.

IF you ask in what Sense? Whether as materially, or as formally taken? I think either Sense may be admitted. But then there will be Difference in the Proposition, according to the Sense presumed. For, if Righteousness be here taken *Materially*, then the Hungring and Thirsting after it will be a *simple* and *direct* Act of the Will: But if *Formally*, for that Righteousness whereby a Man is formally good and vertuous, then the Hungring and Thirsting after it will be a *Reflex* Act of the Will; that is, a Desire, not of Material Righteousness, but of the Love of Material Righteousness, which is a Man's Formal Righteousness. And this Sense of Righteousness I take to be most agreeable to the Exigence of this Place, because the Desiring Material Righteousness, by a direct Act of the Will, actually makes a Man formally righteous, and so prevents and anticipates that Repletion which our Lord promises as a future Reward and Blessing. Whereas the Desiring Formal Righteousness, or the Love of Material Righteousness by a Reflect Act,

supposes the Man not yet actually righteous, as he is also supposed in the Beatitude; and so leaves him capable of having the Promise made good to him, that he shall be filled.

Now, as to the *Degrees* of Christian Righteousness, the Masters of Spiritual Life usually assign Three. By Degrees, I suppose, meaning not all those Advances in Righteousness, whereby a Man may exceed either another, or himself; for then they might as well have reckoned three Thousand, there being an infinite Latitude in Goodness: But only such Advances as imply different *Periods*, and distinct *States* of the Divine Life. These they assign to be Three; grounding this their Division upon the Authority of St. *John*, who, they say, represents Christians as under a Threefold State, by bespeaking them under the several Titles of *Little Children*, *Young Men*, and *Fathers*, Joh. 2. 12. By Little Children, meaning young or new Converts, who must be fed with the Milk of the Word, with the plain Doctrins and Principles of Christianity. By Young Men, those who are grown up to some Strength in Holiness, and have made some Progress in the Mortification of the inferiour Life. By Fathers, those who are arrived to a perfect Habit of Goodness, and, as far as Human Nature will admit, are fully regenerated into the Divine Life.

BUT I think this Computation must be re-trenched: For, with all the Invention which I have,

have, I can find but three States, or Degrees, for the whole Moral Condition of Mankind : For all the Men in the World, and every particular Man in several Periods of his Life, may be reduced to one of these three Orders: Either he is one of those who do not apprehend Sin as an Evil; who either through Want of Understanding and Reflection, have not attained to any Sense of its Malignity; or through Debauchery and habitual Viciousness have lost it, and so will and chuse Sin *purely* and *intirely*, with Unity of Consent, and without any Mixture of Reluctancy, which is the most exalted Pitch of Wickedness that a Creature is capable of. Or else one of those who indeed do look upon Sin as Evil, and as such nill and are averse to it; but not looking upon it always as the *greatest* Evil, do oftentimes nill it only imperfectly, and absolutely speaking do will and chuse it, to avoid (as they then think) some greater Evil. Or else lastly, one of those who looking upon Sin not only under the Notion of Evil, but as the greatest of all Evils, nill and refuse it, not only in some certain respect, but absolutely and thoroughly, so as not by any means to be persuaded to commit it.

THESE Three Degrees will comprize the whole Moral State of Mankind. And accordingly I observe that St. *Paul* makes mention of a three-fold Law. The first is, νόμος τῆς ἀμαρτίας ἐν τοῖς μέλεσι, *The Law of Sin which is in the Members*, Rom. 7. 23. The Second is, νόμος τοῦ νοῦς, Ver. 23. *The*

The Law of the Mind, or Conscience. The Third is, νόμος πνεύματος ἁγίου, The Law of the Spirit of Life, Rom. 8. 2.

THESE Three Laws answer exactly to the three Moral States of Human Nature. Under the first Law, the Law of Sin, are those who will and embrace Sin purely and entirely. Under the second Law, the Law of the Mind, are those who will and stand averse to Sin in some certain respect, as Evil, but yet will and chuse it absolutely and effectually. Under the third Law, the Law of the Spirit of Life, are those who absolutely and thoroughly will the Commission of Sin.

THE first of these States is a state of meer Sin and Death, and those of this Order are they who are said to be *Dead in Trespasses and Sins*, Eph. 2. 1. The second is a state of Imperfect Life. The third is a state of Health and Vigour. The first is a state of Rest and Acquiescence in Sin. The second is a state of Contention. The third is a state of Victory. In the first state the Mind is laid fast in a deep sleep. In the second she is between sleeping and waking. In the third she is broad awake, and well come to herself. He that is in the first state, is born only of the Flesh, and has no higher Principle in him: He is that *Animal Man* that perceives not the things of God, 1-Cor. 2. 14. He that is in the second, has indeed some quickning Motions, some ineffectivè Stirrings and Endeavours of the Divine Life. But he that is in the third, is born
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of the Spirit and of God, and doth not commit Sin, because his *seed remains in him*, Joh. 3. 9.

FROM this Distribution of the Moral State of Man, 'tis evident that there can be but two distinct Degrees of Righteousness, or States of the Divine Life. For the first of the Three (as was before remark'd) is a State of meer Death and Sin. Righteousness and Life belong only to the Two latter, but with this great Difference, that the first of these two Degrees, tho' it has something of Life and Righteousness in it, yet 'tis such as is consistent with the final and absolute Prevalency and Dominion of Sin, and consequently such as cannot qualify a Man for Pardon, or put him into a State of Grace and Salvation. Whereas in the last the Principle of the Divine Life is supposed to be so strong, as not only to resist, but to overcome Sin. And he that is thus spiritually alive, is alive indeed, alive unto himself, and alive unto God, and if he abide in this Life, shall live for ever.

THERE are therefore but two such Degrees of Spiritual Life and Righteousness as imply different States. And therefore to the Distribution of St. *John* my Answer is, That it must necessarily be understood not of Three distinct States of Righteousness (there being no more for the whole Moral Condition of Man) but of three Degrees in one and the same general State. If it be demanded which of the two States of Righteousness that is? I answer, That

That St. *John* must be supposed to intend the last and best State, because he addresses himself to his Little Children, Young Men and Fathers, as those who had their *Sins forgiven them*, who had *overcome the wicked one*, and who had *known the Father*, Joh. 2. 12, 13. All which Expressions argue one State of Grace in common between them, tho' differing in Measures and Proportions. The Reasonableness of which threefold Gradation I do not think my self concern'd at present to enquire into or justify, it being sufficient to my present Purpose to have shewn that it cannot be meant of Three different States of Righteousness, but only of Three different Degrees in the same State. The States themselves are but two.

Now to the Question, What Degree or State of Righteousness that is, which if we hunger and thirst after we shall be fill'd : I answer, That it must be no other than that which puts a Man in favour with God, and qualifies him for the Mercies of the New Covenant. For if the *Righteousness it self* be not such as will render a Man acceptable with God, how can the *Desire* of it intitle him to his Promises? 'Tis a much less Worthiness to desire any Righteousness than 'tis to have it; and how then can it be an acceptable thing to desire an unacceptable Righteousness! The Righteousness therefore here intended must be such as makes him that has it, acceptable to God; and consequently it can be no other but the last Degree

OR

or State of Righteousness: Since nothing short of that can either reconcile God to Man, or make Man fit for God. And this I take to be the constant Voice of Scripture, and the Doctrine of our Holy Church, which every where represents an absolute and effectual Love of Holiness, and the like Hatred of Sin as necessary to the State of Grace and real Regeneration.

THERE are, I know, some among us, who notwithstanding their usual and popular Presence, That they differ from our Church not in any Doctrinal Points of Religion, but only about some few Ritual Observances, do yet teach very differently in this Article, setting the State of Regeneration and Sanctification so low, that a bare ineffectue Striving against Sin is reckon'd a very sufficient Mark of it: Wherein they conspire with those of the Roman Church, who make the slightest Repentance by the Accession of Sacerdotal Absolution to be full and valid; only with this Difference, That what the one make sufficient in a certain Case, and on a certain Supposition, the other make sufficient universally and absolutely, requiring nothing further as of necessity to Sanctification than a bare ineffectue Strife against Sin. A State which a Man may be soon *in*, tho', according to the same Gentlemen, not so soon *out*. For whoever has the least sense of Sin as an Evil (and certainly there are but few who have not so much) must needs be so far averse to it, and cannot possibly commit it
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but with some Reluctance: Which yet, according to these Men, is sufficient to intitle a Man to the State and Reward of Sanctification, tho' at the same time he be the *Servant of Sin*.

THIS I confess is a good way to counter-balance the Severity of their Reprobating Decrees, and to stock Heaven as much by one Doctrin, as they depopulate it by another. But certainly the Gate of Heaven is much too strait both for this Doctrin and for those (I will not say that hold it, but) that live by it. It is a Doctrin too little according to Godliness to be according to Truth, and such as makes neither for the Honour of God, nor for the Safety of Man. But I need reprove it no further, it being sufficiently exposed by our most excellent Bishop *Taylor* in his Preface to the Clergy of *England*, before his *Unum Necessarium*.

ALL therefore that I further remark is, That since the Righteousness of the first Degree is that which these Men make sufficient for Acceptance with God, the same Degree of Righteousness would, I suppose according to these Men, be a sufficient Title to this Beatitude. But if the last Degree of Righteousness be only that which can procure us Acceptance with God (as most certainly it is) then that is the only Righteousness, which if we duly hunger and thirst after, we shall be fill'd. I say, which if we duly hunger and thirst after. Which leads me in the second Place to enquire what kind of Hunger and Thirst
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that is to which this Promise of Repletion is made.

AND first, 'tis plain that Hunger and Thirst here must be taken in a figurative and metaphorical Sense, since Righteousness is not the Object of a *Natural*, but of a *Spiritual* Appetite. Hunger and Thirst therefore is the same with willing or desiring. This as to the *Kind*. But then as to the *Degree*, 'tis to be consider'd, That every Good does as such necessarily move the Will, as every the least possible Weight moves the Scale. But it does not always move *effectually*, as every Weight in the Scale does not weigh it *down*. But however something it does towards it, since otherwise as much Weight would be necessary to turn the Scale as if it had been quite empty. I shall therefore distinguish of Willing as a very contemplative Theorist does of Physical Motion, into that which is *impotent*, and that which is *prevalent*. By impotent willing meaning that natural Inclination or *Velleity* we have to every Good as such, which indeed would be prevalent, if not out-weighed by Reasons of stronger Moment on the other side; but being overcome by them becomes impotent, not as to the Endeavour (for that is inseparable) but as to actual Determination. By prevalent Willing, I mean such a Degree of Willing as is not a meer Endeavour, but passes into actual and effectual Choice: When the Moral Scale not only *gravitates* and presses, but weighs down.

Dr. Gliffon de
Vita Naturæ, &c.
19. p. 254.

Now

Now to the Question, Which of these Degrees of willing or desiring is here intended? I answer, the last and highest, that which is peremptory and effectual, that which passes into Act, and ends in a thorough Determination of the Will. Since nothing less can either be signified by such strong Metaphors as these of *Hungry* and *Thirsting*, or consist with the Sincerity of a Christian Spirit. 'Tis not enough therefore to have ones Face set towards *Jerusalem*, and to cast some amorous Glances upon the Beauty of Holiness. 'Tis not enough to have some faint ineffective Wishes, some kind Resentments towards Righteousness, there being but few so wretchedly wicked and immoraliz'd as not to have some such little *Vellotties* of being Good; and no question *Balaam* that desired the *Death*, did also at this rate desire the *Life* of the *Righteous*. But the Desire must be strong and active, vehement and importunate, absolute and peremptory, without any Reserves or Conditions. It must bear the same Proportion to the Soul, that the Keenest Hunger and Thirst does to the Body, that is, it must be a great deal sharper, as much as the Appetites of the Spirit are more quick and exquisite than those of the Body. It must be such a Desire as our Saviour had to celebrate the Passover, and institute his last Supper, when he says, *Luk. 22. 15. With desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.* Briefly, it must be such a Desire as carries in it the full Bent and Stress of the Soul, such

such as is accompanied with the most earnest and hearty Endeavours, and with the most Passionate and Devout Prayers and Aspirations to God. Such as that of the Psalmist, *O that my ways were made so direct, that I might keep thy statutes!* With many more such throughout the whole 119th Psalm, which I commend to the Meditation of the Pious.

THIS is that Hungring and Thirsting after Righteousness intended in this Beatitude. And accordingly 'tis observable what Solomon in a place almost parallel to this of our Lord, says concerning the Love of *Wisdom*, which generally in Scripture, especially in Solomon's Writings, signifies the same with *Righteousness*, Prov. 2. *My Son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures. Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of thy God.* Here the Wise Man makes the most searching Diligence, and the most vigorous Exertion of Soul, necessary to the finding of Wisdom. And he that so seeks her shall find her. Which brings me in the last place to make good the Proposition it self, that those who do thus hunger and thirst after Righteousness shall be fill'd.

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BUT

BUT before I proceed to this, I beg leave by way of Digression to speak something of another sort of Hunger and Thirst which all Christians are concerned to have. Our Saviour tells us, that *Except a man eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, he has no life in him,* Joh. 6. 53. Now if the Flesh and Blood of our Lord be necessary to the *Life*, then certainly the Hungring and Thirsting after it is necessary to the Health and good Habit of a Christian. There is not a more open sign of a distemper'd Constitution either in the *Natural*, or in the *Spiritual* Man, than either to long for what is not his proper Food, or not to have an Appetite for that which is. And therefore since the Body and Blood of Christ is the proper Food and Aliment of a Christian, it concerns him as he values the Health and prosperous State of the Divine Life, not only to feed upon it, but to keep up in himself a due *Hunger* and *Thirst* after it.

MORE especially this he ought to do, whenever he approaches the Holy Altar to partake of this Divine and Heavenly Feast. He ought then by all the Arts of the Spirit, and by all the Methods of Grace, to quicken and raise this Hunger, and set an edge upon this Thirst. *St. Austin* (if I mistake not) discoursing of the Dispositions of a worthy Communicant, reckons this *Hunger* and *Thirst* among them, and makes them as necessary Qualifications as any. And there is a great deal of Reason for it.

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This Holy Sacrament is generally set out in Scripture by Meat and Drink. 'Tis call'd expressly by the Name of the *Lord's Supper*. And, says our Saviour to the Jews, *My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed*, Joh. 6. And as 'tis expressed, so also was it *presigured* by Types of the like Nature, such as the Tree of Life in the midst of Paradise, the Bread and Wine of *Melchisedeck*, the Manna, the Paschal Lamb, the Shew-bread, the Bread wherewith the Angel fed the Prophet, and particularly by the Waters springing out of the Rock, whereof the Fathers drank in the Wilderness.

Now I consider that as these Figures represent the Nature and Efficacy of the Holy Sacrament, that 'tis the Food of the Soul, and the Life and Strength of the *Spiritual Man*, so they do also represent to us our *Duty*, and the proper Measure and Argument of Preparation: For if Meat and Drink be the Entertainment, what more convenient Preparation than *Hunger* and *Thirst*? We ought indeed to come to these Springs of Salvation, as the Hart is represented to do by the Psalmist to the Water-brooks, panting and thirsty, longing and impatient. Or rather, to use a nearer Emblem, as those thirsty *Israelites* did to the Waters that issued out of that Mystic Rock in the Wilderness. 'Tis impossible to give a just Description of this *Sacramental Thirst*; but if we could but so far advance our Fancy, as to represent to our selves with what Eagerness and Greediness

those thirsty and scorched Travellers in the Wilderness did apply their Mouths to the springing Stone that was now more endeared to them by the *Benefit* than by the *Miracle*, then and then only may we have some Notion of that Hunger and Thirst wherewith we are to approach and receive these Divine Mysteries. For if that Rock and Miraculous Water was a Type of our Sacrament (as the Apostle assures us it was, telling us expressly that that Rock was Christ, 1 Cor. 10. 4.) then by the like proportion that *Thirst* was also a Symbol of our Duty, a Signification of our *Sacramental Thirst*.

AND as he that will come to this Divine Feast, must come Hungry and Thirsty; so he that is truly Hungry and Thirsty as he ought, will be sure to come, and not (as too many do) study to find out Pretences to excuse his Absence. But why do I say *Study* to find Excuse? There are some Men that will be hinder'd by *any* thing; nay, by *every* thing. There is nothing, there *can* be nothing so little and inconsiderable, but what will hinder some Men from the Holy Sacrament: That which would not hinder them from any thing else, things of much lighter Weight than what were pretended by those in the Parable, the buying of a Farm, or the Trying of a Yoke of Oxen, or the Marrying of a Wife. If the Heavens do but frown, or if they themselves are never so little out of Humour; if a Visit be intended a Day after, or if a Domestic Jar happen'd a Day before, they presently

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keep off from the Sacrament. Nay, some are so very absurd, that though they themselves are in perfect Charity with all the World, and have not the least Tincture of the old Leaven remaining in them, yet if *another* Person happen to be out with *them*, they shall think this a sufficient Warrant to stay away from the Sacrament; which amounts to as much as if a Man should say, Because another Person has sinn'd against me, therefore I will sin against God and my self, and so be sure to outdo him.

BUT there is a Degree of Folly beyond this. There are some that cover over this gross Neglect, which comes the nearest of any thing to what the Apostle calls *Trampling upon the blood of the covenant, and doing despite to the Spirit of Grace*, with the specious Pretence of *Reverence*. They have, forsooth, so profound a Reverence for the Holy Sacrament, that they cannot find in their Hearts to come to it. A very odd Way of expressing Reverence to any Divine Institution, by turning ones Back upon it. This is such a Reverence as the *Jews* pretend towards the *Tetragrammaton*, or Name *Jehovah*, which consists in their never using it. Such a Reverence (if so much) as the *Papists* shew to the Host, when they carry it in Procession, to be gazed upon, and stared at. But do these Men, indeed, reverence the Sacrament? Then one would expect, at least, that when-ever they *do* come, they should behave themselves there with more Devotion and Reverence than others that are most constant.

constant. But there is nothing like to be observed. Nor do I at all wonder at it, since the Way to Communicate well, is to Communicate often. And I farther remark, That those who behave themselves most *irreverently* at all other Parts of Divine Worship, are the very Men that stay most away from the Holy Altar, upon the Pretence of Reverence.

BUT how comes it to pass that *this* is the only Part of Religion that must be neglected upon the Account of Reverence? Do they do so by any *other* Part of Religion? 'Tis true, indeed, that all the other Parts of Divine Worship are too much neglected, as well as this; but I do not find that ever any were so absurd as to pretend *Reverence* for the neglecting of *them*; and why then should they do it here?

BUT do these Men indeed reverence the Holy Sacrament? Why then do they not pay some Regard to the *Command* it self, as well as to the *Matter* of it? *Do this*, says our Saviour, *in remembrance of me*. Why should all the Reverence be fixed upon *This*, and none upon *Do*? Or, if they do reverence the *Command*, how are they not afraid of breaking it? Or how can a *Command* be revered by not observing it? *Do this in remembrance of me*. If the doing this be in Remembrance of our Saviour, then the not doing it is to forget him: And how can he pretend Reverence to the *Institution*, that forgets the *Author* of it?

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AND here I cannot but take Notice of another gross Notion that I find passes very current among Common People. They think all the Danger lies in Coming unprepared: If they eat and drink unworthily, then nothing but Death and Damnation: But if they stay away, all is safe and well. As if a Man might not destroy himself with *Fasting*, as well as by taking *Poison*. These Men ought to consider that there is such a thing as an *Unworthy Non-Communicant*, as well as an *Unworthy Communicant*. And I wish they would read a certain Book that bears that Title, *The Unworthy Non-Communicant*: They would then perhaps be sensible of some other Danger, besides that of Coming without sufficient Preparation. In the mean time, all that I shall farther say to those Men is, that what-ever Penitences they make to Christianity, 'tis certain they have not that *Hunger* and *Thirst* which is so necessary to the Life of a Christian, and which, if they had it, would bring them oftner to this Spiritual Banquet, and procure them the Blessing of being *filled*, and replenished. To the Consideration of which I now return.

Now there are two Ways of being filled; either *Absolutely* and *Simply*, so as not to be any more in Desires: Or with respect to some *certain* Object, so as not to desire any more of the *same*; tho', simply speaking, you do desire *still*. The First of these is *Satisfaction*, the Second is *Satiety*: And those that duly hunger and thirst after Righteousness shall be filled both Ways; that is,

They shall be filled with *Righteousness*, and they shall be filled with *Happiness*.

FIRST, They shall be filled with *Righteousness*, Rom. 5. 5. For, since the Spirit of God, which sheds his Love abroad in our Hearts, is a good and loving Spirit, and knows no other Bounds in his Communications than what are set him by the Capacity of the Subject, it follows, that he will not fail to replenish all those with his Graces, who are duly qualified to receive them. But now, nothing can be supposed to be a greater Qualification, than such *Hungring and Thirsting* as I have described. This is the utmost Man can do to dispose himself for the Reception of the Divinest Impressions. This therefore is that sacred Lure, that powerful Charm, which draws down the Holy Spirit into the Hearts of Men; as the *Platonists* say of aptly disposed Matter, that it *sucks* a Soul into it, by a kind of Natural *Magick*, from the World of Life. This Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness is the very same to the Life of the Soul, as that *Organical Aptness* is to the Life of the Body: It is the Congruity of the Soul, in order to Spiritual Life. That Soul therefore that is so qualified for Righteousness, cannot miss, according to the Order of Grace, of being filled with it.

THE short is, God desires the Righteousness of Man, more than Man himself does, or can do: He delights to see his own Image reflect from him, and stands ready to sow the Seeds
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of the Divine Life in every capable Soil; and therefore we need not doubt but that the truly hungry and thirsty Soul shall be filled with the *Bread of Life*, and with the *Waters of Comfort*, Pſal. 23. Not that he shall be so filled with Righteousness in this Life, as not to desire any more of it, (for we are now in a State of Proficiency, not of Perfection) but in the next he shall: He shall then be so replenished with it, as not to desire any one farther Degree of it; and shall be perfectly possessed of that Divine Life and Nature, whereof he is now only Partaker.

SECONDLY, These hungry and thirsty Souls shall be filled with *Happiness*. This is a certain Consequent of the other, there being both a *Natural*, and an *Established* Connexion between Righteousness and Happiness. Some, indeed, have gone so far, as to make them one and the same as to *Kind*, and distinguishable only as to *Degree*. Hence that common Theological Effate, *Grace is Glory begun, and Glory is only Grace finished*. But I think there is more Prettiness in the Expression, than Truth in the Notion. Nay, there is one Instance which plainly demonstrates it to be false: For 'tis most certain, that the Human Soul of our Saviour was always in a State of *Perfect Grace*, having, as the Scripture says, received the Spirit of God without Measure; and yet it is as certain, that he was not, while on Earth, in the *State of Glory*, being then a Man of Sor-

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rows, and acquainted with Grief: Much less was he in the State of Glory at the Hour of his Passion, and during his dreadful Dereliction. Which yet could never be, if perfect Grace and Glory were, as some contend, one and the same thing.

BUT our Proposition will stand well enough, without the help of this Notion. For, tho' *Righteousness* be not the same thing with *Happiness*, yet there is such a Connexion between them, that they who are filled with the former, shall certainly be so with the latter. And this depends upon the Nature of Things, as well as upon the Order of God: For a righteous Frame of Spirit not only gives us Admission to the Supreme Good, but also disposes us for the Enjoyment of it; without which, all the other Materials of Happiness would signifie nothing: 'Tis the Disposition of the Soul that makes the Vision of God truly *Beatifick*; and when we *awake up after his likeness, and behold his presence in Righteousness*, Psal. 117. 16. then, and then only, we shall be *satisfied* with his Glory.

AND here we may stand still a little, and reflect what a great Privilege those that hunger and thirst after Righteousness have, beyond all those who make Secular and Carnal Things the Objects of their Desire. These things can never fill them *absolutely*, so as to extinguish all Desire; being neither themselves the Good of Man, nor leading to that which is: Nor can they always satisfy that *particular* Appetite
which

which is conversant about them ; sometimes because the Things themselves cannot be had, Nature having not provided enough for the Covetousness and Luxury, tho' she has for the Necessities of Men : And sometimes because they are too deficient when we have them, by reason of their Disproportion to the Enlargement of the Faculty ; as in the Objects of *Sight* and *Hearing*, wherewith neither the *Eye* nor *Ear* is satisfied, as was remark'd before. And when these things ~~do~~ fill any particular Appetite, it is only for a time, till the next Fit of Longing comes ; as the Ground is, for the present, refreshed with a transient Shower. But for those that hunger and thirst after *Righteousness*, as their Desires are more noble, so their Satisfaction shall be more abundant. 'Tis their great and peculiar Blessedness to be filled in all Senses, and in all Capacities, and to all Eternity.

DISCOURSE the Fifth.

MATTH. V. Ver. vii.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.



IF all the Passions which God has planted in Human Nature, there is none which at once carries so bright a Resemblance of *God*, and is so fitted to the present Condition of *Man*, as that of Pitifulness and

and Compassion. And if, when God made Man, he consulted his own Eternal Essence, certainly when he drew this Part of him, we may suppose him to have reflected upon the divinest of all his Ideas, and to have stamped upon him the most lovely Feature of the Divinity.

ALL the other Passions are, in their own simple Natures, indifferent, neither good nor evil in themselves, but equally determinable to either, and, for the most part, are actually determined to the wrong. They are generally irregular, either in the Degree, or in the Object; are either mis-governed or mis-placed; and when most orderly managed, the highest Character they can pretend to, is only to be Instruments and Servants to Vertue. They are as a gusty Wind and Sail to a Ship; if she steer right, they prosper, and further her Course; but if wrong, they serve only to strike her against the Rocks with more Speed and Force.

BUT now this Affection of Pity and Compassion rises higher than Indifferency, and is not content with a bare State of Innocence. It is of it self a vertuous Disposition, and needs only actual Exertion to make it a direct Vertue, and then its own Native Excellency will place it among the Highest Orders. And therefore tho' our Saviour by assuming our intire Nature, justified the Innocency of *all* our Natural Passions, yet as *Mercy* was that Attribute of God which he came chiefly to display, so is *that* the Affection which he chiefly commends to Man, by his

his Practice, and by his Discourses, by open Commands, and by Parabolical Insinuations; but chiefly by selecting and adopting this alone of all the Passions into the Sacred Number of his few Beatitudes, by telling us, that *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*

THIS great and peculiar Honour, done by our Lord to this Affection, will invite us to consider,

FIRST, The Nobleness and Excellency of it.

SECONDLY, Its great Reasonableness, and Usefulness.

THIRDLY, The particular Blessedness assigned to it.

BUT before we can well enter upon these Considerations, we must first premise something concerning the Notion of Mercy, or Compassion. By which, I suppose, is commonly understood, a Trouble or Uneasiness of Spirit, conceived at some Evil that has befallen another; with a Desire to help him out of it: Whereby it may be perceived, that this is a mixt Passion, compounded of *Sorrow* and *Desire*: Sorrow for the Evil of the Patient, and Desire of delivering him from it.

IF it be asked, What kind of Evil that must be, which is the Object of this Sorrow, or which may recommend a Man to our Pity? I know no Reason why we should except against any.

any. There are, I know, some considerable Divines and Moralists (among whom is *Curcellaus*, Pag. 999.) who will allow no other Evil to be capable of Pity, but only Evil of *Pain*; nor that neither, if it be *deserved*. But, for my part, I do not understand why *Sin* may not fall under our Pity, as well as any other Evil. Nay, I think that the greatest Object of Pity in the World is an irreclaimable Sinner. And as for *Affliction*, tho' the thing it self be most pitiable when joined with Innocence, yet, I think, upon the *whole*, the guilty Sufferer is more to be pitied than the Innocent, since I can pity him for his Demerit, and for his Misery too; whereas the latter is pitiable only for his Misery. Indeed, the guilty Patient is not to be pitied so much for his direct Misery, because he deserves it; but then he is more to be pitied for his Desert and Misery together, than the other is for his Misery only. And I question not but that our compassionate Saviour, when he wept over *Jerusalem*, relented as much for the *Sins*, as for the *Vengeance* that was hanging over that unhappy City. And that, had those two great Tragick Scenes been at once presented before him, the *Slaughter* of the *Innocents*, and the *Destruction* of that *guilty People*, he would have found more to be pitied in the latter, than in the former Tragedy.

I know that, by the *Roman* and *Jewish* Laws, it was forbidden to shew any Signs of Compassion in the behalf of those that suffered

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as *Criminals*; and, in consequence to this, they were not to *sit*, (that being the Manner and Posture of the *Hebrew* and *Roman* Mourning) but to *stand* at their Execution.

Which was the Reason (as a learned Critick of our Church observes) why the Blessed Virgin, tho' deeply affected for the severe Usages of her Son, yet, in Compliance with the Law, chose rather to *stand*, than to *sit* near the Cross; and tho' full of inward Grief, refused to make any *solemn* Shew of Lamentation.

Mr. Gregory in his Notes and Observations, p. 25.

BUT I suppose that the Signification of these Laws, in forbidding open Compassion to convicted Malefactors, was not, that they were not Objects capable of it, and that therefore to pity them would argue a Sense of their Innocence, but only to procure the greater Reverence to Judicial Sentences, and to shew their great Satisfaction and Acquiescence in the Administration of Justice. This therefore will not exclude Criminals from the Sphere of our Compassion, of which I see nothing that should make them incapable. And I would fain know what would have become of all Mankind, if *Suffering Innocence* had been the only Object of Commiseration.

THESE few things being premised concerning the Notion of Mercy and Compassion, let us now consider the things that recommend it. The first whereof is, The Nobleness and Excellency of it. This has suffered much under the

the Mis-representation of two sorts of Adversaries, the *Stoick*, and the *Aristotelian*. In the *Stoick* Morality it is so far from having any Reputation for Excellence, that it passes for a downright Vice, for an Instance of Weakness and Littleness of Soul, for such a Piece of Softness and Effeminacy as does not comport with the Character of their *Wise Man*; who, indeed, is allowed to *relieve*, but not to be *troubled* for the Afflicted; and to add, if he can, to the Tranquility of *their* Minds, but not to lose any thing of his *own*. *Non miserebitur, sed succurret*, says *Seneca*: He may help the Miserable, but must not share in the Misery. This the Gravity of *Zeno's* School will, at no hand, permit; which, indeed, should make us the more beholden to them for granting what they do. But it is no wonder that they who will not allow a Man to be sensible of his *own* Evils, should forbid all Pity to those of *other* Men.

ON the other side, the *Aristotelian*, tho' he does not strike this Affection out of the List of the Vertues, as does the other, yet he very much cheapens and depreciates the Worth and Excellency of it, by deriving it only from selfish Principles, by making this the only ground of pitying others, that we upon the account of common Nature and Chance are obnoxious to the same Evils our selves.

IN opposition therefore to this Double Reproach I shall maintain and illustrate the Nobleness

bleness and Excellency of this Disposition upon this Double Ground.

I. BECAUSE 'tis found always in the Best of Natures.

II. BECAUSE it proceeds from the Best of Principles.

AND first, 'Tis always found in the Best of Natures. God as he is the Best, so is he also the most merciful and compassionate of all Beings. 'Twas the very Name whereby he proclaim'd himself to *Moses*, *Exod. 34. 6. The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, &c.* And our Saviour commends this Attribute of God in particular to our Imitation, *Luk. 6. 36. Be ye merciful as your Father is merciful.* We read in Scripture of the *Tender Mercies* of God, or as it may be more strictly render'd, *Luk. 1. 78. The Bowels of the Mercy of God.* There is a strange Emphasis and Strength in the Expression. And indeed there is nothing in Scripture so pathetically expressed as the *Tenderness and Mercy of God.* 'Twould be endless to alledge Particulars, but there is one Place which may go for all. 'Tis that famous Expostulation of God with himself upon the disingenuous Behaviour of his People *Israel*, *Hos. 11. 8. How shall I give thee up Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, and my repentings*

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are kindled together. What moving, melting Strains are these! What a lively, breathing Image of Mercy and Pity! And yet 'tis but an *Image* still, vastly short of the Original, as will always be, whatever is said or thought of the infinite Mercy of God.

THE *Doctors* of the *Talmud* (as I am told) speaking concerning the Employment of God before the making of the World, say, not as he in *St. Austin*, that he was preparing an Hell for the Inquisitive, but that he was contriving how to be *merciful* to Mankind. And 'tis true indeed, God did from all Eternity contrive to shew Mercy to Man, tho' not by the way of Study or Employment of Mind, as they grossly fancy.

BUT the *Hebrews* further note (what indeed is more considerable) that God to shew his great Honour and Love for this dear Attribute, in all his kind and merciful Transactions with Men, chose always to be called by that his great and incommunicable Name, *Jehovah*, as to *Moses* in the Clift of the Rock, *Jehovah*, *Jehovah*, the Lord, the Lord God, *merciful and gracious*, &c. But in any Process of Justice and Judgment, he always styles himself *Eloah*, or *Elohim*, a Name importing Force and Power, and that is not proper to God as the other, but common to him with the Creatures, being sometimes given to the Angels, sometimes to Magistrates, and sometimes even to False Gods. The Name *Jehovah* was more

Sacred,

Sacred, and of Higher Import than that of *Elohim*; and therefore God to shew his special regard to Mercy above his other *Strange Work*, chose in his milder Addresses to be call'd by the former, and in his severer Proceedings by the latter. Which was the Reason, (as the forementioned Learned Critick remarks,) why our Saviour at the Point of his Dereliction cried out, not, *Jehovah, Jehovah*, but *Eli, Eli, my God, my God*, as not presuming at that time and in that Capacity, to call God by his Titles of Paternal Love and Indearment, but as *Naming the Judge of the World doing the extreamest Right upon his own Son, treading the Wine-press alone in the Person of all Mankind*, as that Learned Author expresses it, Pag. 7.

BUT the greatest and most convincing Demonstration of the Mercy of God, is seen in the mysterious and costly Redemption of lapsed Man. The greatest Exaltation of which, is to say nothing of it, but, as the Angels are represented to do in Heaven, to stoop down and look near into it with Silence and Wonder. *Which things the Angels desire to look into*, 1 Pet. 1. 12. An Allusion no doubt to the Propitiatory or Mercy-lid upon the Ark, whereupon two Angels, *Cherubins*, (who are the Angels of *Knowledge*) did abide with their Faces one toward another, and their Eyes bent down to the Ark. Which, by the way, is also a sufficient Argument of the Unfathomableness of this great Dispensation of Mercy, which can

still find further Employment for the Study and Curiosity even of Angels.

BUT perhaps 'twill be said, that Mercy in *God* is of another kind than what is called by that Name in *Man*, that it comes nearer the Stoical Notion of Mercy, importing only a bare Will to help the Miserable, without any compassionate Resentment for his Misery. It may be so, I won't dispute that now, tho' I can hardly believe but that such strong and flaming Expressions of the Divine Mercy in Scripture must needs signifie something more than what such *cold* Interpreters affix to them.

BUT however, to be more convincing, I further instance in the Human Soul of our Saviour Jesus Christ. 'Tis most certain that of all Human Spirits his was the most excellent. *Adam* in his Innocence was not comparable to him. He was excellent only by way of Nature, but our Saviour's Human Spirit to the same or greater Excellence of Nature had also superadded the Excellency of Grace, not common Grace, but that great and transcendent Grace of the Hypostatick Union. And 'tis as certain that as he had the *Best*, so he had the *Best-natur'd* and most tenderly compassionate Soul in the World. I need not produce Instances, his whole Life is but one Argument of it. Only one Passage, when he saw the Multitude scattered abroad like Sheep that have no Shepherd, 'tis said, ἐκπλαγίσθη ἐπὶ αὐτοῖς, *He was moved with compassion on them*, Mat. 9.

36. so we render it; but indeed the Expression is too high and pregnant to be verbally translated. 'T would require a long copious Paraphrase to drain the Sense of that one Word, which signifies all that inward Feeling and Yearning of the Heart and Soul at a pitiful Object, that melts and turns the very Bowels of the Good-natur'd Spectator.

AND the same Tenderness of Spirit which he had on Earth, he retains still in Heaven, tho' in all other respects *Impassible*, and incircled with Divine Glories. Whereupon he is called in Scripture our *merciful High-Priest*; and to convince any Opposer that this is not meant of Mercy improperly so called, a bare Will to help without any compassionate Resentment, says the Author to the *Hebrews*, *we have not an High-Priest which cannot be touched with feeling of our infirmities*, Heb. 4. 15.

AND these two Considerations by the way give a clear Defeat to the Pretences of both the forementioned Adversaries. For whereas the *Stoick* traduces this noble Vertue for a piece of Weakness and Infirmity, fit only for soft and effeminate Persons; to him I oppose the Instance of our Saviour's Human Soul while on *Earth*. And whereas the *Aristotelian* makes the only ground of Pity to be a fear of falling into the like Calamity; to him I oppose the same Instance of our Saviour, but in *another Capacity*, when he was altogether *Impassible* in his Glorified State, and above the Possibility of partaking

taking with us in our Miseries any other way, than by *Sympathy* and *Compassion*.

To this I may add, that among *meer* Men the most generous and brave Spirits, those whom *Paganism* has Deify'd, Christianity has Sainted; those Heroes whom History has marked with Honour, and whom Envy it self is ashamed to calumniate, have all along been signal for their *Mercy* and *Good-Nature*. As on the contrary, the most base, timorous and low-spirited Breasts are always observed to be the Seats of *Cruelty* and *Hard-heartedness*.

BUT 'tis no wonder that this Disposition is found in the Best of Natures, since in the Second Place it proceeds from the Best of Principles. For it proceeds from *Charity*, with which the least thing a man can think or do is excellent, and without which the greatest, *Rom. 13.* even *Martyrdom* it self, is nothing worth. It has that for its Parent which is the Mother of all Vertues, and which is of it self the fulfilling of the most perfect, that is, of the *Christian Law*. And that it proceeds from *Charity* is plain. For the more we desire the Happiness and Well-being of Mankind, the more we shall be troubled to see any of them in Misery, and be the more willing to procure them Ease and Deliverance. And this tho' we do not apprehend our selves in danger of the like Calamity, there being no necessity of making that the ground of Pity, as appears from the Instance of our Saviour's Human Soul in its Glorified State.

State. I deny not but that the generality of Men are mov'd to Pity upon the consideration of common Danger, and that it may be their own Turn next to suffer and stand in need of Help. but it is not necessary that they *should*, and 'tis their Imperfection that they *are*. I say *their* Imperfection, not that of the *Affection* itself, whose Idea involves no such selfish Principle, and which may really be separated from it, as by the fore-alledged Example is certain and evident.

AND now if to be found in the Best of Natures, and to proceed from the Best of Principles, be any Argument of Excellence, we may hence conclude what a Noble and Excellent Disposition of Mind this is, and that when the *Roman Orator* told *Cesar*, That of all his many Vertues, none was either more acceptable, or more wonderful than his Mercy and Clemency; he might perhaps Complement the *Emperour*, but said nothing extraordinary of the Vertue.

As will further appear by considering Secondly the great Reasonableness and Usefulness of it. As to the Former, besides that all that which may be said in the behalf of Charity and Universal Love, may be alledged as well for this, there are these two more proper and peculiar Grounds to prove and inforce it.

- I. To consider what Man has Receiv'd,
- II. To consider what he Expects.

AND First, if we consider what Man has already *receiv'd*, this Vertue of Mercy will appear to be highly reasonable. Man has receiv'd innumerable Mercies of God, some of which are so great, so surprizing and incredible, that 'tis made one of the greatest Trials and Commendations of his Faith to *believe* them. Such as the Honour of the Hypostatick Union, the Redemption from Sin and Misery by the Death of the Son of God, the Grace of Repentance, and the like. All which are yet improv'd and heighten'd by this further Consideration, that they are proper and peculiar to him, no other Creatures, not so much as the Angels themselves, being Partakers with him. The Angels indeed as all other Creatures partake of the Goodness of God; but Man alone among all the Creatures has the Privilege to be the Object of his Mercy. Since therefore Man and Man only has receiv'd so much Mercy of God, it appears very reasonable that he of all Creatures should shew Mercy.

As it will Secondly, if we consider what he *expects*. Man has not yet received so much Mercy, but that he expects more. The Mercy that he has receiv'd is by the Redemption of Christ to be put into a *Capacity* of Salvation, but the Mercy that he expects is to be *actually* saved. The Court of Mercy is the only Court where Man dares appear, or can abide a Trial. Briefly, Man expects Mercy both from God and from Man, in this Life, and in the next, in Death and after Death, and therefore there is great
reason

reason to conclude, that he of all Creatures should be merciful, and that *Cruelty* was as little *made for Man as Pride.*

NOR is this Affection less Useful than Reasonable. The Condition of Man in this World is such, as makes it as necessary for him to be *pitiful*, as to be a *sociable* Creature. Man cannot subsist without the Guardianship and Protection of Society; nor is Society any Security without this Affection. For what signifies Strength and Ability (and Society as such infers no more) without Inclination to assist? The Wise Man tells us that *Wisdom is better than Strength*, Eccl. 9. 16. and 'tis very true; but neither of them, nor both of them signify any thing without a tender and compassionate Temper. Then only may we expect Happiness and Defence from Society, when there is the same Sympathy in the Politick as there is in the Natural Body, when there is a mutual Correspondency and Communication of Parts, like the Sympathetick Answer of one Lute to another. When the *Heaven hears the Earth* in the Prophet's Phrase; or as the Apostle more fully expresses it, when *if one Member suffer, all the Members suffer with it; or if one Member be honour'd, all the Members rejoice with it*, 1 Cor. 12. 26. This would make a *Millennium* indeed; nor is any thing further wanting, but only that Men would agree together to make the Experiment.

AND because this is a Passion of so great Use and Necessity to the present Condition of *Man*,
God

God has been pleas'd to take an early and an effectual Care for the Security of it, not only by giving the Soul of *Man* an Original Bent and Inclination that way, but also by disposing him to it by the very Make and Figuration of his Body, that so the whole *Man* might stand inclined to shew Mercy and Compassion. For we are to consider that there are some natural Dispositions in the Brain, whereby we are moved and admonished to be pitiful and compassionate, since the Course of the Animal Spirits is (by I know not what Principle) directed to those Parts whereby we are stirred up to the sense of others Pain or Misery. For as Experience witnesses, whenever we happen to cast our Eyes upon a *Man* that is wounded, we find a suddain Tide of Spirits thronging towards those Parts of our Body, which answer to the Parts affected of the wounded *Man*, unless by some accidental Cause their Course be diverted some other way. And these *Motions* by which the Parts of our own Body are affected by the occasion of those *Motions* which are excited in others, do raise that Sentiment within us, which we call *Pity* or *Compassion*, which by an Order of God's Establishment, we can no more help being affected with, than we can that our Animal Spirits should flow to and affect those Parts of our Body which correspond to those of another which we see wounded. So that you see the Ground and Foundation of this Affection is laid in Nature. God has bound it upon

us

us by a *Natural* as well as by a *Moral* Law, by the very Figure and Contexture of our Bodies, which certainly he would not have done, but that he knew how useful and necessary it was for the Interest of Mankind, in their present Posture, which is a State of Want and mutual Dependence upon each other, whereby we stand in need of one anothers Pity and Compassion.

AND now if this Divine Affection (for so we may now venture to call it) be not yet sufficiently recommended from its Nobleness and Excellency, and from its great Reasonableness and Usefulness, let us further add the particular Blessedness here assigned to it. *Blessed are the merciful*, says our Saviour, *for they shall obtain mercy.* This they shall obtain from Men and from God, here and hereafter.

FIRST they shall obtain *Mercy* from Men here. Not that this is to pass for an absolute Rule, without any Exception, since as long as Men are but Men, *Mercy* is capable of being abused and ill-requited, as well as any other Vertue; otherwise our Saviour would have been more kindly treated than he was by the *Jews*. But the Meaning is, that nothing does more naturally recommend a *Man* to the good Will and Compassion of others, than a Merciful and Benign Temper; and that generally speaking, if Men be but tollerably well disposed, and have any Sense of Justice and Gratitude, the merciful Man will actually find *Mercy*

cy among them. However if not, he has the greater Stock of Mercy to come. For,

SECONDLY, the *Merciful* shall obtain *Mercy* from God hereafter. And this does not depend upon so many Casualties, and such uncertain Suppositions as the other. Here 'tis only required that *mercy and truth meet together*, and that the Man be sincere and upright in all other Moral Respects. And so much indeed is necessary. For 'tis not to be thought that *Mercy* alone, any more than any other Solitary Vertue, can qualifie a Man for *Mercy*. No, the Man must be τέλειος ἡ ἀλόκληρος, Perfect and Intire, and wanting nothing as to all the integral Parts of Duty, to be accepted in the Judgment of God, *Jam. 1. 4.* Only there may I think be allowed this further Sense in the Proposition, that no *one* Vertue shall go so far towards the obtaining of full *Mercy* from God, as this of *Mercifulness*. And that if the *Merciful* Man for want of other necessary Parts of Christian Perfection, should not be able to *stand* in the last Judgment, yet however his Fall shall be much the milder, and he shall have great Abatements of Punishment made him for the sake of this one Excellency. To which purpose, 'tis very considerable that our Saviour in the Description of the Last Judgment, makes all the Favour and all the Severity of that Day to proceed according to the Practice or Omission of this Duty, *Mat. 25.*

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ONE way or other therefore the Merciful shall be sure to obtain *Mercy*, nor will God forget this *Labour of Love*. Pray God we may not forget it our selves, but may so love, study and practise *Mercy* here, that we may hereafter not only receive a milder Sentence, but find such a Degree of Mercy as may finally rejoice against *Judgement*. Amen.

DISCOURSE the Sixth.

MATTH. V. Ver. viii.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.



ONE of the most distinguishing Perfections of the Christian Institution above any other either Divine or Human, is, That it requires an inward Rectitude of Mind and Spirit, and makes the *Heart* the Principle and Seat of Spiritual, as it is of Natural Life. The *Heathen Morality* went little further than the Regulation of the outward Behaviour, not much regarding the Sanctity of the *Interiour*. And tho' some few raised Spirits among them, mov'd by a Diviner Impulse, would now and then, like *Men* in Extasies, talk above the World and themselves too, recommending certain *Purgations* and *Purifications* of Soul, as the *Pythagoreans* and *Platonists*,

tonists, yet this was not taught or known in the common Schools of Nature, nor was it any where made the ordinary Standard of *Morality*.

THE *Jewish Religion*, as it presented to the World a Second and more Correct Edition of the Law of Nature, so was it in this particular respect more perfect than the *Gentile Morality*, there being in the *Moral Law* one special Precept which directly concerns *Purity of Heart*. But yet there was a great defect even here too, because tho' there was a Prohibition of *inward Concupiscence*, yet it had no penal Sanction annex'd to it. Every other Precept was so guarded as to be able to revenge it self upon those who transgressed it. Idolatry was punished, Perjury was punished, Profanation of the Sabbath, Disobedience to Parents, Murther, Adultery, Theft, and bearing false Witness were all

Philippus a Lim-
borch. Theolog.
Christian p. 217.

punished, only *Concupiscence* had no Punishment allotted to it. Which (as a Learned Person conjectures) gave some occasion to think that they might securely indulge their *Concupiscence*, so it did not break forth into the outward and grosser Act.

CERTAIN it is, that many among the Jews so thought and practis'd, contenting themselves with external Conformity to the Law, without any regard to the inward Purity and Holiness, as may appear from our Saviour's frequent Reprehensions of the Pharisees upon this very Account. And 'tis very probable that
this

this their Fancy was occasioned by there being no Punishment assign'd to the Breach of the *Tenth* Commandment, as that Learned Person conjectures. However 'tis certain that it was a great Defect in the Law not to bind so perfect a Precept with a Penal Sanction. Tho' indeed the true Reason was, because 'twas too perfect to be severely exacted in that Infant Age and State of the Church. The Law therefore did not rigidly *exact* it, tho' it did plainly *command* it. Which tho' no Defect with relation to that Time and State, (the Law being as perfect as the Gospel, as to all the Ends and Purposes intended by it, and every way accommodated to the Condition of those on whom it was imposed) yet absolutely speaking it was a great Defect and Imperfection of the Law.

THEN as to the *Mahumetan* Religion (which indeed is only Heathenism pretending to Revelation) this, tho' the last, and assuming to it self the Improvement of all that went before, is yet really short even of Heathenism it self. This is so far from requiring internal Purity, that it does not require so much as external, but allows and *recommends* too the grossest Impurities; which has often made me wonder why the *Turk* should write upon the out-side of his Alcoran, *Let no man touch this Book, but he that is pure.* I'm sure the Book it self requires no such thing, nor can I justify the Reason of the *Motto* in any other Sense but this,
That

That none but he that is pure is fit to be trusted with such a corrupt Institution.

BUT the Christian Law is *pure* indeed, and none but such as are so are worthy to unloose the Seals of this book. This requires the utmost Purity that is consistent with the Measures of Morality, Purity without, and Purity within, pure Hands and pure Hearts. It requires it more expressly, and in a greater degree, than either the Heathen or Jewish Religion, and (what was wanting in the other) under the Sanction of Rewards and Punishments, and those the greatest imaginable. It does not only command inward Purity, but encourage it too by the strongest Proposals that can affect either the *Sense* or the *Reason* of Man. One of the greatest of which Encouragements is, that our Saviour inserts it into the Order of his Beatitudes, and gives it a special Title to the Beatifick Vision in these Words, *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

THE Subject to be here discoursed of is *Christian Purity*, or Purity of *Heart*. Whereof I shall represent,

I. THE Nature, by a Character or Description.

II. THE Necessity.

III. THE Blessedness.

BY Purity of Heart in general, is to be understood an inward Conformity of all the Thoughts

Thoughts and Desires of the Soul to the Will and Law of God. When not only the external Actions are according to the Rule, but the whole inward Frame and *Position* of the Mind stands right and well-order'd, and (as the Apostle describes it) not only the Body, but the *whole spirit and soul is blameless*, 1 Thes. 5. 23.

AND to make it so, these Two Things are particularly requisite, First, That we do not consent to any unlawful Desires, no not so much as to the first Motions of Sin, whether proceeding from the Corruptness of our own Nature, or from Diabolical Suggestion. Secondly, That we do not entertain with any Delight the Remembrances of our past Sins.

BUT more particularly yet, Purity of Heart may be doubly considered, either in opposition to *Pollution*, or in opposition to *Mixture*. In the first Sense it removes Sensuality, in the second Hypocrisie. This Distinction of the Word Pure is acknowledged, and withal applied to this Place, by our Learned Dr. *Hammond*, illustrated by the Instances of Water and Wine, the former of which is said to be pure, when not mudded or defiled; the latter when not mixt.

Pract. Cat. p.
107.

BUT tho' the Word be equally capable of this latter Sense, yet I do not think it to be at all intended by our Saviour in this place, there being no such particular Congruity between this sort of Purity and the nature of the Reward here assign'd. Confining therefore our

I Discourse

Discourse to the former Sense of the Word, and more suitable to the Circumstance of this place, from what has been premised, we may collect this Idea or Character of the Pure in Heart,

“ That they are such as regulate not only the
 “ external Conduct of their Lives, but also the
 “ inward Frame and Habitude of their Minds,
 “ and conform not only their Actions, but
 “ their Wills and Desires, Thoughts and De-
 “ signs to the Rule of the Law, and to the Di-
 “ states of the *Internal Light* of God in the
 “ Soul. Such as sanctifie the Lord God in
 “ their Hearts, compose the inmost Recesses of
 “ their Minds into an Holy Awe and Reve-
 “ rence of the Divine Presence, set a Law to
 “ all their Intellectual Powers, and suffer not
 “ the least Thought or Passion to violate the
 “ Order either of Reason or Grace. Such,
 “ lastly, as yield no consent either to the Be-
 “ ing or Stay of irregular Motions, nor give
 “ any entertainment to the Allurements of the
 “ World, the Flesh, or the Devil, nor delight
 “ themselves with any pleasing Recollections,
 “ any imaginary Scenes of their past Immora-
 “ lities; but set themselves at the greatest Di-
 “ stance from Sin, resist the very first Begin-
 “ nings, and, as near as they can, abstain from
 “ the least Appearances of Evil.

THIS is the most resembling Idea that I can frame to my self of the Pure in Heart. And now lest this should be taken for a meer Idea, a thing of Notion rather than Practice, I proceed
 in

in the next Place to represent the Necessity of such a Disposition of Soul.

THE Necessity of it is Double in order to a double End, *Holiness* and *Happiness*.

AND First, This Purity of Heart is necessary in order to Holiness, that is, there can be no true Christian Holiness without it. This will appear by considering,

FIRST, That the Christian Law expressly requires it. For this I need appeal no further than to the Progress of this same Discourse of our Saviour upon the Mount. Where among several other *improving* Expositions of the *Mosaic Law*, we find this, *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit Adultery. But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a Woman to lust after her, hath committed Adultery with her already in his Heart, Mat. 5. 27.* By which *Lusting* here I conceive must not be understood the bare natural Appetite of Concupiscence (that being as such indifferent) but the Appetite irregularly determin'd; nor that neither as 'tis a pure Natural and Mechanick Motion, (for so it has nothing Moral in it, and can only be materially Evil) but as it has the Consent of the Will going along with it. Which Consent may be either to the very *Desire* it self, or to the *Acting* of it. If to the *Act*, then the Man is in all Moral Accounts a compleat Adulterer, and will be so esteem'd by God, who as he *Sees*, so he *Judges* by the Heart, and will not think a Man the more innocent only for wanting an Opportunity of

committing what he fully intended. But if the Consent be only to the Desire, then tho' the Man be not a compleat Adulterer, yet he may be truly said in the Style of the Psalmist, to be a *Partaker with the Adulterer*, Psal. 50. to have enter'd within some Degrees of Unchastity, and to have transgressed against that Christian Purity, which forbids all Consent not only to the compleat Acts, but also to the first Motions of Sin.

SECONDLY, The Necessity of this Purity of Heart in order to true Holiness, will appear by considering the Nature of God, who is both a *Spirit* and a *Discerner* of Spirits, and ought therefore for a double Reason to be worshipp'd in *Spirit and in Truth*, Joh. 4. 24. Our Saviour thought the former sufficient, but the latter adds a further Degree of Strength to it. God as a Spirit cannot be worthily served by any thing less than the Sacrifice of the Spirit, which perhaps was one of the Reasons why our Saviour, when he was to become a Sacrifice to his Father, took upon him not only Human Flesh, as some of the Ancient Hereticks would have believed, but also an Human Soul. And as a Discerner of Spirits he cannot be put off with a Bodily instead of a Spiritual Service, or accept of a Polluted and Unsanctified Spirit. The Psalmist had a due Sense of this, when he said, *Psal. 51. 6, 10. Thou requirest truth in the inward parts, and shalt make me to understand wisdom secretly.* And when he pray'd, *Make me a clean*
clean

clean Heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within me.

THIRDLY, This Purity of Heart may be further concluded necessary to true Holiness from the Nature of Man himself, in whom as the Soul is in all respects the *Principal*, so in all Moral Respects it is the *only* Part concerned. This *Inner Man* is that Man who is the immediate and proper Subject of all Good and Evil, Vertue and Vice, and accordingly this is the Part to which our Sanctification and Regeneration is always ascribed, and from which the Man receives his whole Moral Distinction. And therefore says the Apostle, *To be carnally minded is Death, but to be spiritually minded is Life and Peace*, Rom. 8. 6. Where you see 'tis the inward Disposition of the *Mind* that makes all the Difference. If this be Pure and Holy, the whole Man is so; but if this stand not right to God and Goodness, 'tis not all the external Conformity in the World that can supply the Defect.

'Twas the Conceit of the Ancient Jews (as we are told by Mr. *Selden*) that every Profelyte of *Justice* at the very Instant when he became so, had a new Soul infused into him, to which Opinion our Saviour is supposed to allude in his Discourse with *Nicodemus*. Now tho' Christianity does not acknowledge a New, that is, *another* Soul in its Converts, yet it requires that the same Soul become new, it requires a new

De Jure Nat.
& Gent. p. 159.

Frame and Temper of Spirit. — The *Christian Man* is to be Born again, and to become a *New Creature*, a Creature of another Rank and Order. And 'tis the *Mind* and *Spirit* upon which this great Transaction is to pass, and which is to be the immediate Subject of this extraordinary Change. And accordingly our Regeneration is expressed in Scripture by our being *renewed in the Spirit of our minds*, Eph. 4. 23. We must be renew'd; and where? Not in our Body or outward Man, but in our Minds. And in what Part of the Mind? Not in the Inferiour Part, whether *Sensitive* or *Plastic*, that which is exercised about Objects of Sense, or that which *moves* and *forms* the Body, but in the Highest and Noblest Part, in the *Spirit* of our Minds, which answers to the Platonical *Nōs*, the very *Flower* and *Essence* of the Soul. Here 'tis we are to be renewed, as indeed we must if we be renew'd at all, this being in all regards the Principal, and the only *moral* Part of Man.

To this purpose it must be further consider'd, that this Intellectual Heart, the Spirit and Soul of Man is the Fountain and Source of all Action. This is that which sees in the Eyes, and hears in the Ears. This is that which understands and wills, loves and hates. Here are all the Springs and Powers of Life and Motion, here is the last Resort of all outward Impressions, and from this *Central Point* are derived all the Lines of Action and Motion, even as

all

all the Arteries and Veins are from the Natural Heart, which it diffuses and disperses throughout the Body, and has its Pulses in every Part. If therefore this general Head-Spring be not kept pure and clean, how can the Streams run clear? And upon this was grounded that signal Advice of the Wise Man, *Prov. 4. 23. Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.* Parallel to which I find a Passage in the Meditations of the Royal Philosopher *Marcus Antoninus*, *Ἐνδον βλέπει, ἔνδον ἡ πηγὴ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ; Look within, for within is the Fountain of Good.*

Oxford Edition,
on, pag. 224.

FURTHER yet, this Intellectual Heart is not only the Fountain of Action and Motion, but the most active and most rapidly moving thing in the World. This Heart is always *Beating*, the Pulses of it never rest; Thought rises upon Thought, and Desire succeeds Desire. The Motion is perpetual, constant and vehement; so vehement, that the swiftest Bodily Motion, no not that of the Starry Orb, is comparable to it; so vehement that it cannot be discern'd or number'd, and comes nearer to a *Rest* than a Motion, as the swiftest Turnings round of a Globe look like standing still. Now what a dangerous thing is such a Motion as this, if not rightly determin'd? Of what vast Heights in Goodness is it capable! And to what vast Heights of Wickedness may it rise, if not well govern'd! There is therefore great Ne-

cessity that this *Heart* of Man should be kept with all Diligence, and that it should be kept pure and undefiled.

FOURTHLY and Lastly, the Necessity of Purity of Heart in order to Holiness will appear as from the Christian Law, the Nature of God, and the Nature of Man, so also from the *intimate Union* that is between the Divine and Human Nature. All things are full of God, who is therefore call'd in the Sacred Tongue *קדש* or the *Place*. But there is nothing so intimately united to him as the Spiritual Part of the Creation. God is the immediate *Place* of *Spirits* and *Souls*, who all live, move, and have their Being in him, and are joyn'd to him by a *Central Touch*, as the great *Plotinus* speaks. The Apostle says, that even our Bodies are the Temples of the Holy Ghost; our Souls then must be at least his Sanctuary, and most Sacred Receptacle. But what? Was not God just now supposed the Place of Spirits, and are Spirits now made the Place of God? Yes, and without any Absurdity. For so *St. John* describes our Union with God, by our dwelling in God, and by God's dwelling in us, *John 4. 16*. The Union is Double, on God's part, and on Ours. God dwells in us by his special Presence, by the Spirit of Grace and Benediction. But we dwell in God Essentially and Totally. God dwells only in some certain Spirits, such as are of a Disposition fit to receive and entertain him; those who (as the Jews love to speak) are worthy to have the *Shechinah* rest upon

upon them. But all Spirits good and bad, however qualified, dwell in him. For where else should they dwell, since he is all, and fills all? Now both these Unions infer the Necessity of Purity of Heart in order to Holiness.

FOR first, if we consider the Soul of Man as dwelling in God, what infinite reason is there that that Part of him especially should be kept pure which is essentially joyn'd to, touches and inhabits so pure and so awful an Excellence! *Put off thy Shoes from off thy Feet*, said God to *Moses*, for the place whereon thou standest is holy Ground, Exod. 3. 5. And if so much Reverence be due to the Dwelling-place of God, what Reverence is there then due when God himself is the Dwelling-place! How dares any Man lodge an impure Soul in the Bosom of so pure a Majesty! Or how can he in any measure be esteemed Holy, tho' in all other Respects never so unblamable, who is polluted in *that* Part which is so inwardly united to the Beauty of Holiness!

THEN Secondly, if we consider God dwelling in the Soul and Body of Man, there is great Necessity of Purity of Heart. And that upon a double Account:

I. BECAUSE the Spirit of God which is the Principle of all Grace and Holiness will not enter but into a pure and clean Heart.

II. BECAUSE no other is worthy of so Divine a Presence.

AND

AND first, The Holy Spirit will not enter but into a pure and clean Heart. For this special and gracious Presence of God is not like his General and Essential Presence, universal and unlimited, but fixt and confin'd to certain Laws, and depending upon certain Conditions and Qualifications. And tho' the first Addresses, influential Visits, and distant Overtures of the Holy Spirit prevent all previous Dispositions of Man, who (as our Church expresses it in her 10th Article) *cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength,* yet to his fix'd Dwelling and residential Abode in us, 'tis necessary that there be an antecedent Preparation of Heart. Which I conceive to be the Reason that tho' *all* Men are at some time or other Partakers of the common and ordinary Motions of the Spirit, (who is said to have striven even with the old World, *Gen. 6. 3.*) yet none but very *good* Men have the Privilege to be the Temples of his Residence. And this whole Matter I take to be distinctly represented in those Words of St. *John*, *Behold I stand at the door and knock: If any Man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him,* *Rev. 3. 20.* Where by standing at the Door and knocking, is meant common and preventing Grace. And this indeed is used to all, without any previous Qualifications. But he does not come in and sup, that is, take up his Residence and be a familiar Guest, till his Voice be heard, and the Door open'd; that is, till the Man has well attended to, and complied with those his antecedent

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dent Motions and Suggestions, till he has swept and made clean the inner Room of his Heart: So that Purity of Heart is absolutely necessary, tho' not for the first preventing Influences, yet for the Residence and In-dwelling of the Holy Spirit, who tho' he visit those that sit in Darkness, and in the Shadow of Death, yet he will not *Lodge* but in a pure and bright Soul.

NOR Secondly, is any other than such worthy of so Divine a Presence. Indeed the purest Soul has Reason to say with the Centurion, *Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my Roof*, Mat. 8. 8. if we consider the Disproportion that is between the Purity of God, and that of the purest Temple we can prepare for him. For he putteth no trust in his Saints, nor are the Heavens clean in his sight, Job 15. 15. How much more unworthy then is the impure and polluted Soul of so pure a Presence! Suppose the Spirit of God would enter into a Polluted Spirit, yet what Soul that has any sense of Decency would dare to continue any longer so, when once possess'd by so Divine an Inhabitant! *Psal. 93. Holiness becomes thine House for ever*, says the Psalmist, that is, it is very meet and right, decent and proportionable, that the place of the Divine Residence should be kept holy and undefiled. The Divine Presence is the greatest and most solemn Consecration of any Place that can be, and where-ever he fixes his Mansion, there the Inscription ought to be, *Holiness to the Lord*. And the reason of all this is by the Psalmist

mist render'd elsewhere, *For thou art a God that has no pleasure in wickedness, neither shall any evil dwell with thee*, Psal. 5. 4.

HAVING thus far shewn the Necessity of Purity of Heart in Order to Holiness, to compleat this Part it remains that we further represent its Necessity in order to *Happiness*. Now this Necessity may respect either our Admission into Happiness, or our Enjoyment of it when admitted. That Purity of Heart is necessary to our Admission into Happiness is already sufficiently deducible from what has been premised concerning its Necessity to Holiness, without which we are expressly told, *No man shall see God*, Heb. 12. 14. We are therefore further concern'd only to shew that 'tis necessary to the *Enjoyment* of Happiness.

AND here not to feign a long Hypothesis of a Sinner's being admitted into Heaven, with a particular Description of his Condition and Behaviour there, we need only consider that the Supreme Good is of a *Relative* Nature, as well as any other Good, and consequently the Enjoyment of it must necessarily require some Qualification in the Faculty, as well as the Enjoyment of any other Good does, something that may render that Good a Good to that particular Faculty. Otherwise tho' it may be *possess'd*, yet it can never be *enjoy'd*. This again must be something that must produce some Likeness or Agreeableness between the Faculty and the Good to be enjoy'd. Which because the Purest of all Beings, leaves no room to doubt but that Purity

of

of Heart must be that Agreeableness, without which as a Man cannot *resemble*, so neither can he *enjoy* God.

WE see that even in this Life 'tis very tedious to be in the Company of a Person whose Humour is disagreeable to ours, tho' perhaps in other respects of sufficient Worth and Excellency. And how then can we imagin that an ill-disposed Soul should take any Pleasure in God, who is to her infinitely more unlike, and therefore disagreeable, than one Man can be supposed to be to another? For my part, I rather think that should an impure Soul be afforded a Mansion in Heaven, she would be so far from being happy in it, that she would do *Penance* there to all Eternity. For besides that a sensualized Soul would carry such Appetites with her thither for which she could find no suitable Objects, which would be a constant Torment; those that she *does* find there would be so disproportionate, that they would rather vex and upbraid, than satisfy her Indigence. So that this in short would be her Case, That which she desires and could relish, that she has not; and that which she has, that she neither desires nor can relish; the Result of which must needs be a very high Degree of Misery and Dissatisfaction. So absolutely necessary is Purity of Heart both to the *Acquisition* and *Enjoyment* of Happiness.

AND yet there is something that recommends it further yet, and that is the *Blessedness* that attends

attends it, the third and last thing to be consider'd. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* But before we come so far as this, there is a Present Blessedness belonging to it in this Life, which I shall briefly touch upon. And here, besides that inward Peace of Mind, that Satisfaction of Conscience, and Spiritual Joy and Complacency which are the common Advantages of a good and well-order'd Life, there are these three more peculiar Advantages of Purity of Heart.

I. THAT 'tis more *Innocent*.

II. THAT 'tis more *Easie*.

III. THAT 'tis more *Safe*.

MORE *Innocent*, because 'tis supposed to put a Bar against the very first Beginnings of Sin, and consequently to be removed at a greater Distance from it.

MORE *Easie*, because 'tis easier to abstain from the first Beginnings of Sin, than from a further Progress in it after you have once begun. Nor is there so much pains required not to admit, as to eject a Temptation. Which made an ingenious Person say, That the Prohibition of *Concupiscence* was not so much a new or distinct Commandment, as an Instrument of Security for the keeping all the rest.

LASTLY, More *Safe*, because more *Easie*; there being not so much Danger of yielding to what a Man can easily forbear, as to that which he must abstain from with Pain and Uneasiness.

BUT

·BUT the greatest Blessedness of all is the *Vision of God*. Which I suppose may be extended beyond that *Beatific* Vision of him, which is the Happiness of Angels and Saints in Heaven, and may signifie some peculiar Advantage belonging to the Pure in Heart even in this Life, namely, the clearer Perception of all *Necessary* and *Ideal* Truths (which may well be called seeing of God, they being one and the same with the Divine Essence) especially such *Ideal* Truths as are of a Moral and Spiritual Nature, to the Discovery of which, Purity of Heart is an excellent Preparative. According to that of the Angel to *Daniel*, Dan. 12. 10. *Many shall be purified and made white, and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.* But having professedly discours'd of this * elsewhere, I shall stay no longer upon this Part, but proceed to that other Vision of God which is called *Beatific*.

* Reflect. on
the Conduct of
Human Life.

HERE I remark, that this is the only Beatitude to which the express Promise of the Vision of God is annex'd. This indeed is implicitly contain'd in some others, but there only openly expressed. And because 'tis reasonable to think that our Lord does suit his Rewards to the Natures of the Excellencies here specify'd, We may well conclude that he intended some peculiar Honour and Privilege to this Holy Disposition of Soul, and to signifie that it has a
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more than ordinary Title to the Happiness of the Beatific Vision. This will include two things,

I. THAT the Pure in Heart shall have a clearer and more enlarged Sight of God.

II. THAT they shall take a greater Delight in what they do see of him.

AND First, They shall have a clearer and more enlarged Sight of God. This will depend upon Two Suppositions.

I. UPON the peculiar Aptness of this Disposition for the Vision of God.

II. UPON the Will of God to afford a greater and clearer Manifestation of himself to a Soul so disposed.

THAT Purity of Heart has a peculiar Aptness in order to the Vision of God, we need not doubt, if we consider that the only Reason why we see not God, now, is the Grossness of this Tabernacle wherein the Soul is incased. This is that *Glass* through which we now see so darkly, and which makes us do so, *1 Cor.* 13. 12. This is that black Skreen that parts the *Material* from the *Intelligible* World. The more abstract therefore we are from the Body, and from the Bodily Life, the more fit we shall be both to *behold*, and to endure the Rays of the Divine Light. We find that even now the purer and finer our Blood and Spirits are, the freer

freer and clearer are our Thoughts. The more bright and transparent this Glafs is, the more the Ideal Light will dart in upon our Souls. And the same will hold in proportion hereafter. The purer the Soul is, the purer will all its Faculties and Operations be; the less it will retain of corporeal Gusts and Relishes, the more recollected and undivided will be its Powers; for Unity of Thought follows Unity of Desire; and the fewer things a Man desires, the fewer will be his Thoughts, and consequently the more strong and vigorous upon the Object where they fix. To which we may add, that the purer the Soul is, the purer will also be her *Resurrection Body*, which is of great moment to the Vision of God, as well as to other *Spiritual Operations*. For we must then see through a Glafs as well as now; only the Glafs will be clearer, according to the different Purity of the Soul, which even in this Life gives a particular Brightness of Air to the Countenance, and makes the Face to shine with an unimitable Lustre. Purity of Heart therefore even upon this single account has a peculiar Aptness in order to the Vision of God. But to this may be added, Secondly, the *Will* of God to afford a greater and clearer Manifestation of himself to a Soul so disposed. For 'tis highly rational to believe, that God who is so great a Lover, will also be a liberal Rewarder of inward Purity; and that he who delights to dwell in pure Hearts now, will reveal himself in a very

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plentiful measure to such hereafter. So that both from the Aptness of the Disposition and from the Will of God we may conclude, That the Pure in Heart shall have a *larger* Share of the Beatific Vision.

NOR shall they only see more of God, but, Secondly, take a greater Delight in what they do see of him. And this is the principal Ingredient of their Happiness: For 'tis not the meer *having*, but the *delighting* in a thing that makes a Man happy. And this is the Condition of Pure Souls. The same Purity which procures them a more enlarged Sight of God, will also make them to delight in the Vision of him, so that they shall *Taste* as well as *See* how good God is, *Psal.* 34. For the purer the Soul is, the liker it is to God who is Essential Purity; and the more it resembles God, the more it must needs love and delight in him.

LIKENESS is the greatest Indearment of Love, and the most natural Foundation of Delight and Complacency. We see this in all the Orders of Being, and in all the Degrees of Life. In the Sympathetic Associations of Vegetables, in the Voluntary Consortings of Animals, and in the chosen Friendships of Men. But most of all may this be seen in God himself. What is it but the most perfect Likeness and Conformity of Essences, Understandings and Wills that renders the Sacred Persons of the mysterious and adorable Trinity so infinitely lovely and agreeable to each other! This was that which made the Father

ther say of the Son, *Heb. 1. 3. This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased,* because he saw there the *Brightness of his Glory, and the express Image of his Person.* And upon this is founded that mutual Delight which the other Sacred Persons enjoy from each other. That therefore which makes the Persons of the Holy Trinity delight in one another, must needs make the pure Soul delight in the Holy Trinity. A pure Soul cannot but delight in a pure God, and the purer she is, the more she will love and delight in him. Purity of Heart does even here *Anticipate,* much more then will it hereafter *increase* the Joys of Heaven.

It remains therefore, that having this excellent Hope, we study to purifie our selves even as God is pure, and so endeavour to resemble and transcribe the Divine Perfections here, that we may contemplate them with the greater Complacency and Delight hereafter. To which purpose, let us now and always pray in the Words of our Holy and Devout Church,

O God, make clean our Hearts within us, And take not thy Holy Spirit from us. Amen.

DISCOURSE the Seventh.

MATTH. V. Ver. ix.

*Blessed are the Peace-makers, for they shall be call'd
the Children of God.*



THE Words very well become the Mouth of him that spake them, who was himself the greatest *Peace-maker* in the World. He made Peace in Heaven by the Blood of his Cross, and endeavoured to promote it on Earth. He first reconciled God to Man, and then tried to reconcile Men to one another. He chose to be born in the most quiet and peaceful State of the Roman Empire, when *Augustus* in token of an Universal Peace had shut up the *Mystical* Gates of *Janus* his Temple. And when he came into the World his Proclamation by the Angels was Peace; and when he was to leave the World, the same was his Legacy, *John. 14. Peace I leave with you, my peace, I give unto you.* The Order of his whole Life was a constant Compliance with the Peace of the State, whereof he gave Two signal Instances, in Paying Tribute when not obliged, and in Forbidding Resistance of the Officer that seized him; and his last Prayer was for the Peace and Unity of the Church. And now, since by this great Love and Study of Peace he shewed himself

himself to be the Genuine Son of God, who is styled the *God of Peace*, 1 Cor. 14. 33. he might with the better *Decorum* make the same Disposition of Mind the Measure and Argument of our Filial Relation to him; as he does when he tells us, *Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God.*

Bx Peace-makers here, I suppose, is meant, not only those that interpose as Moderators, to compose Feuds and Quarrels, (tho' that be the more immediate Sense of the Word,) but more generally those that are peaceably affected, and that shew this their Peaceable Disposition, either by living quietly and inoffensively, or by endeavouring to maintain Peace where it is, or to restore it where it is interrupted. The first of these Degrees of Peaceableness consists in a mere Negative; the two last are of a Positive Nature, and consequently of a greater Excellence: But the most excellent of all is the last, it being, for the most part, not only a *thankless*, but an odious, difficult and hazardous Undertaking, to bring *them* nearer together, whom Anger has set at a distance. 'Tis like the Business of a *Fire-quencher*, who, tho' he may, with plying of Engins, and great a-do, rescue the Pile of Building from the devouring Flames, yet his Eyes will be sure to smart with the *Smok*.

Now this Peace, in the not violating, preserving, or restoring of which this Peaceable-mindedness is concern'd, may be either private Peace between Man and Man, or publick Peace be-

tween Societies of Men. Again, Publick Peace is distinguishable according to the general Distribution of Human Society into Civil and Ecclesiastick, that of the State, and that of the Church. The former concerns Men, not only as subjected to Government, or as under this or that particular Form of Government; but also as Men, and consequently all Men: For, even the State of Nature, antecedently to all human Conventions and Constitutions, (as has been abundantly proved against the Author of the *Leviathan*) is not a State of War, but of Peace. The latter respects only those who are Members of the Christian Church, whereof Christ Jesus is the Head, and subject to that spiritual Government whereof he is the Author. The former kind of publick Peace is opposed to War and seditious Practices, the latter to Schisms and Divisions.

THE Way being thus far cleared by pointing out the general Degrees of Peaceableness, and the general Kinds of Peace, we may now with the less Entanglement proceed to fix the Subject and Order of the following Discourse. And here I do not intend a *Casuistical* Tract, by entring upon that long *beaten* Common-place concerning our Obligation to Peace, and the Measures of observing it with reference either to Church or State: For, besides that this has been the constant Theme of almost every Casuist, and that it is impossible to say any thing *more* than *All*, or *better* than *Some* have already said upon it, I further think that the thing is of it self plain enough; and that,

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were it not for the Perverseness of some Men, rather than for any Obscurity in the Duty, there needed not have been any other Measure given in this Matter than that *general* one of the Apostle, *If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all men.* For, when 'tis enquired, How far we are obliged to Peace in the State, or Peace in the Church? The Answer is plain and ready from hence, That we are obliged to both as far as is possible, and as much as in us lies; and that nothing less than *Absolute* and *Evident* Necessity can justify either War in the State, or Separation in the Church. Which one Rule if well heeded and practised, the Condition of the World would be much more peaceable and quiet than it is, or is like to be.

INSTEAD therefore of treating of this Beatitude in a *Casuistical* way, by describing the Measures of our Obligation to Peace, I shall rather chuse this Order of Discourse.

FIRST, To set forth the general Excellency of a peaceable Disposition.

SECONDLY, To consider that more particular Prerogative of it, in making those that have it Children of God.

THIRDLY, To conclude all with some Reflections upon the present Disturbers of the Peace of *Christendom*.

AND First, The general Excellency of a peaceable Disposition may be deriv'd from these two Principles:

- FIRST, From what it *argues*.

· SECONDLY, From what it *causes*.

· AND First, It argues a well-ordered Frame and good Habit of Mind; good by natural Disposition, good by Deliberation and Choice, and good by Gracious and Divine Operation. It argues a Soul, not only lightly tinctur'd, but deeply season'd, and thoroughly imbu'd with Goodness. ----- *Incoctum generoso pectus honesto*. The same may be said of the peaceable Man, that St. James says of him that offends not in his Tongue, that he is a *perfect Man*, Jam. 3. 2. Not that the due Government of the Tongue alone does make a Man perfect; for there is a Body of Righteousness, as well as a Body of Sin; and to make it perfect, the Members must have both a just Number and Size; but that, considering the many Requisites to so great and excellent a piece of Temperance, it argues and supposes him to be so; and, as it there follows, *able also to bridle the whole Body*. And so here the peaceable Man may be said to be the perfect Man; not that he is so made by this signal Excellence, but that this Disposition argues him to be so, considering what a various Accomplishment of Soul is required before a Man can be capable of exercising so noble a Vertue.

THERE are some Degrees in Wickedness that necessarily suppose others: The Man must first walk in the Counsel of the Ungodly, and stand in the Way of Sinners, before he can have the *Forehead* to sit down in the Chair of the Scornful.

ful. And so there are some Degrees in Goodness, that do also necessarily suppose others. For there is a Scale of Perfection in both, and we can neither be good nor bad by Strides and Jumps. And this is such a Degree of Goodness as supposes many others to have gone before it, being one of the *Top-stones* of the *Spiritual Building*, and one of the last finishing Strokes of the Divine Image of that Christ which is *formed* in us: *Gal. 4. 19.* For the Holy Spirit of God, (as was shewn in the preceding Discourse) requires a consecrated Abode, a chaste Body, and a pure Soul; and will not enter into us till the former be made a Temple, and the latter a Sanctuary. And yet this Excellence is reckoned by the Apostle among the special *Fruits* of the Spirit, *Gal. 5. 22.* and consequently must pre-suppose all that Moral Preparation, at least, that the Entrance of the Holy Spirit does; and must therefore argue a well-order'd Frame and good Habit of Mind.

BUT this being only a general (tho', to one that attends the Force of it, sufficiently conclusive) Argument, I will more distinctly shew that it does so, by considering what particular Qualifications of Soul are required, in order to a peaceable Disposition; whose Presence must needs argue whatever it requires. Now these Requisites are either Negative, or Positive: The Negative are,

FIRST, That the Man be free from all inordinate *Self-Love*; it being impossible that he who prefers his own little private Concerns before the publick

publick Interest, should be at Peace with the Publick when that tender Part comes once to be touched. No, Such an one will ballance *Self* against all the World, will not care what becomes of the Publick when it stands in Competition with that ; but will embroil all the World in War and Mischief if he can, for the least Self-advantage.

SECONDLY, That the Man be free from Covetousness, which tho' the Root of all Evil, is yet more so of Strife and Dissention, than of any other. Covetousness and Peace cannot dwell long together. 'Tis, indeed, a very *Litigious Principle*, and one of the greatest Makebates and Incendiaries in the World. 'Tis this that fills the Court with Brawls and Wranglings, and the Field with Blood and Slaughter. And 'tis a known Observation, That in all Wars, whether justly or unjustly undertaken, the greatest part fight only for *Plunder*.

THIRDLY, That he be free from *Ambition*, which is as great an Enemy to Peace without, as it is to inward Tranquility. The ambitious Man is always advancing his Aim at some higher Mark of Honour ; and if Peace will not serve to raise him, War shall. Take an Instance of this from the Court of *Rome*. What a World of Schisms and Disturbances in the Church, and Factions, Seditions, Plots, Massacres and Wars in the State, have been from time to time occasioned by the Ambition of that See! But there is
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an higher Instance than this; for it was *Ambition* that made War in *Heaven*.

FOURTHLY, That he be free from *Envy*, which, indeed, spites every thing that is excellent; but is, of all things, the most direct and sworn Enemy to Peace. 'Twas the Envy of the Devil that first disturbed the Peace and Order of the World, and set the whole Creation in Battel-Array against Man. And it is the same envious Being that still raises and foment's all the Enmities and Dissentions that divide both the Church and State; and may therefore be called the *Father of Discords*, as well as the *Father of Lyes*. Envy is the greatest Enmity in the World; and the envious Man is the most universal Enemy: There is no Man but whom, by the very Principles of his Disposition, he is obliged either to *hate*, or to *despise*. All his Superiors and Equals he hates, and despises all his Inferiors; which comprize the whole Body of Mankind. And both Ways is Envy an Enemy to Peace, and very destructive to Kingdoms and States. Whereof there is a signal Instance in the Case of *Hanno* and *Bomilcar*, who, through Envy to the growing Glories of *Hannibal*, denied him a Supply of Forces to carry on his *Italian* Conquests, and so ruin'd *him*, their *Country*, and *themselves* too.

FIFTHLY, That he be free from *Revenge*, which is another great Trespasser against Peace; and without which, the rest would not be so mischievous as they are. For this continues and foment's those Enmities to which the other give Birth.

Birth, rivets and fastens Animofities in the Minds of Men, and by fresh Returns of Provocation, brings in (what has in vain been attempted in *Nature*) a kind of *Perpetual Motion* in Malice, and immortalizes Quarrels and Contentions.

SIXTHLY and Laftly, To comprize all at once, 'tis requisite that the peaceable Man be free from all manner of *Lusts*, and *Irregular Paflions*, whether of the Sensual or Intellectual Part; and from all Difaffection and Disorder of Soul; this being the Spring and first Mover to all the Discords and Disorders that are without: According to that of St. James, *From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts, that war in your members?* Where these reign, there can be no Peace; and therefore the peaceable Man must be free from these.

THESE are the *Negative Qualifications*, in order to a peaceable Disposition. The *Positive* I need but just name, the Proof of them being virtually contain'd in the other. They are therefore, First, Charity, or Universal Love; that seeketh not her own, but the Common Good. Secondly, Generosity, and a noble Enlargement of Soul, that sets a Man above the little petty Occasions of Quarrel and Contention. Thirdly, Humility and Modesty, that makes a Man possess himself and his Station with Contentedness and Thankfulness. Fourthly, A candid, sweet and benign Temper, that thinks no Evil, but is well pleased in the Prosperity of every Man, and every State or Community. Fifthly, A mild, meek and

and forgiving Spirit, that does not keep up the *Circulation* of Injuries, but lets the Quarrel fall and die. Sixthly and Lastly, A serene and well-composed Soul, one that rules well her own *inward Charge*, having her Passions in Subjection with all Gravity, Peace and Tranquility of Mind.

ALL these excellent Qualifications are required to furnish out a peaceable Disposition, which will not come into the Soul, as the Soul will not into the Body, till after it be duly tempered and prepared for it. Whence the Proposition to be made out is sufficiently concluded, that it argues a well-ordered Frame, and good Habit of Mind: Which is the first Ground of its Excellency.

THE Second is taken from the Consideration of what it *causes*. The Effects of it are as great and noble as its Principles and Prerequisites. Its great and general Effect is *Happiness*, upon which no one Vertue has so large an Influence as this. Some Happiness it causes immediately and directly, and contributes to secure whatever Happiness it does not cause. Some Blessings it originally procures, and preserves the Possession of all. So that, some way or other, all our Blessings are *Blessings of Peace*, since to this we owe either the Blessings themselves, or, at least, the secure Enjoyment of them. And all this it does by giving Strength, Beauty and Pleasure to Society.

FIRST, *Strength*. Peace is as much the *Sinew* of Society, as Money is of War; and without it, Society is so far from obtaining any of its just
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and natural Ends, that 'tis a far less eligible State than that of perfect Solitude: For, in perfect Solitude Men only want the mutual Assistance of one another; but in a divided and enraged Society, every Man is in the Condition of *Cain*, in fear lest the next that meets him should do him a Mischief. 'Tis Peace that makes Society a Defence, and that distinguishes the Congresses of Men from the Herds of Beasts, or, which is worse, from the Confusion of the Rabble. And as it strengthens Society *within*, so it strengthens it without too: Nor would War be any Security Abroad, without Peace at Home. Briefly, 'Tis Union and Coherence that makes every thing strong, and Peace is the Cement that holds all fast together. And what Society is there that can subsist without it, when even a *Kingdom divided against it self*, tho' it be that of the Devil himself, *cannot stand*? Mark 3. 24.

SECONDLY, *Beauty*. There is, indeed, a certain Beauty in Strength; and every thing that is strong is so far beautiful. But, besides this, Peace gives a more proper and peculiar Beauty to Society; the Beauty of Order and Proportion, of Decency and Agreeableness. For, a peaceable Disposition inclines every Man to mind his own proper Business, and to contain himself within that Place and Station wherein God and his Superiors have fixed him, and not to *aspire* to what is *above* him, or *invade* what does not *belong* to him. For, indeed, Peace it self cannot subsist without this, any more than Society can without Peace. Where-ever there-
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fore there is Peace, there will also be this Order and Proportion: The Hand will not affect the Office of the Eye, nor the Foot the Place of the Head; but every Member will be contented with, and intent upon his own Office and Place in the Body. The Result of which must needs be the greatest Beauty and Harmony.

THIRDLY, *Pleasure*. This, indeed, is necessarily consequent to the two former, since it cannot but be a great Pleasure to every particular well-affected Member of Society to reflect upon the Strength and Beauty of the whole. But, besides this, a peaceable Disposition derives a more immediate and direct Pleasure upon Society. For, Who can express the Pleasure that is in Love and Joy, Sweetness and Dearness in mutual Kindness and Confidences, in Union of Minds, and Universal Friendship! They that have had the Happiness to taste of this Pleasure, know they cannot express it; which made the Psalmist break forth into that abrupt Extasie, *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!* Psal. 133.

HAVING thus far set forth the general Excellency of a peaceable Disposition from what it *argues*, and from what it *causes*, I now proceed, in the Second Place, to consider that more particular Prerogative of it, in making those that have it, Children of God.

To be Children of God is, indeed, common to all good Men; who being begotten a-new by the immortal Seed of the Word, do bear God's
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Image in Holiness, endeavouring in all things to do their Father's Will. But there are some Dispositions that give a more peculiar Right to this Title than others, as they are nearer Resemblances of the Divine Excellencies: Among which is the Disposition now under our Consideration, whereby a Man becomes, in a special Degree and Manner, like God, and so evidences himself to be his Child, and may upon the Consideration of that Likeness fitly be so called. And this is the constant use of this Phrase in Scripture, *Joh. 8. 44. Ye are of your Father the Devil, (says our Lord to the unbelieving Jews) and the Lusts of your Father ye will do.* And so again, *Luk. 6. 35. Love your Enemies, and do good, &c. and ye shall be the Children of the Highest, for he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil.* And says the Apostle, *Eph. 5. 1. Be ye followers of God as dear Children.* They are the Children of God, who are Followers of God, who purifie themselves as he is pure, and who are perfect as he is perfect. So that to be the Child of God, or the Child of the Devil, signifies as much as to carry a particular Resemblance of either. When therefore 'tis said, that the Peace-makers shall be call'd the Children of God, it comes to as much as that they carry a particular Character of the Divine Likeness, whereby it may be known to whose Family they retain, and that they are the True Sons of God.

AND so indeed they are. For God is the God of Peace; and the greatest Peace, that which passes

passes all Understanding, is called the *Peace of God*. For God is the greatest Lover of Peace, the Author and Giver of Peace, and the Rewarder of all such as live in Peace. Indeed under the Jewish State, (which as in other things, so in this was very peculiar, that 'twas^a a State of *Theocracy*) God was known by the Name of the *Lord of Hosts*, not as expressing his true natural Liking and Approbation, but only his Relation to that particular People, whose immediate King and Leader he was. But now under the State of the Gospel, which exhibits a more genuine Idea of God (for the only begotten Son, which is in the Bosom of the Father, he has declared him, *Joh. 1. 18.*) he has changed his Title from the Style of *War* to the Style of *Peace*.

THIS indeed was ever his *Delight*, but now 'tis his *Glory*, and inserted among the brightest Ornaments of his Crown. He is now manifested to be what he ever really was. God from all Eternity to all Eternity enjoys a profound Peace within himself, and the Sacred Persons of the Trinity are not more One in Essence and Nature, than in Will and Inclination. Their *Moral* is as great as their *Natural* Unity. The Kingdom of God is a Kingdom of Peace, and Heaven the Throne of his Majesty is a peaceful Region. We never read but once that there was any War there, and those that caused it were quickly banish'd thence, *Rev. 12. 7.* To be short, God both enjoys and establishes Peace above, he *maketh Peace in his High-places*, and he has sent his

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Son to procure it below, to reconcile Men to him, and to one another, that so both Worlds might conspire in Unity, and that this Will of God might be done in Earth as it is in Heaven. And therefore since God has shewn himself to be so great a Lover of Peace, there is sufficient Ground for this particular Prerogative of a peaceable Disposition, that it makes those that have it Children of God. From which I pass in the third and last Place, to conclude all with some Reflections on the present Disturbers of the Peace of Christendom.

*Pufendorf de
Officio Hom.
& Civ. p. 154.*

'TIS the Observation of a Great Civilian and Moralist, that *Peace is a state peculiar to Man as he is distinguish'd from Brutes.* And so indeed it should be. But could we suppose a Stranger from one of the other Planetary Worlds to come and take a View of this our little Spot, and of the Manners of those that live upon it, he would not sure think *this* of all the things in the World to be the Character of Man. For he could not but observe, and perhaps it would be one of the first Remarks he would make, that there are more Wars and Fightings among Men, than among any other sort of Creatures, and more among *Christians* than among any other sort of Men. For at the very first opening of the Scene, what a miserable Face of things would appear both in Church and State! What Wars and Desolations in the one! And what *Debates, Envyings, Wraths, Strifes, Backbitings, Whisperings, Swellings*

Swellings and Tumults in the other! 2 *Cor.* 12. 20.

BUT because most of the Disturbances in the State proceed from those of the Church, I shall confine my Reflections to those that disturb the Peace and Order of the Christian Church. Where I shall First, Point out who these Disturbers are. And Secondly, Set some such Considerations before them, as may make them sensible of their Crime.

THERE are I conceive these two general ways of disturbing the Peace of the Church; either by imposing unlawful or unreasonable Terms of Communion, or by refusing to comply with such as are Lawful and Reasonable. That the first of these is a Breach of the Church's Peace there can be no doubt, because it introduces a Necessity of Separation. And that the latter is so is as plain, because 'tis a Separation without any Necessity for it. Either of these is *Schism*, whose Notion (as all agree) consists either in making a Necessity of Separation, or in separating without Necessity.

THE First of these will fall heavy upon the *Church of Rome*, who, (as it has been sufficiently made good against her) has brought in an Absolute Necessity of Separation, by imposing such notoriously unlawful and unreasonable Terms of Communion. The latter will light upon all those who separate from such Parts of the *Reformation*, where they may lawfully Communicate. More especially it will light heavier than ordinary upon all those *Sectaries* among us, who now divide from the Church of *England*, the Terms

of whose Communion, (as has been undeniably prov'd and maintain'd) are not only Lawful, but highly reasonable, and of an excellent Constitution.

I need not here, nor is it my Design to set my self professedly to make out the Charge of Schism against the Dissenters and Separatists from the Church of *England*. It has been done over and over, to the utmost Degree of Evidence, and the whole Circle of the Reformed Churches cry out upon them for their unreasonable Separation. Only I would desire them to try themselves and their Cause by that one plain Apostolical Canon before-mentioned, and see whether they can justify themselves by that single Measure. It is this, *If it be possible, as much as lies in you, live peaceably with all Men*, Rom. 12. 18. If with all Men, then certainly much more with Bodies and Societies of Men; much more with our Governors and Superiors; much more yet with the *Church*, the most Sacred and most Eminent of all Societies. And if as far as is *possible*, then certainly as far as is *lawful*.

BUT now I would ask our Dissenters and Separatists this one Question, and appeal to their *Consciences* as well as to their *Practices* for an Answer. Do they live peaceably with the *Church* of *England* as by lawful Authority establish'd, as far as is *possible*, and as much as *in them lies*? So far from this, that I *might* say, (were I minded to aggravate things) that they do the quite contrary, and *Divide* from us as far as possible, and

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as much as in them lies, it being very notorious that they run from us as far as they can, measure their Purity and Sanctity by their distance from us; and condemn and difuse many things meerly because we approve and use them.

BUT I need not take advantage of this, tho' it be too notorious to be denied, as well as too scandalous to be defended. I only demand, Do they live peaceably with the Church as far as is possible, and as much as in them lies? They cannot with any Modesty say that they do. For if they did, not to say that they might come much nearer to us than they do, they must of necessity conform with us. Since as they were never able to shew any thing unlawful in our Communion; so they now generally allow it to be lawful, and accordingly will afford us their Company now and then upon occasion, as often as they think fit to do us that Honour. Well then, if our Communion be lawful, then 'tis *Possible* for them to communicate with us, and if they do not, then 'tis plain that they do not live peaceably with us as far as is *Possible*, and as much as in them lies, and consequently by virtue of this plain Apostolical Canon stand fully convicted of *Schism*, and let them bring themselves off if they can. I am satisfied they will be able to answer it but ill here, and am afraid worse hereafter.

I have now in general pointed out the Disturbers of the Christian Peace, and I wish I could now as easily make these Troublers of our *Israel*

sensible of this their Crime, as prove them guilty of it. In order to which not to insist upon the Heinousness of the Sin of Schism which is as expressly forbidden in Scripture as Murder or Adultery, and the great Obligation that lies upon all Christians to preserve the Unity and Peace of the Church, which the Scripture every where so earnestly presses and inculcates, and which the Example of the Primitive Christians so strongly recommends; and for which both our Reason and our Interest (especially at this time) would suggest to us a Thousand Arguments; I say not to insist upon these and such like Considerations (for a Combination of which I refer to an excellent Discourse of Dr. *Barrow's* concerning the Unity of the Church) I would only desire the Persons concerned to consider how much by their Schisms and Divisions they prejudice the *Christian Religion*. I do not mean as to the Life and Power of Godliness, (tho' that be very true, and worthy to be seriously considered) but as to the Propagation of the Christian Faith. And that with respect to the Three great Enemies of it, the *Heathen*, the *Jew*, and the *Mahumetan*.

FIRST, With respect to the *Heathen*, to whom as the Unity and Agreement of the *First* Christians was a great Indearment, and a very prevalent Invitation, so as to occasion that common Speech among them, *See how the Christians love one another!* So the Schisms and Divisions of the *Present* Christians must needs be a great Scandal and Objection.

Objection. For indeed how can any considering Heathen be perswaded to think such a broken and divided Religion to be of Divine Revelation, when that which *he* takes to by the Light of Nature has more of Unity and Consent!

SECONDLY, With respect to the *Jew*, who may certainly number the Dissentions of Christians among the greatest Hindrances of his Conversion. For when in the Prophetick Writings among other Characters of the Times of the Messias he shall find this to be one, and one of the chiefest, that it shall be a Reign of Charity and Peace, *Isa. 2. 4.* That they shall beat their Swords into Plowshares, and their Spears into Pruning-hooks; That Nation shall not lift up Sword against Nation, neither shall they learn War any more. That the Wolf shall also dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard shall lie down with the Kid, &c. I say the Jew finding this to be one of the Characteristics of the Messias his Reign, and observing withal nothing like it in the Christian State, but rather a perfect *Reverse* of all this, and not being able to distinguish with some between the Design and Natural Genius of the Christian Religion, and the accidental Event of Things; or with others, to have recourse to the other more glorious Reign of Christ in the Millennial State of the Church, wherein these great and strong Figures shall have a proportionable Accomplishment, he must needs be shrewdly tempted to think that the Time of the promised Messias is not yet come,

and that the Religion which now goes for his, is as false as its Professors are evil and wicked.

THIRDLY and Lastly, with respect to the *Mahumetan*, who indeed allows Christ to have been a true Prophet, and his Religion to have been once a true Religion, only he says it has had its Time as well as that of the Jews, and is now, as *superannuated*, to give place to a more perfect Institution, that is, to *Mahumet's*, who as he came after Christ, so was he to fill up his Defects; and to deliver the last and standing Will of God. And will he not find pretence to be confirmed in this his Opinion, and to prefer his Master *Mahumet* as much before Christ as we do Christ before *Moses*; when he shall perceive (as quickly he may) that there is not half so much Unity and Agreement among Christians, even concerning their very Religion which is to be the Bond of their Unity, as there is among *Mahumetans*? Certainly he will, and tho' he perish in his Error, yet I fear his Blood will be upon those who administer the Occasion of it. These are great Scandals and Objections both to the Heathen, Jew and *Mahumetan*, and Woe be to them by whom this great Offence comes. Our Saviour pronounces a severe Woe against them that shall offend even one of his little ones, *Mat. 18. 6.* and what then shall be the Doom of those that scandalize so great a part of the World! I heartily wish that the present Disturbers and Dividers of the Christian State and Church would seriously consider these things,

things, and how they act the part of *Antichrist* in thus letting and hindring the Course of the Christian Religion.

IN the mean time I shut up all with this Prayer, that God would give Light to those *Heathens*, *Jews* and *Mahumetans* that sit in Darkness and in the Shadow of Death, and that in order to this, he would first guide the Feet of us *Christians* into the Way of *Peace*, Amen.

DISCOURSE the Eighth.

MATTH. V. Ver. x, xi, xii.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.
Or, as it may be read from the Close, *Great is their Reward in Heaven.*



IT has been ever a great Occasion of Dissatisfaction to some Men that there should be any such thing as Evil in the World. A greater yet, that this Evil should often fall upon good, and sometimes upon the best of Men. But the greatest of all is, that not only good Men should meet with Evil, but that their very Goodness should betray them into it; that suffering should not only be the Portion of the Righteous, but that Men should suffer for the Sake of their Righteousness. It seems hard

hard indeed that a Righteous Man should suffer, but much more that he should suffer for his being Righteous, and that Affliction should not only be the *Lot*, but also the *Effect* and *Consequence* of his Vertue. For if Honesty and Integrity cannot be a Defence and Privilege against Evil, yet one would expect it should not be a Procurer of it, and that if the Man were not the better for his Vertue, yet at least he should not be the worse.

THESE have been always as perplext *Appearances* in the Moral, as any that arise in the Natural System of the World; a frequent Trouble and Discouragement to the Good and Pious, and a more frequent Occasion of Triumph to the Atheistical and Prophane, who have raised from hence their most plausible Objections both against the *Being* and the *Order* of Divine Providence, which by these greatest Difficulties of it they have been encouraged either to *Deny* or to *Condemn*.

WITH the two first of these Difficulties I am not at present concern'd, nor shall I determine of what Force the last and greatest might be, were this the last State of things, and the *All-concluding Scene* of the World. Perhaps it might then be strong enough to conclude what some are now so weak as to wish and believe. But certainly with the Supposition of an After-state the Objection is so far from being *Desperate*, that I can see nothing *Difficult* in it: And I think 'tis here sufficiently answer'd by that ample Compensation

penfation promis'd by our Saviour to all those whose faithful Adherence to a good Cause, shall at any time engage them in Sufferings and Afflictions. For says he, *Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

WHICH last Words (as our Saviour afterwards explains them) contain not only a Promise of Heavenly Happiness in general, but of a greater Degree and Measure of it, and intitle the Sufferers for Religion, those who undergo Persecution for Righteousness sake, to a more than ordinary weight of Glory. So that hence arise two Propositions to be distinctly consider'd:

FIRST, That there are Degrees in that Glory which shall be the Reward of Saints in Heaven.

SECONDLY, That one of the highest Degrees of it shall be the Reward of those who suffer Persecution for the sake of Righteousness.

THAT there are Degrees of Glory, tho' by some a much contested, is yet I think a most certain and unquestionable Truth. The Certainty of which I shall endeavour to establish upon these few evident Principles.

FIRST, I consider that this must needs be the natural and necessary Result of things. And here I desire only it may be granted me, That there are some certain Dispositions of Soul necessary to relish and enjoy the Happiness of Heaven. This I think is a Supposition that need
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not be disputed, since even to the Enjoyment of sensible Good there is requisite a Proportion of Sense. The Ear must be tunably set to relish the Charms of Musick, and the Palate must be rightly disposed to find any Pleasure in the sweetest Delicacies. And if these grosser Objects that have a more natural Affinity with the Organs of Sense, and strike hard upon them, will not yet affect them without some more *particular inward* Preparation; there is greater reason to think that the Delights of Heaven that are so far above the Level of our Natures, so pure and so refined, cannot be tasted but by a suitable Disposition of Soul. The Necessity of which ap-

*Practical
Discourse of
Death, p. 76.*

pears so great, that I am apt to think (as a late worthy Writer of our Church does) that the whole Moral Excellency of some Vertues is their Qualification for the Happiness of another State, they being of no great consequence to the present Order of this World.

WELL then, if certain Dispositions of Soul be required to fit us for the Happiness of Heaven, then it follows, that the more disposed any Soul is for the Glories of Heaven, the more happy she must needs be in the Enjoyment of them. And if so, then 'twill be necessary to say, either that all Souls are equally disposed, which would be to contradict the Sense and Experience of the whole World; or if one be better disposed than another, then in proportion one will also be more happy than another. The Consequence is plain

plain and necessary, If there must be a Moral Qualification of Soul to fit a Man for Happiness, then certainly the more qualified the more happy. Which has made me often wonder at the Self-inconsistency of those who allowing a virtuous Frame and Temper of Mind to be a Natural Disposition for Happiness, do yet deny greater Degrees of Glory to greater Degrees of Vertue. Indeed if a Moral Disposition of Soul did not fit us for Happiness, the case were otherwise; but since 'tis allowed to do that, I cannot conceive but that the Degrees of Happiness must follow the Degrees of Vertue. And indeed how can he that thinks at all, think otherwise, but that a Soul well purg'd and purify'd, that has undergon a long Course of Mortification, till she is thoroughly awakened into the Divine Life and Likeness, and is arrived to *the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*, Eph. 4. 13. must find more Happiness in the Vision of God, than a Soul just pregnant with the Divine Form, and that carries away with her only the first Rudiments of Spiritual Life! Certainly that Soul which is most like God will be most happy in the Fruition of him. This is no more than what may be concluded from the meer natural necessity of things, without having recourse to any positive Order of God about it. But neither may that be supposed to be wanting. For,

SECONDLY, I consider that the same may be concluded from the Justice and Goodness of God, as well as from the Nature of things. And first,
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from his Justice. Not that there lies an *Absolute* and *Antecedent* Obligation upon God to bestow greater Rewards upon greater Saints; for if Eternal Life it self be (as the Apostle represents it) *the Gift of God*, Rom. 6. 23. no doubt but the Degrees of it are so too. God cannot become a Debtor to Man, or to any other Creature but by a free Act of his own. He may indeed oblige himself to us by a voluntary Ingagement, but we cannot pass any strict Obligation upon him by any thing we can do; and to talk of *Meriting* in this Sense is no less than Blasphemy, and I can hardly believe that any Man that understood himself, ever thus held it.

BUT tho' God be not absolutely obliged to his Creatures, but only upon Supposition, and consequently cannot be Absolutely bound to reward greater Saints with greater Happiness, yet if we once suppose him to ingage himself by Promise to be a Rewarder of Vertue in general; there will be all the Reason in the World to think that by the same Promise he has also *Virtually* obliged himself to crown the greatest Vertues with the greatest Rewards. For since the Reason why he ingaged himself to be a Rewarder of good Men was not (as is already precaution'd) any Absolute Merit of theirs, but only to shew his great Love of Vertue and Goodness, 'tis reasonable to conclude that by the same Motives, and in pursuance of the same End, he also ingaged himself to be a more liberal Rewarder of greater Saints. Since this is as necessary a
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Means to shew his Love to Vertue and Goodness as the other. And therefore tho' we should grant (which yet in the Sequel will appear otherwise) that God had expressly promised only to be a Rewarder of Vertue in general, yet since the End and Reason of this His Ingagement was to shew His great Love to Vertue, this would be warrant enough to conclude, that he had implicitly and virtually ingaged Himself to have an equal regard to the several Degrees of Vertue, and to reward them after their respective Proportions.

BUT to rise higher yet, tho' God cannot be in *Strict Justice* obliged to reward the best of our Services but by an Ingagement of his own, much less to reward them with Eternal Happiness, yet I think there must be acknowledged a kind of *Congruity* or *Becomingness* on God's part so to do, even Antecedently to any Promise or Covenant. There is indeed no strict Obligation till after some Covenant; but there may, and I think must be a Congruity even before. For tho' there be no Proportion of *Equivalence* between our best Works and the Rewards of Heaven, and consequently no possible room for any strict Merit, yet I cannot but think with a Person of great Judgment and Moderation, that there is a Proportion of *Conveniency*; that is, as he afterwards explains it, tho' there be nothing strictly due from God to the Services of good Men, yet 'tis highly worthy of God to reward them; upon which

Le Blanc Theses
Theolog. p. 590.

which Account they also may be said to be worthy, according to that of the *Apocalyps*, *They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy*, Rev. 3. 4.

AND indeed unless we will admit of this *Congruity*, I do not see how to justify the Sense of that Apostolical Maxim, *He that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, Heb. 11. 6. 'Tis plain that the Apostle here speaks of the Grounds of Natural Religion, and what should move and qualifie a Heathen Man to make his first Addreses to God. This he tells you is to believe the Being and the Providence of God, that he *is*, and that he is a *Rewarder*. But now how shall a Heathen Man believe that God is a Rewarder? By any Revelation of his? But that he is not yet supposed to admit. He must therefore conclude it by his own natural Reason, by considering the Idea and Nature of God, the τὸ γινώσκον ὅτι θεὸς ἐστίν, that which may naturally be known of him, and how becoming it is for so excellent a Being to reward those who apply themselves seriously and heartily to him.

WELL then, if it be reasonable to believe upon the Stock of natural Principles that God is a Rewarder, without being assured of it by any Revelation (which is here supposed in the Heathen's Case) then it follows, that even antecedently to any Promise of God there is a great *Congruity*, tho' not a strict Obligation that he should be a Rewarder. For otherwise what Ground could the Heathen Man have so to Conclude or Believe?

lieve? This Congruity therefore must of Necessity be allow'd, however apt some may be to startle at it, when the Word *Merit* is put before it. This is *Prejudice*, but the thing it self as I have here stated and explained it, is both innocent and necessary to be granted. And if there be such a Congruity that God should be a Rewarder in general, then by the same Proportion it follows that he should dispense his Rewards according to the Degrees of Vertue. There being certainly at least as much Congruity in this as in the other.

AND besides this, there is no reason to question but that the *Goodness* of God which is in it self infinite, and which is already supposed to exert it self so liberally as to reward the little and defective Services of a short Life with Eternal Glories, will also be so consistent with it self, as to reward those most, who have pressed forward to the highest Degrees of Sanctity. And were it not for this, I do not see what Incouragement there is for Men to *Excel* in Vertue, which yet the Goodness of God obliges us to suppose. For what should move a Man to be eminently good, considering how difficult it is to be so, and how little recompens'd in this World, if it were not in order to a greater Reward hereafter?

IF it be said, that the least Degree of Glory is a sufficient Incouragement for the greatest Degree of Vertue; I grant it is so, were that greatest Degree of Vertue the necessary Condition of it,

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without which the least Glory could not be obtain'd. But since less will suffice for that (as must be admitted, unless you will say that all glorified Saints are equally good and vertuous) I do not see how there can be sufficient Incouragement for higher Attainments, but only upon the Supposition of greatest Rewards. Which therefore from the Goodness as well as Justice of God there is good Reason to conclude.

THIRDLY and lastly, From Principles of Reason I appeal to Holy Scripture, which I think will be found to speak as fully and plainly to this purpose as may reasonably be desired. For there we find that *God will render to every man according to his deeds*, Rom. 2. 6. And again, that *every one shall receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*, 2 Cor. 5. 10. And lest this should be refer'd to the general Distribution of Rewards and Punishments, more expressly it is said, that *he that sows sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and that he that sows bountifully shall reap also bountifully*, 2 Cor. 9. 6. The same again is expressly represented under the Parable of the *Talents* committed to the Management of Servants, who were severally rewarded according to their several Improvements, Luk. 19. And tho' Parables are not allowed to conclude *throughout*, yet certainly as to the thing directly and purposely intended by them they are as conclusive as any other Forms of Speech, which in this Parable must be the different Dispensation of Rewards hereafter, or nothing.

nothing. Again, the Scripture mentions different Seats of Glory, *Joh. 14. 2. In my Father's house are many Mansions*, says our Saviour, that is, Mansions of distinct Ranks and Orders: For 'twould have been but a small piece of News for our Saviour to have told his Disciples, that in Heaven there were a great many Mansions in number. Nor would this be so suitable to the Introduction of his Discourse, *Let not your Hearts be troubled.*

AGAIN we read of particular Rewards belonging to Men of particular Characters, as of a *Prophet's Reward*, and a *Righteous Man's Reward*. *He that receives a Prophet in the name of a Prophet, shall receive a Prophet's Reward*, says our Saviour, *Mat. 10. 41.* Why a Prophet's Reward, if there be not some special Reward assigned to a Prophet? And again, tis plainly intimated that every Degree, and every Act of Vertue shall have its proper Recompence, where 'tis said, *Mat. 10. 42. Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a Cup of cold Water only in the Name of a Disciple, shall in no wise lose his Reward.* To which Purpose there is also a very express place in the *Proverbs*, *Prov. 19. 17. He that hath pity on the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and look what he layeth out it shall be paid him again.* Where there is a Reward promised not only to Charity in general, but to every Degree of it. And if every Degree of Vertue shall be particularly rewarded, it evidently follows that the greater our Vertues are, the more abundant shall be our Reward,

otherwise some Degrees of Vertue would go unrewarded, contrary to the Supposition.

To this it may be added, that a greater Degree of Blessedness is every where attributed to Patriarchs, Prophets and Apostles, &c. when their Glorification is expressed by their *Sitting down* in the Kingdom of God, and that of other Saints, by their sitting down with them in allusion to the Eastern manner of Feasting. This Privilege of a more eminent Seat is particularly assigned to *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* by our Saviour, when he tells us, *Mat. 8. 11.* that *many shall come from the East and the West, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven.* And so again to the Apostles, *Mat. 19. 28.* *Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the Regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the Throne of his Glory, ye also shall sit upon Twelve Thrones.* It cannot be denied but that this is meant of the Apostles only, and not of his Disciples at large, because of the Twelve Thrones. And why should Twelve of them only be specified, if they were not to be Thrones of an higher Order? Or what *Extraordinary* would our Saviour have promised to his Disciples? And this is further confirmed by *St. John*, who in the Description of the Heavenly *Jerusalem*, makes the Twelve Apostles the Foundations of the City. *And the Wall of the City (says he) had twelve Foundations, and in them the Names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb, Rev. 21. 14.* A Place exactly parallel to that of the Twelve Thrones.

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To dispatch all in a Word, the Condition of Saints in Glory is expressed in Scripture by their being *made like unto the Angels*, Mat. 22. 30. and 'tis of it self reasonable to think that the same general Order and Proportion shall be observed in both these Sons of God, *Angels* and *Men*. But now 'tis most certain that the Angels have their different Orders and Hierarchies, being distinguish'd into Thrones and Dominions, Principalities and Powers, and into Angels and Arch-Angels, and that some of them sit nearer to the Throne of God than others. Whereupon the *Talmudists* call *Michael* the Arch-Angel, *The Prince of Faces*, or the Prince of the Presence, being (as they say) so near to the King of Heaven, as to be admitted to sit down by him, and register the good Actions of the *Israelites*. And says the Angel *Gabriel* of himself, *I am Gabriel that stand in the presence of God*, Luk. 1. 19. He distinguishes himself as much by his *Station* as by his *Name*. And the Vision of *Isaiab* represents one of the Angelic Orders covering their Faces with their Wings, which supposes them to be nearer than Ordinary to the Presence of God, so as not to be able to abide the Glory of it, without the help of a *Veil*.

SINCE therefore there is such a Variety in the Angelical Stations, and our future Condition is generally represented by theirs, this alone were enough to put us upon thinking that our Glorification must admit of the like gradual Diversity. And 'tis no more than what natural

Order and Decency seems to require, that the Members of Christ's Mystical Body should retain the same Diversity in the other World that *St. Paul* ascribes to them in this, that there should still be an *Eye* and an *Hand*, an *Head* and a *Foot*, more Honourable and less Honourable Parts, *1 Cor. 12.* Whereof the Natural Heaven exhibits a very convenient Emblem, in which one Star differs from another Star in Glory. And after all, tho' there were no plain Proof to be had for this, yet there is such an obvious Congruity in the thing as would *convince* where it could not *silence*. And I believe there is no Man, though never so forward to raise Objections against what has been contended for, and to equalize the Glories of Heaven (for the other World has its *Levelers* as well as this) that could yet obtain leave of his own Modesty to expect as bright a Crown as the *Virgin Mary*, or *St. Paul*.

HAVING thus far asserted the different Degrees of Glory, which I have the longer insisted upon, because 'tis a very *practical* as well as *notional* Theory, being of great consequence to the encouragement of Heroick Goodness, I come now to consider the second thing proposed, That one of the Highest Degrees of Glory shall be the Reward of those who suffer Persecution for the sake of Righteousness, that is, of *Martyrs*. And here for the Eviction of this, having already shewn that there are Degrees of Glory in proportion to the Degrees of Vertue, I think 'twill suffice to shew that Martyrdom is one of the highest

highest Degrees of Vertue. For the Argument reduced to Form will stand thus:

AN higher Degree of Vertue shall have an higher Degree of Glory.

BUT Martyrdom is an higher Degree of Vertue:

THEREFORE Martyrdom shall have an higher Degree of Glory.

THE first Proposition is what we have been proving hitherto. To infer the Conclusion therefore there needs only a Proof of the second. Here therefore my Business shall be to give a short Representation of the Excellency of *Martyrdom*.

THE Honour of Martyrdom was so great in the Primitive Church, that even the Commonness of it, which depretiates every thing else, could not diminish from its Veneration. It was then thought of so great Excellence, as to supply the room of Baptism, and the new Convert, whose early and sudden Execution prevented his solemn Admission into the Christian Church, was yet esteem'd a very good Member of Christ's Mystical Body, and number'd with his best Saints in Glory everlasting. The same Honour to Martyrs made them chuse their Tombs for the Places of their Devotion; and God himself was pleased to signalize his speical regard to these his Saints, and to shew how precious their Death was in his Sight, by making the Places of their Rest the Stage of his Miracles;

St. Jerom against *Vigilantius*, as I think, Chap. 4.

NOR is there any thing in all this more strange and extraordinary, than the Excellency of the Vertue it self which was thus honoured. A general Representation of which is thus given

Monſieur Senault
Christian
Man, p. 336.

by the Pen of a Celebrated Writer of the Roman Church. A Church which, by the way, has made more Martyrs, and has fewer than any in the World. But ſhe has dealt long enough in Blood, to be able to form an Idea of Martyrdom from the Martyrs which ſhe has made. *We ſee (ſays one of her Sons) nothing in the Church more noble than Martyrdom. 'Tis the higheſt Form of Vertue, the laſt Expreſſion of Charity; and when a Man has ſhed his Blood and parted with his Life for Jeſus Chriſt, there is not any inſtance that can further be expected from his Love. Juſtly therefore may we acknowledge nothing more Auguſt in Religion than Martyrs. They are the Heroes of Chriſtianity, the Gallant Men of this State, the Nobleſt Parts of this Myſtical Body. There is no Greatneſs that gives not way to their Dignity; whatever we admire is below their Worth, and according to the Opinion of one of the wiſeſt Fathers of the Church (he means St. Cyprian) 'tis more to be a Martyr than to be an Apoſtle. Neither hath any thing been ever more Honour'd in the World. Heaven has wrought an Hundred Miracles to diſcover their Innocence, wild Beaſts have reſpected them, the Flames have ſpared their Garments, Tyrants have admired them, and many times their Executioners have become their Diſciples, in ſo much that theſe renowned Champions had great reaſon to be afraid of*

of *Vain-glory*, at the same time that God delivered them from Sorrow. The Description is handsom and elegant, but what they Describe, they have left to our Church to Practise.

BUT more particularly and distinctly, to take the just *Height* of the Excellency of Martyrdom, we must first lay down a Measure whereby the Excellency of any Vertue is to be estimated. Now the Excellency of any Vertue may be measured either from the *Goodness* of the Object willed, or from the Degree of *willing* it. And two Persons that are equally Vertuous with respect to the Good that is will'd, may yet be very unequally so with respect to the Degree of Willing, because one may will the same Good, and the same Degree of Good more intensely and affectionately than the other. Thus for Instance, *Virginity* may be said to be more excellent than a Conjugal Life, and that tho' you do suppose the States themselves to be equally Pure, because 'tis harder to preserve Virginal than Conjugal Chastity: So that tho' the Degrees of Purity be supposed the same in both States; yet because they are more strongly will'd in the one than in the other, the Virgin may be said to be more pure than the Conjugated Person; not, perhaps as a Lover of greater Purity, but as a stronger and more pertinacious Lover of the *same*, which he adheres to under more disadvantageous Circumstances.

AND this I take to be the Case of *Martyrdom*, whose general Excellency above other Vertues
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consists in the Degree of Inclination or Adhesion to good, which in the Martyr is supposed to be so strong as to determine him rather to suffer Death, and the utmost Extremity of it, than to transgress what he knows to be his Duty. And indeed if we consider how sweet Life is, and how naturally averse we are to Death even in the most easy, much more under the most terrifying Circumstances, it must needs be a very strong and peremptory Adhesion to Vertue that shall engage a Man to quit his Life rather than his Innocence, and Die rather than offend.

BUT to be more particular yet. To recommend the Excellency of Martyrdom there is a Concurrence of the greatest Vertues. The most eminent of which (for 'twere endless to reckon up all) are the greatest *Faith*, the greatest *Love*, and the greatest *Courage*.

FIRST, The greatest *Faith*. There is indeed no Faith like the Faith of a Martyr. This is that Faith which overcomes the World, and all that is terrible in it; That Faith to which all things are possible and nothing difficult, and that removes *Fear*, which is more than to remove *Mountains*. This is that Faith which is more especially the Substance of things hoped for, and the Argument or Demonstration of things not seen. This noble Definition of Faith is never so fully verify'd as in the Faith of a Martyr. This is that Faith that turns the End of the *Perspective*, and shortens the interval of Time, and makes the future World present, and represents Heaven open,

open, and the Son of Man standing on the Right Hand of God ready to defend, and receive, and reward those that will be content to indure the Cross, and despise both the Shame and the Pain of it for his sake. And all this with such Certainty and fulness of Perswasion, that 'tis ready to change its Nature, through too much Evidence, and to cease to be any longer Faith, and commence Science or Revelation. For indeed nothing less than this, than such a full down-bearing Perswasion can well inable a Man to drink off this bitter Cup, and to be *Baptized* at this *Bloody Font*. It must certainly be a strange Degree of Affiance and Confidence which that Man has in God, who can resign up all that is good and pleasant, and submit himself to all that is evil and terrible in this World, and meet Death with all its Natural and Artificial Terrors, and trust God for his Reward in another Life. What a generous, victorious Faith is this! And what a noble Idea must such a Person have of God! The Faith of *Abraham* is highly celebrated in Scripture for his readiness to offer up his Son at the Command of God. And no doubt 'twas a very rare and extraordinary Faith that could reconcile him to such an unnatural Undertaking. But certainly the Faith of a Martyr is very much beyond this, as much as 'tis an higher Act of Reliance to trust God with ones own Soul, and for ones Eternal Happiness, than for a Posterity to inherit a promised Land.

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SECONDLY, The greatest *Love*. There is indeed no Love like the Love of a Martyr. This is that Love which is properly stronger than Death, and which is so perfect as to cast out or overcome all Fear. This is a Degree of Love truly *Seraphick*, and which comes the nearest of any to the Love of Angels and Beatify'd Spirits. If there be any such thing as Seraphick Love in the World, this is it. Not only because 'tis bright and flaming, noble and generous, but because 'tis a Love that gets above all the Bodily Passions, silences all the Motions of the lower Life, and makes the Man act as if he were all Soul and Mind. More particularly, Martyrdom is the greatest Love of *Vertue*, and the greatest Love of *God*.

FIRST, Martyrdom is the greatest Love of *Vertue*, because that is valued at an higher Rate than Life it self, which the Martyr will rather lose than sin. Our Saviour makes it the greatest Instance and Argument of Friendship, for a Man to lay down his Life for his Friend. And so doubtless it is. For 'tis then plain that the Man sets a greater Value upon his Friend, than he does upon Life. And the like may be said of the Martyr, that he sets a higher Value upon Vertue, than he does upon Life, which yet is so dear that (as one observes, who for our Safety too well understands the secret Springs and Inclinations of Human Nature) *all that a man has will he give for it*, Job. 2. 4. And yet this very Life for which a Man will give all things, is by the Martyr given as a Sacrifice to his Innocence. SE-

SECONDLY, Martyrdom is the greatest Love of God, because the Martyr sets so high a Price upon him, that he will chuse rather to die than forfeit the Enjoyment of his Favour and Blessedness, and may truly say with the Psalmist, *Psal. 63. 4. Thy loving kindness is better than life.* 'Tis an easie thing for a Man in a warm gusty fit of Devotion, when the Evil day is far off, and no probable Danger of any Competition between his Religion and his Life, to say that he sets a greater Value upon the loving Kindness of God than upon Life, You know who did so. *Tho' I should die with thee, yet I will not deny thee,* that is, (to reduce the Words to a more Logical Order) I would rather die than deny thee. This is easily said, but not so easily done, as the Event too sadly shew'd. But he that says he values the loving Kindness of God more than Life, and dies rather than forfeit it, may be believed. For what greater Love can there be than this, or what higher Instance or Tryal of it? The greatest Love of God was to die for Man. God could not signalize his Love to Man by any higher Instance than by dying for him; and the greatest Love of Man is to die for God.

THIRDLY, The greatest *Courage*. For there is also no Courage like the Courage of a Martyr. He fears no Evil but only Sin and Damnation, which are just and reasonable Objects of Fear, and will undergo any other Evils to avoid these, which is the truest and the greatest Courage. For where is there any like it? I would not
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have the Man of Honour or Duelist, of all the Pretenders to Courage in the World, offer at a Competition here. For 'tis most certain that he abuses the Notion of Courage as well as that of Honour. His Courage is to dare to sin and be damn'd, that he may avoid the Reproach of Cowardize, that is, not to fear and avoid what with all possible Concern he should, and to fear and avoid what he should not. And if this be *Courage*, I must then confess that I do not know what is *Cowardize*.

BUT neither may the *Military Man* be a Competitor here. 'Tis I confess great and brave for a Man in a just and laudable Cause, for the Defence of his Prince and Country, to fall a Sacrifice at the Head of an Army. And the *Heralds Office* supposes as much. But there are also some Allays that qualifie the Glory even of this Action. For the Man is supposed to be engaged with Multitudes and Numbers, which *incourage* as well as *defend*; and to fight in a Heat, when his Spirits are raised, and his Blood runs high, so as scarce to be able to feel a Shot or a Stab that shall be given him, and to want Opportunity of Retreat, and to be kept from reflecting upon his Danger by Noise, Tumult and Confusion, and to have the Spur of Emulation, and the Incentive of Anger, sometimes of Hatred and Revenge; and which is more than all the rest, the Hopes of a safe come off at last. Believe me, this goes a great way, and I question whether among those that venture themselves in War, one of Ten
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Thousand would do so, if he knew before-hand that he should certainly die in the Field. But now to have a Man go alone and in cold Blood to the Stake, or to the Scaffold; When in every Period of his Advance 'tis still in his Power by compliance to recede from his dreadful Undertaking, and there calmly and deliberately submit himself to *certain* Execution, and *feel himself die* with all his Thoughts, Reflections and Passions about him; this is Courage indeed, and such a Noble Spectacle as might well deserve to be a *Theatre* to Angels and Men, yea even to God himself.

THESE are some of those great things that illustrate the Excellency of Martyrdom, and shew it to be one of the highest Degrees of Vertue, and consequently that it is intitled to an higher Degree of Glory: Which the Scripture also expressly makes to be the Portion of Martyrs, who are said to *indure tortures, and not to accept of deliverance, that they might obtain a better Resurrection,* Heb. 11. A Better Resurrection, that is, a Resurrection to a Better State of Happiness, that being the only Measure whereby one Resurrection may be said to be Better than another. And says the Angel to St. John concerning those who are cloathed with white Robes, and had Palms in their Hands, Rev. 7. 14. *These are they which came out of great Tribulation, and have wash'd their Robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the Throne of God, and serve him day and night in his Temple. And he that sitteth on the Throne shall dwell among them.*

AND

AND now since there is a brighter Crown of Glory prepared for Martyrs, and those that suffer Persecution for the sake of Righteousness, all that further remains is to commend from the Premises these two Practical Inferences.

FIRST, That we entertain no hard Thoughts of the Justice or Goodness of God for suffering so many severe Persecutions in the Christian Church, some whereof were violent, as under the Roman Emperors; some Fraudulent by Hereticks, as *Arius, Nestorius, &c.* And some of a mixt Nature, consisting both of Fraud and Violence, when both Temporal and Spiritual Power did combine together (as now in the Papal See) against the Lord and his Christ. I say we should learn from hence not to censure the ways of God for this, nor to *charge him foolishly*, since there is so plentiful a Reward laid up for those that suffer in the Cause of Righteousness.

SECONDLY, That we do fortifie our selves with the Consideration of this Beatitude, That if God should ever honour us so far as to call us to the Trial of the Cross, we may be so true to God, to Religion, and to our own Souls, as to suffer couragiously and thankfully, ever looking up to that glorious *Crown*, that *white Robe*, and those *Triumphant Palms* which distinguish the Noble Army of Martyrs, who eternally sing Hymns and Praise to God for the Blessing of those Crosses, which now spring up into Crowns, and in bearing of which they find so great Reward. *Glory be to God on High.*

The

*The Conclusion of the Whole, in
a DISCOURSE concerning the
BEATITUDES in general.*



HAVING hitherto discoursed upon every Beatitude particularly by it self, I think it may not be improper for the further Accomplishment of this Work, to conclude all with a Discourse concerning the Beatitudes in general. Where there are Three Material Enquiries that seem to demand Satisfaction.

THE First is, Concerning the Manner and Way of this Divine Sermon, Why our Lord chose to deliver his Laws and Precepts by the way of *Blessing*?

THE Second is, Concerning the Number of the Beatitudes.

THE Third is, Concerning their Order and Method.

FOR Satisfaction to the first Enquiry, I consider first, That Christ who came into the World upon an *Errand of Love*, the greatest Love that an infinitely good God could express to a Creature and who no doubt had also a Soul well tuned, and a Body well temper'd, and both set

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to the softest Key of Harmony and Sweetness was willing to deliver his Laws in the most *dearing* and charming Manner that could possibly be, that he might the better recommend both *Himself* and his *Doctrin* to the good Will of his Auditors, and reconcile them thro' the Love of the *Former*, to the Obedience of the *Latter*. Which is a very laudable Affectation of *Popularity*, first to engage Men's Affections to our *Persons*, that we may the better win them over to the Acceptance and Entertainment of our *Doctrins*. This indeed ought to be the Care and Endeavour of all Preachers; but there was this more particular Reason for it in our Lord, because the Love of *his* Person was not only an *Indearment* of Obedience, but also a very considerable *part* and instance of it. He therefore instead of using an *Imperative* Style, by downright commanding such and such things, chose rather in a more gentle and condescending way to insinuate what was *his* Will, and *our* Duty, by pronouncing them *Blessed* that do so and so.

SECONDLY, I consider that our Lord Christ being to act the *Counter-part* to *Moses*, and to relax the rigour of his Law, by being the Author of a milder Dispensation, thought fit to give an early and a solemn Specimen of his greater Mildness, by varying the Style of his Legislation from that used by *Moses*. And therefore whereas *Moses* deliver'd his Law after an *Imperatorial* way, by saying, *Thou shalt not* do this, and *Thou shalt not* do that: Our Good Lord chose rather to ex-

express his Law more tenderly and *Humanly*, by declaring the *Blessedness* of those that should observe it. And the rather, because *Moses* had armed and immured his Law with *Curses* and *Maledictions*. First in General, *Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them*. Secondly, more particularly, by annexing a Curse to particular Transgressions, as in that famous Commination in the 27th of *Deuteronomy*, to every Clause of which the People were to say *Amen*. And therefore to shew of what a different *Spirit* the Christian Institution was from that of *Moses*, our Lord chose to administer his Law in a form of *Blessing*, in Opposition to *Moses* his *Cursings*; thereby verifying those farewell Words of *St. Peter's* Sermon to the Jews, in a larger Sense than he intended them, *God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his Iniquities*, Act. 3. 26.

THIRDLY, I consider that our Saviour was to deliver a *Law of Love*, a Law that required Love both as the *Matter* and as the *Principle* of Obedience. Love was both the *thing* to be done, and the *Motive* of doing it. The Son of God was to be the great Prophet of Love. 'Twas reserved for him, as being the *Express Image* of him who is Love it self, and therefore the only Master fit to teach it. This was the *Fire* which he came to *kindle upon Earth*, Luk. 12. 49. the most ardent and affectionate Love towards God and towards Men. This was to be the Substance

and Accomplishment of his Law, and the distinguishing Badge of those that profess'd Devotion to it. *By this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, &c.* But now 'twould not have been agreeable for a Law of Love to begin its Recommendation from such Arguments as should work upon the more *Servile* part of Man. *Moses* indeed deliver'd his Law with all the Circumstances and Arguments of *Fear*, and the Nature of his Law required such an Address, but 'twas fit that a Law of Love should come recommended to the World by Motives of *Love*.

FOURTHLY and Lastly, It may be further considered that this solemn Instruction of our Lord upon the Mount consisted of Precepts so very sublime and elevated, and withal so strange and unusual, as having had no Credit, if Reception, in the World before, that 'twas but necessary for the Prevention of Prejudice to set a Beatitude in the *Front* of every Duty, and to bribe the Passions of the Hearers with a forward Anticipation of Happiness, lest Men should say of the *Commands* of Christ, as the Prophet brings them in saying of his *Person*, Isa. 53. 2. that *there is no Form nor Comeliness, nor Beauty in them that we should desire them.*

FOR these and other like Reasons that may be added, our Divine and gracious Law-giver was pleased to deliver his Laws rather by asserting the *Blessedness* than the *Obligation* of them. Which while I consider, I cannot but enter into a profound Admiration of the strange Goodness
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and Condescension of our Lord, that he should so far lay aside the Majesty of a *God* and a *Law-giver*, that he might the better act the part of a *Friend* and of a *Redeemer*. And to set this Consideration the more home upon our Minds, let us by the Aids of Fancy draw the Curtains of this Intellectual Scene, and imagin to our selves that we saw our Saviour seated upon the *Mount of Blessing*, with his Eyes devoutly set towards Heaven, and his Hands affectionately stretch'd forth over the adoring and attentive Multitude, and with Looks full of Concern for the Good of Souls, gravely and pathetically distilling down upon them the Dew of his Heavenly Doctrin, and tempering his Authority with the Style of Goodness, and Kindness, as well as his Divinity with the Veil of Flesh. Who can with sufficient Wonder contemplate so pleasing a Scene of Love and Sweetness! And who, that well contemplates it, can find in his Heart to transgress a Law delivered with so much Condescension, or offend a Law-giver so infinitely, so amazingly good!

Now concerning the *Number* of the Beatitudes, why our Lord should assign *Eight* and no more, 'tis not easie to offer what shall satisfy all Minds. Were I minded to amuse my Reader, I could tell him that in the *Mystick Philosophy* 8 is the Number of Justice and Fulness, because it is first of all divided into Numbers equally even, namely into 2 Fours, which Division again is by the same Reason made into 2 times 2, that is, 2 times 2 twice reckon'd. And by reason of

this Equality of Divisions it received the Name of *Justice*. But I do not believe our Saviour intended any *Rosie-Crucian Mystery* in

Mr. Heydon
Rosie-Crucian,
Infalible Actions,
pag. 73.

this Matter, tho' a certain Gentleman of that Order would fain insinuate that he did, reckoning this among other Observations upon the

Number 8, that there were 8 kinds of Blessed Men in the lesser World, *The Poor in Spirit, the Mourners, the Meek, they that hunger and thirst after Righteousness, &c.* But I think all that can here be warrantably and safely said is, that our Saviour intending (as he signify'd by his Ascent into the Mount) a Discourse of Perfection and Excellence, consisting of such Divine Vertues as were most perfective of Human Nature, and for the Practice of which he himself was most exemplary, was by his Design concern'd to instance only in the most select and excellent Duties both to God and Man. Whereupon premising Humility as being a Duty common to both, and withal the Foundation of all the rest, he found remaining Three extraordinary Duties relating to Man, *Meekness, Mercifulness and Peaceableness*; and Four to God, *Mourning for Sin, Hungring and Thirsting after Righteousness, Purity of Heart, and Suffering of Persecution for Conscience Sake*. So that our Saviour seems rather to have been directed by a natural Measure, and to take things as he found them, than to proceed by any Arbitrary Measure of his own. And this I think is the only Ground of his assigning Eight Beatitudes, and not

not that he had any *Fondness* to the *Number* it self.

THEN lastly, as to the *Order* of the *Beatitudes*, *Dr. Hammond* in his *Practical Catechism*, Pag. 114. remarks two Things. First, That the *Grace* first named is a general *Principal Grace*, and the *Foundation* of the rest, as he there shews in particular. Secondly, That there is an interchangeable *Mixture* of these *Graces* one towards God, and another towards Man, so interweav'd, that the first respects God, the next Man, the next God again, till you come to the last which respects God again. To verifie which Remark, he begins his *Computation* not from *Humility*, which is a general *Fundamental Grace*, but from *Mourning*, which is the first particular one, and respecting God. So that the *First* and the *Last* both respect God, who is the true *Alpha* and *Omega*, the *First* and the *Last*, and those between divide between our Neighbour and God. To teach us, that to God belongs the *Chief*, the *First* and the *Last* of our Love, and that our Neighbour is to be regarded after and in Subordination to God. To this I further add, that there is also a gradual and descending *Connexion* between all the *Beatitudes*, the latter still depending upon the former, as well as all the rest upon the first. For from *Humility* 'tis an easie descent to *Mourning*, When a Man takes a just Survey of his own Nothingness and Unworthiness by contemplating himself as a Creature and a Sinner, 'twill be so natural for him to mourn and be sorrowful, that

the Danger is of being overwhelm'd with too much Sorrow. Then from Mourning 'tis easie to advance to Meekness, it being one of the chief Properties of Sorrow to soften and melt down the Spirit, which when meekly disposed, will also be in a fair Disposition to Hungring and Thirsting after Righteousness. *The Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness of God*, says the Apostle, that is, is no way a Friend to the promoting of Righteousness; whence on the contrary we may gather, that Meekness is a Friend to Righteousness; As it must needs be, since a calm and sedate Soul is most fit for attending to the *Beauty of Holiness*, and for admitting the *Spirit of Holiness*, which as the Jews say, will not rest upon a *turbulent Mind*. And when once the Soul is wrought up to a quick and lively relish of what is Good and Righteous, 'tis then an easie Step to Mercifulness, it being a very Just and Righteous thing to shew Mercy. Which also leads a Man to Purity of Heart, as that without which even Mercy it self will not find Mercy. From whence the very next step is to Peaceableness, to which nothing more conduces than a Pure Heart, free from those Lusts and Sensual Affections which are the Seeds of Strife and Contention. And when a Man has attain'd to a peaceable Temper, then he is fit for the greatest thing in the World, to be a Martyr, and will readily suffer Persecution rather than occasion any Disturbance either in the Church or State, and with the generous Prophet be content to be thrown overboard to appease

pease the Tempest. So admirably well contriv'd and full of Order was our Saviour's Discourse, as it became him who was the Wisdom of God, as well as the Light of Men, and in whom were *hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge,* Colof. 2. 3.

ALL now that further remains, is that by a strict Conformity to these excellent Measures of Christian Perfection we endeavour to bring our selves within the Number of these Blessed Persons, whom our Saviour pronounces Happy here, and to whom he will say in a more Emphatical Accent, *Come ye Blessed,* hereafter.

T H E E N D.

CURSORY REFLECTIONS

UPON A

BOOK

CAL'D, AN

ESSAY

CONCERNING

Human Understanding.

Written by JOHN NORRIS, M. A.
late Rector of Bemerton near Sarum.

In a LETTER to a Friend.

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CURSORY REFLECTIONS

Upon a Book call'd,

*An ESSAY concerning Human
Understanding.*

S I R,



YOU obliged me so highly by acquainting me with the Publication of so rare a Curiosity as Mr. *Lock's* Book, that should I dispute your Commands when you desire my Opinion of it, I should hazard the Credit of my *Gratitude*, as much as by my ill discharging them I am like to do that of my *Judgment*. This, Sir, already reduces me to an even Poise. But to this the just Authority you have over me, and the Right your other Obligations give you to all the Service I can do, being added, and thrown into the Scale, do quite weigh it down, and leave no room for any Deliberation, whether I should obey you or no. Without therefore any further
Demur

Demur or Delay I shall apply my self to the Task you set me, in giving you my *Free Censure* of Mr. *Lock's* Essay, which I shall do by reflecting upon what I think most liable to Exception in the same Order as the things lie before me.

INTRODUCTION, Pag. 1. Sect. 1. *The Understanding like the Eye, whilst it makes us see and perceive all other things takes no notice of it self.* What the Ingenious Author intends in this Period, or how to make out any consistent Sense of it, I do not understand. For if his meaning be, That the Understanding while it is intent upon other things, cannot at that time take notice of it self; this comes to no more, than that when 'tis intent upon one thing it cannot attend to another, which is too easily and obviously true of all *Finite* Powers to be any great Discovery. But if his meaning be (as it rather seems, because of the Particle (All) and the Comparison here used) that the Understanding like the Eye, tho' it makes us see all other things, yet it takes no notice of it self, then 'tis a Contradiction to his whole following Work, which upon this Supposition must needs be very *unaccountably* undertaken.

INT. Pag. 2. Sect. 3. *First I shall enquire into the Original of those Ideas which a Man observes, &c.* But sure by all the Laws of Method in the World, he ought *first* to have Defined what he meant by Ideas, and to have acquainted us with their *Nature*, before he proceeded to account for their Origination. For how can any Proposition be form'd

form'd with any Certainty concerning an Idea, that it is or is not *Innate*; that it does or does not come in at the Senses, before the meaning of the word Idea be stated, and the nature of the thing, at least in general, be understood? If the Nature of Ideas were but once made known, our Disputes would quickly be at an end concerning their Original, whether from the Senses or not: But till that be done, all further Discourse about them is but to talk in the *Dark*. This therefore ought to have been his *first*, and indeed *main* Business to have given us an account of the Nature of Ideas. And yet this is not only neglected in its proper Place, but wholly omitted and passed over in deep Silence; which I cannot but remark, as a *Fundamental* Defect in this Work.

IN the Three following Chapters our Author sets himself to prove that there are no *Innate Principles*. But before I consider whether there be or no, I premise this double Remark. First, That a thing may be false in it self, and yet not so because, or in virtue of such an Argument. Secondly, That tho' a thing be really false, yet it may not become such a Man to deny the Existence of it, who by some other Principles of his may be obliged to hold the contrary. The first of these argues the Writer guilty of *Inconsequence*. The Second of *Inconsistency*. Upon both which accounts this otherwise very ingenious Writer seems in this part to be chargeable. Which from the Sequel I leave to be collected.

HIS First Argument against *Innate Principles* is taken from the want of Universal Consent. *There are* (says he, Pag. 5. Sect. 4.) *no Principles to which all Mankind give an universal Assent.* But in the first place how can this Author say so, since in several Places afterwards he resolves that ready and prone Assent which is given to certain Propositions upon the first Proposal, into the *Self-evidence* of them? There are then even according to him *Self-evident* Propositions. And will he say that *Self-evident* Propositions are not universally assented to? How then are they *Self-evident*? There must be therefore, according to him, some Principles to which all Mankind *do* give an universal Consent. I do not say that this proves them *Innate*, but only that there are such Propositions.

WELL, but how does he prove there are no such? Why, he instances in some of the most Celebrated, and says, Pag. 5. Sect. 5. That *All Children and Ideots have not the least apprehension or thought of them; and the want of that is enough to destroy universal Consent:* Now I always thought that Universality of Consent had been sufficiently secured by the Consent of all, and the Dissent of none that were capable of either. And what then have we to do with *Ideots* and *Children*? Do any or all of these *dissent* or think otherwise? No, that he will not say, because they think not at all, having (as he says) not the *least Apprehension or Thought of them.* And how then does the want of their *Suffrage* destroy universal Consent, when

when all Persons that think at all about such Propositions, think after one and the same way?

THE most therefore that this Author can mean by want of Universal Consent, is that every individual Person does not *actually Assent*. This perhaps may be granted him from the Instance of *Ideots* and *Children*. But then the Question will be about the *Consequence* of his Argument, whether Actual Assent from every Individual be necessary to the Supposition of *Innate Principles*? Or, in other Words, whether from there not being any Propositions to which every individual Man gives an actual Assent, it follows, that there are no Innate Truths. The Author is of Opinion that it does. For, says he, Pag. 5. Sect. 5. *It seems to me near a Contradiction to say, that there are Truths imprinted on the Soul, which it perceives or understands not.* And again in the same Place, *To imprint any thing on the Mind without the Mind's perceiving it, seems to me hardly intelligible.* And again, Pag. 12. Sect. 24. *That a Truth should be Innate, and yet not assented to, is to me as unintelligible as for a Man to know a Truth, and be ignorant of it at the same time.* Here we have both the *Consequence* of the Author, and the *Ground* upon which it stands. The *Consequence* is this. If there be no Truths actually perceiv'd by all Minds, then there are none naturally imprinted. The *Proof* of it is this. 'Tis impossible that what is imprinted on the Mind, should not be perceived by the Mind. Therefore if there be no Truths actually perceiv'd by all Minds, there

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there are none naturally imprinted. Now on the contrary to this I thus oppose. If there may be Impressions made on the Mind, whereof we are not conscious, or which we do not perceive, then (by the Author's own Measure) the not Perception of them is no Argument against such Original Impressions. The Consequence is unexceptionable, not only as clear in it self, but as being the very *Reverse* of the Author's own Argument. And now that there may be such Impressions whereof we are not Conscious, is what the Author himself expressly does own, and what by his Principles he stands obliged to own.

FIRST, 'tis what he does expressly own. For, says he, Pag. 38. Sect. 6. *Being surrounded with Bodies that perpetually and diversly affect us, variety of Ideas, whether care be taken about it or no, are imprinted on the Minds of Children.* And yet they do not perceive them, as he had said before. Therefore by his own Confession there may be an Impression of Ideas where there is no Perception. The same he confesses again, Pag. 61. Sect. 4. *How often may a Man observe in himself, that whilst his Mind is intently employed in the Contemplation of some Objects, and curiously surveying some Ideas that are there, it takes no notice of Impressions, &c.* And again, Sect. 5. *I doubt not but Children by the Exercise of their Senses about Objects that affect them in the Womb, receive some few Ideas before they are born, &c.* And if before they are born, then certainly before they are conscious of them. There may therefore be Impres-
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sion without Consciousness. Which he also plainly implies in his Account of *Memory*. Which he does not make to be a Recovery of Ideas that were *lost*, but a Re-advertency or Re-application of Mind to Ideas that are actually there, tho' not attended to. For, says he, Pag. 65. Sect. 2. *The narrow Mind of Man not being capable of having many Ideas under View and Consideration at once, it was necessary to have a Repository, to lay up those Ideas, which at another time it might have use of.* And accordingly, Pag. 66. Sect. 7. he calls them *Ideas which are lodged in the Memory*. And Pag. 67. Sect. 8. he calls them *Dormant Ideas*. So that according to him, to *remember* is to retrieve, not the the Ideas themselves, (for they are supposed to lie *Dormant* in the Mind) but only the *Perception* or Consciousness of them. This he makes to be the Business of Memory, and therefore there may be an imprinting of Ideas without Actual Perception, which may now, it seems, stand well enough together without any danger of a *Contradiction*.

AND to the Acknowledgment of this, his own Principles will also oblige him. For since in conformity to the *Aristotelian* Philosophy, he makes all our Ideas to be derived from our Senses, or rather by our Senses from sensible Objects, he must needs suppose (considering the variety of sensible Objects wherewith we are surrounded) that there are infinitely more Ideas impressed upon our Minds than we can possibly attend to or perceive. Which may also be argued from

the Finiteness of our Faculties, as was hinted in the beginning.

WELL then, since there may be an Impression of Ideas without any actual Perception of them, whether there be any *Innate Ideas* or no (which I shall not now dispute) it does not therefore follow that there are none, because they are not universally perceiv'd. Which utterly *silences* that Argument taken from the Non-perception of them in Children. And since our Author both does, and is by his Principles obliged to allow that there are many Ideas impress'd upon us when we have no actual Perception of them, it does not certainly become him, tho' there were really no such thing as *Innate Ideas*, and tho' the Non-perception of them were an Argument against them, to bring this as an Argument against the Existence of any such, because they are not universally perceiv'd. This is not to agree with *himself*, however he may agree with *Truth*.

OUR ingenious Author further argues, against *Innate Principles* from the *Lateness* of the Perception of such which are presumed to be of that Number, in that they are not the first that possess the Minds of Children. *Can it be imagin'd* (says he, Pag. 13. Sect. 25.) *that they perceive the Impression from things without, and are at the same time ignorant of those Characters which Nature it self has taken care to stamp within?* This I take to be a very uncertain way of arguing, and of less Cogency than the Former. For if *Nullity* of Perception will not conclude against *Innate Principles*,

ples, much less will the *Lateness* of Perception be able to do it. And besides, there may be many Reasons drawn from the inward, and to us unknown Contexture of Minds, and from the manner of that Original Impression (if any such there be) which would also be to us equally unknown, besides the Order of External Circumstances, that may be the Cause why these natural Characters may not be so soon read as some others. And therefore I do not see what sufficient ground the Author has for saying, Sect. 26, *That if there be any Innate Truths, they must necessarily be the first of any thought on.* Why? Where is the Necessity? The Reason given by the Author is because, *If there are any Innate Truths, they must be Innate Thoughts.* Are then Truths and Thoughts the same? Indeed Truth of the Subject is the same with a Conformable Thought. But Truth of the Object is not the Thought it self, but that which is thought upon. And why then must Innate Truths be Innate Thoughts?

BUT our Author proceeds to another Argument wherein he places more Strength. *If, says he, Pag. 13. Sect. 27. These Characters were native and Original Impressions, they would appear fairest and clearest in those Persons in whom yet we find no footsteps of them.* He means in Children, who, he says, have no Reserves, no Arts of Concealment to hinder them from shining out in their full Lustre. But how does the Author know but that this Natural Impression may be so order'd that it shall not become legible till such a certain

Period of Time, and without such and such Laws and Conditions? We know very well that we do not come to the use of Thinking in *general* till such a certain Period of Time, and the Author himself confesses, Pag. 12. Sect. 25. That *there is a Time when Children begin to think*; and why then may there not be a Time set for the arising of such and such particular Thoughts? And how can he tell that Childhood is that Time? Or if it be, why do not the Ideas impressed by sensible Objects appear fairest in Children for the same Reasons? If there be any Force in this Argument, the Author's own *Hypothesis* is as much concern'd in it, as that which he would overthrow.

COME we now to his Arguments against *Innate Practical Principles*, the first of which is from their not being universally assented to. But what does he here mean by their not being universally consented to? That they are not actually assented to by every Individual whether capable or not? Or that they are not consented to by all that judge any thing about them; if the former, that proves nothing, as we have shewn already; if the latter, then I deny the Proposition, and affirm that there are not only as *Certain* but as *Uncontested* Propositions in Morality as in any other Science. But our Author demands, Pag. 15. Sect. 2. *Where is that Practical Truth that is universally receiv'd?* I answer by referring him to the 274th Page of his own Book, where he says, Sect. 18. That this Proposition, *Where there is*

no Propriety there is no Injustice, is a Proposition as certain as any Demonstration in *Euclid*; I add, and as plain too. It needed nothing to assure the Truth of it but only the Explication of the Terms. And I further remark that in the same Place he says that Morality may be placed among the Sciences capable of Demonstration. Well then, if there may be Propositions demonstrated in Morality, then those Propositions must at last be resolved into *Principles evident and incontestable*. Since otherwise there can be no Demonstration. There are therefore incontestable Principles in Morality. And he confesses as much in express Terms; *I doubt not*, says he in the same Place, *but from Principles as incontestable as those of the Mathematicks, by necessary Consequences, the Measures of Right and Wrong might be made out to any one, &c.* Here he expressly owns incontestable Principles in Morality, that is, incontestable Truths, that is, Truths that cannot be denied, and therefore *must* be assented to. And how then can he with any tolerable *Self-Consistency* say that there are no Moral Principles universally consented to? If none are universally consented to, then all are by some contested. And yet he says there are in Morality incontestable Principles. How to adjust this I no more know, than he does to reconcile *Morality and Mechanism*.

HIS next Argument is, That *there cannot any one Moral Rule be proposed whereof a Man may not justly demand a Reason*, Pag. 16. Sect. 4. Well, what then? Therefore they are not *Innate*. I

do not see the Consequence. Why may not the same Proposition be Innate, and yet deducible from Reason too, as well as the same Proposition be the Object of both *Faith* and *Science*? Why may not Conclusions be Innate as well as Principles? Why may not God be supposed for a further Security of our Vertue to implant even those Practical Propositions upon our Minds, which are also capable of being demonstrated from Principles of Reason? Whether he has so done or no I do not dispute; I only say that their Dependence on Reason is no Argument that he has not.

HE argues again, Pag. 18. Sect. 9, from Mens *transgressing* these Moral Rules with Confidence and Serenity, which he says they could not do, were they *Innate*. I do not apprehend here the least Appearance of a Consequence. Why may not an *Innate Law* be transgress'd as well as a *Written Law*? An Innate Law only dictates that such a thing ought or ought not to be done, and so does a Written Law. He might therefore as well have concluded that there is no Written Law, because it is Transgress'd, as that there is no Innate Law because it is Transgress'd.

THE Author seems to have been sensible of the Weakness of this Argument, and therefore to strengthen it, says he, Pag. 19. Sect. 12. *The breaking of a Rule say you is no Argument that it is unknown; I grant it, but the generally allow'd Breach of it any where, is a Proof that it is not Innate.* Here I remark by the way that he grants
that

that the Breaking of a Law does not prove it *not known*, and why then should it prove it not *Innate*? If a known Law may be transgressed, why may not an Innate Law, Innate being only another way of being known? But says he, *The generally allow'd Breach of it proves it not Innate.* I do not see the Necessity of this neither. The allow'd Breach of a Law is only a more aggravated Breach of it, and if the Breach of a Law does not prove it not to be Innate, why should the allow'd Breach of it do so? And besides, why may not an Innate Law be *Allowedly* broken as well as a Written Law?

BUT says our Author, Pag. 21. Sect. 14. *Did Men find such Innate Propositions stamp'd on their Minds, they would be easily able to distinguish them from other Truths, and there would be nothing more easie than to know what and how many they were.* Perhaps not so very easie. For I see no Absurdity in Supposing, and 'tis what I can very well conceive, that a Man may be sensible of a *Truth impress'd*, and yet not of the *Impression*, and so may not know that it is impress'd, but think it came some other way, and consequently may not be able to distinguish it from some other that does so. The Truth of this may be seen in the Instance of *Inspiration*. Since there have been Prophets (*Caiaphas* for one, *Job. 11. 51.*) who were not able to distinguish Divine Inspirations from their own proper genuin Thoughts: 'Tis therefore no Consequence to say that there are no Innate Principles, because we cannot distinguish them,

THESE

THESE are the main Arguments, and to which all that is further offered may be reduced, whereby this Author impugns the Doctrin of *Innate Principles*; and I think neither any nor all of them are sufficient for the Cause wherein they are engaged. And I am so far from being surpriz'd at their *Deficiency*, that I think it absolutely impossible for him, or any Man else upon his Principles, to prove that there are no *Innate Truths*. For since with those of the Peripatetic School he allows that Ideas are impress'd upon the Mind from sensible Objects, he cannot (as another might) object against the *Possibility* of such Impressions. He cannot say they are capable only of a Figurative and Metaphorical Sense; since according to him the same is literally and really done every Day, every Hour, every Minute. No, he must grant that 'tis possible there may be such Impressions. All the Question then will be concerning the *Timing* of it, whether any of these Impressions be Original Characters or no! And why may they not be at first as well as afterwards? How can he or any Man else tell (upon his Principles) whether the Author of Nature has imprinted any such or no? Or whether we brought any with us into the World or no? However that be, I am satisfied 'tis impossible for any Man that holds *Mental Impressions*, to prove the contrary; especially if with that he allows the *Possibility of Pre-existence*, which I believe no considering Man will say is impossible.

FOR

FOR my part, I do as little believe there are any such things as Innate Principles strictly and properly so called, meaning by them certain Original Characters written upon or interwoven with the Mind in the very first Moment of its Being and Constitution, I say I do as little believe this as the Author himself. Not for the Reasons by him alledg'd, with the Cogency of which I am not satisfied; but because I do not allow any such thing as *Mental Impressions*, or Characters written upon the Mind, which if it pretend to any thing more than Figure and Metaphor, I take to be mere *Jargon*, and unintelligible *Cant*. You know Sir, I account for the Mode of *Human Understanding* after a very different way, namely, by the Presentialness of the Divine $\lambda\gamma\theta$ or Ideal World to our Souls, wherein we see and perceive all things. For a fuller Account of which I refer you to my *Reason and Religion*, and to my *Reflections* lately publish'd. I cannot therefore by my Principles admit of any such Innate Characters in a strict and proper Sense. Only I may, and am also inclined to admit something of near Analogy with it. Supposing that God may and does exhibit some particular Truths of the Ideal World more early, more clearly, and more constantly to the View of the Soul than others, that by these she may be the better directed to the Good of the Reasonable Life, as Animals by sensitive Instincts and Inclinations are to the Good of Sense. This is all that I conceive to be strictly either

Possible

Possible or True in that grey-headed venerable Doctrin of Innate or Common Principles.

HAVING thus far considered our Author's Impugnation of Innate Principles, I come now to examin the Original which he gives to *Ideas*. These he derives, *Book 2. Chap. 1.* from this double Fountain, *Sensation and Reflection*. Especially from the former, telling us again and again, that *the Senses let in Ideas and furnish the yet empty Cabinet*, Pag. 8. Sect. 15. That *the Senses convey into the Mind several distinct Perceptions of things*, Pag. 37. Sect. 3. And that *the Senses do furnish the Soul with Ideas to think on*, Pag. 44. Sect. 20. with many other such Expressions.

THESE indeed are Pretty *Smiling Sentences*. But before we go a step further I would willingly know of the Author what kind of things these Ideas are which are thus let in at the Gate of the Senses. This indeed I expected an Account of in the Beginning of the Work; but since the Author has been pleased to cast a *Shade* upon this Part, I now demand, What are these Ideas? Why you shall know that presently, *Whatsoever the Mind perceives in it self, or is the immediate Object of Perception, that I call Idea*, says he, Pag. 55. Sect. 8. Very good; so much my Lexicon would have told me. But this does not satisfy. I would know what kind of things he makes these Ideas to be as to their *Essence or Nature*. Are they in the first place Real Beings or not? Without doubt Real Beings, as having Real Properties, and really different one from another, and representing,

senting things, really different. Well, if Real Beings, then I demand, are they Substances, or are they Modifications of Substances? He will not say they are *Modifications*. For besides that a Modification of Substance cannot be a Representative of a Substance, there being no manner of Likeness between a Substance and a Mode; if an Idea be a Modification only it cannot subsist by it self, but must be the Modification of some Substance or other, whereof also there may be an Idea; which Idea being (as is supposed) only a Mode, must have another Substance, and so on without end. As for Example, If my Idea of *Figure* be only a Mode, then it must have a Substance wherein to exist as well as Figure it self, which cannot exist alone; and since of that Substance whatever it be, there may be also an Idea, which is supposed to be a Modification, this Idea must also have another Substance, and so on to Infinity. He will not therefore, I suppose, say that our Ideas are *Modifications*.

HE must then say that they are *Substances*. Are they then Material Substances or Immaterial? If he says they are *Material* Substances or Corporeal Emanations from sensible Objects, I would desire him to weigh with himself, and try if he can answer, what is alledg'd by M. *Malebranch* against the Possibility of such Emanations. Particularly, let him tell me how this can consist with the *Impenetrability* of Bodies, which must needs hinder these Corporeal Effluvia from

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possessing the same *Ubi* or Point, which yet must be supposed, if these be the Representers of Objects, since there is no assignable Point where the same, and where multitudes of Objects may not be seen. This one Difficulty is enough to make this way *impassable*. But let him further tell me how any Body can radiate such an inconceivable Number of these Effluvias so as to fill every Point of such vast Spaces, without the least sensible Diminution. Well, but suppose they could, let him tell me how these Corporeal Effluvias, sometimes of vast Extent and Magnitude, can enter the Eye; Or if they could, how they can do it in such Troops and Numbers without jostling, refringing, and inverting one another. Or if this might be avoided, where shall we find room to receive such a numerous Company of Corporeal Images? And upon what part will you have them impressed? Upon the Soul? Or upon the Brain? But who can understand either of these? How can an indivisible Substance, as the Soul is, *receive* any Stamp or Impression? And how can such a fluid Substance as the Brain is, *retain* any? The least jog of a Man's Head must needs obliterate such slight and Aerial Traces, as the Wind does the Figures that are written upon the Sand; Not to say that these Impressions coming on so thick one upon another must needs work out themselves almost as soon as they are in, and in a short time consume the very Brain too. But suppose we could get over all this, the greatest Difficulty is yet behind;

hind; How will such Corporeal Effluvias be able to represent immaterial and intellectual Objects? They will at the most be able but to represent Material Objects, and not all of them neither, but only those whose Emanations they are. And what shall we do with Ideas that will not do their Office, that cannot represent a quarter of the things which we are concern'd to understand?

THESE and a thousand more Absurdities must he wade through, that will assert our Ideas to be Corporeal Effluvias derived from external Objects. It remains then that they must be *Immaterial* Substances. And so without all question they are. *All* of them as to their *Essence*, and *most* of them as to their *Representation*. But how shall Bodies send forth such *Immaterial* Species? They can emit nothing but what is Corporeal, like themselves. How then shall they commence *Immaterial*? Body can no more *emit* Spirit, than it can *create* it. And what is there after Emission that shall be the Principle of Transformation? Some I know talk of strange Feats done by the Dexterity of *Intellectus Agens* and *Patiens*, which they say refine and spiritualize these Material Phantasms; but I suppose our Author is of too Philosophical a Faith to admit of such a *Romantick Transubstantiation*.

THE short of this Argument is, if our Ideas are derived from sensible Objects, then they are Material Beings, because Matter can send forth nothing but Matter. But they are not Material
Beings,

Beings, for the Reasons alledg'd above. Therefore they are not derived from Sensible Objects. Which I think has the force of Demonstration. And to this purpose it may be further consider'd (what I hinted before) that as our Ideas are all of them Immaterial as to their Essence and Substance, so many, perhaps most of them, are also Immaterial as to their Representation, that is, they represent after an Immaterial Manner, as the Ideas of Truth, Vertue, and the like; which *Cartesius* makes to be the Difference between *Imagination* and *Pure Intellection*, and whereof he gives an Instance in the Example of a *Chiliagon*, whose Angles we cannot represent in a distinct View, but may clearly *understand* it. But now how can that which represents after an Immaterial Manner, come from Sensible Objects? Again, we have Ideas of things that are not to be found in the Material and Sensible World, as of a Right Line, or an exact Circle, which our Author himself confesses, Pag. 283. Sect. 6. not to be really extant in Nature. And what does he think of the Idea of *God*? Will he say that *that* is also derived from sensible Objects? Yes: For, says he, Pag. 147. Sect. 33. *If we examin the Idea we have of the Incomprehensible Supreme Being, we shall find that we came by it the same way, that is, by Sensation.* But in the first Place, how does this agree with what he says, Pag. 341. Sect. 2. *That we have the knowledge of the existence of all things without us (except only of God) by our Senses?*

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So then it seems we do not know the Existence of God by our Senses. No? then neither have we the Idea of him by our Senses. For if we had, why should we not know his Existence by Sensation as well as the Existence of other things, which, as he says, we know only by Sensation? For, says he, Pag. 311. Sect. 2. speaking of the Knowledge of Existence, *We have the knowledge of our own existence by Intuition, of the existence of God by Demonstration, and of other things by Sensation.* Then it seems we do not know the Existence of God by Sensation, but that of other things we do. But why are other things known by Sensation, but only because their Ideas come in at our Senses? For I suppose he will not say that the things themselves come in at our Senses; for then what need is there of Ideas at all? And if other things are therefore known by Sensation, because their Ideas come in by the Senses, then why is not God also known by Sensation, forasmuch as his Idea according to him, comes also the same way? And yet he will not allow that God's Existence is known by Sensation; which indeed is very true, but then he should not have said that the Idea of God comes in by the Senses.

BUT what a strange *Adventure* is it in Philosophy to make the Idea of God to come in by our Senses, and to be derived from Sensible Objects! For besides the Difficulties and Absurdities already touch't upon, what is there in the Material World that can resemble God? Nay, what is there in the whole Creation that can re-

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present *him* to our Thoughts? God himself cannot *make* an Idea of himself: For such an Idea, whatever it be must be a Creature; and can a Creature represent God! Nothing certainly but God himself can do that. He must be his own Idea, or he can have none. There is but one possible Idea of God, and that is his *Son*, the Divine $\lambda\gamma\Theta$, or Ideal World, *the brightness of his Glory, and the express Image or Character of his Person*. 'Tis he that is the Idea of God, and of the whole Creation, that both *is*, and *represents* all things. And since the way of Knowledge by our Senses turns to so poor an Account, I would desire our most ingenious Author to consider, whether it be not abundantly more rational and intelligible (not to say pious) to suppose that we see all things in God, or the Divine Ideas, that is, in the partial Representations of the Divine Omniformity. For our Author himself confesses, Pag. 315. Sect. 10. that *Whatsoever is first of all things, must necessarily contain in it, and actually have, at least all the Perfections that can ever after exist. Nor can it ever give to another any Perfection that it has not, either actual in it self, or at least in an higher degree.* God then, even according to him, is all Beings; or, has the whole Plenitude of Being. And I wonder that this Principle had not led this Sagacious Person further. I know whither it would have carried him, if he had follow'd the Clue of it. For why should we seek any further, and puzzle our selves with unintelligible Suppositions? What else

else need, and what else can be the immediate Object of our Understanding but the Divine Ideas, the *Omniform Essence* of God? This will open to us a plain intelligible Account of *Human Understanding*, yea of *Angelical* and *Divine* too. Here I can tell what an Idea is, *viz* the Omniform Essence of God partially represented or exhibited, and how it comes to be united to my Mind. But as for all other ways, I look upon them to be desperate. But these things are already by me purposely discours'd of elsewhere, and are also further to be deduc'd in my *Theory of the Ideal World*.

Reason and Religion, p. 181.

HAVING thus far reflected upon the two Principal Parts of this Work concerning *Innate Principles*, and the *Origin of Ideas*, in a continued way of Discourse, all that further remains is now to consider only some few single Passages as they stand by themselves.

PAG. 16. Sect. 3. *Practical Principles must produce Conformity of Action, or else they are in vain distinguish'd from Speculative Maxims.* 'Tis enough to distinguish them from Speculative Maxims, if they are in order to Action, that is, if they are concerning such things as may and ought to be done by us, tho' in the Event they do not produce any such Conformity. Otherwise a Law would not be a Law till 'tis obey'd.

PAG. 57. Sect. 15. *There is nothing like our Ideas existing in the Bodies themselves. They are in the Bodies only a Power to produce those Sensations in us.* The first Part I acknowledge to be true:

For certainly Heat in the Fire is no way resembling what I call Heat in my self, meaning by it either such a grateful or ungrateful Sensation as I feel, when I approach the Fire more or less. But the latter Clause I cannot approve, thinking it impossible that any Body should directly and properly produce any Sensation in my Soul. 'Tis God certainly that is the Author of all my Sensations, as well as of my Ideas. Bodies can only be Conditions or Occasional Causes of them.

PAG. 158. Sect. 10. Speaking of the Law of Vertue and Vice, says he, *If we examin it right, we shall find that the measure of what is every where call'd and esteem'd Vertue and Vice, is the Approbation or Dislike, Praise or Dispraise, which by a secret and tacit Consent establishes it self in the several Societies of Men, &c.* Praise or Dispraise may be a probable Sign, or secondary Measure, but it can never be the Primary Measure or Law of Vertue and Vice; whose difference must be founded upon more certain and immutable grounds of Distinction than the Praise or Dispraise of Men. For Praise or Dispraise does not *make*, but *suppose* the difference of Vertue and Vice as already settled, and antecedent to it. A thing is not good because 'tis praised, but is therefore praised because 'tis good. And how comes this Praise or Dispraise to be *establish'd by such a secret and tacit consent*, if there be not some other more certain Measure of Good and Evil, according to which our Praise or Dispraise is to proceed?

PAG. 185. Sect. 5. *I doubt not but if we could trace them to their Originals, we should find in all Languages the Names which stand for things that fall not under our Senses, to have had their first rise from sensible Ideas.* Let him tell me what he thinks of the Word (*Although*). Has he not a clear Conception of what is meant by that Word? And yet is there any thing of the *Material Relation* under it? I the rather instance in this Word, tho' I might instance in a thousand more, because I have read of a Man (I think the Relation is in *Dr. Cudworth's Intellectual System*) that was of our Author's Mind; that there was no Word but what ultimately stood for something material and sensible, and was convinc'd of the contrary by lighting upon the first Word of *Tully's Offices* which is *Quanquam*.

PAG. 196. Sect. 19. *The Doctrin of the Immutability of Essences proves them only to be abstract Ideas, and is founded on the Relation that is establish'd between them and certain Sounds as signs of them.* True indeed with respect to us, who because we do not know all the Essences of things, must be supposed to make that only the Essence which we intend to signify by calling it by such a Name. But I hope notwithstanding this, the Author will allow that there are also in reality Immutable Essences of things, independent on our Conceptions, as may appear in *Mathematical Figures*. Where the *Nominal* Essence and the *Real* Essence are all one,

PAG. 205. Sect. 9. He tells us that *Essences are only Articles of the Understanding*. 'Tis true, those Collections of simple Ideas which we bind up together under one Name, which he elsewhere calls *Nominal Essences*, are only Creatures of the Understanding; but as I said before, there are also determinate Essences in the things themselves, tho' for the most to us unknown, which have a fix'd and immutable Nature without any dependence on any Understanding but the Divine. 'Tis true indeed, we are fain to sort and rank things by their Nominal Essences, because the Real Ones are most times unknown; but that is no Argument against the Being of Real Essences. And this is by the Author himself confess'd, Pag. 234. Sect. 11. where he says that *in our Ideas of Substances we have not the Liberty as in mix'd Modes, to frame what Combinations we think fit, to rank things by, but must follow Nature, and suit our Complex Ideas to real Existences*. So that here we have Patterns to follow, and I desire no more.

PAG. 242. Sect. 6. *Were the Signification of Body and Extension precisely the same, it would be as proper and intelligible to say the Body of an Extension, as the Extension of a Body*. Here he supposes it would be proper, to say the Extension of a Body upon that Supposition, whereas indeed were they precisely the same; neither of them would be proper.

PAG. 244. Sect. 14. *The Platonists have their Soul of the World, the Epicureans their Endeavour towards*

towards Motion, &c. These the Author reckons among unintelligible Forms of Speech, and supposes them to be no better than *Gibberish*. As to the Soul of the World 'tis a Subject of too great a Latitude to be discours'd of at present. But as to the Epicureans *Endeavour* towards Motion, that there is such a thing, he may be sufficiently convinc'd by looking upon a pair of Scales, where tho' the lesser Weight does not actually weigh down, yet that it presses and endeavours towards it is most certain, since otherwise as much Weight would be required to weigh it down as if it were quite empty. But this we do not find; whence it must of Necessity be concluded that the former Weight tho' it did not pass into actual Motion, yet it did something toward it, that is, it *Endeavoured*. The same might also be illustrated from the Actions of the Will, some of which are perfect and compleat Determinations, others only *Velleities* or *Endeavours*. But if the Author would be further satisfied in this Matter, I desire him to read the 19th and 20th Chapters of Dr. *Gloss*, *de Natura Substantiæ Energetica*, where he will find this Argument very curiously handled.

PAG. 274. Sect. 19. *The Ideas of Quantity may be set down by sensible Marks, Diagrams, &c. But this cannot be done in Moral Ideas, we have no sensible Marks that resemble them.* Very true, which is a plain Argument that such Ideas are not from our Senses.

PAG. 289. Sect. 2. *Truth seems to me to signify nothing but the joining or separating of Signs, as*

the things signified do Agree or Disagree one with another. This indeed is Truth of the *Mind* or of the *Subject*, but not Truth of the *Thing* or of the *Object*, which consists not in the Mind's joyn- ing or separating either Signs or Ideas; but in the Essential Habitudes that are between the *Ideas* themselves. And that these are such, our Author himself implies, by saying, *as the things signified do Agree or Disagree with one another.* Here then is Agreement and Disagreement antecedently to any joyn- ing or separating. And I very much wonder that our Author professing in the Title of the Chapter to discourse of Truth in general, and particularly of that Truth too which has been the Enquiry of so many Ages, should yet confine his Discourse to Truth of Words and Truth of Thoughts without the least mention of Objective Truth. Which indeed is the Principal kind of Truth.

PAG. 300. Sect. 5. *I think it is a self-evident Proposition, that two Bodies cannot be in the same Place.* If the Proposition be Self-evident how comes he only to Think 'tis so? If it were only Evident he must do no more than so.

PAG. 323. Sect 14. *Eternal Truths are not so from being written in the Minds of Men, Or that they were before the World: But wheresoever we can suppose such a Creature as Man is, inabled with such Faculties, we must conclude he must needs when he applies his Thoughts to the consideration of his Ideas, know the Truth of certain Propositions, &c.* This is a true Aristotelian Account of Eternal Truths.

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But I demand, Are these Eternal Truths in being before the Existence of Man or no? If not, how comes he to understand them when he does exist? What, does he make that to be true, which before was not so? But if they were in being before the Existence of Man, then their Eternity does not consist in their being understood by Man when-ever he shall exist, but in their own fix'd and immutable Relations, whereby they have an antecedent Aptness so to be understood. Which the Author himself seems to imply by saying, *He must needs so understand them.* Why must needs? But only because they are necessarily so and no otherwise intelligible. But of this I have discoursed elsewhere.

Reason and Religion, p. 76.

PAG. 344. Sect. 8. He takes notice of one manifest Mistake in the Rules of Syllogism, *viz.* That *No Syllogistical Reasoning can be right and conclusive, but what has at least one general Proposition in it.* This our Author thinks to be a Mistake, and a manifest Mistake. But perhaps if we rightly understand that Rule of Syllogism, there is no Mistake at all in it. All the Ground of the Dispute is from the Doubtfulness of what is meant by a general or universal Proposition. A Proposition may be said to be universal either when a Note of Universality (as *All*) is prefixed before the Subject. Or when tho' that Note be not prefix'd, yet the Predicate is said of the whole Subject according to the full Latitude of its Predication, so as to leave nothing of the Subject

Subject out, whereof the Predicate is not said. According to the former Sense of Universality, it is not necessary that in every concluding Syllogism one Proposition be universal. But according to the latter Sense of Universality (which indeed is the most proper Sense of it) it is certainly necessary. And I dare challenge any Man to shew me one Instance of a concluding Syllogism that has not one Proposition universal in the latter Sense. For even a singular Proposition is thus universal, since being indivisible, it can have nothing said of it, but what is said of it wholly and universally, *καθόλου*, as Aristotle expresses it. The Author may see a further Account of this in Dr. Wallis his Thesis *de Propositione singulari*, at the latter end of his *Institutio Logica*.

THESE, Sir, are the most considerable Passages that at once reading I thought liable to Reflection in this Work, which, notwithstanding these few *Erratas*, I think to be a very extraordinary Performance, and worthy of the most publick Honour and Respect. And tho' I do not approve of every particular thing in this Book, yet I must say that the Author is just such a kind of Writer as I like, one that has thought much, and well, and who freely writes what he thinks. I hate your *Common-place* Men of all the Writers in the World, who tho' they happen sometimes to say things that are in themselves not only true, but considerable, yet they never write in any Train or Order of Thinking,

ing, which is one of the greatest Beauties of Composition.

BUT this Gentleman is a Writer of a very different Genius and Complexion of Soul, and whose Character I cannot easily give, but must leave it either to the Description of some finer Pen, or to the silent Admiration of Posterity. Only one Feature of his Disposition I am concern'd to point out, which is, that he seems to be a Person of so great Ingenuity and Candor, and of a Spirit so truly Philosophical, that I have thence great and fair Inducements to believe that he will not be offended with that Freedom I have used in these Reflections, which were not intended for the lessening his Fame, but solely for the promoting of *Truth* and *right Thinking*.

AND this will justify that part of the Reflections, where agreeing with the Author in the Proposition intended to be proved, I lay open the Insufficiency of his Proofs. For to say that a thing is false for such Reasons, when 'tis not false for such Reasons, though it be absolutely false, is as great an Injury to Truth, as to say a thing is false when 'tis not false. A false Inference is as much as an Untruth, as a false Conclusion; and accordingly he that might reflect upon the Conclusion if false, may with as much reason reflect upon a wrong way of inferring it, tho' the Conclusion it self be true. Which I mention with respect to the former Part about Innate Principles, where though I agree with

with the Author in the thing denied, yet I think his Reasons are not cogent.

AFTER all, notwithstanding my dissenting from this Author in so many things, I am perhaps as great an Admirer of him as any of his most sworn Followers, and would not part with his Book for half a *Vatican*. But every Writer has his Alloy, and I exempt not any Writings of my own from the like Defects: Of which perhaps, Sir, I have been convincing you all this while. But that shall not trouble me, if at the same time I may be able to convince you of my Readiness to serve you at any rate, as it highly becomes,

SIR,

Your Obliged and

Humble Servant,

J. N.

A

A Brief Consideration of the REMARKS
made upon the foregoing REFLECTIONS
by the Gentlemen of the ATHENIAN
 SOCIETY, *in the Supplement to the*
Third Volume, &c.



THE Gentlemen of this new Society undertake two things, to *Report*, and to *Judge* of the Contents of the most considerable Books that are Printed in *England*; which I acknowledge to be a very useful and laudable Undertaking, if performed Skilfully and Faithfully, with Judgment and Integrity. But whether they have thus acquitted themselves in reference to the foregoing Reflections, the Liberty they have taken with the Author, will I think warrant him to Examin.

SUPPLEMENT, Pag. 2. Paragraph 1. *It will be sufficient to observe that Mr. Norris is a Cartesian, and as it seems, of those of the Cartesians that are of Father Malebranche's Opinion. This occasions that being full of these Thoughts, he seems not always to have well comprehended his meaning whom he Criticises upon. Why the being a Cartesian, and according to the way of M. Malebranche, should make me less apt to comprehend Mr. Lock's Book, I cannot divine. Were the thing it self never so true, yet I think the Reason here given of it, is as odd as may be. But 'twill be time enough to seek out for the*
 Reason

Reason of my misunderstanding Mr. *Lock's* Book, when it is better proved than at present, that I have done so. But as to that, if Mr. *Lock* himself had told me so, his bare Authority without any Reason would have obliged me to suspect my Apprehension, and to think once again; it being a Deference owing to every Author to suppose that he best understands his own Meaning. But from you, Gentlemen, who stand upon the same Level with me, I expect Reason, and to be shewn *where* and *how* I have mistaken him. For the present I am rather apt to think that I have comprehended Mr. *Lock's* Sense well enough, but that you understand neither *Me*, nor Mr. *Lock*.

PARAGR. 2. *He upbraideth Mr. Lock of attempting to treat of Ideas, without defining what he understood by this Word. Here is a false Report. I did not censure Mr. Lock for undertaking to discourse of Ideas, without premising a Definition, of the Name or Word, (for that I grant he has done) but for offering to account for their Origination, without giving a Definition, or any Account of the thing. My Words are, But sure by all the Laws of Method in the World, he ought first to have Defined what he meant by Ideas, and to have acquainted us with their Nature, before he proceeded to account for their Origination. And again, This therefore ought to have been his first and indeed main Business, to have given us an account of the Nature of Ideas: And yet this is not only neglected in its proper Place, but wholly omitted and*
pass'd

pass'd over in deep Silence, which I cannot but remark is a Fundamental Defect in this Work. What is it pray, that is here remark'd as a Fundamental Defect? Not sure his not defining the Term-Idea (for that I grant pag. 16. where I say, that *so much my Lexicon would have told me;*) but his giving no Account of the Nature of Ideas, That is there remark'd as a Fundamental Defect, and I find no Cause yet to think otherwise.

IBID. But Mr. Norris may see that he's mistaken, if he'll read over again the end of the First Chapter of Book I. where the Author begs his Readers Leave, &c. Mistaken indeed, if he had charged the Author with not defining the Term *Idea*, but not at all mistaken, in case the thing charg'd upon him was the not defining the *Nature* of Ideas; for of that the Author gives no Account, neither in the place these Gentlemen refer to, nor any where else.

IBID. It was sufficient to him (viz. Mr. Lock,) to shew in what manner, or if you will on what occasion we come to have different Ideas, without its being necessary to speak of the Ideas themselves. Here is an implicit Concession that Mr. Lock does not undertake to open the Nature of Ideas, and withal that that was the thing laid to his Charge, which sufficiently clears the Reflector from the pretended Mistake. But then withal 'tis affirmed here, that there was no need he should undertake such an Account. Now this being matter of Judgment, not of Report, the thing must be a little argued. These Gentlemen say

say it was sufficient to shew how we come by our Ideas, without speaking of the Ideas themselves. Against this I contend it was not sufficient, it being impossible to give any satisfactory Account how we come by them, till their Nature be in some measure discover'd. For how can any thing be affirm'd or denied of any thing, unless its Nature be known? How can any Attribute be given with any certainty to an unknown Subject? Indeed when the Nature of the thing is sufficiently known and agreed upon, we need only define the Term whereby we express it: As when 'tis supposed to be known what the Nature of an Angle is, I need only say that a Triangle is that which has Three Angles. Which is the Reason why *Euclid* in his Geometry thought himself concern'd only to give *Nominal* Definitions. For the Nature of *Figures* is evidently known; we see the very Essence of them, and therefore there needs no other Definition but that of the Term only, whereby we signify them, that so there may be no mistake of our Meaning; that we may not be supposed to mean a *Square* when we talk of a *Circle*. But when the Nature of the thing is not known or agreed upon (as in the present Case) then a bare Definition of the Term is not sufficient; but the thing it self must be (at least in general) explained, before any Proposition can be with any Certainty advanc'd concerning it. For suppose instead of saying that our Ideas come from our Senses, I should say that *the immediate Object of our Conception*

tion (which is the Nominal Definition) comes from our Senses, what Advantage would this be to the Certainty of the Proposition; or how could it be decided whether the immediate Object of our Conception be from our Senses or no, unless it be first made known, what this immediate Object of our Conception is? We must know its Nature, before we can derive its Pedegree.

PARAGR. 3. *Mr. Lock hath maintain'd that there are no Innate Ideas, since there is no Principle wherein all Mankind agree. But to that the Author opposes the Evident Propositions which all the World agrees to, &c. To that; To what? Here is either a great Blunder, or a very gross Prevarication. What Mr. Lock is here said to maintain, consists of two distinct Parts, a Proposition, and a Reason of the Proposition. The Proposition is, that there are no Innate Ideas: The Reason is, because there is no Principle universally assented to. Now to which of these is it that the Reflector opposes Self-evident Propositions? Not to the Proposition certainly, but to the Reason of it. He alleges Self-evident Propositions not to prove against the Thesis laid down, that Ideas are Innate (for that he expressly denies, *Pag. 15.*) but to prove against the Reason given, that there are Principles universally assented to. As may appear from the very Words of the Place refer'd to, *Pag. 4.* which I leave the Reader to consult. The short of Mr. Lock's Reasoning in that part is this, If*

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there

there are no Principles universally assented to, then there are none Innate; but there are no Principles universally assented to, &c. Now the minor Proposition is what the Reflector denied, and to which he opposed evident Propositions, a thing granted by the Author. Not that he intended to infer thence, that there are Innate Ideas: For though it may follow that if there be Innate Ideas they will be universally consented to, and consequently if not so consented to, they are not Innate: Yet it does not follow that if they *are* universally consented to, therefore they are Innate, that being accountable for upon other Grounds. The Reflector urges Mr. *Lock's* Concession of Self-evident Propositions, only to evince that according to him, there must be Principles universally consented to, and consequently that he ought not to argue against Innate Ideas from the want of such Principles. But the Question of Innate Ideas themselves is not here so much as glanc'd at: And therefore says the Reflector, Pag. 4. *There must be therefore according to him, some Principles to which all Mankind do give an universal Consent. I do not say that this proves them Innate, but only that there are such Propositions,* wherein he thought he had laid in a sufficient Caution against all Mistake. And yet these Gentlemen would fain insinuate as if the Reflector alledg'd evident Propositions in opposition to the Thesis laid down, to prove that there are Innate Notions, as plainly appears from the State of the Question which they

they are so kind as to put for him in the very next Words. For,

IBID. Say they, *The Question is to know if we understand the same thing by Innate Notions and Evident Propositions, which is not assuredly in the Ordinary usage of the Word Innate, that has not at all the same Signification with that of Evident.* Had I opposed Evident Propositions to the Thesis maintain'd, in order to prove that there are Innate Notions, then indeed the Question might have turn'd upon this Hinge, whether we understand the same by *Evident* and *Innate*; and their saying that this is the State of the Question, does impute the other to me. But since my Appeal to Self-evident Propositions is only to prove against the Reason of the Proposition, that there are Principles universally consented to, this is so far from being a true State of the Question, that 'tis an utter Mistake of the Argument. 'Tis plain that my Design was not to prove by that or by any other Argument, that there are Innate Ideas, (for I expressly disown them as well as Mr. Lock,) but only to prove that there are Principles of Universal Consent. And for this I insist upon Self-evident Propositions, and I see nothing wanting in the Argument to serve the purpose for which it was used.

IBID. *Yet Mr. Norris supposing that the Author of the Essay confounds these Two things, accuses him of Contradicting himself, since he granteth that there are evident Propositions.* Well, I find when Men are once got into a Wood, 'tis a hard matter to

get out again. Here is still a further Continuation of the same Blunder. I am far enough from ever supposing that the Author of the Essay confounds these Two things, *viz.* Evident Propositions and Innate Notions, and as far from confounding them my self, or from arguing from the Former to the Existence of the Latter, which I tell you again I expressly deny. Nor do I make the Author's Inconsistency and Self-Contradiction to consist in granting evident Propositions, and denying Innate Notions (which neither of us take to be the same) but in granting evident Propositions, and at the same Time denying Principles of Universal Consent: Therein I tax him with Self-Contradiction.

PARAGR. 4. *One of the Reasons which Mr. Lock used to overthrow Inbred Ideas, is that there is no Appearance that any has these Innate Ideas, which he never minded. But Mr. Norris maintains that the Consequence is not good, because according to him (according to Mr. Lock it should be) our Spirit may receive Impressions which we do not at all actually perceive, as are the Ideas which the Memory preserves. It may be replied to him that he must prove that we may have Notices which we never made Reflection on. It is replied again, that he need not prove it, since Mr. Lock has freely granted it more than once, and is also by his Principles obliged to grant it; as is observ'd in the Reflections themselves, Pag. 6, 7, 8. whither I refer the Reader.*

PARAGR. 5. *The Author in reasoning against what Mr. Lock had said of the Innate Principles of Morality,*

Morality, insists anew upon this Bottom, that he can evidently prove, even by Mr. Lock's Confession, diverse Principles of Morality. He concludes also from thence, that he is in the wrong, to say that there are no Principles of Practice to which Mankind give an universal Consent, since there are Principles of Morality uncontrovertible. But tho' a thing be uncontrovertible, &c. It does not thence follow that 'tis Inbred or Naturally known. What, again in the same Blunder? Sure these Mens Heads turn round. Who ever said it does follow? Does the Reflector by this contend for Innate Notions? No certainly; he only infers from evident Principles of Morality, that there are some that are universally assented to, in Opposition to the Author, who affirm'd there were no such. But he does no where make that an Argument for Innate Notions, which he expressly declares against. One would think these Men were hard put to't for Employment, thus to frame Consequences of their own, that they may afterwards overturn them again.

PARAGR. 5. *In fine, the Author after having made diverse Remarks like these which we relate, upon Mr. Lock's Notions, &c. But what if these hitherto related be none of the Author's, but your own? However, I believe the rest of those diverse Remarks would truly appear like these, if represented by the same Glass: But whether in Reality they are like these or no, I leave to the Consideration of Better Judges.*

PARAGR. 7. *This Definition is notwithstanding like to that of Father Malebranch. What if it be, is it therefore Sufficient? 'Tis true, Father Malebranch in the Second Part of his De Inquirend. Verit. Pag. 196, does thus define an Idea, Objectum Immediatum Mentis, which is only a Nominal Definition, as Mr. Lock's is; but will these Gentlemen say that he stops here, and gives no Account of the Nature of Ideas? If so, either they have not read him, or do not understand him, or do misreport him.*

IBID. *When we have no design to treat of the Nature of a certain thing, it is sufficient to define the Word which we use. If the Nature of the thing be evident and acknowledged, 'tis sufficient to define the Term, otherwise not.*

IBID. *He enlarges very much, especially to shew that the Ideas are not all of the Emanations of the Bodies which we see, which yet Mr. Lock does not in the least say. What if Mr. Lock does not expressly say so? He says however that they are from our Senses, that is, from sensible Objects: And if so, then supposing that he makes them real Beings, they must either be Corporeal Emanations, or Spiritual Images; the Absurdity of both which I was concern'd to shew. And I think it is shewn sufficiently.*

IBID. *What seems to have set Mr. Norris upon these Reasonings, is that Mr. Lock says, that most of our Ideas draw their Original from Sense, which signifies nothing else but this, that we could have no Idea of Diverse things, unless we had perceived them by*

mea n s

means of the Senses. If this were all that Mr. *Lock* contends for, we are better agreed than I was aware of; for 'tis acknowledged also upon my Principles, that the Senses are the *Occasions* of our having Ideas; that is, that God has establish'd a certain Order and Connexion between such Impressions made upon our Senses and such Ideas. Not that these Impressions do cause or produce these Ideas, but that they are Conditions at the presence of which God will, and without which he will not raise them in, or to speak more properly, exhibit them to our Minds. But that Mr. *Lock* means quite another thing from this, when he ascribes the Original of our Ideas to our Senses, I think no one that reads him with even ordinary Attention, can doubt. 'Tis plain, that he means that our Ideas do proceed from *without*, namely, from sensible Objects, and are by our Senses convey'd into the Mind; according to the Hypothesis of the Vulgar Philosophy.

PARAGR. 8. Mr *Norris* reproaches the Author of the *Essay of Saying*, Pag. 147. Sect. 33. that 'tis by means of the Senses that we form the Idea of the Supreme Being. 'Twere well if these Gentlemen were as free from Reproaching the Author of the *Reflections*, as he is from reproaching the Author of the *Essay*: I should not then have had this Objection to answer.

IBID. But our Critic has undoubtedly strangely err'd in this place. But what if our Critic should prove to be in the Right, and our Critics to be they that so strangely err? Undoubtedly this

would be but an ill come off after so Magisterial and Decisive a Sentence. But why is the Critic so strongly presum'd to have err'd? Why because Mr. Lock after having named Sensation and Reflection as the Sources of all our Ideas, continues thus: *It is so in all our other Ideas of Substances, even of that of God (that is to say, that they are all form'd either by Sensation or Reflection) for if we examin the Idea which we have of the Supreme and Incomprehensible Being, we shall find that it comes to us the same way (by the one or by the other) and that the Complex Ideas that we have of God and separated Spirits, are compos'd of the Simple Ideas that we have by Reflection. For Example, Having form'd in our selves by our own Experience the Ideas of Existence, Duration, Knowledge, Power, Pleasure, Success, and of divers other Properties, which 'tis better to have than not to have; when we will form a just Idea of the Supreme Being, we augment each of these Ideas, joyning that of Infinity to them; and thus we form the Complex Idea of the Divinity. If Mr. Norris had read all this Article with Attention, he would have spared himself the Pains of seeking Figures of Rhetoric to refute an Opinion which no body maintains. Now to set this whole matter in a clear and fair light, the short of it is this: I had charg'd Mr. Lock with deriving our Idea of God from the Senses. Herein they say I reproach him, pretending that Mr. Lock derives the Idea of God not from Sensation, but from Reflection. Well, be it so, yet this is to set the Idea of God but one Remove further*

further from the Senses still, which will come to one and the same thing at long run. For these Ideas of Reflection are but a Secondary sort Ideas that result from the various Compositions and Modifications of those Primary ones of Sensation. This is all that can possibly be understood by this second order of Ideas. They are only a various Composition of the first. For 'tis not in the Power of the Soul to make any new Ideas it has not receiv'd; she can only variously modifie and compound those which she has. So that notwithstanding this Expedient, the Idea of God will be, tho' not *immediately*, yet *mediately* and ultimately from the Senses. If it be pleaded that these Ideas of Reflection are not form'd out of those of Sensation, but from the Operation of the Mind about those Ideas. In answer to this, I grant that the Mind may reflect upon its own Operations as well as upon those Ideas they are conversant about, and that these Operations may then be consider'd as Objects that terminate the Understanding. But then I say that 'tis impossible that hence should spring any new Ideas of a distinct Nature from the rest, it being both against the Nature, and above the Power of the Understanding to make its own Object. And besides, this Expedient is so far from helping, that it rather heightens the Absurdity. For according to this Account, the Idea of God would not only be a Creature, but a Creature of a Creature. Indeed, whether it be said that the

the Idea of God be from Sensation or from Reflection, it would both ways follow that 'tis a Creature; only there's this Difference between them, that in the former way, it would be a Creature of God's making, but in the latter way, a Creature of our own making: Which I think is the greater Absurdity of the two.

IBID. He joyneth therewith some Reflections, to make Father Malebranch's Opinion more probable, with which it does not fadge, no more than with those which he makes on diverse places of Mr. Lock's Book. Thus these Gentlemen are pleased to say; but since they offer neither Instance, nor Reason of it, I shall content my self to Reply, that as Wise Men are of another Opinion.

IBID. Whom concluding, he highly commends; which a great many People will Subscribe without Trouble. Well, I am glad there is something wherein I have the good Fortune to agree with this Noble Society, and if it will be any Pleasure to them to know how much I do so, I shall take this Occasion to tell both them and the World, that tho' I have writ against Mr. Lock, I have yet as great Thoughts of him as any of those that so ignorantly defend him; that I both honour his Person, and admire his Book, which, bating only some few things, I think to be one of the most Exquisite Pieces of Speculation that is Extant. And that were I in order to notional Improvement, to recommend but Three Books only in the World, one of them should be this of Mr. Lock's.

PARAGR.

PARAGR. 9. *We find furthermore at the end of the Book where the Author retracts, having maintain'd in an English Book, that Sin was a Real thing, he declares now that he believes 'tis meer Nothing.* This is a gross Misrepresentation that favours neither of the Justice nor of the Civility of the Press. *He declares now.* How does he declare it? Expressly or by Consequence? Not sure expressly. If by Consequence, not to remark the Impropriety of declaring a thing by Consequence, or the Injustice of charging any Man with the Consequences of any Opinion as by him *declared*, were they never so truly deduced, does it follow, that because I disown the Positiveness of Sin, that therefore I hold 'tis a *meer Nothing*? Suppose, I should say, that these Gentlemens Ignorance in Philosophy, and the common Principles of Metaphysicks were not of a Positive Nature, do I thereby say it is nothing? Must Sin either be Positive or Nothing? Is there no Medium? What, did these Gentlemen never hear of a *Privation*! But this 'tis when Nature is not follow'd, when Science is Usurp'd, and when a sort of Men whose Talent was never known to lie much towards Philosophy, will needs turn a Conventicle into a *Paris Royal*, and set up for *Vertuoso's*.

F I N I S.

P R A C T I C A L
DISCOURSES

Upon several
Divine Subjects.

V O L. II.

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| | |
|--|--|
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Written by **JOHN NORRIS, M. A.**
Rector of *Bemerton* near *Sarum*.

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THE HISTORY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT
TO THE PRESENT TIME

BY
NATHAN OLSZEWSKI

VOLUME I
FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT
TO THE YEAR 1780

BOSTON
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1893



T O T H E
 Right Reverend Father in God,

R I C H A R D,

Lord Bishop of Bath and Wells.

My LORD,



THE peculiar Honour I justly have for your Personal Worth concurring with that Reverence I owe to your Episcopal Character, and that happy Relation wherein I now stand to you as my Diocesan, obliges me to lay these Papers at your Lordship's Feet; and that which your Eminent Greatness has made a Debt, your no less Illustrious Goodness encourages me to Pay. Upon which two inducements (the greatest that can be even in Religious as well as Human Addresses) I humbly presume

The Epistle Dedicatory.

sume to tender these plain Discourses to your Lordship's favourable Perusal and Acceptance, which as they are wholly *designed*, so I hope are in *some* measure *fitted* for the Advantage of the Publick; not so much in respect of *No*-tion and Speculation, but what is a great deal more wanted in this very degenerate, tho' otherwise highly Improved Age, the Promotion of Piety and good Life. Which great and excellent *End* that your Lordship may yet much better promote, both by the Prudence of your Government, and by the Brightness and Authority of your high Example, to the Honour and Interest of our most excellent Church, and the Glory of our common Lord and Master, shall be the Constant and Zealous Prayer of him whose great Ambition is to be esteem'd

Your Lordship's

Most Humble and Dutiful Servant,

J. NORRIS.



TO THE
READER.



*S*INCE the Publication of my former Discourses upon the Beatitudes, having received some Intimations, that 'tis the earnest desire of several Worthy Persons to see some more of my Practical Discourses; for the gratification of their Pious Curiosity, and for the general Advantage of all other well inclined Persons, I have been persuaded to make a Scrutiny among my Papers, and to pick out a Set of such Discourses as are of the most Practical Composure, and most apt to season the Mind of the Reader with a Tincture of Piety and Vertue: And these I think are of this Character, which I therefore here communicate to the World in the same Matter and Dress for the main, wherein they were first Penn'd and Preach'd, only bestowing upon them the advantage of a Review, that so they might have that Accuracy and Correctness as might fit them for a Publick Appearance.

I am not insensible how well furnished the Present Age is with Provisions of this kind; so far from that, that I think we have in this respect much the Advantage above any Age or Place in the World.

TO THE READER.

And I think withal, that if there were a Choice Collection made of our English Sermons, especially of the Later times, it might deserve to wear the Honourable Chain in our Publick Libraries, as well as any the best Curiosities we have there, and indeed to turn out a great many dull Wormeaten Authors, which fill our Stalls, as many Persons do the World, Idly and Insignificantly, and are not worth the Room they take up. And I further think, that if the Selectest parts of these our Modern Sermons were ranged under certain Heads, and judiciously sorted and disposed in order, out of these Materials might be framed for the best Body of Divinity, both for the Rational and for the Persuasive part, that is in the World. And 'tis great Pity but that a convenient number of competent Undertakers (for I think it would be too great a Task for any one Person) would agree together upon the Performance. It would I am perswaded be a work of excellent Use as well as Curiosity, and withal a standing Monument of Shame and Condemnation to those of our Dissenters, who are so Silly and so Impudent, as to make this one of their Pleas for leaving the Church, because they have better Preaching in a Conventicle.

But least this should be turned as an Objection against the present Performance, that the Age is so rich in these Provisions, I consider withal on the other side how much it stands in need of them: Its Supplies indeed are great, but its Necessities are as great and greater; and till Men come to be perswaded to live better than they now do, more like Men, and more like Christians, I think further Addresses of this Nature will be always Seasonable, and will be so far
from

To the READER.

from needing an Apology, that they will deserve to be encouraged.

But there is something else that needs it very much, and that is, the unproficiency of the World under such extraordinary Advantages: 'Tis indeed a thing of strange Consideration, and what I have often admired at, that considering what excellent Preaching and Writing there is now in the World, the World should be no better than it is; that there should be so much good Discoursing, and so little good Living; that the Instrument of Religion should be so much Improved, and Religion it self so much Decayed.

It must be allowed that the present Age has Advantages of both sorts, Preaching and Writing, far beyond what former Ages could ever boast of; and that Christians now have Assistances almost as much beyond those of the Primitive Christians, as theirs were beyond those of the Heathen World; and yet (which is both strange and lamentable to consider,) they excelled us as much in Goodness, as we do them in Learning and Knowledge, and were much better without these Advantages than we are with them. No Learning like Modern Learning, no Reasoning like Modern Reasoning, and yet no Christianity like Primitive Christianity. Now indeed Christianity is better understood, and better defended, and the Rules of it more rationally enforced, but then 'twas better Practised: Now we Discourse better, but we Live worse.

What shall we, what can we say to these things? It is our great Shame, and it will be our Condemnation: But we must not give over Medicinal Applications, though the Disease seems not to yield to them,

TO THE READER.

but rather to rage and increase under them; for though we are really worse under these great *Assistances*, yet I hope 'tis not they that contribute to make us so; and if the world be so bad with them, 'tis to be feared it would be in a much worse Condition without them. The Means are therefore to be continued, whatever the Event and Success be, which is God's concern, not ours. And I further consider, that the Badness of the Age under the greatest helps to Goodness, is so far from being a reasonable discouragement against endeavours of Reformation, that there is great reason to think that God reserves the best Remedies and *Assistances* against the worst Times, that when the Malignity of the Contagion is at strongest, it may have a Proportionable Antidote.

I am not so vain as to think my self interested in this last Consideration, any further than as it may serve me with an Answer to an Objection, wherein it is pretended, that Men are the worse for having so much Application made to them for their Recovery, that they suffer in their Morals by being over-tutour'd, as some Men do in their Health by being over-Phyick'd: The ground of which Objection proceeds I suppose upon this Observation, that when there are the greatest helps and advantages to goodness, the Age is then always worst. The Observation I confess is too true, but the Consequence that is made from it, may I conceive be taken off, by supposing that this comes to pass by the special Assignment of God's Providence, reserving the best assistances against the worst times, and not by any Natural Connexion that is between the things themselves in order to such a Juncture.

Upon

To the READER.

Upon these Considerations I am encouraged to send these Discourses abroad, having this only to say concerning them, that as the Subjects of them are of extraordinary importance, so I think they do not fall very much beneath what they undertake for in their several Titles; that they consist of very weighty and serious matter, and are indifferently Correct as to their Composition; that they speak both to the Reason and to the Affection of the Reader, and are in good measure fitted both to Convince and to Persuade: In short, that they may be read with a great deal of Profit, and not without some Entertainment. The former is the more considerable End, and 'tis what I mainly aim at; I wish the Reader may do the same, and when both of us concur in so laudable an End, 'tis to be hoped the Blessing of God will not be wanting; and I pray God it may not.

J. Norris.

The

The General

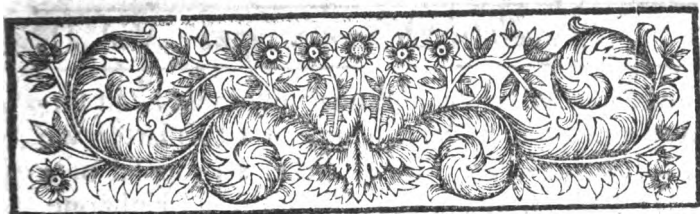
CONTENTS

OF THE

Second VOLUME.

- A** Discourse concerning *Worldly and Divine Wisdom*, upon Luke 16. 8. Page 1.
- A Discourse concerning Righteous and Unrighteous Judgment*, upon John 7. 24. p. 29.
- A Discourse concerning Religious Singularity*, upon Rom. 12. 2. p. 49.
- A Discourse concerning the Excellency of Praise and Thanksgiving*, upon Psal. 50. 23. p. 76.
- The Importance of a Religious Life, considered from the happy Conclusion of it*, upon Psal. 37. 38. p. 96.
- A Discourse concerning Heavenly-Mindedness*, upon Phil. 3. 20. p. 118.
- A Discourse concerning Submission to Divine Providence*, upon John 18. 11. p. 142.
- A Discourse concerning the Folly of Covetousness*, upon Luke 12. 20. p. 165.
- A Discourse concerning the Consideration of God, and of the Divine Presence*, upon Psal. 16. 9. p. 192.
- A Discourse concerning doing God's Will on Earth as it is in Heaven*, upon Mat. 6. 10. p. 221.

A



A
DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

Worldly and Divine Wisdom.

V O L. II.

LUKE 16. 8.

*The Children of this World are in their
Generation Wiser than the Children of
Light.*



Of all the infinite Follies incident to Mankind, there is none that may more justly imploy both our Pity and our Admiration than an Ill-timed, Misplaced and Disproportionate *Wisdom*. The thorough Fool is not nigh so great a Prodigy as the Half-wise Man; nor is a stark uniform Ignorance

rance so mysterious and unaccountable as an uneven miscondacted Prudence. Of this latter we may conceive Two sorts, either a proposal of a wrong End, or an undue prosecution of a right one. In the former, the Man is supposed to be right enough in his *Means*, but to be wrong in his *End*; in the latter, he is supposed to be as right in his *End*, but to be wrong in his *Means*. In the former, we consider the Man as Wise in little things, and a Fool in great concerns; Wise where Wisdom might be spared, and a Fool where 'tis highly necessary. In the latter, we consider him as not *so* Wise in great things, as either himself or another is in little things. And this I take to be a stranger sort of Folly than the former; for here the Man is supposed to be so Wise, as as to have aim'd at the true Mark; and to have fixed upon a right End, but yet withal at the same time to be so much a Fool, as not to prosecute this right End as prudently and carefully as the other does a wrong one; which truly is a very odd Combination. 'Tis a great Folly not to propose a good End, and he that fails in this part, can never expect to have any thing orderly and regular in the whole course of his Life: Such a Man (if he deserve that Name) lives *Backward*, and the longer he lives, and the more active and busie he is, the more he is led out of his way, and the further he is from his Journey's End. A Man were better have no Mark before him, but Live at *Rovers*, without any End or Design at all, than to propose an End to himself that is
 not

not good. The former indeed seems to be more sottish and stupid, and to have less of Soul and Thought in it; but the latter, if I mistake not, is more dangerous and mischievous, and will lead a Man into more fatal Miscarriages.

BUT though it be so great a Folly not to propose a good End, yet it seems a much *stranger* Folly not to prosecute it when you have proposed it, and when one has attained so far, not to proceed further: The Reason may be obvious why a Man does not propose a good End, for he may want clearness of Understanding to discern which is so. But he that has proposed a-right, shews by his very doing so, that he does not want that. The rightness of his Aim sufficiently argues the goodness of his Eye-sight, and why then he should not prosecute his well-chosen End, is somewhat unaccountable: And besides, the greatness and the goodness of the End, has a natural and genuin efficacy both to *quicken* and to *regulate* the execution of it; and the more considerable the End is, the more it has of this Influence. As the Means themselves do take their measure from the End, so does the *execution* of them too, and the more weighty and concerning is the End proposed, the more pressing and urging is the engagement that lies upon the Proposer, both to chuse fit and proper Means for the compassing it, and to be diligent in the use and application of them when chosen. So that whether we regard that rational Light and discernment of Mind which
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he discovers himself to be Master of that proposes a right End, or that aid and assistance which is communicated to him from the weight and moment of the End it self, (which cannot but help on its own prosecution,) the Folly of not prosecuting a well-proposed End, will appear to be of all others the most strange and amazing.

AND yet this is that Folly which is more or less chargeable upon the Wisest of Men; those who have duly considered, and taken a just measure both of themselves and of the World without them; that have well examined and fitted out the capacities of their Nature, and the utter insufficiency of all created Good to fill those Capacities; those that have duly prized and valued the whole *Inventory* of this Worlds Goods, and have fixed a general Inscription of *Vanity* upon them all, and who accordingly upon the strength of this Conviction, have gone out of the Circle of this World for their Happiness, and have proposed to themselves the supream Good for their End, and for the Wisdom of this their Choice, are stiled *Children of Light*: Even these Men are chargeable with this strange Folly, and it is here actually charged upon them by the eternal and Substantial Wisdom of God in this his weighty Remark upon the Politick Stratagem of the unjust Steward, *the Children of this World are in their Generation, wiser than the Children of Light.*

In the Words there is something *implied* and something directly *asserted*. 'Tis implied.

I. THAT

1 THAT there are a sort of Men who are Children of this World, that is, who make the Good of this World their End, and seek no further for their Rest and Happiness. 'Tis implied again on the other side,

2. That there are a sort of Men who are Children of Light, who look beyond this Sphere of Vanity, and black Vale of Misery, and propose to themselves the Beatitudes of another Life; as their true and last End; and these our Lord calls *Children of Light*, both from the *Object* of their Choice, (the Glories of Heaven being frequently represented in Scripture under the Symbol of Light,) and from their *Wisdom* in chusing it. 'Tis implied again.

3. THAT the former of these, notwithstanding the preference here given them, do not act according to the measures of true Wisdom; and therefore our Lord does not say *absolutely* that they are Wise, but only that they are Wiser in their *Generation*.

4. THE thing directly asserted by our Lord is this, That notwithstanding their want of true Wisdom, (that Wisdom which is from above) they are however wiser in *their Generation* than the Children of Light. That is, that however they are befool'd in the Choice of their End, yet they make more prudent Provisions for its Attainment and Security, and prosecute it by more apt and agreeable Means, and with greater Cunning and Diligence than they who have chosen a better, do theirs. And in this the
Children

Children of this World, though great Fools, are yet in their Generation, in their Way and Manner, Wiser than the Children of Light.

THESE I shall make distinct Subjects of Discourse; to each of which I shall speak according to the present Order.

AND first of all, 'tis implied, that there are a sort of Men, who are Children of this World, who make the Good of this World their End, and seek no further for their Rest and Happiness. 'Tis I confess strange that there should be any such, considering that the World is no proper Boundary for the Soul even in its *Natural* Capacity, much less in its *Spiritual*: 'Tis too cheap and inconsiderable a Good for an Immortal Spirit, much more for a Divine Nature. And therefore did not the Commonness of the thing take off from the Wonder, 'twould seem no doubt as great a Prodigy to see a Man make the World his End, as to see a Stone hang in the Air. For what is it else for a Man, the weight of whose Nature presses hard towards a stable and never failing Center, to stop short in a fluid and yielding Medium, and take up with the slender stays of Vanity, and lean upon the Dream of a Shadow? I say, why is not this to be look'd upon as equally strange and preternatural, as a Stone's hanging in the Air? Is not the Air as proper a Boundary for a *Stone*, as the World is for a *Soul*? And why then is not one as strange as the other? For in the First place, one would think it next to impossible, that a Man who thinks at all, should not consider frequently and thoroughly

thoroughly the vanity and emptiness of all Worldly Good, the shortness and uncertainty of Life, the certainty of Dying, and the uncertainty of the Time when; the Immortality of the Soul, the doubtful and momentous Issues of Eternity, the Terrors of Damnation, and the Glorious things which are spoken, and which cannot be uttered of the City of God. These are Meditations so very obvious, so almost unavoidable, and that so block up a Man's way; and besides they are so very important and concerning, that for my part I wonder how a Man can think of any thing else. And if a Man does consider and resolve these things, one would think it yet more impossible that he should make so vain a thing as this World, his End; that he should think of Building Tabernacles of Rest on this side the Grave, and say, *it is good to be here*. So that upon the whole Matter, were a Man put to the Question, whether 'twere possible that a Rational and Thinking Creature as Man is, should be so far a Child of this World, as to make the Good of it his End; and seek no farther for Rest and Happiness; were a Man I say to consider this only in Notion and Theory, without having any recourse to Observation and Experience, he would go nigh to resolve the Question in the Negative, and think it impossible that he who is capable of Chusing at all, should Chuse so ill.

BUT, whether 'tis that Men do not heartily believe such a thing as a future state of Happiness and Misery; or if they do, that they do not actually and seriously consider it, but suffer it

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to lye dormant and unactive within them, and so are as little affected with it, as if they did not believe it; or that they look upon it through that End of the *Perspective* which represents it as a great way off, and so are more vigorously drawn by the Nearer, though Lesser Loadstone; or whatever other cause may be assigned for it, we are too well assured from Experience, that there are such Men in the World: Men, who going through the Vale of Misery, use it not only as a Well to refresh and allay, but fully to quench and satisfy their Thirst, *Psal. 84. 6. et emixta gurgures*, as the Apostle Phrases it, *who mind and relish Earthly things*, Phil. 3. 19. who make the Good of this World their last Aim, the Sum total of their Wishes, the upshot of their Desires and Expectations, their End: Who love it as they are Comanded to love God, with all their Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength, who rest and lean upon the World with the whole stress and full weight of their Being, who out-do the Curse of the Serpent, and whose very *Soul* cleaves to the Dust.

For I demand, Is not the Interest of this Animal Life, the great Governing Principle of the World? Are not the Policies of the Statesman, and the little Under-crafts of the Plebeian, all put into Motion by this Spring, and all guided and determined by this Measure? Is not every thing almost reckoned Profitable only so far as it conduces to some Temporal Interest, insomuch, that the very Name *Interest*, is almost appropriated to
Worldly

Worldly Advantage? And is not this the great Bias of Mankind? Is not most of the Noise and Bustle that is in the World, about the World it self, who shall have the greatest Share of it, and make the greatest Figure in it? Do we not see Men all set and intent upon the World, that lay themselves out wholly upon it, and that can relish nothing but what has relation to it; Men that seem to grow into the Soil where they dwell, and to have their Heads and Hearts fastened to the Ground with as many Cords and Fibres, as the Root of a Tree; and that seem to be staked down and nailed fast to the Earth, and that can no more be moved from it, than the Earth it self can from its Center: In one Word, Men of whom it may be said without Censure, that the World is their God, and its Pleasures, Honours, and Profit their Trinity.

NOR is this matter of *Practice* only, but of *Opinion* too; for we know there have been some among the Antient Philosophers, who have expressly taught, that the End of Man, the *Totum Hominis*, lies in the Good of the Animal Life, in the Pleasure of the grosser Senses. Thus we know did *Aristippus*, *Cyreneus*, and a whole Sect of Philosophers after him, called *Cyrenaici*; which Opinion is also charged upon *Epicurus* by *Cicero*, and by many of the Fathers of the Church: And the Charge is still believed and entertained among many Persons of sufficient Learning and Worth, notwithstanding the favourable and plausible Plea *Monsieur Gassendi* has offered in the

behalf of his Master. But the Plea is, that these are Pardonable in comparison of those who enjoy the Advantages of a Revealed Religion, and that in its last Perfection and Consummation too, and yet take no higher Aim than at the Good of this World, and in direct Contradiction to our Saviour's Aphorism, think that the *Life*, that is, the true Interest and Happiness of Man *does* consist in the Abundance of things which he possesses, *Luke. 12. 15.*

To our Experience, we may add the Attestations of Scripture, which gives several intimations of this low-sunk, wretched and deplorable Degeneracy of Soul. To Instance in a few, does not *Job* say in vindication of his Integrity, *If I have made Gold my Hope, or have said to the Fine Gold, thou art my Confidence; Job 31. 24.* Implying that some there were that did so. And does not the *Psalmist* say, *Psal. 52. 8. Lo, This is the Man that took not God for his Strength, but trusted in the multitude of his Riches, and strengthened himself in his Wickedness?* And does not the *Apostle* tell us of some *whose God is their Belly*, *Phil. 3. 19.* and of others, *whose Godliness is their Gain?* *1 Tim. 6. 5.* And what else does the *Apostle* mean, when he says of *Covetousness*, that it is *Idolatry?* Does he not thereby intimate, that the Covetous Wretch not only delights in his Possessions, and loves to count over his Heaps, (for this a Man may do without being an Idolater,) but that he places his End and chief Happiness in his Treasures, that he falls down and adores his
Golden

Golden Calf, and in the forementioned Phrase of *Job*, makes Gold his *Hope*, and says to the Fine Gold, thou art my *Confidence*!

BUT the Minds of Men (thanks be to God) are not all under this Eclypse, nor is this Darkness spread over the whole Face of the Deep; Light and Darkness divide the Moral as well as the Natural World, though with the difference of unequal Proportions; the Darker is here the bigger side. There are however, though not so many, yet there are Secondly, a sort of Men who are Children of Light, whose Minds are more Illuminated, and their Eye more clear and single, who look beyond the Veil of the Material World, the Beauty of which can neither charm, nor its Thickness detain their piercing Sight, and propose to themselves the Beatitudes of another Life as their true and last End. This many do in *Profession*, and some in *Reality*: In Profession all Christians do it, to whom therefore the Title of Children of Light is promiscuously given by the Apostle, *1 Thes. 5. 5. Ye are all the Children of Light, and the Children of the Day; We are not of the Night, nor of Darkness*: That is as far as concerns Profession and Solemn Undertaking. But that which all Christians profess, some do really do, proposing to themselves *Habitually* at least, the Happiness of the *other* World as their last End, being by repeated Experiences, as well as rational Reflections upon the Nature of things, abundantly convinced of the vanity of *this*. And these indeed aim at

the right Mark, though all of them have not a Hand steady enough to hit it.

BUT to return again to the Children of this World, 'tis implied in the Third Place, that these do not act according to the Measures of true Wisdom; for our Lord does not say absolutely that they are Wise, but only that they are Wiser in their Generation; which implies, that absolutely speaking, and upon the whole, they are not Wise. Indeed they think themselves Wise, and the World for the most part is of their Opinion: They are generally esteemed not only Wise, but the only Wise Men, Men of Reach and Design, Policy and Conduct; and he that does not play his Game, so as to thrive in the World, is generally pitied more for his *Folly*, than for his *Poverty*. Nay hence, and hence only, are taken the Measures of Wisdom and Prudence, and this is made the Rule and Standard of all Policy and Discretion; a Man is counted so far Wise, and no farther, than he knows how to get an Estate, to raise a Family, to give Birth to a Name, and make himself great and considerable in the World: He that can do this, is a Shrewd Man, and he that can't, is either Pitied or Laugh'd at (according to the Humour the World's in) by those that can.

NEITHER is it any Allay or Abatement of their Character, to say that all this is brought about by Sinister and Indirect Means, by Fraud and Cozenage, by Deceit and Corrupt Proceedings: This rather Commends the Parts and Ingenuity

geniuity of the Man, shews him to be a Man of Art and Contrivance, and that he owes his Success more to good Management, than good Fortune; nay, he that can do thus, is the Topping Wise Man, and is thought worthy not only to *have*, but so far to *ingross* the Name, that a Shrewd Cunning Man (even in their own Language) is but another Word for a *Knave*. This is the general Sense of the World.

BUT whatever the Opinion of Men may be, we are assured by the Apostle, who had Converged in the other World as well as in this, that *the Wisdom of this World is Foolishness with God*; 1 Cor. 3. 19. and if so, to be sure 'tis Foolishness in it self, since the Intellect of God is the Measure of all Truth. And the *Psalmist* speaking of Worldly-Minded Men, that think their Houses shall continue for ever, and call their Lands after their own Names, says expressly, *Psal. 49. 13. This is their Foolishness*. And this Censure he boldly charges upon them, how singular soever it might seem; and though not only the present Generation of Men should vote them Wise, but even their Posterity; those of more Improved Reasonings, and more Inlarged Experience, should *praise their Saying*.

THUS light do these Men weigh in the Ballance of the *Sanctuary*; nor will they be found to be less wanting in that of *Reason*: For how can they deserve the Title of Wise Men, who are out in the very first and leading part of Wisdom, the Chusing of a Right End? This is such a mighty
B 4
Flaw.

Flaw, as nothing that comes after, can make up or Compensate for. When once a Man has fixed himself a wrong End, he has cut out a *false Channel* for the whole Course of his Life, which must needs be ever after one continued Mistake, one constant Blunder; and though he be never so Ingenious afterward, to compass this End, his Wisdom comes too late, and does but serve to insure and hasten his Ruin. The Ship indeed has good Sails, there is nothing wanting in the *Executive* part; but steering to a wrong Point, it has this only advantage from them, to be dashed upon the Rock with the greater Speed and Violence.

THE short is, no Man is, or ought to be accounted Wise for that wherein he is Mistaken; and that this is the case of those who propose to themselves false Ends is most certain: For no Man proposes any End but what he takes to be *Good*, and fit to be Prosecuted, Evil as Evil being not within the Possibilities of Choice, whether as to the *End* or as to the *Means*. If therefore the End prove really Evil (which is here supposed to be the Case,) 'tis otherwise than what he thought it, and consequently he was abused and imposed upon in his Choice. And now let him play his *After-Game* never so well, and pursue this his false End by never so apt and compendious Methods, the most he can pretend to, is to drive well in a false Road, and the most he can justly expect is to be thought a *Cunning*, but he must never set up for a *Wise Man*. He may indeed pass for such an one among the
Many,

Many, as an Ill Acted Part is commonly the most Applauded by the injudicious Rabble of the Theater. But this Wisdom is now Foolishness with God, the only exact and unerring Judge, and will one day be made appear so to *Angels* and *Men*. Then also shall the Children of this World, who have been so often admired and cryed up for their extraordinary Depth and Reach, and been reckon'd the Sharpest Intreaiguers and Projectors, the very *Machiavels* of their Age, confess and lament their own great Folly and Weakness, (when yet 'tis too late to be Wise,) and admire the *Wisdom* as well as the *strange Salvation* of those whose Life they once thought Madness.

AND thus I have done with the Three things implied in the Text; I now proceed in the Fourth place, to the thing directly Asserted: Which is, that notwithstanding the want of true Wisdom in the Children of this World, they are however Wiser in their Generation than the Children of Light. Or in other Words, that however they are befool'd in the Choice of their End, yet they make more prudent Provisions for its Attainment and Security, and Prosecute it by more agreeable Means, and with more Cunning and Diligence, than they who have Chosen a Better, do theirs. They are indeed worse *Proposers*, but they are better *Executors*; worse *Designers*, but better *Contrivers*: They come vastly short indeed of the Children of Light in the first part of Wisdom, the
Choice

Choice of a right End, in which respect the Child of Light has as much the Precedency in point of Wisdom, as Heaven is better than Earth; but then they exceed them as much in the Second, the Choice and Application of right Means.

Now this I shall make appear Two ways; First, Antecedently, by considering what Grounds of probability there are that it should be so. Secondly, *a posteriori*, by Comparing the Proceedings of each of these Men, whereby it will appear that it is so.

AND First, there are Grounds of probability and Presumption that it should be so: For it may be considered in the First place, that the Children of this World having chosen the Good of the Animal Life for their End, must be supposed to set the same value upon it, and to look upon it with the same Eye that the Children of Light do upon Glory and Happiness; And this notwithstanding all its real Vanity and Emptiness: For did they see and perceive that, they would never have chosen it for their End; and if they do not, then 'tis all one to them, as if it were a Solid and Substantial Good, and they prize it accordingly. Thus far therefore they both stand upon equal Ground.

BUT then Secondly, 'Tis to be considered, that although these two Ends considered Absolutely and Simply in themselves, are alike valued by their respective Proponents, (for then is a thing at the *highest* value, when 'tis made an End,)

End,) yet one of the Scales may and will receive some moments of Advantage more than the other, from some Accidental and Collateral Circumstances, which may more sensibly in dear one of these Ends, and give it a more Commanding Influence over the Soul that proposes it; Which indeed is the present Case.

FOR *1st*, The good things of this World are *Present*, those of the other *Remote* and *Distant*: How far distant, we don't know, and are therefore apt to fancy the farthest remove; like Travellers, that think the Way always longest, where they are the greatest Strangers. Now we know a present Good has a great Advantage above a far distant and late Reversion. A Candle that is near, affects us more than the Sun a great way off, and by its Neighbourhood, out-does the other's Bigness. And as 'tis in distance of *Place*, so it is in distance of *Time*; a present Good though it be less, is more affecting and inviting, than one of a more Sizable Dimension, if it be Future; and there is more Force and Virtue in one single *Now*, than in many *Hereafters*. 'Tis not in the Moral as in Physical *Statics*; there indeed that Weight weighs heaviest, which is farthest removed from the Center of Motion; but here the nearer the Weight, the stronger is its Power: And there is this convincing Reason for it, the Good that is Present, opens its self all at once to the Soul, and acts upon it with its full and intire Force; there is not so much as a Ray of its Light but what strikes us. But now that which

is future, is seen by Parts and in Succession, and a great deal of it is not seen at all; like the Rays of a too distant Object which are too much dispersed before they come at us, and so most of them miss the Eye. This makes the least present Interest, out-weigh a very considerable *Reversion*, since the former strikes upon us with the strong Influence and Warmth of the Neighbouring Sun, the latter with the Faint and Cold Glimmerings of a Twinkling Star. And accordingly the Holy Ghost takes notice of it, as an extraordinary thing in *Moses*, and that argued him to be a Person of great Presence and Discernment of Mind, that he could so rightly Calculate his Interest, as to prefer the Future Rewards of Heaven, before the Present Glories of *Egypt*.

THEN *sally*, The Good Things of this World are not only Present and at hand, but *Sure* and *Certain*; I mean as to us, for the other are no less so in themselves. *We are sure* (as *Job* says) *that there is a Vein for the Silver, and a Place for Gold where they mine it*, *Job* 28. Our Senses inform us of this, and that's a Testimony we seldom reject. As for the Place of Happiness, we have heard the Fame thereof indeed with our Ears, but have neither seen it our selves, nor discoursed with those that have; and although 'tis assured to us with as much Evidence as is consistent with the Nature and Virtue of *Faith*, nay, with almost as much as a thing Future is capable of; yet *Darkness* and *Fear* commonly go together, and Men are generally very jealous and distrustful

difficult about things whereof they are Ignorant, or half Inform'd, as Imperfect Eyes are apt to start. And though the Principles of *Faith* are in themselves as Firm and Firmer than those of *Science*, yet to us 'tis not so Evident; nor do we ever assent so strongly to what we Believe (be the Testimony never so Authentick,) as we do to what we know.

THEN 3dly, The Good Things of this World; as they are present and sure, so do they strike upon the most *Tender* and *Impressible* part about us, our Senses. They attempt us, as the Devil did *Adam*, in our Weaker part, thro' the *Eve* of our Natures. A Sensible Representation is the strongest of all Representations; a Sensible Representation, even of the *Vanity* of the World, would work more with us than the Discourse of an Angel about it; and I question not, but that *Alexander* the Great was more inwardly affected when he saw the Ruins of the Grave of *Cyrus*, when he saw so great Power reduced to such narrow Limits, such Majesty seated on such a Throne; the *Monarch* of *Asia* hid, or rather Lost in an Obscure Cave, a Stone for his Bed, Cobwebs for his Tapestry, and all his Pomp and Glory turned into Night and Darkness; I say, he was more convinced of the *Vanity* of Greatness by this lively Appeal to his Senses, than he ever was or could be by all the grave Lectures of his Master *Aristotle*. And if the *Vanity* of the World when represented to the Senses, has such vigorous Effects upon them, what shall we think of the *Glory* of it when so Represented?

sented? How would that Affect and Subdue us!

AND this the Devil very well knew and considered, when he was to Tempt the Son of God; his Design was to decoy him into Covetousness and Ambition, and in order to this, he might have entertained him with fine Discourses about the Wealth and Glories of the Terrestrial Globe, and have read him a *Geographical Lecture* upon the Kingdoms and Empires of it; but he knew his Advantage better than so, and chose rather to draw a *Visionary Landskip* before him, and present him with a Sensible Idea of all this, knowing by Old Experience how much more apt the Senses are to take Impression, than any other Faculty of Man.

Now this is the great advantage that the Good Things of this World have, they are obvious to our Senses, we *See* them, we *Hear* them, we *Smell* them, we *Tast* them, we *Feel* and *Handle* them, and have the most intimate and indearing Conversation with them; *The things that are Temporal are seen*, 2 Cor. 4. 18. says the Apostle: 'Tis their distinguishing Character. But the things that are Eternal are not seen, but only through a Glass darkly, so seen as not to be discerned; and in reference to the other World, as the same Apostle says, *We walk by Faith and not by Sight*. 2. Cor. 5. 7.

FROM these and other such Collateral Advantages which the things of this World have above those of the next, it may in the First place be presumed, that those who have erred so

so far as to make this their End, are in all probability like to Love it more Intensely, and value it more highly than the Children of Light do their End, which wants these Sensible Indearments and Recommendations. Well, and if so, then it farther follows, that of necessity they must be more heartily concerned for its Attainment, and consequently more Wary in the Choice, and more Diligent in the Use of such Means as serve to that purpose. For the Love of the Means always receives its Measure from that of the End.

AND thus we see what grounds of probability there are, that it should be so. I come now in the Second place, briefly to compare the Proceedings of each of these Men, whereby it will appear, that *de facto* it is so.

AND here First, we find by Experience, that the Men of this World do prefer their Secular Interest above all other things whatsoever; and that not only in Notion and Theory, Habitually and in General, (for that's supposed in its being made their End,) but also in every instant of Action, in all Junctures and Circumstances. Though their *End* be False, yet they are not so; but keep true to it, and always prefer it, retaining in every point of Action the very same Sense and Judgment they had of it when they first made it their Choice. And to satisfy that they are in good earnest, they will adhere to it at any rate, they will forfeit any Good, and undergo any Evil to secure this their grand

grand Stake. For will they not Rise Early, and Late take Rest, Drudge and Toil, Plot and Contrive, Cheat and Defraud, Lye and Dissemble, be of any Religion, or of no Religion, and submit to all the Basenesses imaginable, to Get or Secure, or Recover a Place of Honour or Profit? Will they not incur the Curses of the Widow and Orphan, the Contempt of Wise Men, the Hatred of Mankind, the Censures of Posterity, the Displeasure of God, and even Damnation it self for the sake of their beloved Mammon? They will; they will bustle through all this, and will gain their Point, though they lose every thing besides: And herein they are consistent with themselves, they act agreeably to their Principles.

BUT now will the Children of Light do as much for their End? Will these part with the World for Heaven, as the other will part with Heaven for the World? Will these do or suffer any thing for the Interest of their Souls, as the other will for that of their Bodies? Some few there are that will, and God add to their Number. But are there not many who Habitually and in General, have proposed to themselves Heaven for their End, and so far are supposed to give it the Preference above all; and yet when they come to be set upon by a Temptation, to have before them the Charms of Pleasure, or the Terrors of Pain, or to be pressed with either Hopes of Gain, or Fear of Loss; in short, when they come to have any other considerable Interest brought into Competition with

with that which they made their End, will they not then suffer a present Interruption of their former Judgment, and actually undervalue what they *Habitually* prefer? Will they not enter into a Cloud of Darkness and Obscurity, lose the present Light of their former Convictions, and so act as Foolishly as those that never had any better Principles, or truer Sentiments? Will they not prove False to their Cause and to themselves, make a Foolish Exchange, let go the Substance and catch at the Shadow? Will they not refuse to take up the Crown for fear of the Thorns that guard it, and chuse rather to lose Heaven than be Translated thither in a Fiery Chariot? Yes, 'tis to be feared that most of them will; and that of those many that have proposed Heaven as their End, there are but few that would have the Courage to be *Martyrs* for it.

AGAIN Secondly, The Children of this World as they will spare no *Pains*, so will they lose no *Time* or *Opportunity* for the Securing a Temporal Interest. They greedily Seize upon the next Minute, take Opportunity by the *Forelock*, and make haste to be Rich, though by doing so, they know they shall not be Innocent. They carefully observe every Season, lay hold upon the First that comes, and will be sure to strike Sail with the very next Wind that will carry them to their Port. They know very well, that the present time is the only time they are Masters of, and that they may reckon upon as their own, and therefore *that* they will be sure

to Improve, and not trust to the Uncertainties and Contingencies of Futurity. Let but a Question arise about their Title to their Estate, and they can't sleep till it be clear'd up, and confirm'd. Let but a Place of Dignity or Profit fall, and with what Expedition do these Eagles repair to the Carcass! They take the Wings of the *Morning*, perhaps of the *Night* too, and fly as if running for a Prize, or chased by an Enemy.

BUT now, are the Children of Light such Prizers of Time, and such Improvers of Opportunity? 'Twere well if they were. For what is more common than to see Men, not only the professedly wicked and profligate, but even those who have set their Faces *Sionward*, and propose Heaven as their End, to procrastinate and adjourn their Repentance from Day to Day, from Month to Month, from Year to Year, to delay their Preparations for Eternity, and to Sleep soundly and securely, in a *Doubtful*, and sometimes in a *Damnable* and Irreconciled State; and all this, though they know how short and uncertain their Lives are, that 'tis but a *Breath* and a *Vapor* that soon passes away, and we are gone. Though they know that there is but this one time of Probation, and that *there is no Work, nor Device, nor Knowledge, nor Wisdom in the Grave*, Eccl. 9. 10. Though they know that *Now is the Accepted Time, that Now is the Day of Salvation*, 2 Cor. 6. 2.

A G A I N Thirdly, the Children of this World,

World, as they will lose no Time, so neither will they let slip any other Advantage of advancing their Fortunes, and of providing against a Wet Day. They twist their own Interest with the Interest of their Friends, seek out for all Helps, and make use of the *Best*, and take the advantage of every Rising Ground. They have also a quick Eye upon all Revolutions, suppose themselves in all possible Cases, and make early Preparations for every Accident. They sit like Wary and Watchful Spiders in the Heart of their Webs, and there with a quick and perceptive Sense, they feel out the least Disturbances that threaten the Security of their little Tenement. Nor do they smell out Danger more suddenly than they provide against it. Thus the unjust Steward; when he foresaw he should quit his *Office*, and in that his *Livelihood*, and be turned loose to the wide World; he presently bethought him of a Plank to Swim upon, made an Interest with his Lord's Debtors, by under-rating their Accounts, that so when his *Master* should Discard him, *they* in Requital of his Kindness, might Receive and Harbour him.

BUT now are the Children of Light so careful to make use of all Helps and Means that may further them in the Attainment of their Great End? Such as the Grace of God, Happiness of Temper and Complexion, Good Education, Well-disposed Circumstances of Life, the Good Examples of others, Advice of Spiritual Persons,

and the like. Besides, are they also so Frugal and Provident, so Forecasting and Contriving for the future? Are they so careful in the day of Grace to lay up in Store against a Spiritual Famine, in the days of Peace to Store themselves with Spiritual Armour against the time of Persecution, in the time of Life and Health to provide against the Hour of Sickness and Death, and by a Wise Dispensation of the fading and unrighteous Mammon, to procure to themselves everlasting Habitations? Are they? Every ones Experience and Observation may assure him that they are not.

ONCE more, the Children of this World, as they Catch at all Advantages that may further their Grand Affair, so are they withal as careful to avoid all *Occasions* of Loss and Damage; they love to tread upon firm Ground, shun Hazards as well as actual Misfortunes, and won't so much as come within the *Smell* of Danger. How Shy is the Man of Interest, of lighting among such Company as he thinks will be apt to borrow Money of him, draw him into Suretyship, or betray him into any Expences! Does he not fly from these as from the Snares of Death, or from the Face of a Serpent?

BUT do the Children of Light take the same Care to avoid all Appearances of Evil, all Spiritual Dangers, and all Occasions and Temptations of Sinning against God and their own Happiness? We Pray indeed, and our Saviour has taught us to do so, that God would not
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lead us into Temptation: But don't we often lead our Selves into as Bad as the Worst of those we can Pray against? We venture oftentimes causelessly and rashly within reach of the Devil's Chain, and are not afraid to stir up and awake that Roaring Lyon: We love to play with Danger, to handle Knives and Razors, to walk upon Slippery Ground, to stand upon Turrets and Battlements, and to hazard our Vertue and Innocence, by *Needless*, and sometimes *Doubtful* Trials, where if we should Overcome, the Victory would scarce atone for the Imprudence. So much do the Children of this World exceed the Children of Light in Wisdom.

Thus it is, and to our great shame we must Confess it: There is no Doubt or Dispute in the Victory, the Contention has been all along very unequal, and the Odds very apparent; we are utterly *Distanc'd* in the Race, and see the Prize of Wisdom born away before us. We have indeed in our Eye a much Nobler Mark, but we want a steady Hand. Our End is better than theirs, but our Management is not so good. And what a shame is it for us that have propos'd a Greater and a better End, and are also more Instructed in the Choice of Means, (which are pointed out and described to us by God himself,) to be yet so far out-witted by those of Lower Aims, and who are sain to Study and Contrive their own Means, and whose Wisdom after all, is Foolishness with God! And yet thus it is, the Devil's Scholars are better Pro-

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ficients

ficients than Christ's Disciples; the Ark falls before *Dagon*, and Light is outshone by Darkness.

WHAT therefore remains, but that since we will not Learn in *Christ's*, we should be sent to the *Devil's* School, and imitate the Politicks of the Dark Kingdom, and of the Children of this World? Imitate them I say, not in the Choice of the *End*, (which indeed is very Poor and Low,) but in that *Wisdom*, Diligence and Care wherewith they prosecute it, and be as Wise at least unto *Salvation*, as they are to *Destruction*. Go to the *Ant* thou *Sluggard*, says *Solomon*, consider her *Ways*, and be *Wise*, Prov. 6. 6. And may I not in like manner bespeak the greatest part even of Piously disposed Christians, Go to the Men of the World, and learn *Wisdom*?

LET us then be as Wise as these Serpents; and since we have Chosen the *Better Part*, and are so nigh to the Kingdom of God, let us not for the want of *One* thing, miss of being compleatly Wise and Happy. But as we have made a good Choice, let us prosecute it with equal Prudence. So will our *Wisdom* be Whole and Intire, Uniform and Consistent, Blameless and Irreprehensible; in a Word, that *Wisdom* which shall be *Justified of all her Children*.

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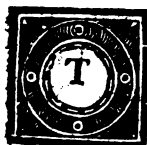
DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

Righteous and Unrighteous Judgment.

JOHN 7. 24.

Judge not according to the Appearance, but Judge Righteous Judgment.



THAT which the great *Descartes* makes necessary to a *Philosopher*; is indeed no less so to a *Christian*; to strip and devert himself of all Prejudices and Partialities, to unravel all his former Sentiments, to unthink all his Pre-conceived Opinions, and so reduce his Soul to the natural Simplicity of a *Blank Table*, and to the Indifference of an even and well poised Balance. For as it matters much in reference to our Actions, what our Sentiments and Judgments of things are (because we always act as at that present instant we think,) so does it to the Regularity and Uprightness of our Judgments what the Temper and Disposition of our Mind is. The *Wise Ben-Sirach* has long since observed, that *Wisdom will not enter into a Polluted Spirit*; and

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St. Paul, that the Animal Man perceives not the things of God, 1 Cor. 2. 14. There are it seems some *Moral* as well as *Natural* Dispositions of the Man that make the Soul unfit for Knowledge, and till these Scales fall off from her Eyes, she cannot see. But the *Pythagoreans* went higher, and taught their Disciples, χειρισθὲν ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος θεῖς τὸ ἄλλως φιλοσοφεῖν, that they must separate and unwind themselves even from their very Bodies, if they would be good Philosophers. This in a Qualified and Corrected Sense is true, for the Body is the great Impediment and Disadvantage of the Soul, and therefore all Bodily Passions and Inclinations, as well as Intellectual Habits and Appetites must be put to *Silence*, in the still and *Attentive Search* and *Inquiry* after Truth. But to the present purpose, it will be enough to remark, that Prejudices and Prepossessions as well as vitious Habits, a cross Constitution, and a gross Texture of Blood and Spirits, do Cloud and Pervert the Understanding, and take away the *Key* of Knowledge. This is that *Veil* which (as the Apostle complains) 2 Cor. 3. 4. remain'd untaken away upon the *Jews*, in the Reading of the Old Testament. And which hindered them from understanding it, and made them stand out in defiance against all the Divine Precepts and Convincing Works of the Son of God, whose Divinity through this Veil of Prejudice they could not discern. It was a greater hindrance to them in distinguishing the Character of his Person, than the Veil of his own Flesh was, or the *Mystery*

stery of the *Incarnation*. This therefore must be removed by the Christian as well as by the Philosopher, and the Soul must be Purged before it can be enlightened; Freed from Prejudices and false Appearances before it can be from Errors and Misapprehensions. Without this Purity of *Heart*, there will be so little Clearness of *Head*, that let our Parts stand upon never so great Advantages, either of Art or of Nature, we shall neither be right in our Determinations of things, nor just in our Censure of Persons; neither Wise in our Discourses, nor Righteous in our Sentences; we shall neither maintain *Truth* nor *Charity*. All which is briefly Intimated and summarily Contained in this Admonition of our Saviour to the prejudiced and partially affected *Jews*, *Judge not according to the Appearance, but Judge Righteous Judgment.*

IN Discourfing upon which Words, I shall First of all Inquire, what it is in general to Judge according to Appearance?

SECONDLY, Whether all Judging according to Appearance, be opposed to Judging Righteous Judgment, and consequently here forbidden?

THIRDLY, If all be not, which it is that is so?

LASTLY, I shall shew the great Reasonableness and Necessity of the Precept, and Conclude.

I begin with the first Inquiry, what it is in general to Judge according to *Appearance*. Now this
this

this will be best known, by considering the import of the Terms severally. By *Judging* therefore, is properly understood that action of the Mind which either joins the Attribute with the Subject, or separates it from it. Or to speak less Artificially, and more to Common Apprehension, which either affirms or denies one thing of another. By *Appearance*, I understand the Representation of the Object to the Mind, with its Motives and Arguments, true or false, in order either to assent or dissent. So that to Judge according to Appearance, is in other Words to affirm or deny one thing of another, upon the representation of certain Arguments, or Motives, to *Believe, Think,* or to be *Assured* that a thing is so or so, upon such and such Grounds; and so it takes in the Three-fold kind of Assent, and that in all the variety of Degree, *Faith, Opinion,* and *Science*, with this only difference between them, that whereas Faith and Opinion do not necessarily suppose a firm Foundation, but are indifferent to due and undue Appearances, (for a Man may believe and think upon false as well as upon good Grounds,) Science does always suppose a due and regular Appearance of the Object, and cannot proceed but upon sufficient Grounds.

AND this I think sufficient in Answer to the First Question; I proceed therefore to inquire Secondly, whether all Judging according to Appearance, be opposed to judging

Righteous

Righteous Judgment, and consequently here forbidden. But we need not inquire long about it, for 'tis most certain that all is not; for if it were, there could then be no such thing as that *Righteous Judgment* which our Saviour Commands, and therefore *Supposes*. Nay, there could be no such thing as Judging at all, because all manner of Judgment is grounded upon the Appearance of things, and without some motive of Persuasion, some shew of Truth, no Man can in any degree be Persuaded. For the Understanding can no more be determined without an Appearance of *Truth*, than the Will can without an Appearance of *Good*: And consequently 'tis as absurd, that all *Judging* according to Appearance should be Criminal, as that all *Willing* according to Appearance should be so. For then indeed all manner of Judgment would be Unrighteous, and a Man could not use his Intellectual Faculty, but he must Sin; which would introduce a new and unheard of *Scepticism* into the World, and oblige Men to suspend the Exercise of their Intellectual Powers, not because there is no Truth, but because 'tis not lawful to Embrace her.

SINCE therefore, all Judging according to Appearance, is not opposed to Righteous Judgment, nor consequently here forbidden, it concerns us to inquire in the Third place, which it is that is so.

AND First, to Judge Ill of a Man upon clear and full Evidence, is not that Judging according

according to Appearance, which is here Forbidden, as opposed to Righteous Judgment: Nay, this is the most Righteous Judgment that can be, for this is the due use of our Judging Faculty, in the right Exercise whereof, 'tis impossible there should be any Miscarriage. I do not make a meer Judging Rightly, or according to what is *True*, to be a due use of our Understandings; for though a Man give his Judgment according to Truth, yet if he be determined to such an Assent by incompetent Motives, he does not use his Understanding aright; but if it be in a Matter of bare Speculation, is guilty of *Levity* and *Rashness*; if in a thing wherein his Brothers Reputation is concerned, of *Uncharity* and *Censoriousness*. But if my Judgment of another be never so Ill, provided the Evidence be Full and Clear, I make a right use of my Judging Faculty, nor can my Judgment be taxed as Unrighteous. And upon this Principle relies all the Innocence and Equity of Courts of Justice, the severest of whose *Verdicts* are Justified by the Sufficiency of the *Evidence*.

AND there is the same common Reason and Measure for the more private Court of *Conscience*, that there is for the more Publick ones, and that which warrants the Proceedings of either, will justifie both; so that if it be lawful for a Jury to bring in a Verdict of the highest Guilt against a Man upon clear Evidence, any Private Person may also upon the like Grounds pass

pass the like Ill Judgment concerning any Man within his own Breast, and in his Thoughts pronounce him a Criminal, if he has good Evidence for such a Judgment. Thus if I see a Man live in a constant course of Vice, in open Defiance to all Laws both Human and Divine; to Wallow in all manner of Bestiality, and Drink down Iniquity with Greediness, I may safely and innocently pronounce him an Ill Man. First, because 'tis not in a Man's Power to suspend such a Judgment, any more than 'tis to resist a Demonstration in *Mathematicks*. The Truth thrusts her self upon me, and I cannot put her back, she will be imbraced and I cannot refuse her; I may wink against the *Sun*, but I cannot shut my Eyes against *Manifest Truth*: And to pretend *Charity* here, is ridiculous; for however Charity may oblige me to Believe and Hope the Best, where there is any room for a favourable Construction, yet certainly it does not oblige me to put out my Eyes, and reject all the information of my Senses: Neither is it possible for me to do so. But suppose I *could* resist such a Judgment, yet I *need* not, because Secondly, in such a Case, there is no wrong done to the Party whom my Censure concerns: He is represented in a faithful Glass, censured after his due Character, and called by his proper Name, and therefore cannot complain of an Injury, without committing one. *Acts 13. 10.* O full of all Subtilty and all Mischief, thou Child of the Devil; thou Enemy of all Righteousness, said
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St. Paul to *Elymas* the Sorcerer, when he saw him endeavouring to turn away the Deputy from the Christian Faith. And *have not I chosen Twelve, and one of you is a Devil*, said our Blessed Saviour. Both these Charges went very high, but the Evidence of the Guilt bore Proportion to them, and that was their Justification. 'Tis therefore very Warrantable to pass a severe Judgment upon a Man, when 'tis plain and out of all question that he deserves it. Nay, 'tis not only Warrantable, but in several respects of great Use and Necessity; for by this Means I am instructed to inlarge my Litany, both for his Conversion, and for my own Deliverance, to apply Reproofs and Advices with all other Methods of Reformation, to beware of his Contagion my self, and in great Measure to prevent its diffusion among others. Whereas if we suffer our Eyes to be so far blinded by a pretended Charity, as not to see the Devil under his Monastick Disguise, he has what he could wish, and what Ill Men use to wish;

Noctem Peccatis, & Fraudibus objice Nubem.

to be Skreen'd about with the Shades of Night, and to Sin in a Cloud, and will do the more Mischief for not being better Understood, and destroy like *the Pestilence that walketh in Darkness*, P^{sal.} 91. 6.

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BUT Secondly, to judge Ill of a Man upon such a Concurrence of shrewd Circumstances as makes up what we call a *Moral Demonstration*, is not that Judging according to Appearance, which is here Condemned. This is also so frequently rely'd upon in Courts of Justice, where Sentence of Death is often given upon such Evidence; nay the greatest part of Human Affairs is known to turn upon this Hinge, and indeed not without good Reason. For although this be an inferiour degree of Evidence, and such as leaves an Absolute Possibility that the thing may be otherwise, yet it secures a Man from all *Fear* of the Contrary; and a Traveller may as little doubt of his way when lightened by the numerous Union of little Splendors in the Milky Way, as when he has the Broad Eye of Heaven for his Guide. For though every single Circumstance in this great heap of Inducements, has but the force of a Probability, and consequently all together can produce no more than that by a proper and direct efficacy; yet there is a new and secondary Force that arises from Reflection; and the *Confederate* Probabilities, weigh more in their Conjunction, than not only some, but even all of them would do *Singly*. Indeed they fall little short of a strict Demonstration, it being hardly conceivable how there should be such a conflux of Arguments upon one side of the Contradiction if the Truth were not there too.

AND moreover there is one Advantage that a Moral Demonstration has above a Physical one, namely,

namely, that there can be no contrary Demonstration brought against it. 'Tis otherwise in the latter; as for Instance, in that endless and unbounded Controversy concerning the Composition of a *Continuum* and the infinite Divisibility of Quantity, where there are plain Demonstrations (that is, such as by Men of Art and Subtily cannot be discern'd from such,) on both sides, which yet are Contradictory. But now, this a Moral Demonstration does not admit of, since it cannot lay claim to that Name till after the Probabilities of both sides have been Compared, and one Scale mightily outweighs the other. Whenever therefore there is this Evidence for any Man's Wickedness, I may safely

* See a short, but very convincing Account of this matter in Dr. Burnet's *Latin Theory*; the Second Part. Pag. 126.

condemn him as Guilty. * Thus, that the See of Rome is the Seat of Antichrist, though this be not evident up to the degree of Physical Demonstration, yet when I consider what the Notes and Marks of Antichrist are, how various in their Number, how considerable in their Quality, and how exactly they all agree to a certain Order of Men in the World, and to none besides, together with all the variety of Concurrence in point of *Synchronisms* and the like; I suppose I might without any danger of Censoriousness or Uncharity, write *Mystery* upon the Triple Crown, and conclude him that wears it to be *the Man of Sin*. This would not be that Judging according to Appearance, which is opposed to Righteous Judgment.

As it is not, in the Third place, to suspect Ill of a Person upon considerable signs and circumstances, that is, upon such as would determin my Opinion in any other Matter wholly indifferent, and where I have no Interest, Passion, or Prejudice concern'd, to have it thus or otherwise. To pronounce Absolutely and Peremptorily in such a case, would indeed be a degree of Censoriousness beyond the allowance of either Charity or Prudence, because the Conclusion would then exceed the force of the Premises, which is ill in *Logick*, and worse in *Morality*; but a bare Suspicion is very Warrantable upon such grounds, and consistent with the highest Charity and Prudence of a Christian; for *Suspicion* is not Evil as Suspicion, being as such only a certain degree of Assent, which cannot be evil in its own Nature, but is either so or otherwise, according as the grounds are upon which it proceeds. Indeed to be *Suspicious*, we commonly take in an Ill Sense, and reckon it among the Characters of an Ill Man, not that we think *Suspecting* to be in it self unlawful, but because we suppose the Man whom we call Suspicious, more apt and forward to entertain ill Suspicions, than in the reason of the thing he ought to be. But if the grounds of my Suspicion be just and reasonable, such as considering Men use to be determined by in other matters of acknowledged Indifferency, it will then be as lawful for me to Suspect as to Judge more absolutely upon grounds that are more clear and evident.

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T H E R E

THERE are (I observe) a certain sort of Men in the World who are not only careless and regardless of their Behaviour, not using that Caution and Circumspection which they ought and easily might for the prevention of ill Suspicions, but studiously order the course of their Conversation so, as if they were fond of Jealousies, and laid a Trap for Censure, and designed to *decoy* Men into an ill opinion of them; and then (which is the most surprising thing of all,) as soon as they have caught their Prey, and are thought and spoken amiss of, they cry out, the World is censorious, and where's your Charity? But in the First place, are not these Men even with the World? Don't they Censure as much as they themselves are Censured? But to let that pass, how do they make good their Charge? Why, they say they are Innocent, they are not the Men the World has taken and represented them for. It may be so, but sure my Charity does not stand or fall with the Truth of your Guilt, the Question as to that being not whether you are really the Man I took you to be, but whether you have not given me just and reasonable grounds to think so. And if you have, 'tis not your *Innocence* that will condemn me of unjust Censure, any more than it will acquit you from the Crime of *Scandal*.

If therefore these great Pretenders to Charity and Candor, would have the ill-natured World leave off Censuring according to such Appearances, let them be more careful to abstain from all

Appear-

Appearances of Evil; for as long as Men put on bears Skins, the Dogs will Bark; and to be angry with them if they do, is as absurd as to give them the Occasion. For what if you walk not in the *Counsel of the Ungodly*? yet if you *stand in the way of Sinners*, and *sit in the Seat of the Scornful*, if you have all the Symptoms and Appearances of an ill-Man, I have good grounds to suspect you are such, and a well grounded Suspicion is always according to Charity. Thus if a Man who for many Years past, has been vehemently suspected to be of a different Religion from that which he openly Professes, should at length when the warm influence of a like-perswaded Princes Favour, incites him to come abroad and dismantle his Secrecies, and at such a period of this Life, too, when 'tis to be presumed that the vibration of his Judgment has been long since over, and settled at the point of its gravity, and that he had no new Changes to make; if I say, he should then appear to be what the World took him for long before, I hope 'tis a pardonable Censure, if I think he has been a Dissembling Hypocrite all along, and that he would have continued so to the last, if Opportunity and Countenance had not put an end to his Dissimulation.

To think Ill of a Man upon such Grounds and Appearances as these, is to think *rationally*, and how can he transgress, that duly follows the conduct of his Reason? The Wise Son of *Sirach* allows greater Liberty, when he tells us, that a *Man's Attire, Excess of Laughter and Gait, shew what*

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what he is; that is, afford us just Measure whereby to judge of him, to judge him to be none of the Wisest. And our Saviour reproves the *Jews* for not discerning the face of the Times, *Luke 12. 56.* And if a Man may Judge of the Times, then why not of those that live in them, and upon whose account alone it is that one Time is distinguished from another in relation to Good or Evil? In all this therefore we sin not, nor charge our Neighbours foolishly. But this we do.

FIRST, Whenever we take up an Ill Opinion of a Man rashly and suddenly, and at first dash prick him down for a Knave, without so much as giving our selves the trouble of inquiring into the merits of the cause; there are too many that do so, that let their Thoughts and Tongues too run before their Wit; that throw out their Censures at random, and speak Evil *extempore*, without considering of *whom* they talk, or *what* or *why*: Men that are for running down every one that comes in their way, and are for passing Sentence immediately without any trial or examination, nay, without so much as the formality of asking, *Guilt* or *not Guilt*. This is certainly a very preposterous headlong method against all sense and good breeding as well as Charity. 'Tis like the *Jews* that were all for Crucifying the Lord of Life before they had heard him. But this is such a gross piece of Injustice as sufficiently condemns it self; and therefore that I shall farther say to the Men

this Practice is; that he who makes haste to *Censure*, can no more be Innocent, than he that makes haste to be *Rich*; and that if we ought to consider before we venture to *Commend*, (as Wise Men say we ought) then much more ought we before we *Condemn*.

SECONDLY, When though we do consider, and make some enquiry into the cause, and withal find some ground and foundation for an ill Judgment, yet we conclude beyond the force of the Premises, and give a Peremptory Sentence, where there are grounds for no higher an Assent, than Opinion or Suspicion. This is a certain sign that we are not determined by the Moments of Truth, by the strength of Reason and Argument; but by some other By-Consideration and partial Inducement. For were our Judgments guided and determined by the sole Appearances of Truth, 'tis impossible that our Assent should be stronger than the Evidence that causes it. For the Understanding of it self, can be determined no farther than as the Object appears to be either true or false; if it be, all that over plus of Judgment that exceeds the degrees of Evidence, must be produced by some other cause; the Evidence alone could cause no more than what was proportionable to it. There is indeed a mixture in all such Judgments, and the *Will* has a part in them as well as the *Understanding*. He therefore that concludes worse of another than in Appearance he has reason to do, must be in some measure *willing* to do so, that is, in other Words to be under some Malice or Prejudice against him;

and he that judges upon such Principles, can never judge Righteous Judgment.

THIRDLY, This we do when we conceive an ill Apprehension of a Person from one or two single instances of his Life, without considering the general tenour of his Conversation; This is a very unjust way of proceeding, and contrary to all Human and Divine Measures. The main current of a Man's Life is to be regarded, and if this maintain a regular Course, 'tis not here and there a little straggling Rivulet that should spoil the Character. For if the Denomination ought always to be taken from the major part, certainly much more so when it lies on the most favourable side. To ballance therefore one single *wandering Star* against a whole *Constellation* of regular actions, is a very ill sort of unrighteous Judgment, and such as the best of Men could never be able to abide, who must needs all be cast in such a Court as this. Such a way of Judging therefore, is not to be indured, especially considering that the Supreme Judge of all, does not Judge us at this rate, but often proceeds by a contrary measure, and suffers one single Vertue to cover a multitude of Sins.

FOURTHLY and Lastly, To give one general Measure for all; this we do whenever our ill Opinion of a Man is built upon such poor and slight appearances, as would not be sufficient to gain our Assent in any other indifferent matter, wherein we are altogether disinterested which way the Scale turns, or prevail with us to think

think the same concerning another Person. This is a sure Sign that Prejudice holds the Ballance, ('tis held so uneven,) and that we judge what we would willingly *have*. And this is more particularly that judging according to appearance, which our Lord here condemns. For thus stood the Case, our Saviour had perform'd a Cure upon the Sabbath-day, among those who were Superstitious Observers of it; now this carried some Appearance of its Violation; Whereupon the *Jews* tax him with prophaning that Holy *Rest*, not at all reflecting either upon *Moses's* seeming inconsistency, in appointing such a troublesome work as *Circumcision* to be done on that day, as often as it happened to be the *Eighth*, or upon *themselves* for then administering it. But the reason was plain, they were soundly prejudiced against *Christ*, but not against *Moses* or *themselves*. Well therefore might our Lord say, *if a Man on the Sabbath-day receive Circumcision, that the Law of Moses should not be broken, are ye angry at me, because I have made a Man every whit whole on the Sabbath-day? Will you wound upon that day, and shall not I heal?* Judge not according to Appearance, (*Ker: 7^o 1^o*, according to every slight superficial Appearance, such as you your selves would not submit to in another case,) but Judge Righteous Judgment The great Reasonableness and Necessity of which Precept comes now in the last place to be considered.

Its Equity relies mainly upon this double ground, the ill Principle that such superficial

Judging proceeds from, and the Ill consequences it leads to,

FIRST, It proceeds from an ill Principle; it argues First, that we are conscious of some inward Baseness in our selves, something that is very low and sordid, which makes us so prone and easie to suspect the same in others; as he that is Drunk himself, fancies every one else to be so that he meets. It argues Secondly, that we thirst after Eminency, and yet despair of attaining it any other way, than by levelling those about us; which makes us so ready and willing to discover Spots in the Moon, and Flaws in the most Solid and *Massy* Vertue. It argues Thirdly, a Mind very disaffected to our Neighbour, to Human Nature indeed, and as much alienated from the true Spirit of Love and Goodness. That we are full of Envy, Pride, Malice and Prejudice; that we love to dwell upon Sores and Deformities, that we take a secret pleasure in the Follies and Infirmities of Mankind, and grieve at that whereat the Angels rejoyce, namely, the wise Behaviour and good order of Men, all which is Inhuman and Diabolical, fit only for Devils and Evil Spirits, but altogether contrary to the *unselfish universaliz'd* nature of God, who rejoyced when he saw all things good and perfect; and to *Charity*, whose Character *St. Paul* tells us, is, that *it rejoyces not in Iniquity*, 1 Cor. 13. 6.

BUT Secondly, the *Consequences* of this sort of Judging are as bad as the Principle; for *1st*, He that proceeds to Judgment upon every little Appearance,

pearance, must needs be often mistaken, and give Sentence with an *Erring Key*, and so often incur that Woe pronounced by the Prophet against all such as call Evil Good, and Good Evil; *Isa. 5. 20.* because Falshood often wears the guise of Truth, and things seem otherwise than they are. Thus the Affability and free Conversation of our Saviour, which was really the effect of his great Humility and condescending Goodness, and of his earnest desire to benefit Mankind, was hardly Censured by the Maligning *Jews*, and misconstrued as a piece of Levity and Dissoluteness; *Behold say they, a Man Gluttonous, and a Wine-bibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners: Mat. 11. 19.* By this means we shall mis-rate both Persons and Things, and often deny those our good word, who it may be, if better known, deserve even our Reverence and Admiration, By this means private Grudges will be entertain'd, and open Quarrels will be broach'd, Mens Affections will be groundlesly and unaccountably estranged from one another, the Bands of Friendship will be untyed, and Men will be jealous and afraid of their dearest well-wishers; good Constitutions will suffer for Personal Mis-carriages, good Churches for unworthy Members, good Religions for ill Professors, good Councils and good Causes for their ill Success; and lastly, that good Reputation which all Men exceedingly value, and which some Men have a fair Right to, and which the Wisest of Men prefers before great Riches, *Prov. 22. 4.* will

will be wounded by the Roving Shot of every Gossipping Tongue.

To which I may add in the last place, that when Men have once accustomed themselves to hard Censures, upon small Appearances, they will be apt to enlarge their Court of Judicature, and from Censuring the Actions of *Men*, proceed to Question and Condemn the Dispensations of *Providence*, and say with the Impious House of *Israel*, *the way of the Lord is not equal*.

It concerns us all therefore to use that Faculty with great Discretion, upon the right or wrong use of which so much depends; to Judge with Caution, and Circumspection, and Mercy here, lest we find Judgment without Mercy hereafter.

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DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

Religious Singularity.

ROM. 12. 2.

Be not Conformed to this World.



ONE of the greatest Supporters of Absurdity in Speculation, and of Immorality in Practice, is *Authority*; that of *Doctrine* in the former, and that of *Example* in the latter. It misguides and perverts the whole Man, puts a false Bias upon the whole motion of the Soul, imposes both upon our Understandings and upon our Wills, corrupts both our Sentiments, and our Practices, and leads us out of the way both of *Truth* and *Vertue*. But it has a greater and more prevailing influence upon our Actions than upon our Sentiments, and our Lives suffer more by it than our Opinions. For besides, that there are more Examples of Ill Living than of Ill Thinking, and a well-moralized Conversation, is a greater Rarity, than an Orthodox Head, there being not such Temptations and Occasions to *Error* as there are to *Vice*; there is also this further difference, that in our O-
pinions

pinions we more usually follow those Authorities which stand off at a great distance from us, and which Antiquity by I know not what Artifice; recommend to us as Sacred and Venerable, But in our *Actions* we take a quite contrary measure, and are rather apt to conform our selves to the Genius and Mode of the Age we live in, which being present, shines upon us with a direct and perpendicular Ray, and more strongly influences and provokes our Imitation and Compliance.

AND truly this is the greatest Mischief that is derived upon the Minds of Men from Authority, and the chiefest Head of Complaint that lies against it; were it only a Stop to the Advancement of Learning, or a Misleader of our Understandings in Speculative Inquiries; were it only a Bar to Notional Improvements, or a Betrayer of our Orthodoxy, it might be thought to have done Penance enough under the Chastisement of a Satyr or Declamation. For the greatest stock of Knowledge which upon the best Advantages we can attain to, is so inconsiderable, that 'tis hardly worth while to be very angry and fall out with what stands in our way, and hinders our little Progress. There is no great Mischief done; 'tis like spoiling what was spoil'd before, and which otherwise would come to little. But since 'tis the great Enemy to all Righteousness, as well as to all Truth, since it debauches our Morals as well as our Understandings, and spoils the *Christian* as well as the *Philosopher*, 'tis fit it should be arraigned before an higher Court, and be Condemned by

by the Censure of an *Apostle*, And so it is, and that upon great and weighty Reasons, in the Words of the Text, *Be not Conformed to this World.*

IN the Words we may consider a *Supposition* and a *Caution*. The *Supposition* is Twofold.

FIRST, that the general course of the World is very bad, and that Vice has by much the Majority of its side.

SECONDLY, That we are naturally apt to imitate that which is most prevailing, and to conform to the course and way of the World.

LASTLY, the *Caution* is against this Inclination, that we should not be Conformed to the modes and usages of this World; which I shall first *state* as to its Measure and Limits, and then *Justifie* as to its Equity and Reasonableness; and so conclude with some Practical Remarks upon the whole.

AND in the First Place, 'tis here supposed, that the general course of the World is very bad, and that Vice has by much the Majority of its side. This, though at first sight it looks like a *Common Place*, a matter of frequent, obvious and familiar Consideration, is yet a thing that is not often thoroughly considered, and there are but few that have a true, lively and affectionate Sense of it. 'Tis not easie for those that are good themselves, to imagine how bad others are, and how much Wickedness there is in the World; and as for Evil Men, they don't use to trouble their Heads with such serious Reflections: So that neither of them

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are like to have a just sense and resentment of this matter.

THE World we commonly compare to a *Theatre*; and truly for the number of Actors, and the variety of Action, 'tis the most Pompous and Magnificent of any; but the Parts that are acted upon it, are for the most, very Tragical, and its Scenes full of Horror and Confusion. For not to mention unjust and causeless Wars, Massacres, Rebellions and Murthers, which like *Earth-quakes* make the frame of Nature to tremble, and threaten the fall of the Stage upon which they are Acted; who can reckon up the open Oppressions, and the secret Frauds, the Violences and the Deceits, the Extortions and the Over-reachings, with all the Arts of Falshood and Subtilty which are every where and every day made use of among Men, to dispossess one another of their Rights and Fortunes? And who is there that can imagine what private Insinuations, what sly Contrivances, what spiteful Whisperings, what treacherous Arts there are daily used even among those that profess Dearness and Kindness to one another, to undermine one anothers Interest, and blast one anothers Honours and Reputations? I need not go to the Courts of Princes for this, those Schools and Nurseries of Immorality, for there is scarce any Society of Men free from it. To this, if I should add the unnatural Feuds of Relations, the ungrateful Returns of obliged Persons, the Treacheries of the Marriage-Bed, the Falshesses of Friends, the Ill Offices of Neighbours, and the Intolerable Practices

Etices of Revenge, not only upon pretences of Honour among the *Duellists*, but as they are generally carried on by the Power and Interest of great Men, by the corrupt and vexatious methods of the Law, and by the common malice of the World; if I say I should add this and a thousand times more that might be said, what a Picture should I draw of Mankind, and what intelligent Spirit is there that would not be afraid, (if such an account should be given him before-hand,) to be *Born* into, or to *Live* in such a World as this?

BUT thus it was immediately upon the beginning of things, thus it has been in all Ages, and thus it will be till the Arch-Angel's Trumpet shall at once awaken us from the sleep of Death, and from the sleep of Sin, and Time it self shall be no more. For no sooner had God finished his Creation, and declared all things good in it, and began to take a Complacency in the works of his Hands, but *through Envy of the Devil, Sin came into the World*, and untuned the proportions of its new set Harmony; and being once planted in the Earth, it liked the Soil, and increased and multiplied by the care and industry of the Devil, as fast as Mankind could by the *Benediction* of God. Infomuch that God who not long before was represented by *Moses* as Creating Man upon the most considerate Pause of Counsel and Deliberation, is now brought in, repenting that ever he had made him, *Gen. 6. 6.* And accordingly, he first shortens his Days, and that expedient failing, he proceeds to a severer Judgment, and issues forth a

Sentence

Sentence to destroy him from the face of the Earth, *Ver. 5.* For God saw that the Wickedness of Man was great, and that every Imagination of the Thoughts of his Heart was evil continually. And again the Text says, that God look'd upon the Earth, and behold it was Corrupt, for all Flesh had Corrupted his way upon the Earth, *Ver. 12.*

AND truly 'tis incredible almost to think to what a pitch of Villany and Wickedness the World was then arrived in so short a time; the World then like some of our Modern Sinners, was young in Years and old in Debauchery; it look'd as if the Devil being newly thrown out of Heaven, were in the very height of his Malice and Resentment, and to retrieve again the lost Field, endeavoured to increase his Numbers, to double his Ranks by making Men as very Devils as himself. For Vice seem'd to reign Absolute and Uncontroul'd, and to have taken full Possession of the whole Earth, so that excepting only Four Persons, *Abel, Seth, Enos, and Enoch,* we read not of one good Man from *Adam* to *Noah*; so extreamly Wicked and Debauch'd was the World at that time, and so highly deserving of that Emphatical Character which the Apostle *St. Peter* gives of it, calling it *κοσμος ανομιων, the World of the Ungodly: 2 Pet. 2, 5.* As if it were a state directly opposite to that of the Blessed Millennium, to that new Heaven and new Earth, wherein, as the same Apostle tells us, *dwelleth Righteousness.*

BUT this you'll say, was at a time when God had

had not given any express Directory for the Manners of Men, who were then left to the sole guidance of their natural light, which at best is but a doubtful Twilight, and is withal apt to be clouded and corrupted by ill Customs and Practices, and in a little time to be quite extinguished with the *Damps* of Vice and Debauchery.

LET us see therefore how it fared with the course of the World after the giving of the *Lam*, when God had trim'd the dim Lamp of natural Conscience, when Revelation had illustrated the obscure Text of Reason, and the Moral, like the Natural World, was governed by a greater as well as by a lesser Light. Now sure one would expect that Men should walk as *Children* of the Day, and that works of Darknes should disappear like Mists before the Rising Sun. And questionless, it must be acknowledged that the State of the Moral World was considerably better'd by this new accession of Light, and that there was less Vice and more Goodness among those who enjoy'd it; the Peculiar People of God, than among the rude Heathen, who had no knowledge of his Laws. For to what purpose should God visit them with this his Day-spring from on high, and give Light to them that sat in Darknes and in the shadow of Death, but only that he might the better guide their Feet into the way of Peace?

IN comparison therefore of the Heathen World, this was a good state of things; but yet Vice had still the upper hand, and considering the vast disproportion between the Numbers of good and bad

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bad Men, the World might still be called *κοσμος ανομιαν*, *the World of the Ungodly*. For not to mention the particular Vices of that perverse and untractable People the *Jews*, their Superstition, their Idolatry, their Infidelity, their Rebelliousness, their Lust and Luxury, their Uncharity, their Covetousness and the like, the Scripture seems to speak of that state and age of the World in general, as if 'twere quite overgrown with Wickedness, and as if Vertue were a Stranger among the Dwellings of Men. Thus the Psalmist, *Help me Lord, for there is not one Godly Man left, the Faithful are minished from among the Children of Men, Psal. 12.* And again, *The Lord look'd down from Heaven upon the Children of Men to see if there were any that would understand, and seek after God.* And what was the result of this Scrutiny? Why, *they are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become abominable, there is none that doth good, no not one, Psal. 14.* And again says the Psalmist, speaking of the City of *Jerusalem*, *I have spied Unrighteousness and Strife in the City, Day and Night they go about within the Walls thereof, Mischief also and Sorrow are in the midst of it; Wickedness is therein; Deceit and Guile go not out of their Streets, Psal. 55.* And again more largely, *Psal. 74. All the Earth is full of Darkness and Cruel Habitations.* And again lastly, to add no more, *They will not be Learned nor Understand, all the Foundations of the Earth are out of Course, Psal. 82.*

Thus miserably deformed was the face of things in this state and period of the World: Nor were

were only the *Morals* of Men universally Corrupt, but they had debauched and corrupted their very *Principles* too, and defaced the *Map* that was to guide and direct them, as well as lost their *Way*. They had almost put out the light of Revelation as well as that of Natural Reason, so that by that time our Saviour appeared in the World, what by ill Glosses and worse Practices, the People of God had almost reduced themselves again to the state of Darkness and shadow of Death, and defaced the Characters of the *Mosaic Table*, as much as their Forefathers had done those of the *Law of Nature*.

BUT then again perhaps it will be said, that this was at a time when God had not made any clear and express Revelation of Heaven or Hell; and therefore though Men had a written Law to walk by, yet it being supported by no other Sanctions than of temporal Rewards and Punishments, they wanted a sufficient *Counterpoise* against the violence of Temptations; and then no wonder that Wickedness should so universally prevail, when the Allurements to Vice were strong, and the Engagements to Duty but weak and unconstraining. But when once Obedience comes to be enforced by better Promises and by severer Threatnings, this certainly will introduce a new way of Living; Men will consider more and live better, and will never be so mad and silly as to spend a few days in Wickedness and Folly, and then in a moment go down to the Grave, and be Damned for ever.

LET us see therefore how 'tis with the Moral World under the Revelation of the great *Mystery of Godliness*, and now Life and Immortality are brought to light by the Gospel; this I think fully answers the Objection: Now therefore certainly one would expect at least a state of *Millennial* Happiness; that Men should be, and live like Angels; that we should see the Tabernacle of God come down and abide among Men, with a new Heaven and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteousness. But alas, the Mystery of Iniquity began to work as soon as the Mystery of Godliness; and although the Primitive Christians were for a while kept bright and shining in the Furnace of Persecution, yet no sooner was the heat of their Affliction over, but their Zeal cool'd with it, and they left their first Love. For then it was that the great *Dragon* being wroth that the Woman was delivered of a Man Child, that *Constantine* the Great was Converted by the Church to the Christian Faith, though to overwhelm her by casting out of his Mouth that mighty Flood of *Arianism*, *Rev. 12*. And although the Earth helped the Woman, by opening her Mouth and swallowing up the Flood, which was done when the First *Council of Nice* declared against that Pestilent and Prevailing Heresy; yet 'twas not long before the same Dragon cast forth two other mighty Floods out of his Mouth, and the Christian World suffered almost an inundation by the breaking in of *Poper*y and *Mahumetism*.

WE have indeed by the Blessing of God, and
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the Zealous Endeavours of good Men, dried up one of those great Floods from a good part of the Christian World, and restored the *Doctrin* of the Gospel to its Primitive Purity and Simplicity. But has the *Reformation* gone on so prosperously in our *Manners*, as it has in our *Faith*? Are we as *Good* as we are *Orthodox*? I doubt not; for if we look abroad into the World, how little true Goodness and Vertue shall we find in it! How rare is it to meet with a Man that lives up within some tolerable measure to the Obligations of his Profession! And how much more rare is it to see one that's truly Serious and Considerate, Circumspect and Recollected, that considers thoroughly and effectually the End of his coming into the World, the shortness and uncertainty of his stay in it; and what shall become of him when he is to go out of it? And accordingly, Lives under a constant and lively sense of God and of his Duty to him, walks with him, and gives up himself wholly to him, makes Religion and the care of his Soul the main business and concern of his Life; works with all his Might while 'tis Day, and is utterly resolved whatever it costs him, to mind and secure the *One thing necessary*! This one would think were no more than what common Sense would prompt any Man to, that would allow himself to think but one Minute in a Year; and yet how few such Men shall we find in the World! Do we not rather see Men drink down Iniquity like Water, and commit Sin with Greediness? Do not the generality of Men live as if they were

resolved to sin as much as they could in a little time, and thought it not only safe, but necessary to do ill? Do they not live as if they were to be nothing after this Life, or as if they were to be saved by their Vices rather than by their Vertues; or lastly, as if they thought Hell a better Place than Heaven, and were in love with Damnation and Everlasting Burnings?

BUT to come a little nearer to our selves, does not the present Age abound with a sort of Men who are Crafty and Designing, False and Treacherous, Rotten and Hypocritical; Men that seem to have their Eye fixed upon, and terminated with the Horizon of this World; that make Gain their Godliness, and Interest their Measure; that will betray the Church for Preferment, sell their Religion and their Souls for Money, that will depart from the way of Truth for the Wages of Unrighteousness, and be Damned hereafter to be Rich and Great here? Never was there more Religion pretended than now, and never less in truth and reality; never more noise about it, and never a less hearty concern for it. What straining about the Gnat of a Ceremony, with those who can in the mean while Swallow down whole Camels of profitable Abominations! This we may talk of, and lament, but we can't help it. It will be ever so with the general course of the World; Vice will always have the Cry of her side, and we are told, that in the latter days *Iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall wax cold.* And all this we may

may learn from the final issue and event of things; we may measure the state of this World, from the final distribution of things in the next. Our Saviour tells us, that *broad is the Way that leads to Destruction, and many there be that go in thereat.* And that *strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way which leads to Life, and few there be that find it,* Mat. 7. 13.

AND this we shall the less wonder at, if we consider the universal pravity and corruptness of Human Nature, the Multitude of Temptations we are *all* exposed to, and the peculiar unhappy Circumstances of Living that many Men are engaged in: To which if we add the great Strength, Cunning and Malice of the Invisible Powers, that the same Envy of the Devil that first brought Sin into the World, is still concerned to uphold and increase it; that there are two different Interests carrying on, that there is a Kingdom of Darkness as well as a Kingdom of Light, and a Mystery of Iniquity, as well as a Mystery of Godliness; we can't think any other, but that the course of the World must needs be very bad. And the wonder will fall yet lower, if we further consider how prone we are to confirm and strengthen an Ill Custom by our *Imitation* and *Compliance*; which leads me to the Second thing supposed, that we are naturally apt to imitate that which is most prevailing, and to conform to the Course and Way of the World.

Now this we are apt to do for one of these Two Reasons; either because we think the ge-

nerality has the Right of its side, and that what most Men do, is fit to be done. Or if we do think they are in the wrong, and do amiss, yet we are loath to venture the Charge of *Singularis*, and withal, fancy that there is something of safety and excuse in Numbers and Multitudes.

AND First, we are apt to think, that the generality has the Right of its side, and that what most Men do, is fit to be done. There is nothing that carries so much Authority with it, as the Example of a Multitude; and though every Man is ready to imagin himself Wiser than any one of these singly, yet when he looks upon them as a Body of Men, there is something awful and commanding in it; the Man blushes to himself, as we are apt to do when we come into an assembly in Public, though made up of Men, every one of which we think inferior to our selves; but their Numbers and Union give them another Air and Appearance, and the Voice of the People becomes to us now as the Voice of God.

'TIS in Practice as in Opinion, what the most *bold* we take to be *True*, and so what the most *do* we take to be *Good*. This is the only Rule some People have to go by, and 'tis the Measure that all *Popular* Spirits do go by, and the Wisest can hardly refrain it; for we can hardly think it likely, that such an United and Complicated Wisdom should be mistaken either in the one or the other. Every Man is apt to reason with himself in the conduct of his Manners, as *Luther* did in the business of the Reformation, *Art thou*
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the only Wise Man? And, *can so many Worlds err?* What? Shall we oppose our selves against the Practice of Mankind, set up for *Reformers*, row against so great a Stream, and live against the World? Can there be any ill in that which so many do, which is passed into a Custom and a Law, which is practised all the World over? Ought we not rather to suspect our own Judgments, and conclude, that that must needs be the right Point, where so many Lines meet, and that the right Way where we find so many Passengers? This is the Common and the Natural Logick of most Men, and by this Measure we proceed both in *Opinion* and in *Practice*, but especially in *Practice*. And this is one cause of our aptness to Conform to the Course and Way of the World. But there is also another.

FOR Secondly, if we do think that the Generality is in the wrong, and does amiss, yet we are loth to venture the charge of Singularity, and withal, fancy that there is something of safety and excuse in Numbers and Multitudes. And first, as to the Charge of *Singularity*, 'tis a dreadful and a frightful Word, and there are but few that have the Courage and the Confidence to stand up against and face the Imputation. We either think the World Wiser than our selves, or would willingly be thought to do so, since this has a shew of Modesty and good Manners, and the contrary seems to carry in it an intolerable degree of Pride and Self-arrogancy. But now to be Singular in any of our Actions, is interpretatively and
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in effect, to prefer our own Sense and Judgment, before that of the World, at least as far as concerns the particular case then before us. For since our Actions are governed by our present Sentiments, if we *do* otherwise than the World does, 'tis plain that we *think* otherwise too, and that we set a higher value upon those private Thoughts of ours, than upon the publick Sense and Judgment of the World, which is a very odious and ungrateful thing to own and publish. For we stand in awe of our Fellow Creatures more than we do of our own Consciences, especially when combined and confederated together in great Numbers and Companies, and cannot chuse but regard and revere their Censures and Animadversions. And this makes us willing rather to err with the Multitude, and be Fools for Company, though we act all the while against the clear Light of our own Minds, than incur the great Censure, the heavy *Anathema* of Singularity.

AND besides, we think there is no *necessity* neither of running that risque, for we reckon our selves secure enough without it, and are apt to flatter our selves into a fancy that there is something of Safety and Excuse in Numbers and Multitudes: Though we know we are in the ways of Sin, yet we comfort and encourage our selves to go on in them by thinking how much they are *frequented*, like Travellers wandring in the Dark, who though they know they are out of their way, yet solace themselves in their Number and Company.

pany. This is very natural and ordinary for Men to do in all Cases, in the Case of Sin and Error as well as in others; and therefore the Psalmist speaking of the gathering together of the Froward, and of the insurrection of Wicked Doers, (which supposes them Many and in Companies) immediately adds, *They incourage themselves in Mischief*, Psal. 64. This is a very usual but vain confidence; for however the Multitude of Offenders may be a Security against an Earthly Power, yet God regards *Numbers* no more than *Persons*, and *though hand join in hand, the Wicked shall not go unpunished*, Prov. II. 21.

THESE are the Grounds and Principles upon which we are inclined to be Conformable to the general Course of the World. But 'tis high time now to shew why we should not be so; and this leads me to consider lastly, the Caution it self, that we should not be Conformable to the World. But before I come to justify this Caution, as to its Equity and Reasonableness, I must premise something concerning its Limits and Measures.

AND first, this Caution is not so rigorously to be understood, as if we were not to yield some compliance and conformity with the Humors and Dispositions of those with whom we converse; for this is a necessary part of Homilitical Vertue, and contributes very much to the sweetning and indearing of Society, and is therefore Good and Commendable, as well as Innocent and Lawful. 'Tis indeed that very thing which we call *Good-nature*, when a Man bends and warps a little from

from his own natural Posture, to meet and strike in with the inclination of his Companions. And the contrary is so far from being a Vertue, that 'tis a culpable stiffness and obstinacy of Mind; and we may take this for a rule, that Religion is ever consistent with Civility and good Manners, as indeed it is with whatever really conduces to the Comfort and Happiness of Human Life. We are only to take care that our Compliance prove not a Snare to us, an occasion of falling into Sin; that we do not offend God, out of Civility towards Men. In all other Cases, we would do well to consider and follow that of the Apostle, *I am made all things to all Men*, 1 Cor. 9. 22. And again, *I please all Men in all things*, 10. 33.

NEITHER again Secondly, is this Caution to be so rigorously understood, as if we were forbidden to conform to the several indifferent Modes of Ages or of Countries, either as to Customs or Ceremonies, whether Religious or Civil, or Habits, or manner of Address, or way of Diet, or the like. For however these may not possibly be ordered according to the best convenience or measure of Discretion, yet 'tis according to the publick Wisdom of the Place and Nation, (for the Wisdom of a Nation is seen as much in their *Customs* as in their *Proverbs*;) and therefore the matter of them being supposed indifferent, 'tis not civil or modest to contradict them. And there is this further to be considered, that besides the pride and rudeness

ness of such an opposition, all the advantage or convenience a Man can get by it, will not compensate for the Odium and Censure of Affectation and Singularity. And accordingly we find, that the Wisest of Men in all Ages have ever thought it Prudence to conform to the Innocent, though otherwise not Convenient Customs of the Age and Place wherein they lived. And 'tis observed concerning our Blessed Saviour himself, who was the Wisdom of the Eternal Father, that when he condescended to put on Flesh, and live among Men, he condescended yet further, and complied with all the received Customs and Manners of the *Jewish* Nation. And indeed he became in all things like unto his Brethren, Sin only excepted; *Innocence* was his only Singularity.

AND this, in one Word, is our measure; we may and ought to be conformable as far as the bounds of Innocence; *usque ad Aras* is the measure of our civil Conversation, as well as of our Friendship and dearer Intimacies: For why should we shew so much disrespect to our Company, as to quit the Road they have taken, if we may safely travel in it? The Conformity therefore which we are here cautioned against, is that of Imitating the general Practice of the World, as to Actions, not of a *Civil*, but of a *Moral* Nature: We must not be Conformed to the general Morals of this World; the Reason and Equity of which Caution I come now to justify.

AND

AND the first Reason why we must not be Conformed to this World, is because this is not such a World as we may safely imitate, 'tis not a World for us to be Conformed to; it never was so even in the Best and Purest Times, much less is it now, in these last and worst days. 'Tis not safe following the Multitude at any *time*, much less now; nor in any *thing*, but least of all in the ordering our Life and Conversation. 'Tis a very ill Guide in matters of Opinion, but much worse in matters of Practice; for the World is a meer Theatre of Folly, a Stage of Vice and Debauchery, one great *Aceldama* of Blood and Cruelty, and to use the Description of St. *John*, *the whole World lieth in Wickedness*, *Joh. 5. 19.* the Words are Emphatical, *εἰς τὴν πόρνεσθαι κείραι*, it has not only fallen into the Gulph of Sin, but it lies there contentedly and quietly. 'Tis not only slightly dipt or stain'd with the Waters of Impurity, but it lies as it were *Moated round*, or rather all over drench'd and soak'd in them, like the Earth in the Universal Deluge: But this I need pursue no further, having already made it a distinct Member of my Discourse.

AGAIN Secondly, another Reason why we must not be Conformed to this World, is because by so doing, we shall confirm and strengthen the cause of Wickedness, and give it Settlement, Succession and Perpetuity: For we shall countenance and imbolden those whom *we* imitate, and cause others to imitate us, and they again will be a President to others, and so on, 'till
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Vice pretend to the Right of Custom and Prescription, and Iniquity be established by a Law. This is one great Reason why the World is so bad now, and 'tis the best expedient the Devil has to make it yet worse; for by this the Vices of the former Ages descend upon the future, sin becomes Hereditary, Children transcribe their Vicious Parents, and Actual, like Original Sin, is intail'd upon Posterity. *Fill ye up the Measure of your Fathers, Mat. 23. 32.* said our Saviour by way of Prophecy to the *Jews*, implying that they would do so; for our Lord very well knew the Temper of those to whom he said it; and I question not, but that most of the Wickedness of that Nation was owing to this, that they were so generally possessed with this Superstitious Humour of *Conformity*, and were resolved to do as their Forefathers had done before them.

AGAIN Thirdly, another Reason why we Christians must not Conform to this World, is because both the *Precepts* and the *Rewards* of our Religion require a very different method of Life from what is ordinarily practised; the Precepts are strict and severe, and the rewards high and noble, such indeed as cannot be conceived for their greatness, and they both call for a very excellent and extraordinary way of Conversation; for after the common way of Living, we shall neither *obtain* the one, nor *fulfil* the other. Indeed our Religion obliges us to great Strictness and Singularity, and a Christian cannot be like himself if he be like other Men. To be a Christian indeed,

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is to be a *New Creature*, to be New in Nature, and New in Life and Conversation ; he must not be like his former self, much less like the rest of the World. The Argument is the Apostle's, *Ye are all the Children of Light, and the Children of the Day* ; that is, Christians, Professors of an holy and excellent Religion, whose Precepts are excellently Good, and whose Promises are excellently Great. And what then? *Therefore let us not Sleep as do others, but let us Watch and be Sober,* 1 Thess. 5. 5, 6.

AGAIN, Fourthly and Lastly, We Christians have one more peculiar Reason not to be conformed to this World ; we have renounced it in our Baptism, with all its Poms and Vanities : By which are meant, not only the Heathen Games and Spectacles, their vain Shews, and loose Festivities, their lewd *Bacchanals* and *Saturnals*, which we renounce *Absolutely*, and the Wealth and Glory and Grandeur even of the *Christian World*, as often as they prove inconsistent with the ends of our Holy Institution ; but also the promiscuous Company, the general Practices, and the popular Examples of this World, which are generally so very Corrupt and Wicked, that we renounce them not upon supposition, as in the other instance, but at a venture. The very first step to a Christian Life, is to dye to the World, and to its general Usages and Customs ; and if we will follow Christ, we must forsake the *Multitudes*, and ascend up to the Mount of Solitude and Holy Separation.

AND

AND that we may be the better encouraged to undertake this *Religious Singularity*, let us to the Reason of the thing, add Two very remarkable Scripture Examples: The First that invites our Consideration, is that of *Lot*, who happened to live in a City so prodigiously Wicked, and beyond all Measure or Example Debauched, that though a very Populous Place, it could not afford so much as *Ten* good Men, they were so universally seiz'd with the Pest and Contagion of Vice. And yet this good Man, though he breath'd in so corrupt an Air, was not at all infected with it; the health and cleanness of his Soul, like that of *Socrates's* Body, was too strong for the Contagion and preserved him from the Malignity of a Plague that was more Infectious and more Mortal too, than that of *Athens*. Indeed the filthy Conversation of that Wicked Place, disturb'd his *Quiet*, but it could not sully his *Innocence*; it *vex'd* his Righteous Soul, as the Text says, *2 Pet. 2. 8.* but it could not *debauch* it. He dwelt like the Church of *Pergamos*, where Satan's Seat was, *Rev. 2. 13.* in the very *Metropolis*, the Imperial City of the Devil's Kingdom; but he Convers'd there like an Angel of Light among Fiends and Evil Spirits. He was surrounded with the works of Darkness, but he had no Fellowship with them; his *Company* was Devilish, but his *Conversation* was Angelical; though he could not make them better, yet they could not make him worse; he lived *with* them, but he lived *against* them.

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THIS indeed was great and extraordinary ; but there is an Example of Religious Singularity beyond this, and that is in *Noah*, who lived in a *World* that was as corrupt, and more than the other's *City* ; the whole *World* then was but one greater *Sodom*, nay it was much worse than that Seat of Wickedness. *Sodom* indeed was so given up to Debauchery, that it could not yield Ten Righteous Persons, but the whole *World* in *Noah's* time could not afford so much as *Two* ; he himself was the only good Man then in the *World*, as may reasonably be concluded from that Reason expressed by God why he excepted him from the general Deluge, *For thee have I seen Righteous before me in this Generation, Gen. 7. 1.* Now 'tis impossible to imagin that Vice should ever be more in mode and fashion than it was then, when as the Text says, *all Flesh had corrupted his way upon the Earth*, and the whole *Earth* it self was fill'd with *Violence*. And yet in this all-over-wicked *World*, *Noah* maintained his Innocence, and his Integrity shin'd forth as a Light in the midst of this Crooked and Perverse Generation, and was not only a *Doer*, but a *Preacher* of Righteousness. In other Ages of the *World*, though never so Corrupt, Religion and Vertue has had some Party, and the Singularity of Living well, is shared and divided among several, and one is a Countenance and Incouragement to another ; but here poor single *Noah* was fain to *Live*, as *Athanasius* was to *Dispute*, against the *World*, and the whole Singularity

rity lodged and center'd in his single Person, which puts it beyond all Example or Parallel.

AND thus have I gone through the several Stages of my Undertaking, I shall now make one or two brief Reflections upon the whole, and conclude.

IN relation therefore to the First Supposition, it may be inferr'd, That the Multitude is no safe Guide, and that the Measures of Right and Wrong are not always to be concluded from the consent of *Majority*; for you see here, that *Vice* has by much the Majority of its side; and yet 'tis Vice still.

FROM the Second, it may be inferr'd, That those who have already a Majority for their way, ought not to think their Cause any whit the better for having new Profelytes every day brought over to them, and because Men flock to their Standard from every Quarter. For, as it has been discourf'd, this is no more than what is to be expect'd from the ordinary course of things. Men are naturally apt to imitate that which is most prevailing, and to conform to the course and way of the World. Those therefore that value themselves or their Cause the better for this, seem not to understand the World, but to be meer Strangers to the Inclinations of Human nature; for did they consider that, they would quickly perceive, that this does not reflect any Credit upon their Cause, but rather upbraids the levity and weakness of Mankind, and is no argument that *they* themselves are *Wise*, but only that *other* Men are *Fools*.

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LASTLY,

LASTLY, from the Caution it self, we may justly infer, that the Censure of *Preciseness* and *Singularity* which the Men of this World commonly charge upon good Men, and the Hatred and Spite wherewith they prosecute them upon that very account, are both of them utterly senseless and extremely absurd: This has been an old Grudge. Thus the Sinners in the Book of Wisdom, *Wisd. 2. Let us lie in wait for the Righteous, because he is not for our turn, and he is clean contrary to our doings: He upbraideth us with our offending the Law, and objecteth to our Infamy the transgressings of our Education.* And again, *He was made to reprove our Thoughts; He is grievous to us even to behold, for his Life is not like other Mens, his Ways are of another Fashion.* A very high charge indeed, and as notable an Inference; he lives otherwise and better than we do, and therefore we must hate and persecute him. But this I say is a very absurd and unreasonable way of proceeding; for the ground of the business, if sifted to the bottom, comes to no more than this. They are angry with a Man for not loving their Company so well as to be content to be Damned for the sake on't. But I think we may with great Civility beg their excuse in this matter; if they will have us do as they do, then let them take care to do as they *should* do. But for a Man to make himself a *Beast*, utterly unfit to be convers'd with, and then to call me Singular and Unsociable; because I won't keep him Company, is hard measure.

AND

AND as these Men are guilty of an unreasonable Charge, so shall we be guilty of an inexcusable Folly and Weakness, if we depart from our Duty and our greatest Interest upon such a trifling inconsiderable Discouragement: For then 'tis plain, that we are of the number of those low and unconsidering Spirits, that *love the Praise of Men, more than the Praise of God.*

LET us not therefore be led away with Noise and Popularity, nor be frightened from our Duty by those empty Anathema's of the Multitude, the Censure of Unsociableness, Preciseness and Singularity. Let us be sure by doing our Duty, to satisfy our own Consciences, whatever others *do or think.* Let us not be carried away in the Polluted torrent of the Age, nor be Fools for Company. Let us for once dare to be *Wise*, and be guilty of the great Singularity of doing well, and of acting like Men and Christians; and then, if we can have the liking and approbation of the World, well; if not, the comfort is, we shall not much want it: And we shall gain something by our *Singularity*, which the others cannot by their *Numbers*, the Favour of God, and deliverance from the Wrath to come.

A

DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

The Excellency of Praise and
Thanksgiving.

*Preach'd in All-Souls College Chappel in
Oxford, upon the Founder's Commemo-
ration Day.*

P S A L M. 50. 23,

Whoso offereth Praise, glorifieth me ;

Or, as in the other Translation,

*Whoso offereth me Thanks and Praise, he
honoureth me.*



O Honour and Glorifie God, as 'tis the
End of the whole, so is it the *Duty and
Privilege* of all the *Rational and Intel-
lectual* part of the Creation. God in-
deed has made all things for his Glory, and he
fails not to glorifie himself one way or other by all
things that he has made ; but there are some things
which he has made to glorifie him by free and pro-
per

per acts of Worship and Homage. And these as he has more *inabled*, so has he more *obliged* to the Performance of this Divine Office, by distinguishing them as well by *Favours* and *Benefits*, as by *Order* of Being, and degrees of natural Excellence from the rest of the Creation.

A M O N G these is *Man*, who though at present not so capable of this Divine Imploy as some of the other Intellectual Orders, yet he has as much, perhaps more Obligation to it than any of them all; since God has not only favour'd him with peculiar Benefits, such as the Grace of Repentance, the Honour of being Personally united to the Divinity, &c. but has also placed him in such a Sphere where he is the only Creature that can acknowledge and pay Religious Service to the common Creator. All other Creatures Praise God only *Passively*, as far as they carry in them the Characters of the Divine Perfections, which must be considered and acknowledged before they redound to the *actual* glory of the Creator. Like a *Lute*, which though never so Harmonically Set and Tuned, yields no Musick, till its Strings be artfully touched by a Skilful Hand. But Man can freely command and strike the Strings of his own Heart and Affections, and is the only Creature here below that can *Actively* Praise and Honour his great Maker and Benefactor. Man therefore is concern'd to Honour and Glorifie God both for himself and for all the Creatures round about him; and as the whole World is the *Temple* of the great God, so Man is as it were the *Priest* in this Region of it,

where he must undertake the Office of Honouring and Glorifying God, not only in his own, but also in the name of all this brute and uncapable part of the Creation. And he is here taught how to do it in these Words of the Psalmist, *whoſo offers me Thanks and Praise, he Honours me, or he Glorifies me.*

By *Honour* or *Glory* here, I ſuppoſe is meant whatever comes within the Notion of Religious Service, or Divine Worſhip; and when 'tis ſaid, that he who offers God Thanks and Praise, he it is that Honours him; I ſuppoſe 'tis ſpoken Emphatically, and by way of Eminence, importing as much as if 'twere ſaid, He it is that Honours him more particularly, and performs a more ſpecial piece of Religious Service. So that from the Words I ſhall in the Firſt place collect this Propoſition, That the moſt principal and moſt acceptable part of Religion conſiſts in Praise and Thankſgiving.

SECONDLY, I ſhall conſider what are the things we are concern'd chiefly to thank God for; among which I ſhall particularly inſiſt upon that Providential diſpoſal of Men in ſuch outward Conditions and Circumſtances of Life, as may be of advantage to further their Eternal Intereſt.

THIRDLY, I ſhall briefly repreſent to you, that the Circumſtances of your Life are ſuch.

WHENCE in the laſt place, I ſhall commend this Inference to your Conſideration, that you are therefore highly obliged to the Duty of Praise and Thankſgiving.

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THE First thing to be spoken to is, that the most principal and most acceptable part of Religion, consists in Praise and Thanksgiving. I confess I am not very fond of making Comparisons between acts of Religion, being not ignorant of what Religion it self has suffered upon this very account among a certain Generation of Men who set up one Duty of Religion against another, as *Preaching* against *Praying*. Nor should I do it here, but that I have for some time observed, that the Price of this Duty is generally *beaten down*, and the Duty it self but *seldom* and but *coldly* practised even among them who make Great account of all the rest, and are more particularly addicted to a Life of Piety and Devotion. The Parable of the Ten Lepers is a true Draught and Image of Mankind; all Ten Prayed, being under a great necessity to do so, but there was but One who bethought himself, and gave thanks, And so 'tis in the World, where to Ten that Pray, 'tis well if there be One that gives Thanks; and even that One shall perhaps Pray ten times, before he gives thanks once; And when he does, it shan't be perhaps with half the Zeal and Affection wherewith he is wont to *Pray*; which procedure by the way, I know not how to resolve into any other Principle than this, that when we *Pray*, 'tis for our selves and our own Interest, to procure some good, or to avoid some evil; but when we give *Thanks* 'tis to God, and for God, without any Self-regard, as I shall further shew by and by. This I conceive is it that makes Men generally more frequent and more zealous in
their

their Praises. Whereas indeed the latter calls for greater Affection and Elevation of Spirit than the former, Praise being a greater glorification of God than Prayer, and indeed than any other Act of Religion.

THIS I might make appear from several grounds of Argument; but not to burthen my Discourse or your Patience with Unnecessaries, I shall confine my self to this single Consideration, That to Praise and give Thanks to God, is the most unselfish and disinterested act of Religion we can possibly honour him with, and consequently the most noble and generous of all. The Consequence I suppose will readily be acknowledged, that if it be really the most dis-interested act of Religion, 'tis also the most noble and excellent; for the less there is of *Self*, and the more there is of *God* in any Religious Performance, the more perfect 'tis allowed to be; and though we do not with some, make it necessary to the goodness of an Action, that it be *unmercenary*, and done without any prospect of Reward; yet the Reason is, because 'tis too high a mark for a mortal aim. We think it a Measure hardly Practicable by *any*, and therefore not necessary to *all*; not denying in the mean while, but rather supposing, that if we could act by such a Measure, it would be an higher and more noble Pitch of Vertue. Taking therefore the Argument for granted, I shall think my self further concern'd only to justify the *Under-Proposition*, by shewing that 'tis really the most dis-interested part of Religion.

Now

Now that it is so, will be sufficiently evident from this, that it respects the Benefits of God merely as they are *past*; it has indeed the Goodness of God for its Object, as well as many other acts of Religion, but with this Difference, that whereas other acts of Religion respect the Benefits of God as they are to *come*, this respects them as *past*, and consequently, can have no Eye upon future Advantage. He indeed that gives Thanks may, but not as, and so far as he gives thanks: It may be the End of the *Agent*, but not of the *Action*. For observe, though to give thanks for Blessings received be really a Means to procure more, as well as other Religious acts, yet there is this difference, that other acts are not only Means to Blessings, but may be used as such to that end, without destroying the nature of the acts themselves. But now Gratitude towards God, though it be really in it self, as much a Means in order to future Blessings, yet it can't be used and intended to that purpose, without so far undoing the very *Nature* as well as *Excellency* of the *Action*: For if I give Thanks merely to get more, if that be my design, this is not Gratitude, but only another way of *Begging*, and so my Praising will indeed fall in and be confounded with Praying, which are supposed to be distinct. So that the very notion of Thanksgiving excludes all regard to Self-interest; and what some highflown Theorists have asserted of Vertue in general, that it loses its very Being and Perfection, by being Mercenary or done upon motives of Interest is strictly true, of this *particular* Vertue,
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whose very Idea shuts out all respect to self-advantage.

THE short is, this Vertue of Thankfulness, though it be conversant about the goodness and beneficialness of the Divine Nature, which is also supposed to be actually exercised upon us, yet it does not respect it in order to our Interest, but as 'tis a Moral Perfection of the same Divine Nature, and so is rather an humble acknowledgment of something excellent in God, whose Perfections we adore and bare witness to, than an Address to him for something of advantage to our selves, which, as I said before, its very Idea excludes, and cannot at all comport with.

BUT now this is more than can be said of any of the other acts of Religion; when we *Pray*, 'tis for the Relief of our Wants; our *Faith* leans upon some future Good, and our *Hope* is a comfortable expectation of it; and even *Charity* it self as it respects God, has a mixture of self-regard in it, I say, as far as it respects *God*. For it must be yielded (whatever some pretend to the contrary,) that there is some sort of Love which may be disinterested and pure from any selfish Principle, namely, Love of *Benevolence*, whereby we may wish well and do well to our Neighbour purely for *his* Good, without projecting any Advantage to our selves. But then this is not that Love wherewith we love God, who is not capable of our *Benevolence*, but only of our *Desire*: For when we love God, we don't pretend to wish any good to him who is already possess'd of all; but only wish him as a Good to our selves, which is the same

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as to desire him. Charity therefore as it respects God, is the same with desire of him, and all love of Desire is founded upon Indigence, and proceeds from Self-interest. So inconsistent and unprincipled is the Discourse of those who talk of Loving God purely for himself and his own absolute Perfections, without regarding our own advantage therein. We may indeed love our *Neighbour* so, but so we cannot love God; for to love God, is to desire him, to desire him as our Good and Happiness, and all love of Desire proceeds from *Want*, and ends in *Fullness*. And if Love it self must give the Precedency to Thanksgiving, I suppose none of the other acts of Religion will offer at a competition with it.

BUT, you'll say, does not our Saviour call Love the First and the Great Commandment? To this I answer, that by Love, there is meant either Love of Benevolence, or Love of Desire; if Love of Benevolence, that is no immediate act of *Religion*, God not being capable of being so loved, as was urged before: And therefore we may allow this to be the principal Commandment, without any contradiction to the present Discourse, which proceeds wholly concerning Acts of Religion. But if the love here spoken of, be love of *Desire*, then this is said to be the First and the Great Commandment, not because it excells all the rest by its own *proper* value, but because it virtually contains, and is productive of them all, there being nothing so difficult or naturally displeasing which he that truly Loves, that is, *Desires* God, will refuse

use to do for his sake. And therefore 'tis, that in another place, Love is said to be the *fulfilling of the Law*, Rom. 13. 10. that is, virtually and potentially, as 'tis a general Mother Vertue, and the principle of a more particular and special Obedience. And in this respect indeed Love is the first and the great Commandment; but if we consider the proper dignity and excellence of the Action, he that *Praises* God Honours him more, and expresses himself more generously than he that *Loves* him. For he that Loves God, Loves him for his own good, in order to his Happiness and well-being; but he that Praises him (so far he does so,) does it not upon any self-end, but meerly because he thinks it just and equitable that a Creature should acknowledge and adore the Excellency of his Creator; which certainly is the *noblest* as well as the *justest* thing a Creature can do.

INDEED *Love* is the only Divine or Religious Vertue that can with any pretence vye with Praise and Thanksgiving; and accordingly 'tis observable, that of all the Vertuous Acts and Habits that are now requisite to qualifie a Man for Heaven, none shall be thought worthy to be retained in it, but only these Two, *Praise* and *Love*; all the rest shall be *super-annuated* and cease, as having no further occasion for their Exercise; these two only shall remain to be the entertainment of Angels and Angelical Spirits to all Eternity.

BUT though Divine Love be equal with Praise as to this respect, in point of *Permanence* and *Duration*, yet in point of *Generosity* it comes far short of it; for indeed to speak properly, Love is

no further excellent, than as it partakes of the nature of Praise; no further than as 'tis one way of acknowledging the Divine Perfections. For what commendation is it for me to Love what is my good, and makes for my Interest, any otherwise than as by Loving, I acknowledge and bear witness to the excellency and amiableness of the Object beloved? That therefore which is excellent in Love, is not my *Coveting* the Divine Good, (which I do purely for my own Pleasure and Profit,) but by *bearing witness* to it. And yet even here Praise will have the Preeminence, because this acknowledges the Divine Perfections *Directly* and *Expressly*, which the other does only *Implicitly* and by *Consequence*. So that in every respect, Praise and Thanksgiving will be found to be the greatest Honour and Glorification of God, which sufficiently establishes the Proposition laid down, That the most principal and most acceptable part of Religion consists in Praise and Thanksgiving.

AND here, before I go any further, give me leave by the way, First to deplore the general defect of our common Closet-Devotions; Secondly, To commend the excellent Constitution of our Public Liturgy. As to the First, 'tis a sad thing to consider, that so Divine and so Angelical a Service as that of Praise and Thanksgiving, which is so highly preferred in the Sacred Writings, and which the Man after God's own Heart was so very eminent and remarkable for, the *Burthen* of whose Devotion lay in *Anthems* and *Allelujahs*, should be so neglected and so little regarded as it is: That
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that which is so much the employment and business of *Heaven*, should be so little valued upon *Earth*; and what the *Angels* esteem so Divine a Service, should have so little share in the Devotions of *Men*. There are but few even of the Devouter sort, that are duly sensible of the excellency of Praise, and those that have a considerable sense of it, are generally very backward to the Duty, and very cold in the Performance. Our Necessities often call us to our *Prayers*, and supply us with Devotion in them; but as for *Praise*, it seems a dead and heartless Service, and we care not how seldom or how indifferently it be performed. Which common Backwardness of ours, the Scripture also supposes by its earnest and frequent Exhortations to this Duty.

BUT the *Church of England* (to her great Commendation be it spoken,) proceeds by another Measure in her Devotions, enjoying *Praise* as largely and as frequently as *Prayer*; she has taken her Copy from the Man after God's own Heart; and as *Hosannah* and *Allelujah*, Prayer unto God, and Praises of God, divide the whole Book of Psalms, so do they her Liturgy, which is a Service of *Praise*, as well as of *Prayer*. This the Church admonishes us of, in the very Preface and Entrance of her excellent Service, telling us, that we *Assemble and Meet together, to render thanks for the great Benefits that we have received at God's hands, and to set forth his most worthy Praise*. Then the Priest, *Praise ye the Lord*; to which the People, *The Lord's Name be Praised*. And this is done in all our Hymns,

Hymns, as the *Venite*, *O come let us Sing unto the Lord*, &c. And in that noble Hymn called the *Te Deum*, *We Praise the O God*, *we acknowledge thee to be the Lord*. Thus again in the *Benedictus*, *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel*, &c. where we bless God for the Redemption of the World by Christ; which also we do in the *Jubilate* and in the Blessed Virgin's *Magnificat*, *My Soul does magnify the Lord*, &c. So again in the *Cantate Domino*, and the *Nunc Dimittis*, and *Deus Miseratur*, *Let the People praise thee O God let all the People praise thee*. Besides the *Gloria Patri*, and many particular Offices of Thanksgiving, and the whole Psalter of *David*, which is a considerable part of the Church Service. So truly sensible was the Wisdom of our excellent Mother, both of the great worth and importance of this Duty of Praise, and of the general Backwardness and Coldness of Men in applying themselves to it.

BUT I proceed now in the Second place, to consider what are the things we are chiefly concerned to Praise and Thank God for. These in general are those things which relate to our Spiritual Concern, and our grand Interest in another World; for the same general Order is to be observed both in our Prayers and in our Praises; and as we are chiefly to *Pray* for Spiritual Blessings, so 'tis for them that we are chiefly to return *Thanks*. More particularly we are concerned to thank God (as the Wisdom of our excellent Church directs us,) for his inestimable Love in the Redemption of the World by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the

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means of Grace, and for the hopes of Glory. And among these means of Grace, I think we are not in the last place concern'd to thank him for disposing us in such outward circumstances of Life as are advantageous to our Salvation, it being hardly imaginable how much the diversity of these contributes to our Living well or ill. How many Persons of excellent Dispositions, of great Attainments, and of greater Hopes, have we known to be utterly spoiled and ruined, meerly by falling into Ill hands; as we have it recorded of the young Disciple of St. *John*, in *Ecclesiastick Story*? And so again on the other hand, how many Persons of Vicious Inclinations, and more Vicious Lives, have been diverted out of the Road of Destruction meerly by some accidental Occurrence, some little Providential hit that happened to cross their way!

THERE IS an *Ingenious Gentleman* of considerable Character and Figure in the Learned World, who makes that Grace of God whereby he conducts Men to Holiness and Happiness, to be nothing else but only a happy train or disposition of external Circumstances and Occurrences. As suppose a Man falls into some very sharp Affliction, which works him into a softness and tenderness of Mind; while he is under this sensible and pliant disposition, he happens to meet with a good Book, which strikes upon the same String of his Soul; after this, he lights into good Company, where the former Disposition receives a new and further improvement; and so on in a train of Accidents,

cidents, the latter still renewing the Impression of the former, till at length the Man is perfectly brought over to a new Order and Habit both of Mind and Life.

Now though for several weighty Reasons too many to be here alledged, I cannot be of this Gentleman's Mind, so far as to make the Divine Grace (which in Scripture is frequently ascribed to the Holy Spirit of God working within us,) to be nothing else but a course of well-laid Circumstances; yet I may and must needs say, that I think the outward Circumstances of Life, have a very great stroke upon the moral conduct of it, and that the *success* of inward Grace does very much depend upon outward Occurrences. For not to argue from the different manner of *Education*, upon which the quality of our future life does generally as much depend, as the fortune of the *Soul* does upon its delivery out of the Hand, 'tis common and easie to observe, that some Men are engaged in such unhappy Circumstances, as do almost necessitate them to be Vicious; while others again are so advantageously placed, as if God had laid a *Plot* for their Salvation.

THE ground of this unequal Dispensation 'tis neither easie nor at present *necessary* to account for, and I believe we may put it among those Difficulties whose Solution is reserved to the Coming of *Elias*, as the *Jews* love to speak of all desperate Problems. In the mean time however, this is certain, that those who are distinguished from the Multitude by such advantageous Circumstances,

have great reason to bless God for making the *work* of their Salvation so *Easie*, and the *Issue* of it so *Secure*, for thus disposing them, and setting them in order for Eternal Life. For however the glory of doing well be inanced by circumstances of disadvantage, as 'tis spoken to the credit of the Church of *Pergamos*, that she held fast the Faith even where Satan's Seat was; *Rev. 2. 13.* yet of such vast moment is the business of our Salvation, that a Wise Considering Man would prefer such Circumstances as add rather to the *Security*, than to the *Weight* of his Crown. 'Tis too great a stake to be hazarded for the glory of a greater Excellence, whether of Vertue or of Reward; and therefore though a Life of *Temptation* may possibly serve to that, yet our Saviour in consideration of our state and danger, has taught us to Pray that we may not enter into it.

AND for the same reason that we *deprecate* such circumstances of Life as are apt to *hinder*, we are concerned to *Pray* for such as are apt to *further* us in the way of our Salvation; and our Saviour could intend no less, by his *Lead us not into Temptation*, than that we should pray that God would lead us into such circumstances of Living, as may not only be no hindrance, but an advantage and furtherance to our Salvation. And if it concerns us to *Pray* for such, then also to give *Thanks* for them. We ought indeed to Bless God for every thing that contributes never so little to so great an End, much more for disposing us in such a state and way of Life, where we have few Temptations but to
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do well, and are as it were under a *Course* of Salvation.

AND this (my Brethren,) I take to be very much your *Case*, and that the circumstances of your *Life* are in a great measure such as I have now described; for not to mention your grand, though common *Privilege* of Christianity, which divides you from above half the *World*, and your more peculiar *Privilege* of being *Members* of a *Reformed Church*, and that too the *Best* of those which are *Reformed*, where there is such excellent *Provision* made for all the *Purposes* of a *Christian Life*; where you have not only all the *Substantials* of *Christian Religion*, but those also most excellently *Ordered* and *Disposed* according to the best measures of *Human Wisdom*; particularly where you have such an excellent *Liturgy*, so *Wisely* and so *Divinely Composed*, as might be used even by the *Angels* in *Heaven*, were there any need of *Praying* there; I say, not to insist upon these things, I shall proceed to what is more *Personal* and *Peculiar*, and briefly represent to you the *advantagiousness* of your present *Circumstances* upon these *Two Considerations*.

FIRST, That you here enjoy also all the *Advantages* of *Serving God* in the way of a *Contemplative Life*.

SECONDLY, That you here enjoy also all the *Advantages* of *fitting* and *qualifying* your selves to serve both him and the *Publick*, in an *Active Life*, whenever you shall be called to it.

AND First, as to a *Contemplative* Life; This is immediately and properly a Life of Religion and Devotion, and absolutely considered, is the most perfect of any: This the School-Men and Mystical Divines commonly represent under the Figure of *Martha* and *Mary*, the former of which they suppose to be the Picture of an *Active* Life, and the latter of a *Contemplative*. And whereas *Mary* is said to have chosen the *Better part*, this they think a Warrant to give the preference to a *Contemplative* Life. Whether it be or no, I will not dispute, but I think the preference it self is just, and that a *Contemplative* Life absolutely considered, has the greater Perfection. For though there be great excellency in an *Active* Life, yet 'tis meerly with relation to the present Exigence; and though the Habit of Charity shall (as the Apostle discourges, *1 Cor. 13. 8.*) remain for ever; yet these present instances and expresses of it are calculated purely for this Life, and shall utterly cease in the next. But now the *Contemplative* Life is to last for ever, and to be the Entertainment of that state where there is nothing but meer Excellence where all that is imperfect shall be done away.

AND this is that Life which your present Circumstances doth invite you to, and further you in; here your *Thoughts* are your own, and so is your *Time* too wherein to employ them; here you live a Life free and dis-ingaged from all worldly Incumbrances and Secular Avocations, and blest with all possible Advantages for a *Contemplative* and Affectionate Religion: Here you have Solitude,

Solitude, Retirement, and Leisure, and so may serve God without *Distraction*, and without *Disturbance*. And you can hardly well imagine till you have tried it, of how great advantage this last thing is to a Devotional Life. *He that has little Business shall be Wise*, says he that was so: I may add, and shall be good too. Leisure is a great Friend to Meditation, and that to Religion. But Business is an Enemy to both; for believe me, 'tis very hard to keep up the Spirit of Devotion in Multiplicity of Affairs. He that is thus troubled about many things, is not in the way of *Extraordinary Religion*: 'Tis well if such a one can mind the One thing necessary, and discharge the Offices of Common Life. But this is not your Case, you have Time, and you have Leisure in abundance; you have little else to do, but to trim your Lamps, to adorn your *Interior*, and to perfect Holiness in the Fear of God. In short, your very Profession is to be *Religious*; you live in a place where the Order of the Morning and Evening Sacrifice is duly observed, where you have stated Hours of Prayer and Thanksgiving to serve God in *Publick*, and all the *rest* of your Time is one continued Opportunity of Serving him in *Private*. So that you may be said, considering the Advantageousness of your Circumstances, to be in the very Emphasis of the Phrase, *παρακλησις ζωης*, to stand in order, and rightly disposed for Heaven, and your whole Life may be properly called a *Day of Salvation*.

AND as you here enjoy all the Advantages of serving God in the way of a *Contemplative Life*, so

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Secondly;

Secondly, you have here also all the Advantages of fitting your selves to serve both him and the Publick in an *Active* Life whenever you shall be called to it: For besides, that what makes you Good and Religious here, serves also to make you useful and serviceable hereafter, a Pious and a Well-principled Education being the best Preparative for a Life of Publick Action and Employment; besides this, you have all the Advantages of Learning that *Books* and *Conversation*, and *Leisure* to make the best use and improvement of both can possibly afford: So that there is no Employment or Profession either in Church or State, either Spiritual or Secular, but what you have here the best Helps and Advantages to fit your selves for.

AND now since there is so much Excellency in Praise and Thanksgiving, and since we are particularly obliged to Bless God for Advantageous Circumstances of Life; and since the Circumstances of your present Life appear to be eminently such, let me in the last place commend this to your serious Consideration, Whether you are not therefore highly obliged to the Duty of Praise and Thanksgiving.

CERTAINLY if any Persons in the World are, you are, who are best qualified to understand the transcendent excellency of it, and also lie under the greatest Obligations and Inducements to it; Indeed you can never enough Bless God for the Happy Opportunities of Religion you enjoy in this Place, where you are like the *Trees planted*
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by the Water side, Pſal. 1. 3. in a growing and thriving Situation, (as the Pſalmiſt elegantly deſcribes the condition of this Happy Man,) and where it muſt be your own intolerable fault, if like him, you bring not forth your *Fruit in due Season*. Particularly you ought to Bleſs God for that Happy Inſtrument of theſe great Advantages, whoſe dear Memory we this Day *juſtly*, and I hope *Gratefully* Celebrate.

AND after a grateful Senſe, and hearty Acknowledgment of theſe kind Diſpenſations, your next care ſhould be to make ſuch good *uſe* and improvement of them all, as may answer both the natural tendency of the Privileges themſelves, and the good Ends and Deſigns of *God* and your *Pious Founder*; always remembering, that if (as the Author to the *Hebrews* tells us, *Heb. 2. 3.*) they ſhall not eſcape who neglect the common Advantages of the Chriſtian Inſtitution, which was ſo much beyond whatever the World enjoyed before, much leſs ſhall we if we neglect *ſo great Salvation*, ſo great an Advantage and Opportunity of being Saved.

THE

The Importance of a Religious Life considered from the happy Conclusion of it.

PSALM 37. 38.

Keep Innocency, and take heed to the thing that is right; for that shall bring a Man Peace at the Last.



IS the great difference between a Life of Sin and Wickedness; and a Life of Piety and Vertue, that the former consults only the *present* Interest, but the latter provides for our *future* well-being, and lays a sure Foundation for our everlasting Peace and Happiness. The greatest advantage we can possibly promise our selves from a sinful course, can be at most but to be diverted a little, and pleasantly entertained for our term of Life here, which besides the uncertainty of it, is at longest very short and transitory: Short indeed, if compared to other temporary things in the Vegetable or Sensitive World, to the Life of an Oak or an Elephant; but a meer *nothing*, if ballanced with the Days of Eternity: Time it self has no Proportion to Eternity, much less that Span of it that makes the Life of Man, *Psal. 39. Behold thou hast made*

my Days as a Span long, and mine Age is even as nothing in respect of thee, says the Psalmist; so that were our whole Life one continued and intire Scene of Pleasure, nothing but meer Sensuality and Epicurism, 'twould be but just nothing in respect of that long part which we are to act upon another Stage. Indeed such a degree of Pleasantness would serve to make it yet much shorter, and contract the *Span* into a *Point*. And yet this is the most that a life of Sin can possibly pretend to, (for it lays claim to nothing beyond the Grave but Misery and Destruction) and when once the little Span is measured out, all that we can then say of it, upon a review, will be to the sense of that severe Remark of the Stoick, *Ἡ μὲν ἡδονὴ παρῆλθε, τὸ δὲ κακὸν μένει*, *The Pleasure truly is past and gone, but the Evil remains*; which is a most deplorable and afflicting Consideration.

BUT I speak this only upon *supposition*; for indeed the Sinner is seldom or never so fortunate as this comes to; his whole Life is but a Point, a little Speck between Time and Eternity, and yet 'tis not the thousandth part of it that he enjoys. The more usual method of Sin, is to mix and change the Scenes, to regale us with a short Entertainment, and then to serve up to us in the close of the Feast a *Deaths Head*; to divert us a while with Pleasure and when that's over to make us pay dearly for it; to afflict us with a sharp and perhaps long repentance. Indeed a bad Conscience is a Companion troublesome enough even in the midst of the most high-set Enjoyments; 'tis then like the *Hand writing* upon the Wall, enough to spoil

spoil and disrelish the *Feast*; but much more when the tumult and hurry of Delight is over, when all is still and silent, when the Sinner has nothing to do, but attend to its lashes and remorse. And this in spite of all the common Arts of Diversion, will be very often the case of every wicked Man; for we cannot live always upon the *stretch*; our Faculties will not bear constant Pleasure any more than constant Pain; there will be some *Vacancies*, and when there are, they will be sure to be filled up with uncomfortable Thoughts and black Reflections: So that when the Accounts of a Sinful Life are cast up, this will be found to be the Sum of it, a little present gratification at the expence of a deal of succeeding Trouble, Shame and Self-condemnation; nothing but present Joys and those too frequently *interrupted* and always *over-charged*. So that setting aside the great *After-reckoning*, its Pleasures are over-bought even in this World, and there is this great Aggravation of the Folly of Sin, that although some of its Pains are Eternal, yet all its Pleasures are but for a Season.

BUT now it's quite otherwise in the practice of Religion and Vertue: This makes Provision for our Best and Last Interest, and secures to us a Reversion of never Failing and never ending Happiness. Indeed she is not destitute even of a *Present* Reward, but carries in hand a sufficient Recompence for all the trouble she occasions. She is pleasant in the *Way* as well as in the *End*, for even her very Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her
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Paths are Peace. But 'tis her greatest and most distinguishing Glory and Commendation, that she befriends us *Hereafter*, and brings us Peace at the last. And this is a Portion she can never be dis-inherited of, however the Malice of Men, or an ill Combination of Accidents may defraud her of the Other. And therefore the Psalmist Over-looking as it were all the intermedial advantages of a good Life, recommends it only from that which is proper and peculiar to it. For Vice has its Present Pleasures as well as Vertue; but herein are they discriminated, that 'tis Vertue only that ends well. I my self (says the Psalmist) have seen the ungodly in great Power, flourishing like a green Bay-Tree: There's the present Pomp and Triumph of Sin. But I went by, and lo he was gone; I sought him, but his place could no where be found: There's the unhappy Close of the Merry Comedy. Then it follows as a Practical Remark from the whole: Keep Innocency, and take heed to the thing that is Right, for that shall bring a Man Peace at the last.

THE Words are Naturally resolvable into these three Considerations, which shall be made the Subject of the following Discourse.

1. THAT Peace at the last is more to be valued than any of the Temporary Pleasures of Sin.

2. THAT a good Life, which the Psalmist here expresses, by keeping Innocency, and taking heed to the thing that is Right, will certainly bring a Man this Peace at the last.

3. THAT

3. THAT therefore it highly concerns every Man to keep Innocency, and to take heed to the thing that is Right; in one word, to *Live well*.

THE Sum and Force of the whole may be reduced in this practical Syllogism.

THAT which will bring a Man Peace at the last, is to be chiefly minded, and most diligently heeded.

BUT a Life of Piety and Vertue will bring a Man Peace at the Last.

THEREFORE a Life of Piety and Vertue is to be chiefly minded, and most diligently heeded.

I begin with the first Consideration, That Peace at the last is more to be valued than any of the Temporary Pleasures of Sin. Now this Term, *at the last*, may be taken Two ways, either for the last and concluding Period of a Man's Life in this World, and then Peace at the last will be all one with Peace at the Hour of Death; or else for the last and unchangeable State of Man in the other World, and then Peace at the last will be the same with *Everlasting Peace*. I shall consider the Proposition with respect to both these Senses: And First, for Peace at the Hour of Death; The inestimable value of which, though none are so well able to judge of, as they who are really and actually concern'd in that dreadful moment, yet we may take some measures of it, by considering a little what
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it is to *Dye*, and how miserable is the condition of those who have lived so ill as to *want* this Peace at the Hour of Death.

AND First let us consider (that which I fear we seldom do) what it is to *Dye*: Death is a thing of a strange and dreadful consideration, dreadful in *it self*, as 'tis a Dissolution of Nature, the manner of which, because we do not *know*, we mightily *fear*; but much more so in its Issue and Consequence, which is both *great* and *doubtful*, for upon this one thing more depends, than upon all the things in the World besides. Indeed the loss of Life and the Pains and Agonies wherewith it is lost, are the least part of Death. This indeed is the whole of it to brute and irrational Creatures, they suffer Pain for a while, then resign up their Breath, and lose both the Sense and the Remembrance of both Pain and Pleasure. But to the *Dying Man* Death appears in another Light, and with another Face: He is further to consider, that he is just now launching out into the fathomless Deep of Eternity; that he is entring upon a new, strange, dark, and withal unalterable state of things; that he shall be within some few Minutes what at present he has no manner of Notion of, and what he must be for ever; that he is now about to throw his last and great Cast, and to be resolved once for all of his whole Condition; that he is now passing from Time to Eternity, Eternity of Happiness, or Eternity of Misery.

AND what a dreadful moment then must that be, which a little preceeds this great Transaction,

action, when a Man stands upon the very *edge* and brink of the Precipice, just upon the turning off, and has the great Gulph of Eternity in view! Nothing certainly can be more dreadful than this, except that very Point, that narrow Horizon that divides Time from Eternity, the end of the former, and the beginning of the latter, and actually determines the business of our Happiness or Damnation.

AND now since to Dye is no less a thing in its consequence, than to be either Damned or Saved, to be either Eternally Happy, or Eternally Miserable, it cannot sure but be matter of vast importance to a Man, to consider which of these two is like to be his Lot, when he is just about to try one of them. Nay indeed, 'twill then nearly concern him to be pretty well assured of the *welfare* of his After-state; then if ever, he will rightly understand the inestimable Price of a quiet Conscience, of a satisfied Mind, and of a Hope full of Glory and Immortality; then if ever, he will find that which was always a *Continual Feast*, is now a Sovereign Cordial and the Food of Angels; for never certainly is Peace and Comfort more seasonable than at this Instant; never so much need of it, and never so much value to be set upon it; never can it more avail us to be satisfied concerning our final condition, than when we are just entering upon it; never more refreshing to have some few Beams of Light, than when we are passing through the *dark Valley* and *shadow* of Death. Then therefore, if ever, we shall duly value this rich Pearl,

Pearl, a good Conscience, and be well content if we had parted with all our Substance for the Purchase of it. We shall then be fully convinced (O why are we not so now!) how much it outweighs all the Temporary Pleasures of Sin, yea, and the Severities of Vertue too; and that if our whole Life had been one continued act of Penance and Austerity, 'twould have been abundantly recompensed by the Satisfaction and Consolation of this one Moment. And that 'tis worth while to live Rigidly, if 'twere only upon this one Consideration, that we may Dye Chearfully.

AND without Question it must needs be an unspeakable Satisfaction to a Dying Man, when if he looks *backward*, he sees a Life well spent; if *forward*, he has before him a bright Prospect of Light and Glory: When he can say with King *Hezekiah*, *Remember now O Lord I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in Truth and with a Perfect Heart; Isa. 38.* and with the great Apostle when within view of his Dissolution, *2 Tim. 4. I have fought a good Fight, I have finished my Course; I have kept the Faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the Righteous Judge shall give me at that day.* I say it must needs be an unspeakable, an unconceivable Satisfaction, for a Man in his last Hour, when he is taking leave of his Body, and shaking Hands with the whole World, when all are sad about him, and concerned for him, then to consider that there is a better state; and that he has a Title to it; that when his

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Earthly Tabernacle shall be dissolved, he has a Building with God; an House not made with Hands, Eternal in the Heavens: That when he shall cease to live with Men, he shall dwell with God, and converse with Angels; in a word, that he is to leave nothing but Vanities and Shadows behind him, and that he has the solid and real Happiness of a whole Eternity before him. What a mild and unterrifying thing is Death to such a Man as this, and with what Serenity and Cheerfulness does he entertain its Summons! He can smile in the Physicians Face, when he hears him pronounce his Sickness desperate, can receive the Sentence of Death without Trembling, and if his Senses hold out so long, can hear even his Passing Bell without disturbance. The Warnings of Death are no more to him, than was the Voice of God to *Moses*, when he said to him, *Get thee up to Mount Nebo and dye there; Deut. 32.* no more but get thee up and Dye. For now he feels the approaches of that Salvation with Joy, which he had before wrought out with Fear and Trembling, and can lay down his Body with an holy Hope, having possessed it in Sanctification and Honour. And what a happy state of Mind is this! How far exceeding all the common objects of Desire and Envy, and all those Pleasures of Sin, for whose sake 'tis yet frequently put to the *Hazard*, and too often foolishly *exchanged!* To *Live* with Peace of Conscience is a singular Happiness, but much more to *Dye* with it; then, if ever, 'tis a Peace that passes all Understanding,

So great reason had *Balaam* for that passionate Wish of his, *Let me dye the Death of the Righteous, and let my last End be like his.*

BUT this we shall be further convinc'd of, by considering Secondly, the miserable condition of those who want this Peace at the Hour of Death: This may be conceived in a double degree, either by way of *Doubt* or *Distrust*, or by way of downright *Despair*. Suppose we then in the First place, a Man placed upon his Death-Bed, who has led his Life so indifferently, or Repented so lately, or so imperfectly, that 'tis a matter of reasonable question, whether he has an Interest in the Mercies of the New Covenant or no; what a strange kind of *Suspence* must such a Man be in, and what a strange concern must he have upon him! What a disconsolate, what a *damping* Thought must it be for such a Man to consider that he is now going out of the World, but does not know whether! That there are Two States of Eternity, but he does not know which shall fall to his lot; nor when his Soul is dislodged from his Body, who shall give her the first greeting, whether an *Angel* or the *Devil*. And how must such an uncertain Soul tremble and be confounded in this her *dark* Passage! 'Tis a sad thing even to be Doubtful and Unresolved in a business of such vast moment.

BUT if the Man by reason of the notorious Enormity of his Life, is so far a Stranger to this Peace, as to be in utter *Despair* of his Salvation, I want words to express how miserable then his

14

Condition is ; with what amazement then will he look, both backward and forward upon his Sins, and upon his approaching Account, and how full of Indignation will he be against himself for neglecting, when he had so many Opportunities, to consider the things that belonged to his Peace, and which now he perceives to be forever hid from his Eyes ! The *Memory* of a Sinful Life is always tormenting, whatever Pleasure there may be in the *acts* of it, and the expectation of Judgment is always terrible ; but never do either of them appear in their true Colours, till a Man comes to Dye : Then he begins to have a sense and apprehension of them, somewhat like that which our Saviour had in the Garden, which put him into an *Agony*, and a *Sweat of Blood*. When the Man comes within view of *Eternity*, then will he be most concerned for his misuse of *Time*. The Scripture compares a wicked Man to a *Troubled Sea*, always working and uneasy, but about the time of Death he is all over Storm and Tempest. Who can then *express* the hundredth part of the Disturbance and Confusion he then *feels* ? For a Man to think he is just going to give an account before God of such a Life as he can't so much as reflect upon privately by himself without Shame and Amazement, and to be sentenced to a place of Torment, from whence there is no Redemption ; to think that he has lived Insignificantly and Wickedly, Idly and Unaccountably, and neglected that only time of Probation, that only Opportunity

nity of Happiness allowed him, an Opportunity which was procured him at no less a rate than the Death of his Saviour, and which was denied to the Angels that Sinned: To think that he has neglected so great Salvation, and that he must now be miserable and undone for ever, when with ease he might have been Happy, and all this for the sake of some little trifling Interests or Pleasures, for Dreams and Shadows, for that which never was considerable, and now is not at all: What can be more afflicting, more astonishing than this? For my part I think the Misery on't so great, that I can't see how any Man could support himself under the Agony of such a Consideration, no, not though an Angel should appear to him from Heaven, strengthening him: For 'tis a state of Mind full of the very *Blackness* of Darkness, and but one Remove from the Misery of Damnation.

AND NOW I think from this Description of Horror, it may with ease be gathered, what an invaluable Blessing and Happiness it is to have Peace at the last, I mean at our last Hour. If there be any one that is not yet enough satisfied of it, let him but ask a Dying Man the Question, and then remain an Infidel if he can.

I should now consider Peace at the last, as it signifies *Everlasting Peace*, or the Peace of the last and unchangeable state of Man in the other World, and shew how far this is to be valued beyond all the Temporary Pleasures of Sin: But this is that Peace of God which passes all Understanding,

derstanding, all Conception, and all Expression, and between which and any thing of this World, there is no manner of Proportion. What the Apostle says of the *Sufferings*, is as true of the *Pleasures* and Enjoyments of this present time, that are neither of them worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed: Not worthy to be compared for their *Greatness*, and less for their *Duration*. I may therefore well omit any further enlarging upon this, 'twould be almost as ridiculous to go about to give Light to a thing that is of it self so clear, as 'tis to disbelieve it; and he that offers to make the least Question of so evident a Truth, is much too absurd to be seriously argued with.

I shall therefore pass on to the Second Consideration, that a good Life which the Psalmist here expresses, by keeping Innocency, and taking heed to the thing that is Right, will certainly bring a Man this Peace at the last. And First, 'twill bring him *Everlasting Peace*; this is plain from the whole tenour of the New Covenant, which establishes a standing and never failing connexion between *Repentance* and *Pardon*. 'Tis the very Purchase of Christ's Death, that now Repentance may be unto Life; and accordingly 'tis not only matter of Hope and probable Expectation, but 'tis made one of the *Articles* of our *Creed*, that we may obtain *Forgiveness of Sins*. Indeed, Repentance is now no where in vain, but among Devils and Damned Spirits; it would have been so with us too, had not Christ dyed,

Much Comfort and Satisfaction, as that last general Review which he takes of it, when he comes to Dye; then he has most need of Comfort, then he is most fit to relish it, and then he has most of it. With what strange Delight and Satisfaction does he then reflect upon his past Life, and call to mind the Good he has done in it! Those Joys and Consolations which before maintained a gentle Course within their own Channels, now begin to swell above their Banks and *overflow* the Man. A kind of Heavenly Light springs up in his Mind, and shines forth into his Face, and his Hopes and his Desires, his Thoughts and his Affections, his Presages and his Expectations, his Body and his Soul; yea, the whole Man is full of Glory and immortality; he is conscious to himself of his Sincerity and Integrity, that he has not been wilfully and deliberately wanting in any part of his Duty, but has rather made this his *Exercise* and constant Concern, to keep a Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Man. And as he *recollects* this with *Pleasure*, so he builds upon it with *Confidence*, and accordingly resigns up his Soul into his Maker's Hands, cheerfully and couragiously, nothing doubting, but that that good God whom he has so faithfully served in his Life, will take care of him, and reward him after Death.

AND for such an Assurance as this, there is sufficient ground in Scripture: *Psal. 119. Great is the Peace that they have who love thy Law, says the Psalmist; And the Righteous hath Hope in his Death,*

Death, says Solomon, Prov. 14. 32. And says the Prophet, Isa. 32. 17 *The work of Righteousness shall be Peace, and the effect of Righteousness Quietness and Assurance for ever.* And says the great Apostle, 2 Cor. 1. 12. *Our Rejoycing is this, the Testimony of our Conscience, that in Simplicity and Godly Sincerity, we have had our Conversation in the World,* 1 John 3. 14. *And we know that we have passed from Death to Life, because we love the Brethren,* says St. John. And again, ver. 21. *If our Hearts condemn us not, then have we Confidence towards God.*

T H E R E is indeed some Controversie between the *Reformed* and the *Romish* Doctors concerning this Matter, the latter generally denying that a Man may be Assured or Certain of his Salvation; now though it may and perhaps must be granted, that we cannot have an Assurance of *Divine Faith*, (nothing being the Object of such an Assurance, but for which we have an immediate Revelation from God, which cannot ordinarily be said of any Man's Salvation in particular, but only of the general and conditional Proposition of the Covenant upon which we build,) yet I think there is sufficient reason to conclude from the forementioned places of Scripture, with many others too numerous and obvious to alledge, that a Man upon the consideration of his past Life, may be so *Morally* assured of his Salvation, as to be out of all reasonable Doubt or Irresolution about it; and he that will deny this, must oblige himself to maintain one of these Two Propositions, either that a Man cannot understand what Conditions

ditions are required of him in order to a Salvable State, or that he can't with any measure of Certainty, judge of himself whether he be qualified according to those Conditions. The former of which, would reflect upon the *Sufficiency* and *Clearness* of Scripture, which must be allowed to be full and plain in necessary things; and the latter would redound too much to the dishonour and disparagement of Human Reason and Understanding; since according to this Proposition a Man must be supposed to be so great a Stranger to himself, as not to know what passes within his own Breast, contrary to which the Scripture supposes in that Question, 1 Cor. 2. 11. *Who knows the things of a Man, save the Spirit of Man which is in him?*

IT must be acknowledged, that this is not a strict Certainty, neither of *Science* nor of *Divine Faith*, but only a Moral and Human Assurance; for 'tis certain, that the Conclusion can be no stronger than the Premises: And therefore since one of the Propositions (that which contains my own Qualifications,) is matter only of Experimental Knowledge, which is a Human, and therefore fallible Testimony, 'tis certain, that the Assurance that rises from the whole, can be no more than an Human or Moral Assurance. But that is enough, and he is neither Reasonable nor Modest that either *Desires* or *Pretends* to more; since the other is sufficient for a *Satisfactory*, though not for an *Infallible* Judgment.

AND yet there is something further in this matter yet; for to this Moral Assurance grounded

ded upon the general Terms of Salvation, (which are matter of Divine Faith,) and upon the inward consciousness of our being qualified accordingly, (which is matter of Experimental Knowledge,) we may further add, that *Obsecration* so often mentioned in Scripture, *Rom. 8. 16.* whereby the Spirit it self is said to bear Witness with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God; not by a clear and exprefs Revelation, (for then the Assurance we have of our Salvation, would be an Assurance of Divine Faith, which is against what was before supposed,) but only by a secret Determination of our Minds to assent to this Comfortable Conclusion, that we are in a state of Pardon and Salvation, and by Confirming us in that Assent. After what manner this Operation of God is performed, I shall not be so curious as to inquire, 'tis enough to know that it is a certain impression of the Holy Spirit upon our Souls, whereby we are inwardly perswaded beyond the force of Rational Conviction of our being interess'd in the Divine Favour, and in the Glory that shall be revealed. This is the *Seal* of the Spirit, *Ephes. 1. 13, 14.* and the *Pledge* or *Earnest* of our *Inheritance*, which God often bestows upon the Children of Light in this Life, as a Reward for their past, and sometimes as an encouragement for their future Obedience. For so says the Spirit to the Churches, *Rev. 2. 17.* *To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the hidden Manna, and I will give him a white stone and in the Stone*

Stone a new Name written, which no Man knows, saving he that receives it.

AND now since Peace at the last is so valuable a Treasure, and since a good Life is a certain and the only way to obtain it, what Consequence can be more natural and evident from these Premises than that it highly concerns us to keep Innocency, and to take heed to the thing that is right; in one word, to Live well, which was the Third and last Consideration. Indeed were Peace at the last, a thing of no great value, or were not a good Life a sure and a necessary method to obtain it; were there a failure in either of these Premises, the Conclusion would fail with it, and 'twere no great matter how we Lived. But since the quite contrary appears to be unquestionably true, that Peace at the last is incomparably beyond any Temporal Interest we can propose, and a good Life is a sure and necessary way to procure it; nothing certainly in the World can be of such moment and consequence, as to live well, 'Tis by infinite degrees the most important thing that can possibly imploy our Thoughts, or our Time, our Studies or our Endeavours, nay indeed 'tis the *One thing needful*. Vain and impertinent are all those other *many things* we are here troubled about, all those Thoughts and Cares we have [about Time, and the things of Time, which indeed would be of little value, even to a Temporary Being, much more to an Immortal Spirit who is to live in another State, and there

there either enjoy or suffer to all Eternity. To such a Being Time certainly can be no further considerable, than as Eternity depends upon it, no further than as it may serve as an Opportunity to secure the other, which is all the *use* and all the *value* Time and this Mortal Life can have with a wise and considering Man. The best use therefore we can make of our Time, is to live well in it, to spend it Innocently and Usefully, Piously and Charitably in the Service of God, and in doing good to Men. 'Tis for this we have our Time, and this is the right and proper use of it, and that which will give the most Happy Conclusion to it. This is that which will yield us Peace and Comfort, when nothing else can, and when we stand in most need of it, in the *Hour of Death*, and in the *Day of Judgment*, in either of which there is no comfort like a good Conscience.

WHEN I shall lie faint and languishing upon my Dying Bed, with my Friends all sad about me, and my Blood and Spirits waxing cold and slow within; when I begin to reckon my Life not by the Striking of the Clock, but by the throbbings of my Pulse, every stroak of which beats a *Surrender* to the Pale Conqueror, in this great *Ebb* of Nature, when the Stream of Life runs low, *Eccles. 12. 6.* and the Wheel at the *Cistern* can hardly turn round its Circle, it will be then no Pleasure or Comfort to my departing Soul to reflect upon the great Estate that I have got, upon the Family and Name that I have raised, or upon the Ho-

Honours and Preferments that I have gone through: No, my *Soul* will then have a new Taste as well as my *Body*, and these things will be as insipid to me as my *Meat* and *Drink*; only the Conscience of having done well, will then refresh me, and yield me Peace and Consolation. This is that *Angel* that must support and strengthen me in that great and last *Agony*; nothing else is able to interpose for my relief, in that dreadful juncture, and this alone will be a sufficient Comforter and Assistant. Many things there are that divert and ingage our Thoughts in the *Course* of our *Life*, but at the *end* of it, there is nothing that will be regarded by us, or afford us any Satisfaction but a good Conscience. *2 Cor. 1. 12.* Our rejoicing then will be this, the Testimony of our Conscience, that in Simplicity and Godly Sincerity, we have had our Conversation in the World. And how infinitely then are we concerned to take heed to our ways to walk circumspectly, and heartily to apply our selves to that *now* which will stand us in such stead *then*!

BESIDES, 'tis our greatest Wisdom as well as Interest, and the best Proof we can give of our being Rational Creatures: We think it a great Commendation of our Reason to be able to Dispute well, and Discourse well, and we are generally more impatient of what reflects upon our *Intellectuals*, than of what reflects upon our *Morals*. But certainly to Live well, is the greatest argument of Wisdom, and that which

which reflects upon our Morals, reflects most of all upon our Understandings. We Live now in an Age wherein Craft and Worldly Policy, nay, and even down-right Knavery has usurped the name of Wisdom, and a Man is in danger of bringing his Parts in question, by adhering to his Duty against his Worldly Interest:

But this is the Wisdom of Fools and Mad-men, of those who either think not at all, or else consider things by halves; 'tis in short the Wisdom of this World, which the Apostle tells us is Foolishness with God. But there is another Wisdom, and that is the *Wisdom of the Just*; and this is that Wisdom which God commends, and which we our selves shall hereafter (when best able to judge,) commend too; for this is that Wisdom from above, which is first *Pure*, then *Peaceable*, *Jam. 3. 17.* which will bring us Peace at the last, and whereby we shall become Wise unto Salvation.

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THE Conclusion of all is, Time it self is short, the Time of Man is much shorter; Eternity has neither end nor change, and every Man is hastening to this Eternal and Unchangeable State; and therefore it infinitely concerns us all so to live while we sojourn in this World, that when we come to Dye, we may have these Two things to support us in that dreadful Hour, the Reflection upon the Innocency of our Life past, and the Prospect of future Glory and Happiness.

WHICH God of his Goodness grant us all,
&c.

A
DISCOURSE
CONCERNING
Heavenly-Mindedness.

PHIL. 3. 20.

For our Conversation is in Heaven.



TH A T Man is deeply lapsed and degenerated from a state of Excellency and Perfection, is evident from the Ruins of his Nature, which is now too faulty and defective to be the first and original Workmanship of God; but in nothing is his Fall more signalized, than in that abject, servile and groveling disposition of Mind he now labours under: He has suffered indeed in all his Faculties, and every *String* of his Soul is put out of *Tune*; his Understanding has a Cloud dwelling upon it, his Will has lost much of its Verticity or Magnetick Inclination towards the chief Good; but that wherein he is most diminished, and stands most alienated from the *Life of God*, and the order of Grace, is the *Passionate* part of him,

him, his Affections; these have suffered such a vast *Declination* from their true and natural Point, and are so depressed into the dregs of the Material World, and are now become so unperceptive of any thing but the gusts and relishes of the Animal Nature, that instead of serving (as they were originally intended,) to the invigoration and actuation of the Soul, they are her greatest clog and impediment in all her Endeavours and Aspirations after the Divine Life.

THIS is that so much Celebrated *μεροπύνασις* of the Platonists, the *Molting of the Plums* of the Soul; she is not only broken and wounded in her Wings, but utterly *unpinioned*, she has dropt her Feathers, and can no longer sustain her weight in the higher Regions, but falls down, and lies grovelling upon the Ground; as if besides the Primitive Curse upon Man of Tilling the Earth from whence he was taken, he had inherited that of the Serpent too, *Upon thy Belly shalt thou go, and Dust shall thou eat all the days of thy Life.*

AND as this Demission of Soul is the most signal instance of the Degeneracy of Man, so is it commonly the last from whence we recover; our Affections are the most stubborn and unconquerable part about us, as being blind and unperceptive Appetites, and such as are set at the greatest distance from the *Light* of the Mind, which shines first upon the Will, and then upon the Passions, whose illumination is therefore more feeble and languid. Hence it comes to pass, that this is the most difficult part to be managed, as
I there

there is more trouble with One Fool, than with Ten Wise Men: and when the Understanding and Will are resigned up, and given over to the importunity of him that stands at the Door and knocks, these still maintain the Fort against the Heavenly Battery, and are very often too successful in the their resistance. Indeed the regulation of the *Pathetic* part is commonly the last conquest of Divine Grace, the consummating degree of Spiritual Life, the closing feature of that Image of God which is form'd in us; for nothing is more common than to see Men of singular Strictness and vertuous Conversation in all other respects, who yet have their Affections deeply engaged in Secular Interests, who stoop and yield to the Magnetism of this dirty Planet, and (as the Apostle phrases it in the Verse before the Text,) *Mind* or relish *Earthly things*: An Eminent Example of this we have in the Story of the Young Man, who came to our Saviour to inquire what he should do to inherit Eternal Life; who though a diligent Observer of the Law, and generally accomplished with moral Qualifications, insomuch that our Lord began to have a kindness for him, yet the *affectionate* part of his Soul had still a wrong Bias, and was not sufficiently weaned from Earthly good; *One thing thou lackest*, and what was that? Not more Justice, nor more Charity, nor more Temperance, but to have his Affections more loose and disengaged from the World; for when he was bid go and sell what he had and give it to the
Poor,

Poor, he was sad at that Saying, and went away grieved, though he was told at the same time, that it was to be only an *Exchange*, and that far for the better, that he should have Treasure in *Heaven*, *Mark 10. 21.* for what he quitted upon *Earth*.

BUT however difficult it may be for a Soul so low sunk in her Affections to recover again upon the Wing, and bear up above the steams of the Flesh, and the attractions of the Animal Nature, yet this is that excellent end which the Christian Institution aims at, and which every good Christian ought diligently to endeavour after: For what the Author of our Faith and Happiness said of some particular Words of his, is true of all, that they are Spirit and Life, such as are able, and were designed to reanimate the dead and senseless Minds of Men, and to diffuse a vital heat throughout the torpid and benumm'd World. And accordingly *St. Paul* tell us, That Christianity is *νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς*, *the Law of the Spirit of Life*, and in another place, *διανομία τοῦ πνεύματος*, *The Ministration of the Spirit*, *2 Cor. 3.* such as becomes a Vital Form in us, to give us Motion and Activity, and to raise us from that Swoon and Lethargy, which by our Fall we were cast into. And the same Apostle makes it here the Character of an accomplished Christian, such who is fit to be proposed as an Example for our Imitation, that he is one that is not only above, but has nothing to do with the petty trifling Interests of this lower World, but has

his Thoughts and Affections wholly taken up and imployed about the Beatitudes of the next. For says he, *Brethren, be Followers together of me, and mark them that walk so as ye have us for an Example; for our Conversation is in Heaven.* In discoursing upon which Words, I shall shew.

FIRST, What it is to have our Conversation in Heaven.

SECONDLY, How reasonable and becoming it is for a Christian to do so.

THIRDLY, What are the Uses and Advantages of such an Heavenly Dispensation of Life.

NOW concerning the First, I consider that *Heaven* here may be understood either largely for the state of the other Life in general, by way of opposition to this, or more strictly for that special and excellent Portion of it, Glory and Happiness. If we consider it according to the former sense, then to have our Conversation in Heaven, will be to be perpetually mindful of our Mortality, and that we are Citizens of another World, and must shortly take our leave of this; to have a constant prospect into that other World which must be our last Home, and to be always looking beyond the Horizon of Time, to the Long Day of Eternity, to dwell in the Meditation of the Four last things, Heaven, Hell, Death and Judgment; how great they are in their Consequence, how certain in the Event, and how near in their Approach, and in consideration of all this, to be always preparing for our great and final Change.

BUT

BUT if we consider it according to the latter and stricter Sense, then to have our Conversation in Heaven, will be frequently to contemplate the Infinite Perfections of the Divine Essence, the *First of Beings*, and the *Last of Ends*, and the unconceivable Happiness of those who shall enjoy the Communications of his Blessedness; to Contemplate, and have always in view that weight of Glory, that incorruptible Crown with which the Sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared, no not to be mentioned. To meditate day and night upon that happy time, when we shall be Partakers of *Moses's* Wish, and be admitted to that intimate and naked Vision of that Mysterious and Incomprehensible Excellence, which is too great for our Mortal Faculties, and which none can *See and Live*: *Exod.* 33. 20. When we shall see him not in Symbols and Figures, not in Glories and sensible Manifestations, but openly and clearly, really and as he is, and from seeing him, be transformed into his likeness: 1 *John* 3. 2. To meditate upon the Blessed Society of Saints and Angels, upon the delicious repasts of Anthems and Allelujahs, and that more ravishing Harmony of Divine Love, and intellectual Sympathy; upon the elevated and raised Perfections of a glorified Soul, the enlargements of its Understanding, and the Sublimations of its Wills and Affections, and upon the Angelical Clarity and Divine Temper of our Resurrection Body: In sum, upon all those Glorious things which are

spoken, and which even he that saw them could not utter, of the City of God, and upon the infinite Consolations of that joyful Sentence. *Come ye Blessed of my Father, Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the World,* 2 Cor. 12. 4. Lastly to contemplate all this not coldly and indifferently as a thing that is a great way off, or as an uncertain Reversion or imaginary *Utopia*, but as a state that will shortly and certainly be, and with that Faith and Assurance which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen; to Dwell, Converse, and have our *Civil Life* in Heaven, (for so the word *πολίτευμα* signifies,) as if we were already Inhabitants of that Blessed Place, and actual Members of that Sacred Policy and Community.

THIS is to have our Conversation in Heaven, this is that *Heavenly-Mindedness* which the great Apostle who had personally conversed in the Third Heaven, and seen there more than he could utter, proposes to the Imitation of his Followers, and for which he esteemed himself fit to be an Example: Which leads me to shew Secondly, what a reasonable and becoming thing it is for a Christian thus to have his Conversation in Heaven; and to convince him that it is so, let him consider,

FIRST, That the other Life is the state we are chiefly intended for, without respect to which there is nothing in this considerable enough to justify the Wisdom and Goodness of God

God in making the World; that here we have no abiding City, no durable concern, and consequently what a Folly 'tis to let our Thoughts *dwell* where we but *Sojourn* our selves; that this present state, both by reason of its shortness and other Vanities, is upon no other account considerable, than as 'tis an opportunity for, and a Passage to the next; that as it was not worth while for God to make it, so neither is it for us to live in it, if it were not in order and relation to something further; that it is a short Voyage, and where the Haven lies always in sight; that 'tis the greatest short-sightedness imaginable, not to see beyond so little a prospect as the Grave, and the greatest stupidity and dotage, to confine our Cares and Affections on this side of it, if we do: 'Tis true indeed if there were no other state but the present, 'twould be our greatest Prudence to make as much of it as we could, though 'twere more vain and contemptible than 'tis, because 'tis our All; 'twould then be as reasonable to have our Conversation on *Earth*, as now 'tis to have it in *Heaven*, and the *Epicure's* Proverb would then be as Wise as any of *Solomon's*, *Let us Eat and Drink for to Morrow we Dye.* But since we are assured by him who brought Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel, that there is another state, and that our Death is but the beginning of a new and never to be ended Life; this one would think should deserve and engross all our Thoughts and Affections, our Meditations and Discourses, and that we should be no more concerned with the

things of this World, than a *Ghost* is, that only comes to do a Message of Providence, and when his Errand is over, vanishes and disappears. Or if we did at any time condescend to interest our selves in the Affairs or lawful Entertainments of this Life, methinks it should be only transiently and by the by, as the Hungry Disciples pluck'd the Ears of Corn, just to serve a present Necessity, or as the *Israelites* eat the Passover in haste, with our Loins girt, our Shoes on our Feet, and our Staff in our hand, *Exod. 12.*

SECONDLY, Let him consider that as the other state is the chief and proper state of Man, so Heaven is the good and happiness of that state, that 'tis the true natural Centre of our Rest, our Home and Native Region; that the Joys there are unspeakable and full of Glory, such as the Senses of Man cannot taste, such as his understanding cannot at present conceive, and such as it will never be able to comprehend; Joys that are without example, above experience, and beyond imagination, for which the whole Creation wants a Comparison, we an Apprehension, and even the Word of God a Revelation. That *Eternal Word* of God, which opened to us a Prospect of a future state, and brought Life and Immortality to light; yet he attempted not to give us a representation of the Heavenly Felicity, but thought fit rather to cast that unexpressible Scene of Glory into a *Shade*. For indeed to what purpose should the Son of God go about

about to reveal the Secrets of the Kingdom to us, since if it were possible to describe it as it *is*, yet 'tis not possible for us to conceive it as it is *described*, but we must Dye and be Partakers of it, before we can either *understand* it or *indure* it; this therefore would be a Revelation without a Discovery, a Revelation which he himself only could understand, another *Sealed Book* which none but himself would be able to open. Since then Heaven is a Place of such transcendent Glory and Happiness, as our present Faculties are not fine enough to *convince*, nor strong enough to *hear*, what can be more reasonable and becoming, than that we who are now journeying in the Wilderness towards this our Heavenly *Canaan*, where is our Portion and our Inheritance, should have our constant Conversation there by holy Contemplations and devout Affections, that so according to our Saviour's Argument, where our Treasure is, there our Heart may be also? For what can be either a more noble or a more concerning Object for an Human Soul to Contemplate, than its last end and sovereign Happiness; when all its Changes and Revolutions shall cease, all its Appetites be satisfied, and nothing further to be expected but a most delightful continuation of the same endless circle of Felicity? Certainly one would think, that what will so wholly take up and engage the Soul when she comes to enjoy it, should be thought worthy to employ her best Thoughts now, as undoubtedly it would, did we firmly and heartily believe it. And therefore,

THIRDLY,

THIRDLY, Consider that we have no other way of approving the sincerity and heartiness of our Faith, concerning Heaven and Happiness, but by having our Conversation there ; for so great and glorious things are spoken of the City of God, that 'tis not morally possible that a Man should be heartily perswaded of the truth of them, and yet not to have the main current of his Thoughts and Affections run in that Channel: How is it possible that a Man should believe such great things and yet not have his Thoughts dwell upon them? Some things indeed may be very little questioned, and yet as little thought of, because their *Moment* and *Importance* carries no proportion to their *Truth*; they are not *Realities*, but *Trifles*. But sure the things we now speak of, are too concerning, if true, not to be frequently and seriously considered: If once we are thoroughly perswaded of their Truth and Reality, their own concernment and importance will be enough to recommend them to our most inward and recollected Thoughts and Meditations ; and therefore for my part when I see Men plunge themselves into the depths of Sensuality and Worldly Interests, as if they never meant to rise again, to love the World as they are commanded to love God, with all their Heart, Mind, Soul and Strength, to have no serious Thoughts and Remembrances of Heaven or Heavenly things, but to set up their Tabernacles, and say 'tis *good to be here* ; I must conclude, (and they may think me

me uncharitable if they please,) that whatever they pretend, they do not heartily and seriously believe there is any such place as Heaven; for if they did, considering the vast importance of the thing, it would certainly have a greater share of their Contemplations, and a larger room in their Hearts. And this very thing our Saviour intimates in his Reprehension of the immoderate Cares for the World; *These things*, says he, *the Gentiles seek*, those who have no revelation to assure them of a better and more enduring Substance: Having no certainty of the future, they make most of the present, and in so doing, act in some measure according to their Principles. *But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, Mat. 6. 32, 33.* ye that have a Revelation of a nobler end, and of a far more excellent state, do you apply your selves principally to that, or else you will not act like your selves, and may justly be suspected of not *Believing* that Revelation which the others *want*.

FOURTHLY, Consider that as the having our Conversation in Heaven, is an argument and test of our *Faith*, so is it also of our *Resurrection* with Christ, and our *Spiritual Life*; the Connexion is made by the Apostle, *If ye be then risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the Right Hand of God; set your Affections on things above, and not on things of the Earth; for ye are Dead, &c. Col. 3. 1.* In which Discourse 'tis evident, that the Apostle does not only exhort to Heavenly-Mindedness as a Christian

ftian Duty, but makes it also a certain Mark and Argument of Spiritual Life and Resurrection. The Marks and Signs of Grace have made a great part of some Mens Divinity, and they are generally such as do not want for Latitude and Comprehensiveness; to be sure they contrived their business, so as to take in themselves and their own Party. But certainly there is not a more notorious Criterion whereby to distinguish the prevalency either of the Animal or of the Divine Life, than to consider how the Moral *Tast* and *Relish*, that which the Platonists call *Αγαθωσις*, the *Boniform faculty* of the Soul stands affected. 'Tis a shrewd Symptom of an ill habit of Body when the *Tast* comes to be so vitiated, as to delight to feed upon Trash and unwholsom things; and so 'tis in the state of the Mind, the Animal and Sensualized Man, as he does not *Perceive*, so neither does he *Relish* the things of God; they have no congruity with that Life and Sense that is most invigorated and awaken'd in him, and therefore he prefers his Husks and Acorns before the hidden Manna, and the Food of Angels. But he who is born of that incorruptible Seed mention'd by St. Peter, 1 Pet. 1. 23. and in whom the Divine Life is most excited, he having his Spiritual Senses well disposed and exercised, finds a particular Gust in Divine things, contracts his Affections upon Heaven and Happiness, looks upon all inferiour good as dry and insipid, and is ready to say with the Psalmist, *One thing have I desired of the Lord, even that I*
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may dwell in the House of the Lord all the days of my Life, to behold the fair Beauty of the Lord, and to visit his Temple, Psal. 27. This is the Desire, that is the Relish of a spiritually dispos'd Soul, of a soul that is dead to the World, and alive unto God ; the Sum of all which is briefly comprized in that of the Apostle, *They that are after the Flesh do mind, or (as the Word also signifies,) do relish the things of the Flesh, and they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.* This is a short and compendious, but a very great Test of Spiritual Life, and that whereby we may distinguish a vital Sense of Religion from a formal Profession.

FIFTHLY and Lastly, Consider that one great end of our Saviour's Ascending into Heaven in his Human Nature was, that we Christians might have our Conversation there ; in order to which end, the Ascension of Christ has a double Influence, First as a Rational Motive, and Secondly as a Moral Emblem.

FIRST as a *Rational Motive*, for since the Ascension of our Saviour into Heaven adds new supplements of support to our Hopes of arriving thither (his Ascension being a Pledge and Pattern of ours,) it must needs at the same time fan the Flame of our Affections, and make them tend upwards with importunate reaches towards Heavenly Objects. For this is a Maxim which *Experience* as well as *Philosophy* has stamped for truth, that the more our Hope of any good is established, the more our Desires after it are increased,

creased, and that nothing sooner cools the Fever of the Affections, than Despair of Fruition ; Whence it follows, that the Ascension of Christ by adding further encouragement to our Hopes, becomes a Rational Motive to us to refine and elevate our Affections, and to have our Conversation in that Heaven of our Interest in which the Ascension of Christ in our Nature is so convincing an Assurance.

SECONDLY, As a *Moral Emblem* ; the whole course of our Saviour's Actions tends to our instruction and admonishment ; and though some of them were never intended to be copied out in kind, as being set above the Sphere of our imitation, yet they are not so far out of our reach, but that they point out to us some *resembling* Excellence, and may be imitated though not *litterally*, yet in *Figure* and *Mystry*. Of this kind are the Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord ; for although with him we cannot as yet loosen the bands of Death, and break the Prison of the Grave, yet we can now in some sense rise with him, from the Death of Sin, to newness of Life, and are by his Resurrection not only *inabled*, but also *admonished* to do so. And altho' as to his Bodily Ascension, (as our Lord told St. Peter,) we cannot follow him now, yet we can in some sense ascend with him by a passionate elevation of our Thoughts and Affections, and are also mystically invited to do the latter from the Contemplation of the former. The Local and Bodily Ascension of Christ, calls for a Moral and Spiritual Ascent ; *John* 12. 32. *If I be lifted up from*

from the Earth, I will draw all Men unto me, said our Lord in reference to his Crucifixion. How much more powerful then ought this Consideration to be in reference to his *Ascension*, for it cannot be said of him now, what was then, when his Beauty was benighted under a Cloud, that there is no Form nor Comeliness in him, that we should desire him; for now are the Mists scattered before the prevailing Sun, he shines forth in his full Glory and Triumph, yea, he is now altogether Lovely. Now therefore may the Pious and Seraphick Soul bear up her self upon the Wings of Contemplation, Love and Desire, and follow her Ascending Lord where the Eyes of the wondring Apostles were forced to leave him, and say in the Words of *Elisba* to his departing Master, *as the Lord liveth, and as thy Soul liveth I will not leave thee;* 2 *Kjn.* 2. 2. and blessed is he that hath part in this first Ascension, for over him the Second Death shall have no Power.

AND thus have I shewn by several Considerations, what a reasonable and becoming thing it is for a Christian to have his Conversation in Heaven; but it will appear yet much more so, if we consider in the Third and Last place, the great Uses and Advantages of such a Heavenly dispensation of Life, and they are many; but I shall consider only some of the most remarkable of them.

FIRST, This is a most excellent expedient to beget and confirm in us the contempt of the
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World, and of all those Poms and Vanities of it which we renounced in our Baptism; this is a mighty thing, and a thing that has been essayed by several methods, as by Monastic Engagements, by retiring into Cloisters and Deserts, by Vows of Poverty and the like: But these are rather Natural than Moral Ways of forsaking the World; and 'tis considerable that our Saviour in his last Intercession for his Disciples, Prays not that they should be taken out of the World, but delivered from the evil of it, *John* 17. 15. The best way to forsake the World, is to do it in Heart and Affection, and the most effectual means to do this, is by conversing in the other World. This indeed may be done by a serious Contemplation of the powers of *external* Nature, and of the capacities of our *own*; by comparing which two together, we may be satisfied of the Vanity and insufficiency of all Worldly Objects to the purposes of Content and Happiness. And this was the course that *Solomon* took to convince himself and others of the World's Vanity. But besides that this is a long way about, and a way that requires a great deal of Time, and a great deal of Experience, and a great deal of Meditation and Reflection; it is also a Method fit only for finer and more elevated Spirits, those of a Contemplative Genius, and of a Nice Discernment. But to Converse in Heaven, is a more compendious and easie Method to contemn the lower World, more practicable to the common sort; and those that cannot in
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the other way *Dispute* and *Demonstrate*, may however in this be *sensibly* convinced of the Vanity of the World. The Earth to us that dwell upon it, seems a Body of considerable Magnitude, but to one that should take a view of it from one of the higher Orbs, 'twould appear but as a *Point*. The same indeed might be demonstrated upon *Mathematic* Principles, but every one is not capable of doing that, and such an high rais'd prospect would save the trouble. And so 'tis in the case before us; this World considered alone may perhaps carry with it a specious and goodly Appearance and he that does so consider it, will need Reason and Argument to convince him of its Vanity; but 'tis but to converse a little in the other World, and take a view of it from thence, and 'twill all without any more ado shrink almost into nothing. And therefore 'twas not without reason that the Divine Philosopher stiled Philosophy the *Theory of Death*; for certainly the Contemplation of the other state, is the most compendious way to true Philosophy, the Contempt of the World far beyond all the ways of Reason or Discourse, all the rigid and mortifying Lectures of *Stoicism*. And accordingly I observe that the Author to the *Hebrews* says of *Abraham*, Heb. 11. 9. that *by Faith he Sojourned in the Land of Promise as in a strange Country, dwelling in Tabernacles*.: And the reason of his doing so more expressly follows, *for he look'd for a City which has Foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God*; so that this was that which drew off *Abraham's* Affections from the Land of Promise,

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mise, because by Faith he had a Prospect of a far better Country, and had his Conversation in Heaven.

SECONDLY, this is the best Remedy to support us under the Evils of this present Life; as it lessens the good, so it lessens the evil of it too, and will serve to *support* us under the one, as well as to *wear* us from the other. Nay, to speak the truth, it will not so much support us under these Evils as take them away, and render them slight and inconsiderable. For suppose the worst that can be, Death, and a painful Death, he that has his Conversation in Heaven, views the Glory that shall be revealed there, and at once sees that the sharpest Sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with them, no more than the *Point* of a Circle is with its *Circumference*: He contemplates the Joy that is set before him, and so indures the Cross, and despises the Shame and the Pain too: For a view of Heaven will mitigate any Cross upon Earth, and help us to encounter any Affliction as St. *Stephen* did his Martyrdom: He is one of those *steddy Men* the Psalmist speaks of, *Psal* 112. 7. who are not afraid at any evil Tidings, but his Heart stands fixed in the Lord. Much less will he for the dread of any Persecutions or Worldly Losses deny his Religion, or by a Trimming and Hypocritical Mode of Behaviour, court the Favour of those in Power, or by any sinful compliance part with a good Conscience. He sees nothing so great or so terrible in this World, as to fright him into any such
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unworthinesses; no, they that do so, have not their Conversation in Heaven, but are Earthly, Sensual and Devilish, and for all their Pretences to *Self-denial*, deny nothing of themselves that I know of, but their *Understandings*. He that truly converses in Heaven, sees infinitely more there than he can either *get* or *lose* here, and can therefore never be guilty of such a Foolish Exchange, as to gain not the *whole*, but a *little* of the World, and lose his own Soul.

THIRDLY, This Dispensation of Life is the best Preparatory for Heaven that can possibly be; for besides that the *greatness* of that Happiness makes him that Contemplates it, despise any good or evil that may here stand in competition with it; he further considers the *Nature* and *Quality* of that Happiness, that it is an union of the Soul with her best and last end, that it is a clear Vision and an ardent Love of God, who cannot be seen by him that *Lives*; much less by him that *Lives ill*; and this must needs put him upon thinking, that a Holy and Divine frame of Spirit is absolutely requisite, not only as a *Condition* to our *Admission* into Heaven, but also as a *Condition* of *Enjoyment*, without which there is no being Happy even when we are there. And from this Consideration, he naturally passes to fit himself for the enjoyment of his Maker, to Purify himself as he is Pure, to Purge, Refine, and Spiritualize his Nature, that so he may be qualified for the refined Joys of Heaven. The short is, there are Two things that must and will be considered by him that has his Conversation in Heaven, the

Greatness of the Happiness there, and the *Nature* of it ; and each of these has a particular influence for the preparing him for it : The former will make him Temptation-Proof against any present good or evil that shall stand in his way to his great Prize, and the latter will contribute to form and fashion the frame of his Mind into a likeness and affinity with the end which he proposes : But both together will so strongly influence the Man, that he will become perfectly *ἀναρταίνθη*, dead to himself and to all the Luscious Relishes of the Corporeal Life, and the Life of God will be triumphantly seated in him, so that now he has but one only Will in the World, which is to have none at all of his own, but to *annihilate* himself, that God may be all in all in him. And thus while like *Moses* he converses with God on this holy Mount, his Face shines with a Divine Glory, and he is transfigured into the likeness of him whom his Soul loves.

FOURTHLY and Lastly, This is a dispensation of Life, that affords the greatest Pleasure and Satisfaction of any in the World, to ascend the top of the Mystical *Pisgah*, and thence to take a survey of the Happy Land ; to contemplate the infinite Perfection of God, and the Happiness of those Blessed Spirits that enjoy him, the Order of Angels, and that Noble and Blessed Communion of Saints ; to contemplate the last and richest Scene of Providence, and the Discovery of all the rest that went before ; when the reason of all difficult and perplexing Appearances shall be made plain, and the *manifold Wisdom*

dom of God set in a clear Light; to have our Minds imployed about the greatest and best things, to walk with God, and keep a constant Communication with Heaven, must needs be the sweetest as well as the noblest and most worthy Entertainment on this side of it. *Intellectual Pleasures* are certainly greater than *Sensual*, even by the Confession of the greatest Sensualists, as may appear from this single instance, in that Men will abstain from the greatest Pleasures of Sense, that they may not lose a good Reputation, which is an Intellectual good; and as Intellectual Pleasures are greater than Sensual, so this is the greatest of those that are Intellectual. Concerning this the same may be said that is of Wisdom, that *her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and that all her Paths are Peace; that she is a Tree of Life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that retaineth her; Prov. 3. 17.* That they who eat of her shall yet be Hungry, and they that drink of her shall yet be Thirsty. For there is a certain inexhaustible Well of Pleasure, a fathomless Abyss of Delight in this Heavenly Conversation, which they only, who have experimented it, can *conceive*, and which even they want Power to *describe*.

THIS I know will be far from satisfying some Voluptuaries, who are sunk so low into the contrary Life, that of Sense and Carnality, that they will think a Man Mad that shall either *Talk* or *Live* at this Abstracted rate; but to these I have Two things to say: First, That their having no notion of the Pleasure of this Dispensa

tion, is no Objection against it; the thing may be true for any thing they know or can say to the contrary, for they are not, during the quick sensibility and invigoration of the lower Life, proper Judges in the case, any more than the *Sense* it self is of an Intellectual Object; for these things are spiritually discerned by a certain Divine Taste and Sensation, which is a Faculty which these Men want.

THE other thing I shall commend to the Sensualist is this, that since he is too scrupulous and sceptical to take our word for it, he would endeavour after such a degree at least of Spiritual Purification, as to try the Experiment, that as the Psalmist speaks, he would *Taste* and *See* how good and pleasant this Heavenly Conversation is; and then I'm much mistaken if he does not find that all the Madness lay on his side, if he does not confess that there are no Joys like Spiritual Joys, and that one Day spent in these *Anti-Courts* of Heaven is better than a Thousand.

AND now since it appears to be a thing of so much reason and becomingness, and of so great use and advantage to have our Conversation in Heaven, methinks we should easily be perswaded to enter upon this Heavenly Dispensation of Life. The Region we now converse in, is very incommodiouly seated and of an unwholesome Complexion, such as does not agree with the Constitution of the Soul, where she is always sickly and out of order, full of weaknesses and indispositions; why then do we not change our Abode, and remove our dwelling into

into our Native Country, where there is a purer Air, and a more healthy Climate! When we hear or read a Description of a very pleasant Country, such as the *Bermuda Islands*, where the Sky is Serene and Clear, the Air Temperate and Healthy, the Earth Fruitful and Entertaining, where there are Walks of Oranges, and Woods of Cedar Trees; though we have no probable prospect of our going to dwell there, yet we can't chuse but often think, and sometimes dream of it, and wish our selves the happiness of so pleasant an Abode. Why then do not our Thoughts dwell more in Heaven, where besides the far greater delightfomness of the Place, we have a particular *Interest* and *Concern* to invite us thither? 'Tis the hope of arriving at Heaven at last that supports our Life upon Earth; it is not able to support it self: One or two turns here, gives a Considering Man a full compass of its Enjoyments, and he no sooner comes to understand them, but he despises them. And what shall a Wise Man do, what refuge has he after this Discovery, but to *Converse* in Heaven? What Expedient is there left, but to *anticipate those Joys*, when he can no longer *taste these*?

So that there is a necessity of conversing in Heaven, if 'twere only to relieve the Vanity of Earth; and happy is the Man who has so much of Heaven while he is upon Earth: Yea, *Blessed is the Man whom thou chooshest O Lord, and receivest unto thee; he shall dwell in thy Court, and shall be satisfied with the Pleasures of thy House, even of thy Holy Temple, Psal. 65. 4.*

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DISCOURSE
 CONCERNING
 Submission to Divine Providence.

JOHN 18. 11.

*The Cup which my Father has given me,
 shall I not Drink it?*



THIS is a Question which our Lord puts to himself; and 'tis well he did so, for had he put it to any body else, 'tis great odds but that it had been answered in the *Negative*; for the great and general Centre of Human Nature, whither all the Lines of Appetite tend, and where they all meet, is *Happiness*; The desire of Happiness is the First and *Master-Spring* of the *Soul*, as the Pulse of the Heart is in the *Body*, that which sets all the Wheels on work, and governs all the *under-motions* of the Man; 'Tis that original Weight and Bias which the Soul first received from the Hands of her Creator, and which she can never lose so long as she her self is: 'Tis indeed the strongest and most radical Appetite that we have, an Appetite to which God *has* not set any bounds, and to which Man *cannot*;

cannot; an Appetite that is ungovernable and unconfined in it self, and that gives Measures and Laws to all the rest; and consequently there is nothing which so ill comports with our Nature, which so directly crosses the *grain* of our Constitution, as that which threatens or offers the least contradiction to this ruling Inclination of it. Hence it is that *Evil* is the great *antipathy* of Human Nature, which though it has many particular Aversions, yet this is her great and general Abhorrence: From this at its first approach the whole Man shrinks in, and stands averse, and would be removed from it (if possible) an infinite distance; the *Animal* part of Man is against it, and the *Reason* of Man wonders and disputes how such an uncooth thing came into the World, and several *Hypotheses* have been advanced to account for that strange Appearance; *πρότερον τὸ κακόν* was the great knot of antient Morality, and the most gravelling Problem of all the Heathen Philosophy; and I question whether Reason without the assistance of Revelation can conquer the Difficulty. So that considering the Opposition that it carries to the whole Man, both to our *Appetites* and to our *Understandings*, there seems nothing more difficult than to be reconciled to it, though it be in order to a greater advantage, and we see an excellent glory behind the Cloud.

'Tis said by *Plato*, that *Pleasure* and *Pain* are the two Nails that fasten both the Wings of the Soul down to the Earth, and hinder its Ascent

* *Epictetus.* cent upward : and the Wise * Stoick has most excellently summ'd up the whole difficulty of Vertue into *ἀντήξειν* and *υπέξειν*, to *Abstain* and *Sustain* : Indeed Abstinence and Patience are the Two most rough and uneasie Places in all the Stage of Vertue ; the rest of her ways are ways of Pleasantness, and all her other Paths are Peace. But here the Traveller meets with Trouble and Discouragement, is engaged in a point of Labour and Contention, and though in the Event he perform his Duty and bear forth good Seed, yet 'tis always with the reluctancy of his lower faculties, and (as the Psalmist expresses it,) *he goes on his way sorrowing.*

BUT the chiefest and noblest Scene of Vertue lies in *Patience* ; 'tis hard to abstain from Pleasure, but 'tis much harder to indure Misery, (which is the reason by the way that the Sanctions of Laws are generally taken rather from Punishments than from Rewards,) and of all Obedience, that which is *Passive* is most difficult ; for we hate Pain to an higher degree than we love Pleasure. And of this the Infernal Spirit was so sensible, (one who dwelling with everlasting Burnings is best able to judge of the difficulty of submitting to Misery,) that he presumed to say concerning that excellent Person whom God had commended for his Integrity in all the instances of *Active* Obedience, and whom he himself knew to be a Miracle of *Patience* in particular, that if God would but put forth his Hand,

Hand, and touch him with some near and cleaving Affliction, he would curse him to his Face, *Job* 1. 11.

AND to this purpose 'tis yet further observable, that even the Disciples of the Blessed Jesus whom he had picked and chosen out of the promiscuous Herd of Mankind, and who followed this Lamb whithersoever he went, and traced him through all the narrow paths of a Vertuous and Religious Life, yet when he came to Mount *Calvary*, within view of the Cross, they all forsook him and fled, stopt short at the foot of the dreadful Hill, and left him to tread the Wine-press alone: and even he that had most courage and presence of Mind, and dared furthest, he whom St. *Chrysoftome* calls the *Warm Disciple*, even he followed him but afar off, *Luke* 22. 54.

NAY, even our Blessed Saviour himself, who besides the peculiar excellency of his Human Spirit, and the incentives of an Omnipotent Love, had also the Divinity of his Person for his immediate Succour and Support; as he fainted as to his *Bodily* strength under the *Load* of the Cross, so was he amazed into an Agony and Sweat of Blood at the very apprehension of what he was to suffer upon it, and almost fainted in his *Resolution* too, till after the recollections of Meditation, and the confirmation of an Angel, he overcame the tenderness and reluctancies of innocent Nature, with the perfection of Submission and Resignation, emptied himself of his own *Will*, as he had formerly done of his

his Heavenly *Glories*, and refused all help and deliverance both from the Guard of his Angels, and the over-officious Sword of his zealous Apostle with this gentle Reproof, *Put up thy Sword into the Sheath; the Cup which my Father has given me shall I not drink it?*

THE full sense of which Words is resolvible into these Two Propositions.

FIRST, That every Affliction which befalls Man, is dispensed to him by the hand of Providence; which is intimated in these Words, *the Cup which my Father has given me.*

SECONDLY, That therefore he ought to submit to it with all Patience, Meekness, Contentedness and Resignation of Spirit intimated in the last Clause, *shall I not drink it?*

AND First, that every Affliction which befalls Man, is dispensed to him by the hand of Providence: That there is such a thing as Providence in general, and that God does concern himself in the Government and Management both of the Material and Intellectual World, by ruling and ordering the *Motions* of the former, and the *Actions* and *Events* of the latter, though denied by the School of *Epicurus*, is yet I think acknowledged by all that own a *Creation*, and certainly with great agreeableness and consistency with that Principle. For besides that *Creation* doth both *suppose* and *produce* Love, towards the Creature, suppose it as the *Principle*, and produce it as the *Effect*, it being impossible that God should either create
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ate what he did not Love, or not Love what he has created; according to that Observation of the Wise Man, *Wisd.* 11. 32. *For thou lovest all the things that are, and abhorrest nothing which thou hast made; for never wouldst thou have made any thing, if thou hadst hated it.* I say, besides that Love of God which follows upon the Creation, and that care which as closely follows upon the Supposition of his Love, I further consider, that it had not been worth the while for God to have created a World, if he did not intend to govern it; for since the World is not capable of governing it self, and conducting the infinite variety of its own motions to any excellent end, and since without some conduct or other, it must needs fall into disorder and confusion, if God will not undertake the Government of it; to what purpose should he make such a World, which without his care of it would bring him more *Disbonour* by its *After-disorders*, than *Glory* by its *first Production*? And Disorder is a thing so opposite to God, that we find he could not be reconciled to a *Natural* Chaos, much less then can he be to a *Moral* one, especially in a World of his own raising; for indeed Creation is too great a work to be bestowed upon a World which is ever after to be abandoned and left to it self. And since God has ingrafted into the nature of every Animal, affectionate Propensions towards its own Productions, whether Natural, Mechanical or Intellectual, nothing can be more absurd than

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to imagine that he would be so ill a *Parent* himself, as to expose this his own Offspring, and which as soon as brought forth, he Loved, and pronounced very good, to the uncertainties of Chance and Contingency.

BESIDES, we are naturally led to the existence of Providence by the consideration of the Divine Perfections, such as his Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Omniscience, Goodness and Justice. And accordingly we find, that even *Aristotle* and the *Peripateticks*, who would not allow the World to be Created by God, as supposing it to be Eternal and Uncreated, yet were forced from the Contemplation of the Divine Excellencies to acknowledge it to be Govern'd by him. They own'd a Providence, though they disown'd a Creation, and that from a serious consideration of the excellent nature and attributes of God, which they thought would sufficiently engage him to take care of the World, though he did not make it: And truly were the Supposition possible, I should yet think as they do; for sure God is too great and too good a Being to suffer Anarchy and Confusion wherever there is a Capacity of Order.

EPICURUS indeed turns this Argument quite a contrary way, and from the Perfection of the Deity, argues for his profound Repose and Inactivity; that being fixed upon his own Center, and full of himself, he has nothing to do but to live at large, secure and unconcerned, and enjoy the richness of his own Essence, with an infinite

finite and undivided Complacency. But this all depends upon that precarious and ill natured Principle of his, that all Benevolence proceeds from Indigence, or which is the same in other terms, that all Love is Self Love; which indeed, if true, will oblige us to confess, that the more perfect and self-sufficient any Being is, the less solicitous he must be of the concerns of others; and consequently a Being absolutely Perfect as God is, must of necessity be wholly destitute of all Benevolence towards other beings, and without any concern for their welfare. For no consequence is more plain than this, that if all Love be from Want, then that Being who is absolutely removed from Want cannot be capable of any Love. *Epicurus* his Inference therefore is very right; but the ground upon which he proceeds is false, in making all Love to owe its rise to Indigence.

I shall not here undertake a *direct* confutation of this illiberal and straitfaced Notion, having particularly considered it elsewhere; I shall only remark at present, that the falshens of this *Epicurean* Principle, is put out of all Question to us who believe a *Creation*; for if, that Love proceeds from want, be an Argument that a perfect Being can have no Love, then we may argue as well the other way, that if a perfect Being does Love, then Love does not proceed from want. And we have sufficient discovery of this in the *Creation*, which con-

Theor. and Regulat. of Lovt.
P. 52.

considering the Self-sufficiency of the Divine Nature, must needs be the effect of a pure, unselfish, and disinterested Love: Which by the way is a consideration that mightily commends the excellency of the Divine Goodness, and should wind up our Affections to great Heights of Praise and Gratitude.

AND as the *Self-Sufficiency* of God is no Bar against Providence, (being only upon a mistaken Principle of *Epicurus* alledged to that purpose,) so are his other Perfections a strong Argument for it; *that* is consistent with it, and *those* do necessarily infer it. Thus his Omnipotence, Omnipresence, and Omniscience render him abundantly able to sit at the Helm of this great Vessel, and his Goodness and Justice ingage him to undertake the Charge. He that contemplates the former, can no longer question, *Job 22. 13. How doth God know? Can he judge through the dark Cloud?* Nor he that contemplates the latter, suspect, that he purposely declines the Office, and *walks* idle and unconcern'd in the *Circuit of Heaven*. Besides, the Perfections of God would not appear so conspicuously, if there were no Providence. 'Tis great to Create, but 'tis more to govern a World; as the Skill of the Artift is more seen in well ordering and artfully touching the Strings of a Musical Instrument, than in the first making and framing of it.

AND if it be once granted that there is a Providence, 'tis an absurd and ridiculous conceit, to confine it, (as some do,) to the *Superlunary*,

nary Regions; for the same Arguments that infer the being of Providence in general, conclude also for the *Universality* of it. 'Tis most congruous to think that the Providence of God is of equal extent with his Creation (for sure that which was not too mean to be Created, cannot be too mean to be Governed,) and that the same Loving and Harmonious Spirit that first moved upon the face of the Waters and ranged the most *minute* particles of Matter into Beauty and Order, does still run through the now Organized Mass, and preside over, and sweetly direct, not only the Greater, but also the *Lesser Motions* of this his most exquisite Machine: For without this the Harmony of the Universe would be very defective, and its parts disproportionate and ill-ordered. 'Tis true, Beauty and Order would dwell above, but all would be Chaos and Confusion below, and the *Earth* would still be *without form and void*. And thus the irregularity of the lower World would cast a disparagement upon the whole System of things, as the untunableness of One or Two Instruments dis-recommends the whole Musical Consort.

'Tis therefore necessary to affirm, that the Providence of God extends to both Worlds, as the Sun Beautifies and Inlightens each Hemisphere. In this respect also as well as others, that Divine Comparison will hold, *God is Light, and in him is no Darknes* at all. But though nothing be too small or inconsiderable for the Comprehensive reach of the Divine Cognizance yet we may

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reasonably suppose that he considers the value of his Creatures, and proportions his Providential Care according to their different Excellencies. Now throughout all the order of the Visible Creation, Man is the most noble and accomplished Being, and consequently the chiefest Object, the most peculiar *Charge* of Providence; so peculiar, that as the *Creation* of other Sublunary things carried a peculiar respect to Man, so is their *Government* too chiefly in subordination to his Interest. And indeed 'tis no more than what by the Measures of Proportion we are warranted to suppose, that he should have a more than ordinary Interest in the care and superintendency of his Creator, who was made by an immediate Pattern from himself, and with his solemn Counsel and Deliberation.

NOR is this ever waking and broad Eye of Divine Providence open only on the Societies and Communities of Men, and intent only upon the Revolutions of States and Kingdoms, but also watches over the affairs and concerns of every particular Person in the World; no Man is too little and despicable for the notice of Providence, however he may be overlook'd by his Fellow-Creatures, for we are told in Scripture not only of the Guardian Angel of the *Jews* and the Prince of *Perse*, but that we should take heed how we offend or despise even the meanest of Men, because of the interest they have among the Angels of special Presence, the *Courtiers* of Heaven, *Matt. 18. 7.* Nay we
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are told by the same infallible Oracle, that even the very Hairs of our Head are all numbred; so that not only the meanest of Men, but even the meanest things relating to them, their most indifferent and insignificant concerns are under the Charge and Care of Providence.

AND if the care of Providence be so very punctual and exact even to Grains and Scruples in the most trifling and indifferent Concerns of Man, we may with great reason conclude, that it is much more so in our more weighty and considerable Interests: And since not only our present but future Happiness depends much upon various junctures of Circumstances and States of Life, we have consequently reason to conclude, that these are more particularly conducted by God's Providential Hand; and accordingly that *Affliction comes not forth of the Dust, neither does Trouble spring out of the Ground, Job 5. 6.* but are disposed and ordered by God, and Arrest us with a Divine Commission. And accordingly the excellent Wisdom of our Church in her Office for the Visitation of the Sick, Piously orders the Minister to exhort the Sick Person after this Form, *Dear-ly beloved, know this, that Almighty God is the Lord of Life and Death, and of all things to them pertaining, as Youth, Strength, Health, Age, Weakness and Sicknes: Wherefore, whatsoever your Sicknes is, know you certainly that it is God's Visitation, &c.* As indeed we have reason to think that every other Affliction is as well as Sicknes, that there is a Chastising as well as Destroying Angel, and

that all Plagues are from God as well as those of *Egypt*; that no Calamity can either privily steal or violently break in upon us without the Divine notice and particular permission. But that every bitter Draught which we take, is weighed, mingled and reach'd out to us by an invisible Hand, by the Dispensation of Providence, that 'tis a *Cup which our Father has given us*: Our infinitely Wise, Good, and Compassionate Father, one who knows to chuse for us infinitely better than we can for our selves, and whose infinite Goodness, Love and Faithfulness, give us all possible assurance that he will use his Wisdom for our best Interest, and give good *Gifts to his Children*. Which leads me to consider the Second general Proposition, that therefore we ought to submit to every Dispensation with all Patience, Meekness, Contentedness and Resignation of Spirit.

PATIENCE and Resignation under all Providential dispensations however difficult in the *Practick*, has yet perhaps more to be said for it in the *Theory*, than any one instance in all Morality; but I am obliged by the limits of my Discourse, to confine my Thoughts at present to such Arguments and Considerations only as may be afforded by the excellent Nature, Attributes and Relation of God. For 'twas for this reason alone, that our Blessed Lord cheerfully submitted to the drinking of his Bitter Potion, because

cause 'twas given him by his Father, *The Cup which my Father has given me.*

AND that this is a Pillar strong enough for so great a weight, a sufficient Argument for the most Heroical Resignation under the most accumulated Affliction, not to argue from the example of our Blessed Lord who supported his labouring Courage by this single Consideration, under the weight of his unparallel'd Agony, will clearly appear, if we consider some of the excellent Attributes and Perfections of God. Those which more eminently conduce to this purpose, and wherewith I shall at present content my self, are his Supream Dominion, his Self-sufficiency, his Infinite Wisdom, Goodness, and his Paternal Relation to us.

FIRST then, we may consider, that he from whose Hands we receive our bitter Cup, has a Sovereign Right and Dominion over us; which though we state at the lowest pitch, and do not bottom it with some upon the *supremacy*, or supereminency of the Divine Nature, or with others on the unlimitedness of the Divine Power, but rather (which indeed seems more reasonable) upon the benefit of Creation, yet even then will follow that he may justly make what deductions he pleases from the sum of our Happiness, within the Compass and Latitude of that Benefit. And consequently we have no just reason to murmur, as if Injured, though either by Deprivements or positive Inflictions he diminished our Happiness, so long till he leave us in a state

just preferable to that of *Nonexistence*; though he should draw out our Happiness to the very Lees, strip us of all Good but that slender one of *Being*, and forbid us the taste of every Tree but this *One*, that grows in the whole Paradise of God. Thus I say by reason of the freeness of his Favours, God may deal with the most innocent and spotless of all his Angels, who after all this vast Subtraction, and in this state of extream Barrenness and Sterility, are yet his Debtors; and therefore instead of Murmuring and Repining, obliged to take up the Resolution of the Psalmist, *While I live I will Praise the Lord; yea as long as I have any Being, (though nothing besides,) I will sing Praises unto my God,* Psalm 146.

BUT though God might justly do this, and consequently though even in this case, Patience and Resignation were highly reasonable, yet 'tis not his method to deal thus arbitrarily with us, or to proceed to the utmost Bounds of his Dominion; he has by his very donation of Being to his Creatures, given them all the fair grounds imaginable to hope and expect that all his after-proceedings toward them shall be agreeable and correspondent to that his First Favour, and that he will never take from us the least Scruple of that Felicity wherewith he invested us at the first Minute of our existence, without either our own fault, or a reference to some further Advantage; the first of which takes away all occa-
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tion of Complaint, and the Second calls for our Praise and Eucharist.

AND that this is the measure whereby God deals with us, we may be well assured, if we consider the other remaining Attributes, his Self-sufficiency, his infinite Wisdom and Goodness, and his Paternal relation to us; God is a Being, whose Happiness as 'tis always perfect, equal, uniform, and at full height like his other Excellencies, so is it wholly absolved and consummated within himself, and admits of no Foreign Ingredient into its Composition. He is as happy as he can ever possibly be in his own Essence, and consequently can neither *receive* nor *propose* any Advantage to himself in any change that is wrought in the Creature; he stands in no need of our *Happiness*, much less of our *Misery*; and therefore whensoever he lays an Affliction upon us, since he can have no Interest of his own to serve by it, we must either say that he afflicts us merely for Affliction's sake, or that he designs it in order to a more important Good of the Patient: To affirm the former would be Absurdity, Impiety, and Blasphemy, and withal contrary to the express voice of Scripture, which tells us that God does not *afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men*, Lam. 3. 33. The latter therefore must be concluded, that all the Evils which God dispenses to us, (except only where our extrem Demerit alters the Case, as in the instance of *Damnation*;) are designed for our greater Interest either here or hereafter, and to *Perfect* or

Consecrate us *through Sufferings*, Heb. 2. 10. They are indeed the Arrows of the Almighty, but sent upon a Friendly Errand; present Interruptions, but future Inlargements of our Happiness; like the Misty Veil of the Morning, which for a while shuts in the Rays of the Sun, but at length contributes to the greater Lustre and Triumph of the Day.

AND to this purpose we may further consider, that the great Moderator of the Universe, and Supream Disposer of all Events, is infinitely Wise and Good, as well as Self-sufficient, and consequently cannot but do things for the *Best*; for as he is too Self-sufficient to drive on any Interest of his own, so is he too Wise to mistake ours, and too Good not to execute the dictates of his Wisdom; the consequence of which two Suppositions, must needs be the disposal of all things in the best way and manner that is possible. 'Tis much more rational in it self, and less derogatory to the Divine Perfections, to suppose with *Epicurus* that God does not at all meddle with the Affairs of the World, than that he does it by *halves*, and steers his great Vessel with a disadvantageous conduct. There is no Artist, but will perform to the utmost of his Skill, provided it be as easie for him to make his Piece compleat, as to *under-work* it. And that 'tis so to God, we can no more dispute, than we can the absolute Infinity and Perfection of his Nature. Certain therefore it is, that if God Governs the World, 'tis Govern'd altogether

gether as well as 'twas made, that is, as well as is possible: Θεός γεωμετρῶν, says *Plato*, God Acts the part of a Geometrician, does all things exactly and regularly; thus he made the World, and thus he governs it, he proceeds by the same Standard in both, and his Government of the World is no less Mathematically exact than his Creation of it. 'Tis true indeed, the exactness of the former is not so obvious to our observation, as that of the latter, nor are we so well able to judge of the *Moral*, as of the *Natural* Geometry of God: But considering the Perfection of God, and the Imperfection of our Capacities, we have no reason to question, but that one is as exact as the other, and both as exact as possible. Not that this is to be understood in an *Absolute*, but in a *Relative* Sense; for as to the Perfection of the Natural World, we do not require that every Species of Being should be in the highest Perfection, whereof a Creature is capable, (1 Cor. 12. 17. *for if the whole Body were an Eye, where were the Hearing?*) So neither are we to measure the perfection of the Moral World by single and separate Instances, but by the whole conduct and course of the Divine Dispensation. And then as in Music, what is Discord in particular and separately considered, will be Harmony upon the whole; a far more excellent Harmony to the *Intellect*, than the most curious and artful disposition of Sounds can be to the *Sense*.

'Tis true, we want light in this Valley of Darkness and Night of Ignorance, to discern this

this Harmony and beautiful conspiracy of things, (which is the true ground of all the Discontent that is in the World;) but hereafter when our Eye-sight shall be cleared and fortified to see our Glorious Maker as he is, we shall then with the Beauty of his *Face* behold that of his *Providence*, we shall see the deep Plot of this great and wonderful *Drama* laid open and unravel'd, and how even the most Cloudy and Doubtful states of things wind up into Beauty and Harmony: We shall see and be well satisfied, that there is a Geometry in his *Providence*, as well as in his *Creation*; and that as all things were made, so are they governed too in *Number, Weight, and Measure*. Then shall we not only patiently and meekly submit to, but with full acquiescence and complacency of Spirit, rejoyce in the accomplishment of the whole Will of God, though it be in the Damnation of our nearest Friends and Relatives. Then shall there be an intire resolution of our Will into the Divine, God shall be all in all, *Ephes. 3. 10.* and his *πολυποίκιλος σοφία*, his manifold and various Wisdom, though not fully comprehended, yet shall be so much understood, as to be fully justified by all his Children.

IN the mean time, till we are in a capacity to judge our selves, we may and ought to repose a firm confidence in the Skill of the Divine Dramatist, and believe implicitly that there is a most incomparable Beauty in the whole Scheme and System of this great Master-piece, though to
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us who sit in a dark corner of the Theatre, some of its parts seem obscure and perplex'd; that (as the Wise Man expresses it,) *Wisdom reaches from one end to another*, Wisd. 8. 1. and that he has *poured her out upon all his Works*, Eccles. 1. 9.

AND is there now any room for such a Passion as Grief or Discontent after such a Consideration as this? Can a Man acting upon this Supposition be so absurd as to be disturb'd at any Accident, to repine under any Condition, to take to heart the loss of any Friend, though another and a better Self, though this whole Happiness were compendiously sum'd up in him, so as to lose all at a Blow; when at the same time he seriously considers, that all things are as well as they can possibly be? Certainly he that is troubled at any Affliction, may well be suspected of one of these two things, either of forgetting that God governs the World, or of charging him with Male Administration. He insinuates by his Grief and Discontent thus much at least, that he dislikes the order of the Universe, and that if he were placed at the Helm, he would steer its Course after another method; and does therefore deserve to be remembered of that which *Luther* told *Melancthon*, when troubled that the Reformation did not move on so smoothly as he would have it, *Momendus est Philippus desinat esse Rector Mundi: Philip* is to be put in mind that he leave off governing the World.

FOR certainly were we thoroughly satisfied of the infinite Wisdom and Goodness of God in
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the disposal of all events, were this Perswasion deeply fixed in us, and intimately present with us, that all is for the Best, we should see Argument enough not only for Patience and Contentment, but also for Rejoycing and giving Thanks in all Dispensations; we should (as *Seneca*, Epist. 96. well expresses the Temper of his Wise Man,) *non solum Deo parere, sed & assentiri*, not only submit with resignation to the Divine Will, but approve and imbrace it with full choice, as our best Lot and Portion, and say with

* *Epiſtetus*. another excellent * Stoick, *Ἐγὼ ἕως πάντων τούτων πρὸς ἀνθρώπους ἕσπλογιήσομαι*, I will not only endure, but plead for the dispensations of Providence, and justify them to the World. We should not then content our selves with that of the Royal Prophet, *I became dumb and opened not my Mouth, because it was thy doing*, *Psal.* 39. but proceed further, and kiss the Cross even while it oppresses and galls our Shoulders, and go forth to meet our Sufferings, after the example of our Divine Master, who withdrew voluntarily to the Garden where he foreknew he should be apprehended, and there as freely surrendered himself when he might have escaped: We should not so much as wish to have avoided any Calamity; and though we took never so much delight in our Paradise, yet after we heard the Voice of God walking in the Garden, and received his Sentence to depart, we should not endeavour a re-entrance, though we could remove the fiery Sentinel, and prevail with the

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angry Cherub to sheath his Sword; but should rather thank God for his severe Mercy, and say with the great example of Patience, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord, Job 1. 11.*

THERE remains yet one Consideration more, and that is the *Paternal* relation of God; he that gives us the bitter Cup, besides the Essential Bignity of his Nature, has also a near relation to indear him to us; he is our *Father*, and therefore cannot but be very tenderly affected toward us. He Loved us when we were but an *Idea* in his own Understanding, much more does he now, when we have actually participated of his Spiritual Nature, and not only so, but of his peculiar likeness too: Add to this, that he has shewn himself to be a Father by infinite Favours and Kindnesses, some of which border almost upon Fondness and Partiality, in so much that they have raised *Envy* in some of the Angels, and *Wonder* in all the rest: For there are things done for Man, which the Angels have long contemplated, and yet still *desire to look into, 1 Pet. 12.*

SHALL I not then drink the Cup which my Father, this my Father has given me? My Father who is too full and perfect to need my Misery, though in respect of his Supream Dominion he might to great degrees arbitrarily afflict me; who is too wise to mistake my true interest, and too good (for he is Essential Goodness, and his very Definition is Love, *1 John 4. 8.*)
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to prescribe me a Draught which he knows not to be wholsom for me! Who has given me all the good I enjoy, and who has parted with more for my sake, than he can possibly take from me in this World; for he has given me his Beloved Son, the brightness of his Glory and the express Image of his Person! *Shall I then receive Good, so great a Good at his hands, and not receive Evil?* Job 3. 10. Shall I refuse the Cup which my Father, this my Father has given me? No, may the considering Sufferer say, I will welcome the Sharpest Arrow that comes from his Quiver, I will rest heartily satisfied with his severest dispensations, and though he kill me, yet will I trust in him.

LET us then at all times and on all occasions with all Patience, Meekness, Contentedness and Resignation of Spirit, be Passively as well as Actively conformable to the Divine Will, and demean our selves as becomes Children under the Chastisement of so Wise and so good a Father; let us not only with calmness endure, but with content and satisfaction approve and justify all his Dispensations; so will he justify and acquit us hereafter, and to the present benefit of our *Affliction*, superadd a Reward of our *Patience*, and reveal to us such an excellent Glory with which the Sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared.

To which God of his Infinite Mercy conduct us all, *Amen.*

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DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

The Folly of Covetousness.

LUKE 12. 20.

But God said unto him, Thou Fool---

 IS somewhat strange to consider that Wisdom should be a thing *desired* by all, and highly *pretended* to by the most, and yet that Men should betray their Folly in nothing more than in their Judgments concerning Wisdom; and yet this is the frequent as well as unhappy fate of the many Pretenders to Wisdom that are in the World, who in nothing take such absurd measures as in this. We shew indeed enough of our Weakness and Ignorance in the search of *Nature*, and in what we call our *Philosophy*: We live among Mysteries and Riddles, and there is not one thing that comes in at our Senses, but what baffles our Understandings; but tho' (as the Wise Man complains, *Wisd. 9. 16.*) *hardly do we guess aright at the things that are upon Earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us; yet find*

find them out we do in some measure, and are seldom so very much out in our Judgments, as to mistake in *Extremities*, and take one contrary for another: 'Tis very rare that we take the virtue of a Plant to be Hot, when 'tis extremely Cold, and he must be a very mean *Botanic* now, that shall gather Poison instead of Pot-herbs; and yet this we often do in the conduct of Life, and in the great Ends and Measures of it. Here we often mistake one contrary for another, Evil for Good, Darkness for Light, and Folly for Wisdom. We do not only act foolishly, (for that were something tolerable, would we but acknowledge and be ashamed of our weakness,) but we back this Folly with another, applaud and justify our absurd measures, and think our selves Wise, not only while we are Fools, but for that very thing wherein we are so.

THE generality of Men place their Wisdom in that which is directly their Folly, and their greatest Wisdom in their greatest Folly; they lay deep Plots for shallow Interests, and are very slight and superficial in their Contrivances about things of real Moment and Consequence; they work out a frame of little Designs, with as much Industry, Art and Wariness, as the laborious Spider weaves her fine-wrought Web, and to as much purpose, to catch a *Fly*, to bring about a *Trifle*, when the same, perhaps half the labour and thoughtfulness, would have served for the securing a weighty and substantial Interest:

terest: And yet when they have done this, they think they have been very Shrewd and Politick, and compassed a very notable Point, and are Proud of their little Atchievement, and fancy the Title of *Wise* as much their due, as if pronounced so by the *Oracle*, and as sure and well established, as if *their* Wisdom as well as that of *Solomon*, had built her House upon seven Pillars, little thinking all the while that he that dwelleth in Heaven shall laugh them to Scorn, that the Lord shall have them in Derision: *Psal. 2. 4.* That God whose Ways are not as our Ways, nor his Thoughts like our Thoughts, has already weighed them in a truer Ballance than that wherein they weigh themselves, and finds them wanting in what they chiefly pretended to, and charges them with downright Folly and Madness. For this was the case of the Rich Man in the Parable, the Fruitfulness of his Ground had put him upon a new Expedient, and he was very busie and thoughtful within himself how to find room to dispose of his Goods; what shall I do, says he, because I have no room where to bestow my Fruits? The Poor Man it seems was as much straitned in his Plenty, as other Men use to be in the extreamest Poverty; *What shall I do?* The very Language of those who are reduced to *Straits*: Do? Why, give the overplus to the Poor; and that thou mayest not be so overstock'd again another Year, part with a good piece of Land, and build an *Hospital*. No, says he, I understand better things than so, this will

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I do, I will pull down my Barns and build greater, and there will I bestow (not on the Poor,) all my Fruits and my Goods; and I will say to my Soul, Soul thou hast much Goods laid up for many Years, take thine Ease, Eat, Drink and be Merry. This was his Resolution, and a Wife one too as he thought, applauding himself as much in the Wisdom of his Contrivance, as in the Fruitfulness of his Ground: *But God said unto him, Thou Fool* —

IT is here supposed, that the Rich Man thought he had done wisely, and proceeded by the best Measures of Prudence and Discretion, in that the Judgment of God is here by way of Opposition set against his; he it seems and God, were of two different Apprehensions, *But God said unto him,* — From the Words therefore I shall in the First place observe, how vastly the Judgment of God differs from that of Men, and particularly that what we count Wisdom here, is Folly with him: And since the Judgment of God is always infallible, and according to the truth and reality of things, I shall therefore in the Second place consider the great Folly of what God here condemns as such; First, Of Sin in general; Secondly, Of placing our Happiness and Content in the good things of this World: And here I shall consider the great Folly of Covetousness, and particularly of the Covetous Rich Man in the Text.

AND First, I observe how vastly different the Judgment of God is from that of Men, and particularly

icularly that what we count Wisdom here is folly with him, *My Thoughts*, says God by the Prophet, *are not your Thoughts, neither are your Ways my Ways; for as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are my Ways higher than your Ways, and my Thoughts than your Thoughts, Isa. 55. 5.* Indeed the disproportion is very great between Earth and Heaven, between the Point and the Circumference of so vast a Circle, and yet this does but faintly shadow out the mighty disproportion that is between the Measures of Men and the Ways of God; for the difference is as great, as between Truth and Falshood, which are removed from each other by an unmeasurable distance. There's more Truth than we are easily aware of in that fancy of *Homer*, that the Gods call things by other Names than we do; so far are they from thinking our *Thoughts*, that they do not so much as speak in our *Phrase*. Not only the Thoughts of God, are above our reach, but even his very Words are *ἀπίστα φήματα*, Words that cannot be utter'd by a Mortal Tongue, nor understood by any *imbodyed* Understanding; there's an unimaginable difference even in the very *Nomenclature* as well as the *Logick* of Earth and Heaven, for God dwells in *unapproachable* Light and Glory, nay he himself, as *St. John* tells us, is a pure and unmix'd Light, a Light which has no Darkness, and to which nothing is dark, but all things open and naked. He therefore pierces through the very *Essences* of things, sees them all in their proper Colours, and calls them

all by their proper Names. He has before him in one simple view, the whole *Field* of Truth; nay he is very Truth himself, and consequently can no more be deceived in his Judgment of things, than he can cease to be what he is. But we, though we see in his Divine Light, yet we have it reflected to us through false Mediums, and mingled with Clouds and Mists, and thick Darkness. We look upon Truth as we do upon the Face of the Setting Sun, through a gross and fallacious *Atmosphere*, and by a *Refracted Ray*, which makes it appear where it is not; for we see through a Veil of Flesh those dim *Spectacles* of the Soul, and the Vapours of the Body cloud the Understanding, and blunt the Edge of the Mind. We seldom discern things as they truly are, and when we do, we can hardly keep true to the Judgment which we have once rightly made, but are oftentimes by the intervening *Eclipses* of sudden Passion, actually ignorant of what we habitually know, and then act as foolishly and absurdly, as if we had never known it. These are the accidental Disadvantages we labour under, besides the finiteness of our Understandings, which even in the Perfection of our Nature are bounded within a narrow compass. And since this is the Case between God and us, the Judgment which God makes of things, must needs be vastly different from the Sentiments of Men; for if the Judgment of one Man be so widely different from that of another, if the Conceptions of Philosophers be so far

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far removed from the fancy of the Vulgar, and the Measures of an Experienced Statesman be so quite otherwise than those of a poor Home-bred Peasant, how vastly different must the Measures and Judgments of God be from those of Men, who sees Darkness even in the Angels of Light, and charges the loftiest Seraph with Folly! Certainly so very different, that they are for the most part quite contrary; insomuch, that what we think *Truth*, and withall dogmatically pronounce as such, and perhaps bind with an *Anathema*; God in the mean while judges to be Error; and what we take to be Wisdom, he esteems to be Folly. And I doubt most of our Wisdom is of such a *Stamp*, as will not *pass* above in the Regions of Light, however current it may be here below by the advantage of this our *Night and Obscurity*: And the Apostle says plainly of the Wisdom of the World, (which indeed is the Wisdom of the *most*;) that 'tis Foolishness without end.

BUT of this we shall be better convince'd by some particular Instances, whereof there are a Multitude, but I shall briefly touch upon a few. And First, as to the frame of the *Natural World*, some Mathematicians and Naturalists have quarrel'd with the Geometry and Contrivance of it; some dislikes the Situation and Motion of the Sun, making some Countries so very Hot, and some so very Cold, and in occasioning so frequent *Eclipses*. Another quarrels with the contact of the Weather, and can by no means

think it well that a full Cloud should empty it self upon the barren Sand, or upon the Sea, when in the mean time many a rich Ground is almost starved for want of Relief from Heaven; and he can as little reconcile it to wise Administration, that the hopes of the promising Year should be crush'd in Pieces by the rude Arrest of an unreasonable Frost. Another wonders to what purpose there should be such vast numbers of little Insects, why there should be any such thing as *Paison*, and why among Fishes, the Greater should prey upon the Less, and why those which are Food for us, should be so thick set with little Bones; and he can never forgive Nature for the Luxuriancy and easie growth of Weeds, when choice Flowers are hardly brought up even with Labour and Care. But to all this and the like, the Judgment of God stands directly opposed, who upon a Solemn Review of his Works pronounced all things good that he had made, and found not one *Erratum* in the whole Book of Nature.

Thus again as to the Administration of the *Moral* World, we don't like the System of this neither; but are wont to be dissatisfied; First, That there should be any such thing as *Evil* in it; this has been censured as a great Flaw by the whole School of Philosophers, and the most favourable Plea they could advance for it, was to resolve it into *Necessity*, and the Invincible *Stubbornness* of Matter; as much as to say, God could not help it. And those who could be
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pretty well reconciled to the *being* of Evil in the World, would yet by no means indure to think that the greatest share of it should light upon good Men. This was ever an unanswerable Scandal, and an unmoveable Objection; and yet 'tis most certain, that if God did not judge it best upon the whole matter, that there should be Evil in the World, and that the most of it too, should fall upon those who deserved the least, he would never suffer either the one or the other.

THERE is yet another thing in relation to the Moral World, which lies very cross upon our Minds, and that is the Adjournment of the full Administration of Justice to another World; we would fain see it in this, and are for an immediate and visible distinction and separation to be made between Good and Bad, between the Tares and the Wheat; and because we see no such difference made, we are apt to censure the Order, if not to question the very Being of Divine Providence. But it seems the Judgment of God is against ours, he thinks it not so well that the Tares should now be separated from the Wheat, but that *both should grow together till the Harvest*, Mat. 13. 10.

THUS again as to the *Matter* of the Christian Faith, and the *manner* of planting it in the World, which the Apostle in one Word calls the *Preaching of the Cross*; this we know was a Stumbling Block to the *Jews*, and Foolishness of the *Wise Greeks*, who were then the *Vertuoso's* of the World; and yet we are told by an inspired Pen, that

'twas both the *Power* and the *Wisdom* of God,
1 Cor. 1. 24.

THUS again as to the Government of the Christian Church, even those who have received the Christian Faith, are not altogether satisfied with that; for many of us are apt to think that Christ would have made much better Provision than he has for the good of the Church, if he had constituted in it an *Infalible Guide*, and Visible Judge of Controversies, by whom all Difficulties might be cleared, and all Disputes ended, which now so confound and divide the Christian World; I say many who do not believe that there is any such Constitution, are yet apt to think and say, that 'twere a thing much to be wish'd it had been so, and that 'twould have been a great deal better so than otherwise; and yet God we see in his Wisdom has not thought fit to have it so.

THUS again as to the condition of Human Life, we commonly imagin it would be mightily for our Advantage to have a prospect of *Futurities*, and to foresee what shall happen to us hereafter; and accordingly we are very curious to taste of the Fruit of *this* Tree of Knowledge, and to pry into the obscure Manuscript of Destiny; and some are so impatient, that they will have recourse to the Devil for such Discoveries rather than fail. And yet we see God in his manifold Wisdom has thought fit to *Seal up* this Book of *Futurities* from our Eyes, and will not trust us with so *dangerous* a piece of Knowledge,

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THUS again Lastly, We many of us think it a great Point of Wisdom to heap up Wealth, to get Honours and Preferments, to raise Families, to perpetuate a Name; and we are hugely satisfied with our good Policy and Discretion, if we can secure to our selves a little Portion of this dirty Planet, this little Spot, this Point, though we pay for it, not only the Price of Labour and Care, Contempt and Disgrace, Danger and continual Fear, but even the great Price of our Future Inheritance, and part with our Religion, and our very Souls in the Exchange. This we oftentimes think Wisdom to do for a *little* of the World; whereas in the Judgment of God, to gain the *whole* upon such Terms, would be but an ill Bargain. *What shall it profit a Man, says our Saviour, to gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul?* Yea, but there are some, and never so many as in this Age, that think this no such unprofitable Merchandize, but are very well content to sell Heaven for Earth, Happiness for Vanity, and will readily part with the great Reversion of another World for a Turf of Ground in present Possession. This is the way of them, and they think they do well, and that they may say of themselves all the while what the Wise King did in the midst of all his sensual Indulgencies, *Eccl. 2. 9. also my Wisdom remained with me.* But however these Men applaud themselves in their extraordinary Reach and Policy, God in the mean time has another Opinion of their Conduct, and will say to every one of them, what he

he did to the Rich Man in our Parable, *Thou Fool.*

AND now whereas the Judgment of God is ever Infallible, and according to the truth and reality of things, I am hence led in the Second Place to consider the great Folly of what God here condemns as such; the thing condemned, is the Conduct of the Rich Man, which he himself thought Wise, but God thought very Foolish; and the First ground of the Charge where-with God taxes him, was the *Sinfulness* of it; he was a *Fool* because a *Sinner*. I shall therefore in the First place reflect a little upon the Folly of Sin in general: Sin and Folly, Sinner and Fool, are Words in Scripture, especially in the Writings of *Solomon*, of a parallel Signification, and are indifferently used one for the other: And the Schools of Morality insinuate the same in that common Aphorism of theirs, *every Sinner is ignorant.* Πᾶς ὁ ἁμαρτανὸς ἄγνοος, says the Socratical Proverb. Indeed Sin has its Birth in Folly, and every Step of its Progress is Folly, and its Conclusion is in Folly; there is its Rise, there is its Advance; and there is its End: But this will appear more distinctly from the consideration of these Two things. First, The absurdity and madness of the Choice which every Sinner makes. Secondly, The Error and Mistake that must necessarily precede in his Judgment before he makes it: These Two things, wherein is comprized the whole Folly of Sin, have been by me already

dy considered * elsewhere; but because it is a Consideration of such an uncommon importance, I shall rather present it here again to the Reader with a little Alteration, than refer him to it.

* *Reason and Religion.* p. 250.

As for the Absurdity of the Sinners Choice, 'tis the greatest that can be imagined; for what is it that he chuses? 'Tis to do that which he must and certainly will *repent* of and wish he had never done, either in this World for its *Illness* and *Sinfulness*, or in the next for its *sad Effects* and *Consequences*. 'Tis to despise the Authority, Power, Justice, and Goodness of God; 'tis to transgress his Commands which are good and equitable, and in keeping of which, there is *present* as well as *future* Reward; 'tis to act against the frame of his Rational Nature, and the Divine Law of his Mind; 'tis to disturb the Order and Harmony of the Creation, and by *extra-linéal* motions to violate the Sacred Interest of Society: 'Tis lastly, to incur the Anger of an Omnipotent and Just God, and to hazard falling off from his Supream Good, and the last end of his Being, and the being ruin'd in his best Interest, to all Eternity. All this the Sinner partly actually incurs, and partly puts to the hazard in the Commission of any one Sin. And for what is all this? Is it for any considerable Interest, for any thing that bears something of Proportion, and may pretend to Competition, and a rival weight in the opposite Scale of the Ballance?

Ballance? No, 'tis only for a Shadow, for a Trifle, for the Gratification of some baser Appetite, for the Acquirement of some little Interest, which has nothing to divert us from adhering to that which is truly our *Best*, but only that poor Advantage of being present, though at the same time its *Vanity* be present with it.

AND now is this a Choice for a Wise Man, for a Man of common Sense? Nay; is it a Choice for a Man of any Sense at all, for one in his right Wits to make? Is there a better Demonstration to be had of a Man's being a Fool or Mad than this? No certainly, and were it not for the Customariness of the thing, and that too many are concern'd, this would be thought a sufficient Reason why a Man should be *beg'd* for a *Fool*, or sent to *Bedlam*: For if Absurdity of Choice be an Argument of Folly, the Sinner is certainly no common Fool, there being no Choice so absurd, so unaccountable as his.

BUT his Folly will further appear, if we consider Secondly, the Error and Mistake that must necessarily precede in his Judgment, before he does or can make such a Choice; all Sin is founded upon Ignorance and Mistake, for as 'tis impossible to chuse Evil as Evil in general, so is it no less impossible to chuse any *particular* kind of Evil as Evil; and consequently 'tis impossible to chuse the Evil of *Sin* as such: The Devil himself (as Abstract a Sinner as he is,) can't love Sin as Sin. If therefore it be chosen, it must be chosen under the appearance of Good, and
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it can have this appearance no otherwise than as considered as a lesser Evil, (for that's the only way whereby an Evil may appear Good or Eligible) and so it must be considered before it be chosen. He therefore that chuses Sin, considers it at the instant of Commission as a lesser Evil, and therein consists his Error and Mistake; he is either Habitually or Actually Ignorant, he either has not the Habitual Knowledge of all those things which would preserve him in his Duty, or at least he has not the Actual Consideration of them; for 'tis *that* which must bring him to *Repentance*, there being no Consideration beyond this: And 'tis impossible a Man should Sin with the very same Thoughts, Convictions and Considerations about him, as he has when he *Repents*. This I say is no more possible, than for a Ballance to move two contrary ways with the same Weight, and in the same Posture. He therefore that Sins, wants *that* Consideration at least to keep him *in* his Duty, which when he Repents brings him *to* it; and is therefore Ignorant and Mistaken.

THE Sum of this matter lies in this form of Argument, Whoever thinks Sin a lesser Evil, is mistaken in his Judgment; but whoever commits Sin, does then think it a lesser Evil; Therefore whoever commits Sin is mistaken in his Judgment. So great is the folly of Sin, both in reference to the Absurdity of the Choice, and to the Error and mistake of the Chuser; and so great reason has every Sinner to take up that Confession of the Psalmist, *Psal. 73. So Foolish*

was

was I and Ignorant, and even as a Beast before thee.

AND thus far of the Folly of Sin in general; I come now in the Second place to the other ground of the Charge, where I am to consider the folly of placing our Happiness and Content in the good things of this World, and of that particular sort of Earthly Mindedness which we call *Covetousness*. It is certainly a very great folly to place our Happiness in any *Created Good*, even in the very Best of the Works of God; there is no thing even in *Heaven* that's *Created*, which can be our Happiness; not the Discourses of Angels, not the Love of Seraphims, not the Musick of Allelujahs. And therefore the Psalmist excludes all the Creatures even in *Heaven*, as well as in *Earth* from being the Objects of his Happiness; *Psal. 73. Whom have I in Heaven but thee?* Says he, 'twould be a great folly therefore to make any *Created Good* our Happiness, even in the very Region of Blessedness. But then to place it in any good that this World, this Sediment, and Sink of the Creation can afford, is such a degree of Sottishness and Stupidity, as did not Experience convince us that there are such Fools, one would hardly think incident to a Rational Creature, for it plainly argues that we are grossly ignorant of one of these Two things, either of our selves, or of the things of the World; we are either ignorant of the Dignity and Excellency of our Natures, of the Designs and Ends of our Creation, and of the Strength and Capacities

capacities of our Appetites which are to be satisfied with nothing less than Infinite; or if we do know and consider all this of our *selves*, then we are so much the more ignorant of the *World* about us, to think that there is any thing to be had in this Circle of Vanity to satisfy the importunity of such Hungry and Capacious Appetites.

So far indeed is any thing in this World from being able to afford us *Happiness* and Satisfaction, that 'tis well if it can give us *Entertainment*, and sweeten the otherwise insipid, and to some very bitter Draught of Life: The Wisest Enquirer into the Capacities of Nature will hardly allow it so much as that; but says of all here, that 'tis not only *Vanity*, but also *Vexation* of Spirit; and if we do by an extraordinary Fortune meet with any thing in this World that can a little cool and allay the heat of our great Thirst, and refresh the drought of our Spirit, yet we are assured by our Saviour who well understood the World, though he enjoyed but little of it, *John* 4. 13. that *whosoever drinks of this Water shall thirst again*; and we all find by repeated Experiences, that 'tis so, and our Reason tells us it must be so, considering the vast, the infinite disproportion between the best things of this World, yea of the whole Creation, and the largeness, the immensity of our Appetites and Capacities, which are a plain Demonstration that we were neither made for them, nor they for us, and that here is neither our Good nor our Evil.

AND

AND what a Folly then is it to place our Happiness, and take up our Rest in such things as these, against the Confession and experimental Verdict of the Wisest of Men, against the express Declaration and Asseveration of God who made both the World and us, and knows the exact Proportion that all his Works have to each other; and that a Barn full of Corn can never satisfy the Hunger of a Soul, against the united experience of all Men ever since *Adam*, nay, and against our own Experience too, which will witness to us, if we but ask her, that we never *enjoyed* but were *disappointed*, and found our Souls empty when our Arms were full; nay, and against the Answer of our Reason too, which satisfies us of the *Necessity* of what our Experience confesses to be *true*, and that as it has ever been so, so it ever will and must be so: I say, what a desperate, incorrigible Fool must he be, who after all this, will yet dream of a Heaven upon Earth, and place his Happiness in the good of this World! The short is, there is no Folly or Disappointment like that of being mistaken in ones *End*; and of all Ends, none is so foolishly mistaken as our *Last End*, and this can never be more foolishly mistaken, than when 'tis placed in the things of *this World*. This therefore is a very great instance of Folly and Stupidity, and to him that is guilty of it, whatever he be for Wit and Parts in other Matters of lesser consequence, God justly may, and will say, *Thou Fool*.

AND

AND now if there be so much of Folly in *Centring* in this World, which consists of great variety of Good, and wherein there is a great *Latitude* of Enjoyment, what a Folly must it then be to straiten our Happiness within the *narrow* compass of *One* or *Two* of its meanest Objects, and to set up our Rest in a full Purse, or a full Barn, or in a few Acres of Ground! And this the Covetous Man does; though he be called a *Worldly* Man, yet 'tis not the World at large, but a little of it, and the worst of it that is the Mistress of his Heart: He is such a Fool to think that his very *Life consists* in the Abundances of things which he possesses, and so he makes Gold his Hope, and says to the Fine Gold, *Thou art my Confidence*. He places his End in these things, and so is guilty of all the common Folly and Absurdity of those who place their Happiness in any of the good things of this World; only there is this one peculiar aggravation on his Side, that whereas the Ambitious Man, though he makes Honour and Preferment his Happiness, yet he enjoys it when he has it; and so does the Voluptuary by his Pleasures; and by this means though they lose their true End, yet they have something in Exchange. In the mean time, the Covetous Wretch, though he makes Wealth his End, yet he when he has it, enjoys no more than he did when it lay hid in the Bowels of the Earth, and so goes to the Devil for *nothing*. For nothing did I say? 'Tis worse than so, for though he has nothing of the *Enjoyment*, yet he won't bate himself an

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Age of the *Trouble*, but endures all the Pain and Anxiety that Carefull Days and Sleepless Nights can give, and so has his Hell here, and hereafter too.

THE truth is, there is more Depth and Mystery in the *Folly* of Covetousness, than in any the most profound *Wisdom* in the World; other Follies of Human Life, though they are not to be cured any more than this, yet they may be accounted for; and though they do overpower and inflave the Mind, yet they do not baffle it. But this is a Disease that has such variety of uncertain Symptoms, that 'tis hard to know what cause to ascribe it to; the Theory of it is as difficult as the Cure, and we can only say, that the Soul is not well under it, that 'tis a *Disease*. 'Tis Folly enough one would think, for a Man to place his Happiness in such a Trifle as a piece of glittering Dirt, and to have one's Soul dwell among Sacks of Corn, and Bags of Money, and to be always craving, heaping, counting and admiring; this I say one would think were Nonsense enough, considering the vileness of the Treasure it self, the Providence of God, the shortness and uncertainty of Life, the transitoriness of this World, the fashion of which is always passing away; and considering withal the very little that Nature requires for her satisfaction. But yet it were something tolerable if the Wretch would but be perswaded to make use of what he has, and to enjoy like a *Man*, what he desires and admires like a *Fool*. But to see an *Old saking Miser* among his Bags, like a Scare-Crow in a Field

Field of Corn, to keep others away from what he has no power to make use of himself; to see him hovering and brooding over his Heaps, and bringing forth nothing; to see him daily pay *Religious* Visits to his *Mammon*, and to have his Belly empty when his Coffers are full, sure the Philosopher that laugh'd to see an Ass eat Thistles, might well split his Sides at such a Spectacle as this.

Thou Fool! If thou dost not want so much Wealth, why dost thou desire it, and take so much Pains to get it? And if thou dost, why dost thou not use and enjoy it? But this is the monstrous Folly of the Covetous Wretch, he first desires Absurdly, and then is more absurd in not enjoying what he desires; he is every whit as Poor when he has, as when he has not; he is good to no body, but worst of all to himself: In one word, he is a continual Torment to his own Mind, and Laughing-stock to the World, whom he diverts with his Folly, the only thing wherein he is a Benefactor.

IT were an infinite undertaking to expose to view the whole Absurdity of Covetousness, which is a *World of Folly*, as the Tongue is of *Iniquity*; only there is one notorious instance of it, which in justice to my Subject, I cannot well pass over: And that is, that it is a Vice of this peculiar Quality from all others, to be then most strong and prevailing, when there is least cause for it, and least Temptation to it; for then generally are Men most Covetous.

1. When they have most Wealth.

2. When they have least Time.

1. *When they have most Wealth*: This one would think should be the proper Cure of Covetousness, as a full Draught of Water is of Thirst; for this is what the Covetous Man desires, this is the Mistress of his Affections, and the delight of his Eyes, that which he has so long and so passionately wish'd for, and promised himself so much Happiness in; and therefore when he is possessed of this, one would expect that he should be satisfied, and at rest, as other Lovers are when they are come to the enjoyment of their Desires. But the case is so far otherwise, that he is more deeply plunged in Covetousness now than ever, and is the more *Empty* for being *Full*; and there is nothing more common than to see Men who were of a frank and liberal Disposition when they had little or nothing to support them, to commence Covetous in an instant upon the Bequest of a rich Legacy, or the sudden fall of an Estate. Strange that Men should *contract* their *Spirits* upon the *inlargements* of their *Fortunes*! Many indeed are the Temptations and Snares of Wealth; but of all Vices one would think it should not dispose Men to Covetousness, but rather be an Antidote against it: And yet so it is, Men are generally most enslaved to this Vice, when they have really least Temptation to it, and might most easily be above it, that is, when they have *most Wealth*. Which indeed is a more strange and unaccountable *Appearance* to consider,

der, than either the Attraction of the Loadstone, or the Ebbing and Flowing of the Sea; and yet 'tis as strange to consider, that Men are also most *Covetous*,

2. *When they have least time.* Indeed when Men are in the Morning of Life, and have a long Prospect of many Years before them, they have then some Temptation to be Covetous, and something to plead for their being so; for they may then live long enough to *enjoy* what by their Frugality they can get, and considering the many Contingencies of Human Life, to *want* what at present they enjoy. But when the Day of Life is far spent, and the Night is at hand, when a Man has but a short Prospect before him, and his Sun is just ready to touch upon its great *Horizon*, then one would think he should have but little heart to be Covetous; and yet then is the time when Men are most of all so; for Covetousness is the proper Vice, or rather Disease of *Old Age*, and is almost as constant an Attendant of it, as Grey Hairs, or a Trembling Hand. When all other Vices leave the Man, as no longer fit for their Service; when even *Lust* it self, the last of the black Train has bid him adieu, then Covetousness seizes him, as if it designed to have him wholly to it self, without Partner or Competitor, to domineer over him with an *absolute* Tyranny. Strange, that a Man should be most solicitous for Provision by the way, when he is almost at his Journey's end, within view of Home! *Thou Fool!* If thou must be Co-

vetous, take a proper Condition, and a right Time for it, and be so either when thou art *Poor*, or when thou art *Young*; when thou hast a Temptation to it, and a Pretence for it. But it seems Absurdity, and Nonsense is so far of the very *Essence* of this Mysterious Vice, that then Men are most addicted to it, when in all Reason and Expectation they should be Proof against it; nay, one would think even naturally incapable of it, when they are *Rich*, and when they are *Old*.

AND now I think there is sufficient ground for the Charge wherewith God taxes the Rich Man; he might well be called Fool, as a *Sinner*, as an *Earthly-Minded* Person, and particularly as being *Covetous*. But let us now consider the particular circumstances of his Covetousness, and we shall find then his Folly was of a nature very Extraordinary; the Text says, that *the Ground of a certain Rich Man brought forth plentifully*; now 'twould be expected, that upon this, his very next Thought should be to return God Thanks for the Fruitfulness of his ground, if it were for no other Reason, but that he might have the like Success again the next Season; No, but instead of that, he immediately thought within himself what he should do, because he had no room where to bestow his Fruits; there was the first Instance of his Folly. Well, but in case this unseasonable and too early Thoughtfulness of his had but put him upon doing some good thing with his Abundance, 'twould have been

been pretty tolerable yet, and there would have been some amends for the *ill timing* it, before he had returned his Thanks to God: No, but he thought *thus* within himself, I will pull down my Barns, and build greater, and there will I bestow all my Fruits and my Goods: *All* my Fruits and my Goods; he designs you see to ingross all to himself, and to remember neither God nor the Poor, to let no part of it go to any Pious or Charitable use; and there's another instance of his Folly. But after all, perhaps he does not mean to place his *End* and chief Happiness in his full Granary, but only to use it as a *lesser* good, and as relating to the Conveniencies of the *Body*, and the gratification of the *Animal* Life: No, but his *Folly* proceeds further than so, I will say to my *Soul*, says he, *Soul*, thou hast much Goods laid up for many Years, take thine Ease, Eat, Drink and be Merry: A very noble Soliloquy indeed! That ever a Man should be so much a Brute and a Sot, as to make a full Barn the good of his *Soul*! of his *Soul* who must seek her *Happiness* from the same Hand whence she had her *Being*, and can be satisfied only by him who is Absolute Perfection. This certainly was a strange extravagance of *Folly*, and yet even this has a further Aggravation yet; for had this Provision of his been indeed for *many* Years, (as he fancied,) there would have been more Cause and Pretence for the great Complacency and Satisfaction he took in it. But little did the poor Fool think upon what Contingencies this Project of his depended, and

how precarious and uncertain the Lease of his Life was, much less that *that very Night* his Soul should be required of him; and yet this was a very obvious Consideration, though in the heat and hurry of his Contrivances he was not at leisure to take it in his way. And this is the lamentable Fate of all Covetous Men, they are so busie in making haste to be Rich, that they overlook the *Grave*, notwithstanding that they are continually poring upon the *Earth*. But not to consider a thing so obvious, is a great piece of dotishness and stupidity; and yet to consider it and go on in heaping up Riches without Reason and without End, is much worse.

AND thus have we seen the whole procedure of the *Rich Man*, (if he may now be allowed that Name,) and the incomparable Folly of it, and in him the Folly of all Covetous Persons, who yet in one respect, do generally exceed their Original in the Parable; for he, though he had resign'd up his Heart and Soul to his Wealth, yet he was so wise as to know when he had enough, and when 'twas time to give over, retreat and take his Ease. But *our Misers* never know when they have sufficient, but drudge on to the very last Minute, and Dye in their Slavery; and are therefore the greater Fools.

WHAT therefore remains, but that we take other *Objects of Content*; that we place not our Happiness in the things of this World, nor labour for that which is not *Bread*; that we lay not up Treasures for our selves upon Earth, but rather

rather endeavour to be Rich towards God; that we do not plunge our selves so deep into the World, and the Pleasures of this Life, this short Life, as to forget the days of Darknes which shall be many. Above all, let us take care that we do not take any thing of the World to be the good of our *Souls*, much less so far as for the sake of any Honour, Profit or Preferment to be false to the infinitely dearer Interest of our Religion, and the Cause of God and his Church; lest when we begin to Pride and Applaud our Selves in our Wisdom, and withal fancy that even Posterity shall Praise our Saying, God in the mean time should say to any of us, as he did to the Rich Man in our Parable, *Thou Fool.*

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1834
DISCOURSE

CONCERNING THE

Consideration of God,

AND OF THE

DIVINE PRESENCE.

P S A L. XVI. 9.

I have set the Lord always before me.

AND 'twere Happy we could all do so ; we should then certainly be more Pure and Uncorrupt in our Thoughts and Intentions, more Spiritual and Elevated in our Affections, and more orderly and regular in our Actions, whether in our Retirements, or upon the open Stage ; we should demean our selves with more care and exactness, both towards God, our Neighbour and our Selves ; we should *lead* our Lives with more Innocence, and *leave* them with more Courage and Chearfulness than we generally do.

THE Words, as indeed the whole Psalm, seem immediately to concern the Person and the
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Condition of Christ, and to be chiefly intended to express that steady, constant and actual Consideration which he had of the *Power* and *Veracity* of God, to whom he was not so intimately and mysteriously united, but that he endeavoured to be more intimate and familiar with him, and if possible, to place him in a nearer view, by the Arts of Attention and Recollection, by the most actual and awaken'd Application of Mind. This, as we have great reason to think, was his constant Practice and Exercise all his Life long, but especially about that Dark and Cloudy Period of it, when he was entering into the Troubles of his Passion; then he had occasion to make use of all the Aids and Succours both of Reason and Grace; particularly to renew and reinforce his Considerations of the Power and Veracity of God, that he would not leave his Soul in Hell, (in the State of Separation from his Body,) nor suffer his Holy One to see Corruption. Then therefore he set himself more industriously to Contemplate the Perfections of God, especially those of his Power and Veracity; and from hence he drew Arguments of Consolation for his Support, under all the Terrors and Afflictions of his great Agony, *I have set God always before me; because he is at my Right Hand, I shall not be moved.*

BUT I shall discourse upon the Words with greater Latitude, and in treating of them, shall concern my self about these Two things.

FIRST,

FIRST, To shew what it is to set God always before one; or how many ways we may be said to set God before us.

SECONDLY, To represent the many and great Advantages arising from each; and what an Excellent Art, and Spiritual Expedient it is for Holy Living, thus to set God always before us.

Now as to the First, to set God always before us, in the general to have him ever present in our Thoughts and Meditations, under some Capacity or Consideration or other; present to our Thoughts not by way of *Essence* only, (for that he necessarily is, and we cannot possibly exclude him thence,) but also by way of *Object*, when we attend to him, and reflect upon him under some Qualification or other, either absolute, or in relation to us: And in this there is great variety, even as much as there is in the several Attributes and Perfections of God; but I shall consider only those that influence our Practice, and serve to the Direction of our Manners. Now in Relation to this, there are Three very excellent ways of setting God before us, as the *Supream Good*, as a *Pattern*, and as an *Observer*.

FIRST, We may set God before us as the *Supream Good*; this we do when we Contemplate the natural and absolute Perfection of his Essence, that universal Plenitude of his, whereby he contains all that is Good, Lovely and Excellent, all things that are requisite to the completing of a most Perfect and Sovereign Being,

ing, that may be infinitely and unchangeably Happy in himself, and whereby he may become apt to be the greatest Good to his Creatures, the true end of Man, the Object of his Happiness, and the last Centre of all his Desires: This is to set God before us as the Supreme Good.

SECONDLY, We may set God before us as a *Pattern*; this we do when we Contemplate the *Moral Nature* of God, those imitable Perfections of his, which answer to those Vertues and good Dispositions of Mind which he requires from us, and which he contributes also to work in us by the Graces of his Spirit: Such are that universal *Sapientia* and Holiness of his Nature and Will, whereby all his Actions become Pure and Right, whereby *the Lord is Righteous in all his Ways, and Holy in all his Works, Psal. 145. 17.* His *Goodness*, wherein are comprehended all the Heights and Depths, and the whole Length and Breadth of the Love, the Kindness, the Mercy, the Grace, the Benignity and Bounty of God, that infinite diffusiveness of his Nature, whereby he is as it were carried out of, and beyond himself, to Communicate the good that is in him to his Creatures, according to their several Proportions and Capacities. His *Justice*, whereby he deals uprightly and equally with all his Creatures, and renders to every one his own, according to their Works, Good or Bad, without any Partiality or Respect of Persons. His *Truth*, whereby all his Revelations are exactly correspondent and conformable. First, to his own Mind, and then
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to the Nature of the things themselves, so that he can neither be deceived, nor deceive. His *Faithfulness*, whereby he most assuredly performs whatever he has Promised or Threatned; but more especially is his Faithfulness remarked in Scripture, for the Performance of his *Promises*, there being a Right acquired from these by the Persons to whom they are made, which is not in Threatnings; and accordingly 'twould be a greater breach of Fidelity, to deny the one, than not to execute the other. And therefore the Scripture commending the Faithfulness of God, restrains it chiefly to his Promise; according to that of the Author to the *Hebrews*, *He is Faithful that Promised*, Heb. 10, 23. Lastly, when we Contemplate his *Sincerity*, which consists in his candid, open and ingenuous dealing with the Sons of Men, in that he never thinks nor designs any thing contrary to what he Reveals, either by Word or Deed, in opposition to all Tricks, Juglings Doubleddealings, Hypocrisy and the like.

THESE are those Vertues and Perfections which constitute the *Moral* Nature of God, and when we propose these duly and sincerely to our Meditation, as they are Excellencies in the Divine Nature, we may be then said to set God before us as a *Pattern*; I say as they are Excellencies in the Divine Nature, otherwise the formality of the thing will be changed: For if, for Instance, I consider the Justice of God, not as 'tis a Moral Excellence in him, but only as an Instrument of Evil to my self; I do not then set

set God before me as a *Pattern*, but as an *Avenger*.

THE Third and Last way of setting God before us, is as an *Observer*; when we consider him as a Being Essentially present in all Places, and with all Creatures, who all live, move and have their Being in him, and beyond all Places and Creatures too, in those infinite Spaces where he can erect new Worlds, but where as yet there is nothing besides himself. I shall not here enter into a nice Disquisition concerning the *Omnipresence* of God, being willing rather to Suppose than Dispute it. But however, lest this way of setting God before us, should be thought Imaginary and Precarious, give me leave by the way; only to remark, that 'tis every whit as reasonable to think the Essence of God to be *every where*, as to be *always*; and that *Immensity* is as rational as *Eternity*: That great and Stupendous Being, who is allowed to reach through all *Times*, may as well be allowed to reach through all *Places*; nay much rather, since it seems to be a less Perfection to be every where, than to be always. For to be always in Duration, is such an intrinsical Denomination, as springs from the greatest of all God's natural Perfections; for it arises from the necessity of his Existence, whereby he cannot but be, which is the highest degree of Being, as being directly opposite to not Being, and consequently of Perfection. But now to be every where, seems rather an extrinsical Denomination relating to somewhat *without*,
and

and such as is not directly contrary to not Being, but only to limited Being. And if we ascribe the Greater to God, why should there be any Controversie about the Less? Taking therefore the Supposition for granted, we may well consider God as a Being every where Essentially present, and consequently as an All-seeing and All-knowing Being, to whom all Hearts are open, and all Desires known, and from whom no Secrets are hid; and not only as an Idle Observer, but as one that takes such strict Notice and Cognizance of what he sees and knows, as to treasure and seal it up against the Day of Retribution, and to Punish or Reward us accordingly.

THESE I take to be the several ways of setting God before us, so as to reap any Spiritual advantage from it: I come now in the Second place to represent the many and great advantages arising from each, and what an excellent Art and Spiritual Expedient it is for Holy Living, thus to set God always before us; and truly the advantages are very great; for as the Habitual Knowledge of God, and the Belief of his Existence, are the first and general Foundations of all Religion, according to that of the Apostle, *He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him, Heb. 11. 6.* So the actual Consideration of him under these Capacities, is highly conducive to the Promotion and Accomplishment of all Holiness and Vertue.

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FOR First, to begin with those advantges that naturally spring from the Consideration of God as the *Supream Good*, what can be more excellent than the Love of God? 'Tis the highest Elevation of a Creature, and withall the most pregnant and comprehensive of all the Virtuous Dispositions he is capable of: 'Tis like the Flower or Blossom of a Plant, which contains all in it; and therefore our Saviour calls it the *First and the Great Commandment*, *Matt. 22. 38.* But now what more effectual means can there be next to the Grace of him who is Essential Love, and who, as the Apostle tells us, *sheds the Love of God abroad in our Hearts*, *Rom. 5. 5.* I say, what more effectual means can there be to kindle, increase, and keep alive in us this Heavenly and Divine Fire, than to set God always before us as the *Supream Good*? Can a Man consider any thing barely as *Good*, and not love it, when love it self is nothing else but an Inclination of the Soul to Good; he may indeed not proceed to chuse it, because it may come into competition with a greater; which when it does, not the good, but the absence of it is to be Chosen, as being the lesser Evil; but yet notwithstanding, he must still love it with a Natural Love, as long as he considers it as in any degree good. Much less then can a Man refuse to love God, when he considers him not only as Good, but as the *Supream Good*. For here, besides that natural inclination which necessarily follows upon the appearance of Good as Good, there is this peculiar to be

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considered, that there is no room for Competition with a greater Good, and accordingly that Natural Love and Inclination which is due to God as Good, must needs pass into act and effectual Choice, upon the consideration of his being the *Supream* Good. The last degree of Love or Inclination must needs be actual and effectual, when it has nothing to out-weigh it, as the least Weight weighs down the Scale where there is no contrary weight to counterballance and over rule it. He therefore that sets God always before him as the supream Good, and never thinks of him but under that Notion, must necessarily and effectually love him, as he that looks upon Sin as the greatest of all Evils, must necessarily and effectually hate it: For the Beauties of God are infinitely Charming and Attractive in themselves, and there wants nothing but our serious and due Attention to make them become so to us; and the more we apply our Attention to them, the more we shall be in love with them. What is it that makes the *Seraphim* burn and flame above the rest of the Angelical Orders, but because they see more of the First and Supream Beauty? Now as Love depends upon *Vision* in the other Life, so does it upon *Contemplation* in this, and consequently, he that considers the infinite Perfection of God most, must necessarily love him most. Contemplation is the most proper and genuine incentive of Love where-ever the Object is truly deserving of it, as discovering to us the reasons why it ought to be

be loved : I say, where the Object is truly deserving of our Love ; for otherwise it will serve only to discover its Vanity, and so lessen its amiableness ; which is the reason that the best way to cure our Love to the World, is thoroughly to consider it. But in case the Object be a true and real Good, and such as will abide the Test of Meditation, and endure to be weighed and handled on both sides, the proper way to beget and increase our Love toward such an Object as this, is studiously to Contemplate it ; and then the Light that is in our Understandings, will beget a warmth in our Wills and Affections. Experience as well as Reason may inform us, that the way to love any thing that is truly good, and will bear a near inspection, is to look much upon it, and consider it thoroughly, since even the most indifferent Objects by long stay and dwelling upon them, do by degrees so gain upon our Affections, that we may come at last to have a kind of a fancy and a kindness for them ; and many have gazed and stared upon an ordinary Face so long, till they have entertained a more than ordinary Passion. And if the meanest Beauty of the Creature by frequent and familiar interviews, becomes at length so Lovely and Charming, how much more shall the continual Meditation upon the Beauty of the Creator, kindle in us a Love towards him, and a Delight in him ! The longer certainly we sit thus under his Shadow, the

more we shall delight to do so, and his Fruit will be the more sweet to our Taste, *Cant.* 2. 3. And if the *general* Consideration of God has such influence upon our Love of him, how much stronger will that Influence be, when we set him before us under the Notion and Capacity of the Supream Good! And therefore when the Psalmist in a deep Contemplation of the Beauties of Christ, had proceeded so far as to conclude him fairer than the Children of Men; as if wounded to the Heart with the Rays of his Divine Beauty, he presently adds, *Thy Arrows are very sharp, Psal.* 45.

THEY are indeed, Lord Jesus, they are very Sharp and Keen, like the Sword that proceeds out of thy Mouth; and how is it that we can resist the Power of thy Sovereign Beauty! Thou woundest the *Seraphim* and *Cherubim*, and all the Orders of Angels with the Arrows of thy Love, and they burn at the Rays of thy Divine Light and Glory: Whom have *they* in Heaven but thee, and what is there on Earth that they desire in comparison of thee? But we who are every day vanquished and led in triumph by Meaner Beauties, stand yet proof against thy Diviner Charms, and feel none of the impressions of thy Love. But 'tis our Blindness that is our Defence, and our unattention is the Shield that repels thy Darts: We do not Contemplate thee as thy Angels do, nor as we our selves do the Beauties of this Sensible World. O do thou then open
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and fix our Eyes upon thee, and they will soon receive in thy Divine Rays; engage but our Minds to *Contemplate* thee, and then we shall not chuse but *Love thee*.

NOR is this the only advantage of setting God before us as the Supream Good; for as this is a consideration of excellent use to excite and quicken in us the Love of God, so does it also Secondly, contribute both to convince us of the World's Vanity, and to support us under that Conviction. He that is *not* sensible of the vanity of Created Good, had need present God to his Thoughts as the Supream Good, that he may have a right sense and apprehension of it; and he that *is*, had need Meditate upon God under the same Notion, that he may have wherewithal to support his Mind under such a Conviction; and this way of setting God before us, is a very effectual means to do both. The Vanity of the Creature never appears with that advantage of clearness and conviction, as when we Contemplate the Fullness and Excellency of the Creator, which presently weakens and puts out all the Lustre of the World, as the Sun does that of a Candle, meerly by *out-shining* it. And when a Man by the help of this Contemplation is arrived to this sense and conviction, the same will also serve to support him under it. 'Tis supposed here, that the Man will then stand in great need of some Support or other, and that very justly; for the Soul of Man being not her own End and Good, must needs rely on something

thing *without* for her Happiness, and as long as she thinks that this may be found among the Creatures, she is pretty well satisfied and at ease. But no sooner is she awakened out of this pleasing Dream, into a Conviction of the World's Vanity, but she has lost her hold, has nothing to enjoy, nothing to rest upon; and what a barren disconsolate condition must she be then in, unless she has some other Refuge to retreat to for her Support? And what other Support *can* there or *need* there be, but the Consideration of the Divine Fullness and Greatness, which will make abundant Supply for all the Deficiency that is in the Creature, were it infinitely more vain than it is, and so *relieve* that Conviction which it has *occasioned*.

BUT Thirdly, This is also a general Remedy against all other Trouble and Sadness, as well as against that which arises from the Conviction of the World's Vanity; the best Consolation of an Afflicted Mind, is to think upon God; this will cheer and refresh the Soul, when Rational Discourses and Wise Sentences are applied in vain; for if your Sorrow proceed from Fear, what more proper relief than to Meditate upon the Power of God, who is able to deliver us from the worst of Evils? If from Love or Desire, what better allay can be found than to Contemplate the Perfection of God, who is able to satisfy our most Craving Appetites? If from Distrust or Despair, what can we do better than Meditate upon the Goodness and Faithfulness of God, who
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loves whatever he has made, knows our frame, and considers that we are but Dust? If from the consideration of the ill state of Mankind, either as to Sin or Misery, how can we satisfy our selves better than by Meditating upon the excellent Order and Conduct of the Providence of God, who Governs the World in a way becoming his Infinite Perfections, and disposes all things sweetly? And so in the like manner in all other instances, whatever be the occasion of our Trouble and Sadness, no Consolation like Meditating upon God, and setting him before us: It is so if we think upon him at *large*, but more especially if we Contemplate him as the *Supream Good*. This is a more immediate and direct remedy against all Sorrow; for Good is directly contrary to Evil, and the sense of Good will counterpoise the sense of Evil, if it be an equal Good; and if it be a greater, it will overcome and swallow it up, nay and leave some degrees of pure Happiness behind, so that the Man shall rather *enjoy* than *suffer*. But now 'tis impossible for a Man to represent God to his Thoughts as the Supream Good, as his proper End and Happiness, without a strong Sense of his Goodness and Perfection; he must in a great measure *taste* and *feel* that Good which he Contemplates, and even this Obscurer Vision of God is in some degree *Beatifick*. And what grief or sadness of Mind then is there which this strong Sense and Taste of God will not overcome, and which will not be quite dissolved, swallowed up and

lost in the Contemplation of the Supream Good? Upon which Considerations, well might the Psalmist say, *Psal. 77. 3. When I am in Heaviness, I will think upon God.* He might have thought upon his Royal Greatness, and the Pomp and Magnificence of his Court, or upon his Riches, or upon his Friends, or upon his Victories and Triumphs; or if none of those would do, he might have taken his Harp into his Hand, and have driven away the Evil Spirit of Melancholy by Musick from himself, as he did before from *Saul*: But he had a better expedient than all this, *When I am in Heaviness, I will think upon God.*

NOR is this all; for should we not also upon the Strength of this Consideration, despise and disrelish all those vain Pleasures which betray us into Sin? Should we not be above the Temptations of ether Honour, Pleasure or Profit? Should we not be secure from that Foolish Exchange which those that pass for the Wisest among us frequently make, I mean that of gaining the World, and losing one's own Soul? Lastly, should we not endeavour by all Means possible to qualify our selves for the blessed Enjoyment of this Supream Good, and in order to that, to cleanse our selves from all Filthiness both of Flesh and Spirit, and to Purifie our selves as he is Pure? Yes, we should; the Love of God would easily constrain us to all this, and the serious application of our Minds to the Infinity of the Divine Perfection, would as easily constrain us to the Love of God.

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AND so much for the advantages of setting God always before us as the *Supream Good*; let us now consider in the Second Place how we may be advantaged by setting him before us as a *Pattern*. We all know and feel the great force and power of *Example*, and how naturally disposed Men are to Imitation, and that we are much the better or the worse for those with whom we *Converse*: And there is this great difference between *Example* and a *Rule*, that a *Rule* only directs, but *Example* does also incline; a *Rule* instructs the Judgment, but *Example* moves and reconciles the Affections; the former shews us the right Point to which we are to steer, but the latter supplies us also with Wind and Sail. And there is no reason to doubt, but that the *Example* of God would be as prevailing with us, as any other, and much more, (as being of infinitely greater Authority,) if we did but equally propose him to our imitation, and set him before us as a *Pattern*. Can then a Man consider the Universal *Sanctity* of the Divine Nature, and not find himself strongly inclined to work over anew the defaced Image of his Creator, and to be Holy as he is Holy? St. *John* assigns this for a Reason why we shall be like God hereafter, because we shall see him as he is; *We shall be like him*, says he, *for we shall see him as he is*. And if the clear and open Vision of God will so far assimilate us, as to make us perfectly conformable to him, certainly the Contemplation of his Moral Perfections, though through a Glass darkly,

darkly, must needs inspire us with Desires and Endeavours to be like him. Is it then possible for a Man seriously and constantly to contemplate the Infinite *Love*, Bounty and Goodness of God, and either be ungrateful to *him*, or uncharitable to his *Neighbour*, to be selfish and strait-laced, niggardly and covetous, reserved and uncommunicative? Much less can he be Envious and Spiteful, Cruel and Unmerciful, and delight in Barbarity and doing Mischief, it would be a Miracle if he should. The Psalmist thought it so, and therefore says he, *Psal 52. 1. Why Boastest thou thy self thou Tyrant, that thou canst do Mischief, whereas the Goodness of God endureth yet daily?* He thought it strange that any Man should value himself for being able to do Mischief, when God thought it his Glory to do Good: He might have reprov'd his Folly and Wickedness from the very nature of the thing, by laying open the great unreasonableness of it, but he chose rather to convince him of the strangeness and absurdity of such a temper, from the Consideration of the *Divine Goodness*.

WHICH before I leave, I shall mention one more very excellent advantage which it has in the Practice of Religion, in that it is apt to remove from us all servile fear, and to inspirit us with a generous and ingenuous Principle of serving God. For all Slavish and Superstitious Fears of God proceed from a wrong Notion of him; we Fear him, and are Jealous of him, because we mis-

misapprehend him; and we misapprehend him, because we do not sufficiently contemplate him. The way therefore to be afraid of him less, is to be more Conversant, and better acquainted with him. When the Disciples saw Jesus walking upon the Sea, and knew not who it was, they were scared with the Appearance; and therefore our Lord to take of their Fear, only made himself better known to them. *It is I,* says he, *be not afraid.* 'Twas enough to dismiss their Fears to let them know who he was. Nor need we at any time any other Remedy against servile Apprehensions, and disingenuous Fears of God, than barely to contemplate the Goodness and Benignity of his Nature expressed in those two Emphatical Descriptions given of him in Scripture, *God is Love* and *God is Light.*

AND thus 'twere easie to give instances throughout all the other Moral Perfections of God; but I shall insist only upon one more, as being more particularly fit and useful to be considered in the Age we now live in. Can then a Man duly contemplate the *Truth* and *Sincerity* of God, how candid, open and ingenious he is in his dealings with the Sons of Men, and how far removed from all Tricks, Juggles and Deceits, and that he can no more deceive, than he can be deceived? Can a Man I say consider this, consider it well, and be a *Hypocrite*? And that not only in an instance or two, but in a long series of Action; not only for a few Hours
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or Days, but for a course of several Years; not only in the common concerns of Life, but in the most sacred of all things, and where we owe the greatest Plainness and Sincerity both to God and Man, *Religion?* Is Charity it self able to believe that such a Mysterious Intricate Sinner as this, has made the Sincerity and Truth of God any part of his Meditations? No, I fear if the truth were known, such a one would be too much concerned in that Charge, wherewith the Psalmist taxes the Proud Man, that *God is not in all his Thoughts*, *Psal. 10.* that he does not think of him at all, or else that he has a wrong Notion of him, and takes him to be altogether such a one as himself: But let such a one know, that God will reprove him, and set before him the things which he has done; for God does not only give us a Pattern of Truth and Sincerity, but does also strictly observe whether we follow it or no: Which leads me to consider in the last place, the advantage of setting God always before us as an *Observer*.

'Tis most certain whether we will consider it or no, that God is every where Essentially and Substantially Present, and that as there is no Place that *includes* him, so there is none that *excludes* him; a notion of God so very natural, that even the *Jews*, as Gross and Unmetaphysical as they were, could not but embrace it. Which was the occasion of that Custom of theirs in their Sacrifices, (taken notice of by Dr. *Outram*
out

De Sacrificiis.
Lib. 1. Page
162.

out of *Maimonides*,) of waving the Victim towards the Six Parts of the World, upwards and downwards, East, West, North and South, whereby to express the Consecration of the Sacrifice to God as every where Present, and possessing all Places.

'TIS also most certain, whether we will consider it or no, that God sees and knows all things, and that (as the Author to the *Hebrews* expresses it, *Heb. 4. 13.*) there is no Creature that is not manifest in his Sight, and that all things are naked and open to the Eyes of him with whom we have to do. This we have most magnificently described by the Psalmist in the 139th Psalm, *O Lord, thou hast searched me out, and known me; thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising, thou understandest my Thoughts long before. Thou art about my Path, and about my Bed, and spiest all my ways: For lo there is not a word in my Tongue, but thou, O Lord, knowest altogether. And again, whither shall I go then from thy Spirit, or whither shall I go then from thy Presence? If I climb up into Heaven, thou art there, if I go down to Hell thou art there also. If I take the Wings of the Morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the Sea, even there also shall thy Hand lead me, and thy right Hand shall hold me. If I say peradventure the Darkness shall cover me, then shall my Night be turned into Day. Yea, the Darkness is no Darkness with thee, but the Night is as clear as the Day, the Darknefs and Light to thee are both alike.*

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WHY now this we all know, and if formally put to the Question, shall be ready to confess it; for I am willing to suppose, that there are scarce any that are either Ignorant, or impudent enough to say with the Atheistical Person in *Job*, *How does God know, can he judge through the dark Cloud? Thick Clouds are a Covering to him that he sees not, and he walketh in the Circuit of Heaven, Job 22. 13.* No, we know the contrary well enough, that God is present every where, and sees and knows every thing, but the Misery of it is, we don't consider it; and 'tis for want of actually thinking upon what we habitually know, that the World is ruined. 'Tis this that makes so great a difference between the Behaviour and Conversation of one Man and another. All believe Omnipresence and Omniscience to be Perfections belonging to the Infinity of the Divine Essence; but one maintains actual Thoughts and Recollections of this, and another does not; one has it lying dormant in him, as a general Notion or Theory, which he can talk and discourse of now and then when occasion is offered, and the other has it always actually present before him in its full Light and Conviction. Whence it comes to pass, that though both agree in the general belief of the Article, yet because one attends to it, and the other does not, the way of their Conversation is altogether different, and one lives as an *Angel*, and the other as a *Devil*.

FOR

FOR indeed were this one Consideration sufficiently heeded and attended to, it were enough of it self to regulate the conduct of Mens Actions, and to reduce the whole World into a truer order and axactness of Living. There are indeed many excellent Methods of obtaining Vertuous and Religious Dispositions of Mind, and of Improvement in them, but none that I can think of so advantagious as this; That which comes nearest to it, is the *Meditation of Death*; but indeed this comes too near to be reckoned as another, it being rather a further instance and improvement of the same. For the Meditation of Death is only so far influential upon our Lives, as 'tis a nearer and stricter way of considering the *Divine Presence*, before which we shall be more immediately presented by Death, so that the Meditation of Death, (as far as it has any influence upon good Living,) is comprehended under the Consideration of the Divine Presence, as a Particular under a General; as indeed whatever is good in any other method of Holy Living, is after a manner Comprehended in this, which of all others is the most Comprehensive and Compendious. Which was the ground of that Admonition of God to *Abraham*, *I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou Perfect*: *Gen. 17.* Where he supposes such a Connexion between the constant Attention to the Divine Presence and Perfection, that to attain the latter, a Man need only practice the former. God in giving *Abraham* this Direction for

a Holy and a Perfect Life, gave him *all*; for this single Exercise of Meditating upon the Presence of God, will either incline a Man both to the Desire and to the Practice of all other Spiritual methods and helps of Holy Living, or else it will supply the room of them. So that if a Man who desires to advance in Spiritual Life, should happen to forget any of the other methods of the Spirit, let him only remember this one, and duly use and exercise it, and he shall either by this bring the rest to his Mind, or find no necessity of so doing. This therefore may well be reckoned as the Head and Chief of all Spiritual Exercises; for indeed this one Exercise draws such a train of advantages after it, as by the assistance of Divine Grace will be sufficient to perfect the Man of God, and complete the Christian.

BUT to be a little more distinct, the advantageousness of this Practice may appear in a double respect.

FIRST, As it is a general Counter-charm against all Sin.

SECONDLY, as it is a general Incitement to all that is good.

FIRST, *It is a general Counter-charm against all Sin*; for as Sin in its formality is an Aversion from God, so the cause of all Sin does at last resolve into Forgetfulness of him, and a Non-consideration of his Presence and Inspection: There is an Aversion from him in our Understandings, before there is any in our Wills, and

and the latter is the effect of the former. The Scripture represents *Cain* as going out from the Presence of God, *Gen. 4. 16.* after he had sinned; but 'tis as true also that he went out *before*; for had he not first cast off the thoughts of God's Presence, 'tis impossible that he should have sinned. And the same may truly be said of all other Sinners, they first depart from God in their Thoughts, and then in their Actions: First forget *his Presence*, and then their *own Duty*: For can we conceive any Man so stupid and hardy as to commit Sin, when at the same time he actually reflects upon a Being of Infinite Holiness, Power and Justice, looking upon him, and upon what he does? Could we suppose God to appear visibly to us when we were in Private, this we must needs grant would strike us with Serious and Reverent Apprehensions, and that we should stand in awe, and not Sin, though in the very heat and full Career of a Temptation. And why should not *God's seeing us*, have the same Influence upon us, as *Our seeing God*? Without question it would, and a great deal more, if we had but the same lively sense of it, and were equally awake and attentive to it; for we see that infinitely less than this will restrain us from Sin; the Eye of the World, nay of one single Person, though an Inferior, though a Slave, though a Fool, though a Child: Nay, even the very Eye of the *Sun*, which very often puts the Sinner out of Countenance, and makes him defer his Folly till the Shades of Night. And

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shall not the Presence of the Great God be as prevalent with us as any of these, especially considering that no Creature can be so inwardly present with us as the Creator is, and that no Observation is of such Importance and Consequence as his? Shall not then his Presence and Inspection be as much a Preservative against Sin, as the Presence of a Man? Without doubt it would, and infinitely more, did we but equally consider it; it would then secure us not only from Sin, but even from *Temptation* too, and keep us out of *Danger* as well as in *Innocence*. For how can he be tempted to Sin, who dwells always in the Presence of his Creator and Judge? Why are the Angels and the Souls of Just Men made Perfect, secure from the danger of Sinning, but only because they are always in the open Presence of God, and dwell in the Light of his Countenance? This is their great Preservative *above*, and the same, if well attended to, would be a Preservative to us *below*. The Perseverance of the Angels in Heaven is owing to their always beholding the Presence of God there; and and if we could do the same here in proportion, that is, if our *Contemplation* were but as actual, steady, and uninterrupted as their *Vision*, we should be as Confirmed and Established as they. In short, notwithstanding the great Corruption of our Nature, and our Proneness to Evil, we need no other Guard, either against Sin or against Temptation, than these Three Words well considered, *God is Present*.

BUT

BUT there is One particular Sin to which this Consideration is utterly irreconcilable, and against which it is a peculiar Antidote, and that is the Sin of *Hypocrisy*; this is a Sin which of all others proceeds most upon the Supposition of God's not being privy to our Thoughts and Intentions, and his not having a thorough Comprehensive Knowledge of all things: As the Fool says in his Heart there is no God, so the Hypocrite says in his Heart, that if there be, yet he is no Observer, as being neither Omnipresent, nor Omniscient: Which Attributes of God whoever seriously Contemplates, must needs have his Antidote against this Vice. For to what purpose should a Man play the *Hypocrite* before him, who can discern the Fraud and Rottenness of the Proud Pharisee under his *broad Phylactery*, and the ravenous Covetousness of the Precise Sectary under his *long Prayer*? No, as the Hypocrite takes care to avoid open Immoralities, because they are visible to the Eye of the *World*; so, had he a due Sense of the Divine Presence and Observation, he would be every whit as careful to be without all inward Impurities, because they are visible to the Eye of *God*. But,

SECONDLY, *This Practice is also a general Incitement to all that is good*: As the Supposition of God's Omnipresence and Omniscience is the Foundation of all Religion; (for to what purpose should we make Religious Addresses to a Being that is either afar off, or unconscious of our Behaviour towards him,) so the constant

and actual Impression of it, would greatly promote the Practice of all Religion, *Walk before me, and be thou Perfect*: How can he be Perfect that does not walk with and before God, and how can he be otherwise that does? the actual Thoughts of the presence of God is the very Life and Spirit of all Religion, without which, we should be quickly weary of Well-doing, and with which, we shall be so far from flagging in our Duty, that we shall be always endeavouring to do better and better, that so we may the more approve our Selves and our Actions to our All-present and All-seeing Judge. This was the Principle into which *David* resolved all the Perfection and Integrity of his Obedience, that he acted as in the Sight and Presence of his Judge. *I have kept thy Commandments and Testimonies, for all my Ways are before thee, Psalm 119.* And no doubt if we acted by the same Principle, we should live with the same exactness; if we lived under a constant sense of the Presence of God as he did, we should also with him have respect to all his Commandments. When the Glorious Presence of God appeared to the *Israelites* upon *Mount Sinai*, we find that they were so sensibly affected with that terrible Sight, as to take up earnest Resolutions of Obedience: for *all the People answered Moses*, reporting the Words of God to them, *with one Voice, and said, All the Words which the Lord hath said will we do.* And as long as this Presence of God continued, we don't find but that they were very Orderly and Obedient, and contained themselves within those Boundaries which *Moses* by Divine Order

Order had had set about the Mount: And there is no question to be made, but that if they could still have maintained a fresh and lively Idea of this great Presence in their Minds, they would also have retained the same obedient Temper of Spirit, and would have contained themselves within all *other* Bounds of God's setting, as well as those of *Mount Sinai*; their Heart would have been whole with him, and they would have continued stedfast in his Covenant. We may therefore, and without Censure conclude, that those who take liberty to break through the Bounds which God has set, by transgressing those excellent Laws which he has given for the good Order and happy Being of Mankind, are not duly sensible of the Divine Presence and Observation: They may know it indeed Habitually as a meer Point of Speculation, but they do not actually weigh and consider it, and have reason to say in the Words of the Patriarch when awakened from Sleep, *Surely God was in this Place, and I knew it not, Gen. 28.*

AND now since the Spiritual Advantages of setting God always before us are so great and so many, I think I need use no other Perswasive to recommend this excellent Expedient of Holy Living to our constant Practice: In all other things we love the most Compendious Methods, and to make use of such Means as lead most directly and by the shortest Line to the End we aim at. And why should we not follow the same Method in the Practice of a Religious

P 3

Life,

Life, the difficulty and consequence of which is enough to engage us to seek out for the best and most forwarding Assistances? Now this certainly of all others will deserve that Character, being the most general Instrument of Perfection, and consequently the most Compendious way to it. Let us then be persuaded to make use of it, by setting God always before us, and having him always in our Thoughts, especially under this Threefold Consideration, as the *Supream Good*, as a *Pattern*, and as an *Observer*; so shall we have a perpetual encouragement to do well, and a sufficient Counterpoise against all Temptations. And God grant we may so set him always before us here, that we may not be afraid to appear before him hereafter. *Amen*

A
DISCOURSE
 CONCERNING THE
Doing God's Will on Earth, as
it is in Heaven.

MAT. VI. 10.

*Thy Will be done in Earth, as it is in
 Heaven.*



O our Blessed Lord bids us to Pray, who came to be the Promoter of *Holiness*, as well as to be the Author of our *Faith*, and to Reform the World as well as to redeem it. Now as 'tis the Perfection of the Natural World to be Conformable to the *Understanding* of God, those Immutable Ideal Representations which are in the Divine Mind, so is it the Perfection of the Moral World to be Conformable to his *Will*; and in both these, the Second Person of the Sacred Trinity, the *Eternal Word*, St. *John* tells us, that *all things were made by him, or according to him, si iurē, and without him was not any thing made that*

was made. And St. Paul, 1 Col. 16. 17. that by him were all things Created that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth; and that by him all things consist. Again 'tis said, Heb. 1. 2, 10. by whom also he made the Worlds. And again, *Thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the Foundation of the Earth, and the Heavens are the Works of thy Hands.*

THEN as to the perfecting the frame of the Moral World, as 'twas his Meat and Drink to do the Will of his Father himself, so was it his Principal Business, and the Main of his Undertaking, to repair the Ruins of Morality, to enlarge the Bounds of his Father's Kingdom, to make others conformable to the Divine Will, and Partakers of the Divine Nature; which in part has already taken effect, and of which (as we are told,) we are yet to expect a further Accomplishment under his Glorious Millennial Reign, when Righteousness shall flourish and be exalted, and the Will of God be done on Earth to a very near degree as it is in Heaven.

To this end serves the great Mystery of Goodness, that Grace of God which has appeared to the World, teaching us, 2 Tit. 11. that denying Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, we should live Soberly, Righteously and Godlily in this present World; the Covenant of Grace being so ordered and contrived, that our Duty is secured, as well as our Infirmary and Necessity relieved, and our Repentance is only made effectual by the satisfaction of Christ, not unnecessary. To this End he gave us a new System of

of Christian Morals, which though no addition to the Eternal Law of Nature and right Reason, was yet a great Improvement of that of *Moses*. And he took care also to second his excellent Precepts by as excellent an Example, that they might appear to be Practicable as well as Reasonable.

AND here because Example has the greater Influence of the Two, he not only gave us an absolute one of his own, and exhorted us to the imitation of it, when he said, *Learn of me*, but also remits us to the excellent Example of the Angels, those ready Performers of God's Will, and winged Ministers of his Pleasure, in that he bids us Pray, *Thy Will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven.*

THAT God's Will is done in Heaven, is here supposed; we are therefore further concerned only to inquire.

1. OF what Will of God our Lord is to be here understood?
2. BY whom it is done in Heaven?
3. AFTER what manner it is there done?
4. HOW far we are concerned to imitate this great Pattern of Obedience?
5. HOW reasonable it is for us to do so?

AND First by *Will* here, our Lord cannot be supposed to mean that which is a Faculty in the Divine Essence, or rather the very Essence it self; for how may we Pray that that should be done, which Eternally and Necessarily is? Neither by *Will* here are we to understand the Act of Willing, for this can no more properly be

be said to be *done* than the other; but that Will, for the doing of which we here Pray, is the *Res Volita*, or the Object of the Divine Will: But then this is Two-fold, either the Object of his Will Decreeing, or the Object of his Will Commanding; or to word it according to the ordinary distinction, the Will of his Decrees, or the Will of his Commands: And 'tis generally held that both these are to be here understood.

BUT I must confess it does not appear to me how the Will of God's Decrees can be at all here concerned, any further than as our Submission to it is a part of the Will of his Commands, for not to insist upon the necessary and uncontrollable accomplishment of God's Decrees, and that things necessary and certain are not so proper Objects of Prayer, I only observe that this Will of God is here desired to be done in Earth as it is in Heaven; which supposes it to be more perfectly performed in the one than in the other; the latter being proposed as a Pattern, and Precedent to the former. But now, as God is in all Places equally Almighty, so are his Decrees in all Places alike performed, in Earth as well as in Heaven, according to that of the Psalmist, *Psal. 135. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in Heaven and in Earth, and in the Sea, and in all deep Places*; this therefore cannot be meant of the Will of God's Decrees, any further than as 'tis a part of the Will of his Commands that we should submit to them, and acquiesce in them.

Neither

Neither indeed can this be directly and strictly intended, but only by way of *Proportion*, that as the whole Will of God, which is capable of being done in Heaven, is there done; so all that is capable of being done on Earth, should in like manner be there done. But I say it cannot be directly intended, there being no Afflictive Dispensations of Providence incident to those who do God's Will in Heaven, and consequently no room for the Exercise of Patience and Submission; as will further appear by considering the Second Inquiry, namely, by whom it is that this Will of God is done in Heaven.

AND this indeed is of no great Difficulty to resolve, since the nature of the Will does of it self point out to the Doers of it; for it being the Will of God's *Commands*, it can no more be done by God, than 'tis possible for God to obey himself. Nor can it be done by the Celestial Bodies; for however these in a large and improper sense are sometimes said to obey God, as when the Psalmist says, that the Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his Handywork; and that Wind and Storm fulfil his Word, and the like: Yet being necessary Agents, they cannot yield any Moral and Acceptable Obedience; much less in such an eminent and exemplary manner as to be a Pattern to us, which yet is here supposed. And yet they will be every whit as capable of this Obedience as we are, if we be not *free Agents*; which by the way I leave to be considered by those who deny that Privilege to
Human

Human Nature. It remains therefore that the Holy Angels are they that do this Will of God in Heaven; none else are capable of doing it, and of these the Psalmist says expressly, that *they fulfill his Commandment, and hearken to the Voice of his Word, Psalm 103.*

PROCEED we therefore to the next Inquiry, namely, after what manner this Will of God is done by the Holy Angels in Heaven; that they do it after a very perfect and excellent manner, far exceeding the highest Measures of Mortality, is here implied, in that they are proposed and commended to us as Patterns, and might be further concluded from the Perfection of their Natures and Faculties, which we cannot but suppose to be very extraordinary, since the excellency of our future condition is summ'd up in this short Description, that we shall be *like unto the Angels, Luke 20. 36.*

BUT waving this Consideration taken from the Powers and Faculties of Angels, as somewhat too Nice and Metaphysical for a Practical Discourse. I shall chuse rather to represent the great Excellency wherewith they perform the Will of God from Two Collateral Considerations.

FIRST, The Impediments they are free from.

SECONDLY, The positive Advantages they enjoy.

AND First, as to the impediments they are free from: 'Tis the great disadvantage of all Human Spirits in this Station, as well as the Complaint of some, that they are united with Bodies

dies that are not proportioned to the Native Excellency and Activity of their Natures; for indeed the Soul has made an ill Match, Married very much beneath her self, and has met with a Clog instead of a Companion, one that is too weak to obey her Dictates and Motions, and too strong to be governed; that cannot follow, and that will not be lead; that sticks too close to her to be shaken off, and yet is too loose from her to be well managed: Such an untractable ill-suited Consort as this must needs be a constant incumbrance to the Soul, even in her Natural, but much more in her Moral and Spiritual Operations, because here the Consort has contrary Inclinations; so that the Soul is put to encounter not only with her ordinary weight, but with an Opposite Law, even the *Law of the Members* which wars against the Law of the Mind, and brings us into Captivity to the Law of Sin, *Rom. 7. 23.*

NEITHER is this all, for we are not only cumbered with a weight of Flesh, and depressed by its low tendencies and propensions; but our Body, which at best is but in an ill disposition for the Operations of the Rational and Divine Life, is often discomposed and made worse by *Sickness*, and then the Soul is forced to sympathize and condole with her ill suited Companion, and either not to act at all, or to perform her Part upon an ill-tuned Instrument: And he that is blessed with the strongest and most tunable Constitution, and enjoys the most vigorous Health, has yet a great many necessities of Nature to serve, that will take up much of his Thoughts

Thoughts and much of his Time; so that he can't chuse but be *troubled about many things*, things below the concernment of a Rational Being, and that, though he has chosen the *Better Part*, and is so well convinced of his true Interest, as to acknowledge only *one thing* to be *needful*.

ADD to all this, that we breath in an infected Air, live in an ill World, where every Object almost is a Temptation, and have a Devil to tempt and seduce us; one who makes it his proper and profest business to cross the Ends of God, to disturb the Moral Harmony of the Universe, and to hinder the symphony and agreement of the Two Worlds, that so God's Will may not be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven; And with these Disadvantages no wonder that it is not.

BUT now the Holy Angels have none of these impediments; they have either no Bodies, or such as no way incommode or retard, but rather help and further their Faculties; for they are in the full height and last perfection of their Natures, and consequently must not be supposed to have the least degree of any of their Natural Perfections detained or held back from exerting it self by any Clog or Impediment; there being no reason imaginable why they should be invested with any degree of Power which must never be brought into Act, as it never must be if not at present, they being now supposed to be in the last Perfection of their
Natures.

Natures. They must be therefore conceived in this respect, to act like *necessary Agents* to the full and to the utmost of their natural Strength, and to have nothing in them that is not put forth as far as possibly can be. And besides, the Scripture always speaks of them under the denomination of *Spirits*, without making mention of any Bodies belonging to them; which must needs imply, that either they are all Pure Minds, (as the *Platonists* say of the highest Order,) or if they have Bodies, they are of so refined and clarified a Mould, so nigh to an Immaterial Substance, that *Spirit* might serve as a common word for both. They have therefore no weight or load upon their Faculties, nothing to dead or slacken the *Spring* of their Nature, no Concupiscence to darken their Understandings, or to pervert their Wills; no Indisposition, Languor or Weariness occasioned through crazy and sickly Vehicles, but are always Fresh, Vigorous and Bright, like the life and quickness of the Morning, and joyce like the Sun to run their Course. They have no Necessities to relieve or provide for, no impertinet Avocations to call them off from their noble Exercises, no ill Company to debauch them, no Devil to tempt and insnare them, and therefore must needs act with a full display of their Faculties, and be carried out incessantly and intirely toward the Supream Good, with their whole bent and energy, as a Stone would tend toward the Center through an *unresisting Medium*.

BUT

BUT this will further appear by considering Secondly the positive advantages which they enjoy: Their great advantage is, that they have a constant and clear Vision of the Essence of the great God. Now I consider that the Essence of God is the very Essence of Goodness, *Deus est bonitas*, as the Divine Philosopher fitly calls him; whereupon I conceive that an Angel seeing God after this Essential manner, must have the same Habitude and Disposition to him, as one that does not thus see God has to the common Nature of Good. But now 'tis impossible that a Man should either will or act any thing without attending to good in common, and without proposing that as his aim: And accordingly 'tis as impossible that the Blessed Angels should will or act any thing without attending to God, and making him their End as long as they have this Essential Vision of him; and of this they are never deprived, for our Lord says of them, that they always behold the Face of his Father which is in Heaven, *Mat. 18. 10.* This he speaks of the *Missionary* Angels that have the Charge and Office of Guardians here upon Earth, that even *they* notwithstanding their Employment here, have a consistent view of the Divine Essence, and are never interrupted in their Beatifick Vision; much more then is this true of the *Stationary* Angels that weight upon the Throne of God, the *Residentiaries* of Heaven. Whence it further follows, that 'tis impossible they should ever
Sin,

Sin; or do any thing contrary to the Divine Nature or Will. For the Essence of God being supposed to be the same to them that good in general is to us, the Vision of it must needs wholly ingage and constantly retain all their Powers and Faculties; (for we can never will any thing out of the Sphere of Good in general,) communicate a kind of Deiform Habit to their Natures, and render them in all things exactly conformable to the Divine Will. And accordingly the Apostle derives our future likeness and conformity to God from our Vision of him; *We shall be like him, says he, for we shall see him as he is,* 1 John 3. 2.

THIS shall be our Felicity hereafter; but it is the Privilege of the Blessed Angels to enjoy it now, and therefore by the strength of the same Argument it must be supposed that they are as like God as the clearest Vision of him can make them; that is, as like him as finite can be like infinite, as a Creature can be like its Creator. That they are exactly conformable to the Perfections of that Adorable Excellence which they behold, that they love what he loves, and hate what he hates, and that in all things they perform his Will and Pleasure in a more excellent manner than such imperfect *Thinkers* as we are, can either conceive or describe.

THUS in general; but now for a more particular account of the excellent manner of their Doing the Will of God in Heaven, we are to consider.

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FIRST

FIRST, That they do it with full *Readiness* and *Alacrity*: 'Tis the necessary as well as unhappy Appendage of our Mortal frame, even in its best condition, to act with a mix'd Consent and a divided Choice: Sin indeed we sometimes do with a full and thorough Consent, without any renitencies to the contrary side; but our resolutions to Good are mixt and imperfect; for the most part we do not go so far, but 'tis our highest Atchievement to conquer and prevail against the tendencies of the Animal part, not to be without them. And though after some uncertain Vibrations, the Scale does at length weigh down for Duty and Obedience, yet still there is some weight in the other Ballance, and the Motion, though Victorious, yet is not intire and unresisted. But now the Holy Angels being free from the Impediments of a contrary Principle, perform the Will of God with a full, intire and perfect Consent; they have no Demurs, or Disputings, no Reluctancies or Aversions, but at the first intimation approve and execute the Will of God with all the readiness and alacrity of an intire, pure and undivided Will. And accordingly in the Prophet *Isaiab's* Vision of God in his Glory, the Seraphim appeared with Six Wings, *Isa. 6. 2. With twain he covered his Face,* (the Text says) *with twain he covered his Feet, and with twain he did fly.* But to the Prophet *Ezekiel*, *Ezek. 10.* the Vision was enlarged, for to him the Cherubims were represented with Wings and Wheels, both of them being very significant and lively Symbols

Symbols of that eminent Alacrity and Agility wherewith the Holy Angels perform the Will of God.

THE *Jews* indeed have a Proverb, *That the Angel of Justice flies but with one Wing*; but hereby I conceive they intend only the slowness of God in issuing out Commissions of Vengeance, not that of the Angels in putting them in Execution: For they see the *Reason* of the Command as well as the *Letter* of it; or if not, yet the clear Vision they have of the Divine Essence and Perfections, will not suffer them to doubt of the Equity and Reasonableness of all his Injunctions, as being well assured that nothing but what is highly Reasonable can be the result of Infinite Wisdom and Goodness: So that they are as well satisfied with the Decrees of Vengeance, as with the milder Emanations of his Love, and perform them both with equal Chearfulness. Thus we see the Angel who was Commissioned to keep laps'd Man out of Paradise with his Flaming Sword, betook himself as readily to the ungrateful Office, as he that was to carry the welcome Tidings of Man's Redemption to the Shepherds, and to sing Glory to God on high, on Earth Peace and Good Will towards Men. And I question not but that those Sons of God which shouted for joy at the laying the Foundations of this great Fabrick, will hereafter upon the Signal given, be full as ready to assist to its Destruction and Fiery Dissolution. But we are upon the same Grounds to consider,

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SECONDLY,

SECONDLY, That their Obedience is *Uniform* and *Universal* as well as ready and chearful, and that they have an equal respect to all the Commands of God. Upon the same Principle that they are Ready and Chearful, they are also *Uniform* and *Universal* in their Obedience; for the reason why they Obey chearfully, is either because they are Convinced of the particular Equity and Reasonableness of the Law, or because they are convinced of the unerring Wisdom of the Law-giver, whom they know they may safely rely upon by an *implicit Confidence*, though they should not be able to account in particular for the Reason of what he Commands. And the same will be a sufficient satisfaction why they should obey him *Universally*, since every Precept either carries its own Evidence and Reason with it, or what is as good, an Inducement to Obedience, the undeceivable Reason of him that gives it. This is the Principle of *Believing* all that God *Reveals*, Mysteries as well as intelligible Articles, and the same is the Principle of Obeying all that God *Commands*. And wherever there is a clear Conviction of this, there *Obedience* must needs be as *Universal* as *Faith*, as having the same Grounds and Inducements: And there being no reason to question but that there is the highest Conviction of this in the Minds of Angels, we may proceed to consider.

THIRDLY, With what *Constancy* they perform the Divine Will: They obey with *Constancy*,

stancy, not only as 'tis opposed to final Cessation, but as 'tis opposed to the least Interruption. The highest Perseverance we can pretend to in this Region of Inconstancy, is not to fall off totally or finally; nor are we sure of so much as that. But to maintain a steady Course of Obedience without the least interruption, is beyond the measures of Flesh and Blood. But now the Holy Angels are not only secure from either total or final Apostacy, but even from the least abatements or interruptions of Duty; for the Excellence which they Contemplate is always the same, and so also is the manner of their Contemplating it. They Contemplate the Face of God as the Philosopher says of the Supreme Intelligencies, *'Αει ἔ, ἀσύντως, always and alike*, and consequently cannot but love and adore him with a constant and uninterrupted Flame of Devotion, the Glorious Essence of God being the same to them that the common Nature of Good is to us, as was observed before: To which there is this further Advantage to be added, that their Understandings are never under an *Eclipse*, no not so much as in part; but as they always receive equal Illumination from God, so do they shine upon their Wills with an equal Light; and consequently they must needs stand always equally affected and disposed to what is good, as appearing to them always in a Light equally advantageous. For the variety and changeableness of our Wills proceed from the variety of our Judgments;

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and

and were our Thoughts and Apprehensions of things always uniform, our Actions would be so too; for we always act as for that instant we think. This therefore being the happy condition of Angels, to have the Eye of their Understanding always equally awake, and in full Illumination, there must needs be also a constant Regularity in their Wills. The short is, as long as they Contemplate the Divine Essence, they cannot divert aside to any thing irregular, because of the Superlative Excellence of the Divine Good, which fills and wholly engages the Faculties; and for the same reason they cannot chuse but for ever to Contemplate. And herein I suppose must be placed that happy *Necessity* the Holy Angels are under, of doing the Will of God, and of persevering in it to all Eternity; and that this is that which we mean, when we say they are *Confirmed* in good.

BUT leaving these Flaming Excellencies a while to their Happy and Noble Employments, before we go further, let us see how these Speculations may be improved to the benefit of our Practice: And First, since God has made his Angels such excellent and accomplished Creatures, let us make the same use of it that the Psalmist did when he took from hence an occasion of Praise and Thanksgiving, *Praise the Lord O my Soul*, says he, and then mentioning some Characters of his Greatness, he adds, *Psal.* 104. 4. *He makes his Angels Spirits, and his Ministers a Flaming Fire.* Indeed the Angels are the greatest *Occasions* as well as *Instruments* of Praise,
as

as being the Noblest part of the Divine Workmanship; *Eccl. 43. 11. Look upon the Rain-bow, and Praise him that made it,* says the Son of *Sirach*: and if God is to be Praised for the Beauty of the Rain-bow, caused only by various Reflections and Refractions of the Globules of the Second Element in their passage through a Cloud, how much more is he to be adored for these great Master-pieces of his Art, these Closet-Draughts of his Beauty.

SECONDLY, We may take a Caution hence to beware of that *Voluntary Humility* which the Apostle speaks of; and where he now alive would have fresh Occasion given him to Condemn, in Worshipping Angels; take heed to thy self, lest when thou liftest up thine Eyes to Heaven, and seest the Sun, and the Moon, and the Stars, even all the Host of Heaven, thou shouldest be driven to Worship them, says *Moses* to the People of *Israel*: *Deut. 4. 19.* And there is the same and greater danger here, when we Contemplate the Glory of this other Heavenly Host; for however through Envy or Emulation we usually lessen and disparage one anothers Excellencies, yet when we have to do with Creatures of another rank and order, we are apt to be guilty of the opposite extream, and to exchange *Detraction* for *Idolatry*.

THIRDLY, We have here a most excellent Antidote against *Pride*, which is a littleness of Mind that arises from our Ignorance of the World about us, as well as of our Selves; and consequent-

ly is best Cured by considering what Excellencies there are above us. The Young Home-bred Heir that thinks his Fathers Mannour a considerable part of the World, is sent abroad to see more of it, and returns Home Cured by his Travels. And would the Man that swells and looks big upon his Parts or Learning, but bestow a Thought or Two upon the Perfections of *Angels*, I dare warrant him his Plumes will quickly fall, and that he will never find in his Heart to set up for a Wit more: For alas, what are we to the Angels? Hereafter indeed 'tis to be hoped that some of us may be made like them; but what are we in Comparifon now? They excel us more than we do the Beasts of the Field, and we need nothing else but this one Consideration well thought upon to convince us, That *Pride was not made for Man*.

FOURTHLY, We may learn hence so to fear the Devil, as to look upon him as a considerable Adversary, and not to be too secure in our best Condition, for he is an Angel still, and we know not what he has lost by his Fall, besides that Grace and Goodness whereby he might be disposed to help and befriend us. And the Apostle tells us, that we still wrestle against Principalities and Powers: And therefore it concerns us to provide our selves accordingly, and as he there advises, to take unto us *the whole Armour of God, Ephes. 4.*

LASTLY, we should endeavour to imitate all the Moral and Imitable Excellencies of the good Angels;

Angels; our Saviour has made them our Pattern in his *Prayer*, and we should make them so in our *Lives*, by endeavouring to perform God's Will in Earth as it is in Heaven: Which calls upon me to return to the Fourth Enquiry, namely, How far we are concerned to imitate this Pattern of Obedience.

THAT our Imitation of it is in some Measure or other required, is most certain, otherwise our Lord would never have taught us to Pray that God's Will should be done on Earth as it is in Heaven; but how far, is the Question. In answer to which, I observe that the Obedience of the Angels may be considered either Intensively, or Extensively; or in other Words, either with respect to the Act, or with respect to the Object, which last may again be meant either of the kinds of Good, or of the several degrees in each kind.

THIS being premised, I answer, First, That we are not obliged to the *Intenseness* of Angelical Obedience; this I say we are not obliged to, because 'tis not among the *τα εφ' ημιν*, the things which are in our Power. This indeed will be part of our *Reward* hereafter, but it cannot be our *Duty* here; and therefore though we are to obey God readily and chearfully, yet 'tis not required we should do it with such a degree of Alacrity as excludes all imperfect motions to the contrary, 'Tis not required while we are a Compound of Flesh and Spirit, that the latter should be wholly free from the Solicitations of the former; 'tis sufficient

sufficient if it have the *Casting Voice*, and prevail in the Contention; and so much indeed is Duty. And therefore says the Psalmist, *He that now goes on his way weeping, and beareth forth good Seed, shall doubtless come again with Joy, and bring his Sheaves with him: Psa. 126.* He must bear forth good Seed, and if he does so, it shall be no Prejudice to him that he goes on his way weeping.

NEITHER are we obliged to serve God always with equal heights of Devotion, and with an uniform fervency of Mind; for besides that our Saviour himself, who led the most *Angelical* Life, Pray'd at some times *more earnestly* than at others; this depends in a great measure upon the various junctures of Circumstances, and the various Imperfections of Objects from without, and the different fineness and quickness of the Animal Spirits within, with many other Accidental Dispositions which are not in our Power. We are only accountable for the Motions of our *Wills*; and for ebbs and flows of Passion, no further than they are at the disposal of the other; and therefore if we Sail by a true Compass, and steer our Course to the right Point, we do our Duty, and are not Chargable for want of Gusty Blafts, and Swelling Sails, which are not in our Power to have.

THEN Secondly, as to the Extensiveness of Angelical Obedience, if this be considered in the First Sense, with respect to the *kinds* of Good, we are certainly oblig'd to have our Obedience as Extensive as theirs, being bound to obey the whole Will of God. For the sincerity of our Obedience can no otherwise be justified than by its Universality and Uniformity; Uniformity as to the *Object*,
though

though not as to the *Act*; and therefore 'tis that the Psalmist Prays, *O that my Ways were so direct that I might keep thy Statutes*; *Psal.* 119. so shall I not be confounded when I have respect unto all thy Commandments.

BUT if the Extensiveness of Angelical Obedience be considered in the latter Sense, with respect to the several *Degrees* in each kind of good, so we are not bound to come up to the Measures and Attainment of Angels, and that because 'tis beyond the Capacity of our present Condition. Nay, I think we are not strictly obliged under Pain of Sin, to attain to all the degrees of good which we possibly can, or always to do what is simply Best; for I think it plain from Scripture, that the Degrees of good admit of Council as well as Precept, and of Perfection as well as Duty: Much less therefore are we obliged to the full extensiveness of *Angelical Obedience* as thus consider'd: If we are not bound to *our* Best, much less to *their* Best.

BUT besides this way of considering the Extensiveness of the Angelical Obedience as to the kinds and degrees of Good, there is yet another, namely with respect to *Time* or *Continuance*; this is what we otherwise call their Perseverance or Constancy of Obedience: Now as to the Measures of our Obligation to this, we are to distinguish and consider the Gospel in a double Capacity, as a *Law*, and as a *Covenant*; if we consider it as a *Covenant*, then we are not obliged to a constant, and all the way a long continued Obedience. For 'tis not uninterrupted, but only final Perseverance that is the condition of the *Covenant*. But if we consider it as a *Law*, then we are not only obliged

obliged to a final, but to an uninterrupted Perseverance, that is, we are not only required to be found at our last *Exit* in a state of sincere Obedience, (which is the Condition of the Covenant,) but also to continue all the way in it: For every deliberate and voluntary interruption of it is Sin, and such as while unrepented of Will actually bring upon us Damnation.

HAVING thus in short stated the general Measure of our Conformity to the Angelical Pattern, which are also the Measures of our Evangelical Obedience, I come now lastly to consider how *Reasonable* it is that we should do thus; and certainly if any thing in the World be reasonable, 'tis that we should do the Will of God; for the *Will* of God is the *highest Reason*. Indeed were God an Arbitrary Humorsom Being, that loved to domineer over his Creatures, and to impose on them harsh and troublesome Commands only for his own Pleasure, and to shew his Authority; though even then we should justly owe him Homage and Obedience, yet there might be some pretence for disputing it, and making demurs about it. But God is so good and kind as to enjoin us nothing but what is pursuant of the End for which he Created us; that is, our Happiness and Perfection: So kind as to link our Duty and Interest together, and to make those very things the Instances of our Obedience, which are the natural Means, and necessary Causes of our Happiness: So that were we to contrive a way to make our Condition Happy, we could pitch upon no
better

better than what he has already prescribed to us in the Laws which he has given us. So highly consonant and agreeable are they to the frame of our Natures, and so absolutely necessary are they both to the order of this present World, and to the Happiness of the next. This might easily be demonstrated of every one of the Divine Commandments in particular; but that being too long an Undertaking for the close of a Discourse, I only consider that we have a certain ground to conclude what the Will of God must be in reference to us, by what he is in himself; for this is an evident Principle, That such as God himself is, such must be his Will, it being unconceivable that he should will any thing contrary to his Nature. But now we all take God to be a Being Essentially and Immutably Wise and Good, Holy, Just and True; and if these are Properties inseparable from the Nature of God (as all grant they are,) then the Will of God must also be Holy, Wise, Just, True and Good, and consequently highly fit and reasonable to be Obeyed.

BUT why, O God, do we want *Reason* to persuade us to do thy Will? Is it not enough that it is *Thine*? *Thine*, who art the great Creator and Governor of the World, and hast the highest right to be served by all the *Creatures*, and by all the *Powers* which thou hast made? *Thine*, who art the best and greatest Being, who art infinitely Wise, Holy, Just and True, and canst therefore

therefore command nothing but what is fo? *Thine*, who art above all capacity of addition to thy Happiness, and canst therefore propose no good but that of thy Creatures in the Laws that thou givest them? Why then do we inquire after the Reason of thy Will? It ought to satisfie us that it is *Thine*.

AND since this Will of God is done in Heaven, why should it not be done on Earth? Since the Blessed Angels who can discern the Reasons of things, even the *deep things* of God, and are infinitely better able to judge of the Reasonableness of Obedience than we are; since *they* are so ready and forward to pay it, why should *we* make any Question or any Delay about it? Since the great Heavenly Host, those Excellent Beings that excel both in Wisdom and Strength, acknowledge, and submit to the Government of God, why should we a little hand'ful of Rebels, stand out? Since the Will of God is done in *Heaven*, why is it not on *Earth*? Yes, it is done on Earth, for at his Commandment the Waters flow, and the Wind and Storm, fulfil his Word; only Man, disorderly Man, will not be Obedient though he has a *God* for his Maker, and *Angels* for his *President*,

BUT let as many of us as hope to be like Angels hereafter, study to be like them here; let us seriously and diligently endeavour to write after so fair a Copy, and set before us the Holy Angels as *Patterns*, as well as *Observers*,

vers, in all our Actions, which would certainly work more upon us, than that Expedient so much advised by a great Man, the imaginary presence of a *Cato* or a *Lalius*. Let us us make it our care as much as in us lies, by the *Angelical* Piety and Regularity of our Lives, to restore the Moral World to that Symphony and Uniform Harmony wherein God made it, and not only *Pray*, but also heartily *Endeavour* that the Will of the great God may be done here on Earth as it is in Heaven.

F I N I S.

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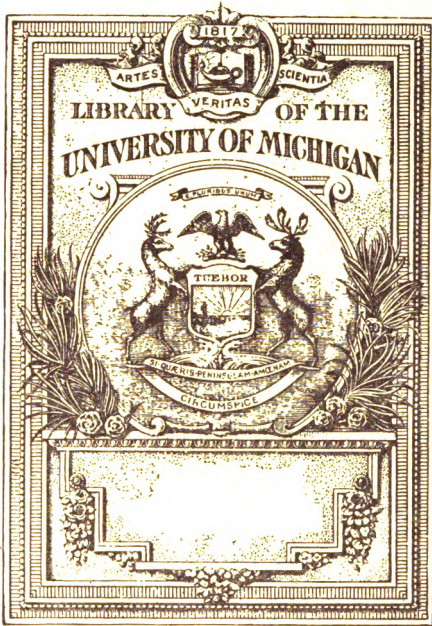
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