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A PRACTICAL (1)
TREATISE

O N

Christian Perfection.

Extracted from a late AUTHOR.

By JOHN WESLEY, M. A.
Fellow of LINCOLN COLLEGE, OXON.



NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE:

Printed by JOHN GOODING, on the *Side*,

Sold by R. AKENHEAD, on *Tyne-Bridge*, Newcastle;
by T. TRYE, at *Grey's Inn Gate*, Holbourn, at the
Foundery, near *Upper Moorfields*, London; and at the
New School in the *Horse Fair*, Bristol.. 1743.

[Price ONE SHILLING.]



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The Rev. Mr JOHN and CHARLES WESLEY,

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CHAPTER I.

O N

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

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

The Wants and Miseries of Human Nature, and the Vanity of Worldly Enjoyments, have made it difficult for the wisest Men to tell, what Human Happiness was, or wherein it consisted.

It has pleased the infinite Goodness of God to satisfy our Enquiries, by a Revelation made to the World by his SON JESUS CHRIST.

This Revelation has laid open the great Secrets of Providence from the Creation of the World. It has explain'd the present State of Things, and given Man all the Information that is necessary, both to give him Rest here, and to lead him safely to everlasting Happiness.

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

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

It gives us right Notions of ourselves, of our true Good and real Evil; it shews us our true Condition, both our Greatness and Meanness, our Happiness and Misery.

Before this, Man was a mere Riddle to himself, and his Condition full of Darkness and Perplexity; a restless Inhabitant of a miserable disorder'd World, *walking in a vain Shadow and disquieting himself in vain.*

But this Light has dispersed the Anxiety of his vain Conjectures. It has brought us acquainted with God,

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and by adding Heaven to Earth, and Eternity to Time, has opened such a glorious View of Things, as leads Men, even in this World, to a *Peace of God which passeth all Understanding.*

III. This Revelation acquaints us, that we have a Spirit within us, which was created after the Divine Image; that this Spirit is now in a fallen Condition; that the Body in which it is placed is its Sepulchre, where it is enslaved to fleshly Thoughts, blinded with false Notions of Good and Evil, and dead to all Taste of its true Happiness.

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

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

Devils also, and Evil Spirits have here their Residence, promoting the Works of Darkness, and wandering up and down, seeking whom they may devour.

So that Man, in his natural State, is like a Person sick of Variety of Diseases, knowing neither his Distempers nor his Cure, and inclosed in a Place where he can hear or see, or feel, or taste of nothing but what tends to enflame his Disorders.

IV. But Christianity puts an End to this State of Things, blots out all the Ideas of worldly Wisdom, brings the World itself to Ashes, and creates all anew. It calls Man from an animal Life and earthly Societies, to be born again of the Holy Ghost, and be made a Member of the Kingdom of God.

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

It proposes the purifying of our Souls, enliven'd with the Divine Spirit: It sets before us new Goods and Evils, and forms us to a glorious Participation of the Divine Nature.

This is the one End of Christianity. It does not leave us to grovel on in the Desires of the Flesh, to cast about for

for worldly Happiness, and wander in Darknes and Exile from GOD: But the sole Design of it is, to lead us from all Thoughts of Rest here, to separate us from worldly Tempers, to deliver us from the Folly of our Passions, the Slavery of our own Natures, the Power of evil Spirits, and unite us to GOD, the true Fountain of real Good. This is the mighty Change which Christianity aims at, to reform our whole Natures, renew our Souls in the Image of GOD, and make them the Inhabitants of Heavenly and Immortal Bodies.

V. The Manner by which it changes our whole State is equally great and wonderful.

I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, saith our blessed LORD, no Man cometh unto the Father but by me.

As all Things were created by the SON OF GOD, and without him was not any thing made that was made, so are all things redeemed and restored by the same Divine Person.

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

The Dignity of this Redemption at once confounds the Pride, and relieves the Misery of Man. How fallen must he be from GOD, that should need so great a Mediator! And, on the other Hand, how full of Comfort is the Thought that so high a Method, so stupendous a Means should be taken to restore him to a State of Peace and Favour with GOD!

VI. This is the true Point of View, in which every Christian is to behold himself. He is to overlook the poor Projects of this Life, and consider himself as a Creature, thro' his natural Corruption, falling into a State of endless Misery; but, by the Mercy of GOD, redeem'd to a Condition of everlasting Happiness.

All the Precepts and Doctrines of the Gospel are founded on these two great Truths, the deplorable Corruption of human Nature, and its new Birth in CHRIST JESUS.

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

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

So that if we think and act as Christians, we act suitably

ably to these Terms of our Condition, fearing and avoiding all the Motions of our Corrupted Nature, cherishing the Secret Inspirations of the Holy Spirit, opening our Minds for the Reception of the Divine Light, and pressing after all the Perfections of our New Birth.

All Christians are continually, to behave themselves conformably to this double Capacity. We are to Fear and Watch and Pray, like Men that are always on the Brink of Eternal Death; and to believe and hope, labour and aspire, like Christians that are called to fight the good Fight of Faith, and lay hold on eternal Life.

VII. This Knowledge of ourselves makes Human Life a State of infinite Importance, placed upon so dreadful a Point betwixt two such Eternities.

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

For what is all the Bustle and Hurry of the World but dead Shew, and its greatest Actors but dead Men, when compared with that real Life to which the Followers of CHRIST are redeem'd?

Had we been made only for this World, worldly Wisdom had been our highest Wisdom; but seeing we are redeemed to an intirely contrary State, worldly Wisdom is now our greatest Foolishness.

It is now our only Wisdom, to understand our new State, and conduct ourselves by the Principles of our Redemption.

VIII. The Nature of our Christian Calling is of that Concern, as to deserve all our Thoughts, and is indeed only to be perceived by great Serioufness and Attention of Mind.

The Christian State is an invisible Life in the Spirit of GOD, supported, not by sensible Goods, but the Spiritual Graces of Faith and Hope: So that a Man busied in Earthly Cares and Enjoyments, perceives nothing of this great and Heavenly Calling.

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

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

CHRIST is the *Lamb slain from the Foundation of the World, the true Light that lighteth every Man that cometh into the World*. He is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End of all Things. The whole Creation subsists in him and by him. No Person is in any Favour with GOD, but by this great Mediator. But how invisible, how unknown to all our Senses is this State of Things!

Christians are Temples of the Holy Ghost, consecrated to GOD, Members of CHRIST's mystical Body, of his Flesh and his Bones; receiving Life, Spirit and Motion, from Him their Head.

But our Senses see no farther than our Parents and Kindred according to the Flesh, and fix our Hearts to earthly Friendships and Relations. Well then may this Life be deem'd a State of Darkness, since it thus clouds and covers all the true Appearances of Things, and keeps our Minds insensible and unaffected with Matters of such infinite Moment.

IX. Wou'd we therefore know our true Condition, we must search after *a Life that is hid with CHRIST in GOD*. We must consider ourselves as Parts of CHRIST's mystical Body, and as Members of the Kingdom of Heaven. In vain do we consider the Beauty and Strength of our Bodies, our Alliances with Men, and the Distinctions of this World; for these Things no more constitute the State of Human Life, than rich *Coffins* or beautiful *Monuments* constitute the State of the Dead.

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

For a Sinner, when glorying in the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life, is a more shocking Sight of Misery ridicul'd; than any Pageantry that can expose the Dead.

X. We have an Apostle's Authority to say, that *he who liveth in Pleasure is dead whilst he liveth.*

This shews us, that when we enquire what our Life is, we must think of something higher than the Vigour of our Blood, the Gaiety of our Spirits, or the Enjoyment of sensual Pleasures: Since these, tho' the allowed Signs of living Men, are often undeniable Proofs of dead Christians.

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

Our Blessed Saviour put an absolute End to all Enquiries of this Kind when he said, *Be not afraid of them that kill the Body, and after that have no more that they can do.*

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

We must therefore, if we would conceive our true State, our real Good and Evil, look farther than these dim Eyes of Flesh can carry our Views. We must, with the Eyes of Faith, penetrate into the invisible World, the World of Spirits, and consider our Order and Condition among them; a World which, as St John speaks, *hath no need of the Sun, neither of the Moon, to shine in it; for the Glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof.* For it is there, among eternal Beings, that we must take an eternal Fellowship, or fall into a Kingdom of Darkness and everlasting Misery.

XI. Christianity is so noble in its Ends, so extensive in its Views, that it has no less Subjects than these to entertain our Thoughts.

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

It never considers us in any other respect than as fallen Spirits, it disregards worldly Distinctions, and proposes nothing to our Fears but eternal Misery, nothing to our Hopes but an endless Enjoyment of God.

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This is the great, the important Condition, in which Christianity has placed us, above our Bodies, above the World, above Death, to be present at the Dissolution of all Things, to see the Earth in Flames, and the Heavens wrapt up like a Scroll, to stand at the general Resurrection, to appear at the universal Judgment, and to live for ever, when all that our Eyes have seen is passed away and gone.

XII. Take therefore upon thee a Temper suitable to this Greatness of thy Condition. Remember that thou art an eternal Spirit ; that thou art but for a few Months or Years in a State of Flesh and Blood, only to try whether thou shalt be for ever happy with God, or for ever miserable with the Devil.

Thou wilt hear of other Concerns and other Greatness in this World. Thou wilt see every Order of Men, every Family, every Person pursuing some fancied Happiness, as if the World had not only Happiness, but a particular Kind of Happiness for all its Inhabitants.

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

When thou hast seen this, if thou wilt, thou mayst go to sleep too, thou mayst lie down and dream. And this is all ; for be as happy as the World can make thee, all is but sleeping and dreaming : And what is still worse, it is like sleeping in a Ship, when thou shouldst be pumping for Life, or dreaming thou art a Prince, when thou shouldst be redeeming thyself from Slavery.

XIII. This is no imaginary Flight of a melancholy Fancy, but the real Nature of Things.

For if thou art that immortal Nature, that fallen Spirit which Religion teaches us ; if thou art to meet Death, Resurrection, and Judgment, as the Forerunners of an eternal State, What are all the little Flashes of Pleasure, the changing Appearances of worldly Happiness, but so many Sorts of Dreams ?

How canst thou talk of the Advantages of Fortune, the Pleasures of Food or Apparel, without being in a Dream ?

Is the *Beggar* asleep, when he fancies he is building himself

himself fine Houses? Is the *Prisoner* in a Dream, when he imagines himself in open Fields and fine Groves? And canst thou think thy immortal Spirit is awake, while it is delighting itself in the Shadows and Bubbles of worldly Happiness?

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

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

We see the Folly and Ignorance of such a poor Contrivance to assist the Dead: But if we did but understand what is Life, we should see as much Folly in the poor Contrivances to assist the Living.

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

Thou mayst hire more Servants, new paint thy Rooms, and put on richer Apparel: And these will help thee to be happy, as *golden Staves* or *painted Shoes* will help a dead Man to walk.

XV. If thou rememberest, that the whole Race of Mankind are a Race of fallen Spirits, that pass thro' this World, as an Arrow passeth thro' the Air, thou wilt soon perceive, that there is no Wisdom or Happiness, but in getting away to the best Advantage.

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

Do but therefore know thyself as Religion hath made thee known; do but see thyself in the Light which CHRIST has brought into the World, and then thou

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wilt see that nothing concerns thee, but what concerns an everlasting Spirit that is going to God; and that there are no Enjoyments here that are worth a Thought, but such as may adorn thee with that Holiness, without which no Man shall see the LORD.

XVI. This is the End of Christianity. It is not a School for the teaching of moral Virtue. It is deeper and more divine in its Designs: It implies an entire Change of Heart, a full Dedication of ourselves, our Souls and Bodies unto GOD.

Our Blessed Saviour came into the World, not to make any Composition with it, but to put an End to the Designs of Flesh and Blood, and to shew us, we must either renounce this World to become Sons of GOD, or by enjoying it, take our Portion among damned Spirits.

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

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

I cannot here omit observing the Folly of human Wisdom, which, full of imaginary Projects, pleases itself with its lasting Establishments in a World doomed to Destruction, and which is to last no longer than till a sufficient Number is redeem'd out of it.

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

XVII. That Christianity implies a Change of Nature, is plain from the whole Tenor of the Gospel.

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

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

We begin again to be, we enter upon fresh Terms of Life, have new Tempers, new Hopes and Fears, and an entire Change of every Thing that can be called Good or Evil.

This new Birth is the very Essence and Soul of Christianity ; it is the Seal of the Promises, the Mark of our Sonship, the Earnest of our Inheritance, and the sure Proof of our Acceptance with God.

XVIII. If we would know what a Change our New Life in CHRIST implies, let us consider what it is to be born of God.

Whosoever is born of God, saith the Apostle, doth not commit Sin. For his Seed remaineth in him : and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the Children of God are manifest, and the Children of the Devil. And again, We know, that whosoever is born of God sinneth not, but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not. 1. John iii. 10, v. 18.

The same Apostle tells us, *Whosoever is born of God overcometh the World.* He overcometh all worldly Desires and worldly Fears. He is crucified unto the World and the World crucified unto him. He is dead to the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life. And he feareth not them that can kill the Body, and after that have nothing more that they can do.

We must therefore examine into the State of our Minds, and see whether we are thus changed in our Natures, thus born again : Whether we are so spiritual, as to have overcome the World ; so holy, as that we cannot commit Sin ; since it is the undeniable Doctrine of Scripture, that this New Birth is as necessary to Salvation, as the believing in JESUS CHRIST.

XIX. We have seen two Marks of those that are born of God. A third is given us by CHRIST Himself. *Love your Enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use*

use you and persecute you ; that ye may be the Children of your Father which is in Heaven. Matthew iv. v. 4.

Well may a Christian be said to be a *new Creature*, since without such a Disposition as this, we cannot be Christians, or Children of our Father which is in Heaven.

It is not therefore enough to love our Friends, Benefactors, and Relations, but if we are born of God, we love like God : We have an universal Love, a Tenderness for all Mankind, imitating that Love which would that *all Men should be saved.*

GOD is Love : And as he who dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in GOD, so he that dwelleth not in Love dwelleth not in GOD.

It is impossible to be a true Christian, and an Enemy at the same Time.

Mankind hath no Enemy but the Devil ; and those who are of the same Spirit.

XX. There is perhaps no Duty more contrary to Flesh and Blood than this. But it is easy to those that are born of God.

For take but away earthly Goods and Evils, and you take away all Hatred and Malice. For they are the only Causes of those base Tempers.

He therefore that *hath overcome the World*, hath overcome all the Occasions of Envy and ill Nature, and can pity, pray for and forgive all his Enemies, who want less Forgiveness from Him than He hath received from his Heavenly Father.

Let us here a while contemplate the Height and Depth of Christian Holiness, and that Godlike Spirit which it implies ! And this alone might convince us, that to be Christians, we must be born again : We must so change our very Natures, as to have no Desire in our Souls, but that of being like God.

And till we rejoice and delight only in God, we cannot have this Love to our Fellow Creatures.

We may therefore learn from this, as well as from what was observed before, that Christianity does not consist in doing no Harm, nor in doing Good, (as it is called) nor yet in any particular moral Virtues, as some idly suppose : But in an entire Change of our Hearts, of all our natural Tempers, and a Life wholly devoted to God.

XXI.

XXI. The same Doctrine is farther taught by our blessed Saviour, when speaking of little Children, he saith, *Suffer them to come unto me; for of such is the Kingdom of God.* Luke xviii. 16.

If we are not resolved to deceive ourselves, if we have not Eyes that see not, and Ears that hear not, we must perceive that these Words imply some mighty Change in our Nature.

Now the peculiar Condition of Infants is such, that they have every Thing to learn; they are to be taught by others what they are to hope and fear, and where-in their proper Happiness consists.

And in this Sense first are we to become as little Children, to be as tho' we had every Thing to learn, and suffer ourselves to be taught, what we are to chuse, and what we are to avoid; to pretend to no Wisdom of our own, but be ready to be taught of God, the only Way of pursuing that only Happiness, which God in CHRIST proposes to us; and to accept it with such Simplicity of Mind as little Children, who have nothing of their own to oppose to it.

XXII. But now is this infant Temper thus essential to Christianity? Does the Kingdom of God consist only of those that have it? This then is another undeniable Proof that Christianity implies a *new Nature*; such as having renounced the Prejudices of Life, the Maxims of human Wisdom, gives itself with a Child-like Submission and Simplicity, to be entirely govern'd by the Doctrines and Spirit of CHRIST.

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

The Wisdom of this World, the Intrigues of Life, the Designs of Greatness and Ambition, lead to another Kingdom. He that follows CHRIST must be emptied of this vain Furniture, and put on the meek Ornament of infant and undesigning Simplicity.

Where is the Wise? Where is the Scribe? Where is the Disputer of this World? Hath not God made foolish the Wisdom of this World?

If we will partake of the Wisdom of God, we must judge of this World and its most boasted Gifts, as the Wisdom

dom of God judgeth of them ; we must deem them Foolishness, and with undivided Hearts labour after one Wisdom, one Happiness, in being entirely devoted to God.

XXIII. This Comparison of Christians to little Children, may also remind us of a certain Simplicity of Behaviour, which is always the Effect of a Heart truly and entirely devoted to God.

As worldly Men are therefore reserv'd, artful and deceitful, because they have many and secret Ends to bring about ; so they whose Heart is wholly devoted to God, being wholly taken up with one great Design, and having no little Successes that they labour after, have no Need of Artifice or Disguise ; and so are naturally open, simple and undesigning in all the Affairs of Life.

XXIV. From all these Considerations it appears, that Christianity implies a *New Nature*, and a Life entirely devoted to God.

Now if this be Christianity, it may serve to instruct two Sorts of People :

First, Those who are content with an Outward Religion ; those whose Christianity lies only in an Outward Decency and Regularity of Life.

I don't mean those that are Insincere or Hypocritical : But all those who are content with Outward Religion : All who are content with any Thing short of that Inward Holiness, that Newness of Heart and Spirit which the Gospel describes.

They should consider that Charity, Chastity, Sobriety and Justice may be practised without Christianity. A Jew, a Heathen may be (what you call) Charitable and Temperate : But to make those Parts of Christianity, they must proceed from a Heart truly turned to God, that is full of an infant Simplicity, that is crucified with CHRIST, that is born again of the Spirit, that has overcome the World. Temperance or Justice without this Turn of Heart, may be the Temperance of a Jew or a Heathen : but it is not Christian Temperance or Justice, till it proceeds from a Christian Spirit. Could we do and suffer all that CHRIST himself did or suffered, yet if it was not all done in the same Temper, in the Spirit of CHRIST, it would profit us nothing.

XXV. A Christian is sober, charitable and just, upon
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the same Principles and with the same Spirit that he receives the Holy Communion; as Acts of Obedience to God, and as so many Instances of a Heart truly devoted to God.

A Christian is sober, not only so far as suits with a regular Life, but so as becomes one who is born of the Holy Spirit, that is one with CHRIST, who dwelleth in God, and God in him.

He is charitable, not only so far as suits with his natural Temper, and with good Esteem among Men; but in such a Measure as is suitable to the Doctrines and Spirit of the Gospel.

For indeed, neither Charity, nor Temperance, nor Justice, nor any other Virtues (as they are called) are Parts of Christian Holiness, till they spring from Holiness of Heart, from the Mind that was in CHRIST.

This is what cannot be too much considered by those whose Religion has made no Change in their Hearts; who fancy themselves Christians, only because of the Regularity of their Lives, altho' they have never experienced a Renewal in the Spirit of their Minds, after the Image of Him that created them; who pray without Devotion, give Alms without Charity, and are Christians without the Spirit of Christianity.

XXVI. Secondly, This Doctrine may serve to instruct those who are convinced, they have been hitherto Strangers to Religion.

Some People who are ashamed of their past Lives, and begin to look toward Religion, think they have done enough, when they have reformed the Outward Course of their Lives; when they have left off their gross Vices and Follies, or are grown careful of some particular Duties or Virtues.

Thus a Man who has been a Drunkard many Years, thinks he has made a sufficient Change by becoming temperate: Another imagines, he is in a very good and safe State, because he does not neglect the Publick Worship, as he used to do: A Lady fancies she lives enough to God because she has left off Plays, and lives more at home than formerly.

But such People should consider, that Christianity does not consist in the Fewness of our Vices; no nor in any one

one particular Virtue, nor yet in the Outward Amendment of our Lives: But in such a thorough Change of Heart, as makes the Love of God the Spring and Measure and Rule of all our Tempers and Actions.

XXVII. It is a miserable Error, to think we are Christians, because we are less vain or covetous, more sober and decent in our Behaviour than we used to be. Yet this is the Case with many, who think they are well, because they are not so bad as they were, because they are reformed from Outward Wickedness; not considering how thorough a Change, how entire a Reformation of Heart, as well as Life, Christianity implies.

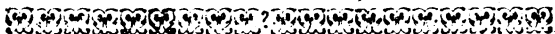
But let such People remember, that they who thus measure *themselves by themselves are not wise*. Let them remember that they are not Disciples of CHRIST, till they have, like him, *offered their whole Soul and Body as a reasonable living Sacrifice to God*; that they are not Members of CHRIST'S Mystical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

Let them remember, *He that is in CHRIST is a new Creature*, and that nothing short of this will avail before God, nothing less than the entire Renewal of the Soul in Righteousness and all true Holiness. Let them remember, that there is no Religion that will stand us in any Stead, but that which is the Conversion of the Heart to God, when all our Tempers are holy, heavenly, divine, springing from a Soul that is *born again* of the Spirit that is full of divine Love, and tends with one full Bent to a Perfection and Happiness in the Enjoyment of God.

XXVIII. Let us therefore look carefully to ourselves, and consider what manner of Spirit we are of: Let us not think our Condition safe, because we are of this or that Church or Persuasion, or because we are strict Observers of the Outward Offices of Religion. For we can't but see, these are Marks that belong to more than belong to CHRIST. All are not his that *prophecy*, or even *cast out Devils, and work Miracles in his Name*. Much less

those who, with corrupt Minds and worldly Hearts, are only *baptized in his Name*.

If Religion has raised us into a *new World*; if it has filled us with *new Ends* of Life; if it has taken Possession of our Hearts, altered the whole Turn of our Minds, and changed the whole Stream of our Affections; if it has given us *new Joys and Grievs, new Hopes and Fears*; if all Things in us are become new; if *the Love of GOD is shed abroad in our Hearts, by the Holy Ghost given unto us, and this Spirit beareth Witness with our Spirit that we are the Children of GOD*: Then are we Christians, not in Name only, but in Truth; then we do believe in the Holy JESUS, and we shall *rejoice in the Day of CHRIST, that we have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain*.



C H A P. II.

Christianity requires a renouncing of the World, and all worldly Tempers.

I. The Christian Religion being to raise a new, spiritual, and, as yet, invisible World, and to place Man among Thrones, Principalities and spiritual Beings, is at entire Ennity with this present corrupt State of Flesh and Blood.

It ranks the World, with the Flesh and the Devil, as an equal Enemy to those glorious Ends which it proposes.

Accordingly the Gospel lays its Foundation, in utterly renouncing those false Goods and Enjoyments, which feed the Vanity and Corruption of our Nature, fill our Hearts with foolish and wicked Passions, and keep us separate from GOD, the only Happiness of all Spirits.

II. For not only the Vices, the Wickedness, and Vanity of this World, but even its most lawful Concerns, if unduly pursued, make Men unable to enter into the true State of Christianity.

He who is busied in an *honest* Calling, may, on that Account, be finally rejected of GOD.

For it is no more pardonable to be less affected to the Things

Things of God, for the Sake of any Worldly Business, than for the Indulgence of our Pride, or any other sinful Passion: Every Business of Life being equally trifling, when compared with the one Thing needful.

III. Men of serious Business indeed generally censure those, who trifle away their Time in vain and impertinent Pleasures.

But they don't consider that their own Employments also are as vain as Vanity itself: They don't consider that any Business or Employment, if it has got hold of the Heart, renders Men as vain and odious in the Sight of God, as any sensual Gratification.

They may call it an *honest Care*, a *wise Industry*, or by any other plausible Name. But it is a Wisdom which can no more recommend itself to the Eyes of God than the Wisdom of an *Epicure*.

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

IV. The Wisdom of this World indeed gives an Importance and Air of Greatness to several Ways of Life, and ridicules others as vain and contemptible, which differ only in their Kind of Vanity. But the Wisdom from above condemns all Labour as equally fruitless, which hinders our labouring after everlasting Life. For what can it signify whether a Man forgets God in his *Farm*, or in a *Shop*, or at a *Gaming Table*? The World is full as important in its *Pleasures* as in its *Cares*; there is no more Wisdom in the one than in the other. And the Man who, by the *Cares* and *Business* of the World is made less affected to the Things of God, is no wiser than he who takes his Delight in running *Foxes* and *Hares* out of Breath.

For there is no Wisdom in any Thing but Religion. Nor is any Way of Life less vain than another, but as it is made serviceable to Piety, and conspires with the Designs of Religion, to raise Mankind to a Participation and Enjoyment of the Divine Nature.

V. Let those who are not at all ashamed to be devoted to the Cares and Business of the World, consider

those States of Life, which they own to be vain and foolish, and contrary to Religion.

Some People have no other *Care*, than how to give their *Palate* fresh Pleasure, and enlarge the Happiness of *Tasting*.

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

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

But why are they to be condemned? Produce but the true Reason why any of these are vain and sinful, and the same Reason will conclude against every Way of Life which is not wholly devoted to God.

VI. Let the Man who is deep in worldly Business, but shew the Vanity and Shame of a Life devoted to *Pleasures*, and the same Reasons will shew the Vanity and Shame of a Life filled with worldly *Cares*. So that whosoever can condemn Sensuality, Ambition, or any Way of Life upon the Principles of Reason and Religion, carries his own Condemnation within his own Breast, unless his Life be entirely devoted to God.

VII. It is granted that some Cares are made necessary by the Necessities of Nature. And the same also may be observed of some Pleasures, as the Pleasures of Eating, Drinking and Rest. But if Reason and Religion do not limit these *Pleasures* by the Necessities of Nature, we fall from rational Creatures into Drones, Sots, Gluttons, and Epicures.

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

For this Reason our Lord points so many of his Doctrines at the common allowed Employments of Life, to teach us, that they may employ our Minds as falsely and dangerously as any Trifles whatever.

He teaches us, that even the Necessaries of Life should

should be fought with a Kind of Indifference, that so our Souls may be truly sensible of greater Wants, and disposed to hunger and thirst after Enjoyments that will make us happy for ever.

VIII. But how unlike are Christians to Christianity! It commands us to *take no Thought, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink?* Yet Christians are restless and laborious, till they can eat in *Plate*.

It commands us to be indifferent about Rayment. But Christians are full of Care and Concern, to be *cloathed in Purple and fine Linen*. It enjoins us to *take no Thought for the Morrow*. Yet Christians think they have lived in vain, if they don't *leave Estates* at their Death. And these call themselves Disciples of that Lord, who saith, *He that forsaketh not all that he hath cannot be my Disciple*.

IX. It must not be said that these Doctrines are not plainly enough taught in Scripture, because the Lives and Behaviour of Christians are so contrary to them. For if the Lives of Christians might be alledged against the Doctrines of Scripture, none of them would have lasted to this Day.

It is one of the Ten Commandments, *Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain*. And our Saviour has forbid swearing, yea, in the most solemn Manner. Yet where more swearing than among Christians, and among such Christians as would think it hard to be reckon'd a Reproach to the Christian Name?

The Scripture says of Christians, that they are born of God, and *have overcome the World*. Can they then be reckoned of that Number, who have not so much as overcome this flagrant Sin, to which they have no Temptation in Nature?

Well therefore may the Doctrines of heavenly Mindfulness, and Contempt of the World be disregarded, since they run counter to all the Corruptions of Flesh and Blood, to all the Pride and Vanity of our Nature.

X. But let those who are startled at these Doctrines, deal faithfully with their own Hearts, and ask themselves whether they should not have had the same Dislike to them, had they lived in our Saviour's Days? Or whether they can find any one Reason, why they should have

have been so spiritual and heavenly then, which is not as good and as strong a Reason for their being as spiritual and heavenly now?

Hath Heaven or Earth suffered any Change since that Time? Is the World become now more worth our Notice, or heavenly Treasure of less Value than it was then? Or have we had another Saviour since, that has compounded Things with this World, and helped us to an easier Way to the next?

Yet, if an *Apostle* was to rise from the dead, calling rich and great Men to these Doctrines, they would drive their Coaches from such a Preacher, rather than be saved at such a Price.

XI. To set this great Truth in a still clearer Light, I will appeal a little even to the Imagination of the Reader.

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

After this Supposition let it be imagined, that we saw the Holy Jesus, who had not where to lay his Head, with his Twelve Apostles, that had left all to follow him. Let us imagine, that we heard him call all the World, to take up the Cross and follow him, promising a Treasure in Heaven to such as would quit all for his Sake, and rejecting all that would not comply therewith: Denouncing Woe and eternal Death to all that lived in Fulness, Pomp and worldly Delights. Let it be imagined, that we heard him commanding his Disciples, to take no Thought, saying, *What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithall shall we be clothed?* And giving this Reason for it, *After all these Things do the Gentiles seek.*

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

I do not now so immediately appeal to the Judgment or Reason of the Reader. I leave it even with his Imagination, that wild Faculty, to determine, whether it
be

be possible for these two different Sorts of Men, to be true Disciples of the same Lord ?

XII. To proceed ; Let us suppose that a rich Man was to put up such a Prayer as this to God :

“ O Lord, I thy sinful Creature, whom Thou hast called to a lively Hope of Glory in Christ Jesus, beg of thee to grant me a *thousand* times more Riches than I *need*, that I may be able to gratify myself and Family in the Delights of eating and drinking, State and Grandeur. Grant that as the little Span of Life wears out, I may abound more and more in Wealth; and that I may see and perceive all the best and surest Ways of growing richer than any of my Neighbours. This I humbly and fervently beg, in the Name, &c.”

Such a Prayer as this should have had no Place in this Treatise ; but in hope that proportionably as it offends the *Ear*, it may amend the *Heart*.

XIII. There is no one, I believe, but would be ashamed to put up such a Prayer as this to God. Yet let it be well observed, that all are of the Temper of this Prayer, but those who have renounced the World.

We need not go among Villains, and People of scandalous Characters, to find those who desire a *thousand times* more than they want, who have an Eagerness to be every Day richer and richer, who catch at still new Ways of Gain; and scarce think any Thing enough, except it equals or exceeds the Estate of their Neighbours.

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

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

For the Reason why these Things appear so odious in a Prayer, is because they are so contrary to the Spirit of Religion. But is it not as bad to *live* contrary to the Spirit of Religion, as to *pray* contrary to it ?

At least, must not that Way of Life be highly blameable, which is so shocking when put into the Form of a Prayer ?

XIV. Need we any other Conviction, that this Man-

ner of Life is contrary to the Spirit of Christianity, than this, that the praying according to it in Christ's Name, comes near to Blasphemy.

Let it be considered how we should abominate a Person, whom we knew to use such a Prayer: And let that teach us, how abominable such a Life must appear in the Eyes of GOD! And with this Addition of Folly, that we call the Prayer *profane*, but think the Life that answers to it to be *Christian*.

From all this it is plain, that the present Followers of Jesus Christ, have no more to do with worldly Enjoyments, than those he chose while he himself was on Earth; and that we are to have the same Devotion to GOD, the same heavenly Affection, as any of those he convers'd with in the Days of his Flesh.

XV. Yet notwithstanding the Scriptures are so express, Men will not give up their pre-conceived Opinions.

It will still be asked, Where can be the Harm of getting or enjoying an Estate?

Whether it be not a commendable Thing, to provide an Estate for one's Family?

And what People of Birth and Fortune are to do with themselves, if they are not to live up to their Estates and Qualities?

To the first Question let it be answered, *Take no Thought, saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithall shall we be clothed? For after all these Things do the Gentiles seek.*

Now, if to be careful and thoughtful, even about the Necessaries of Life, be a Care that is here forbidden, and that because it is such a Care as only becomes Heathens; surely to be careful and thoughtful how to raise an Estate, and enrich one's Family, is a Care that is sufficiently forbidden in Christians. And he that can yet think it lawful, to make this the Care and Design of his Life, is too blind to be convinced by Arguments. Our Saviour saith, *Labour not for the Meat that perisheth, but for that Meat which endureth unto everlasting Life.* He commands us not to lay up for ourselves Treasures on Earth; he assures us that we cannot serve GOD and Mammon.

Now these Places have no Meaning, if it is still lawful

lawful for Christians to heap up Treasures, to labour for Estates, and pursue Designs of enriching their Families.

XVI. I know it is easy to evade the Force of these Texts, and to make plausible H^orangues, upon the Innocency of labouring to be rich, and the Consistency of serving GOD and Mammon.

I don't question but the rich young Man in the Gospel could have made a very good Apology for himself, and have shewn how reasonable and innocent a Thing it was, for so good and so young a Man to enjoy an Estate.

The *rich Man* in Torments could have alledged, how *much Good* he did with his Fortune; how many *Trades* he encouraged with his *Purple* and *fine Linen*, and faring *sumptuously* every Day; and how he conformed to the *Ends of Society*, by so spending his Estate.

XVII. But still the Word of GOD shall not pass away. *Having Food and Raiment, let us be therewith content. For they who will be rich fall into a Temptation and a Snare, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts, which drown Men in Destruction and Perdition.* 1. Tim. vi. 8.

We may, perhaps, by some Acuteness of Reasoning, find out, that this still leaves us at our Liberty, whether we will labour to be rich or not: Yet notwithstanding what the Apostle says, of a *Snare*, a *Temptation*, and *foolish Lusts*, yet we can pursue the Means and desire the Happiness of Riches, without any Danger to our Virtue.

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

And he that neglects Watching and Prayer, tho' the appointed Means of avoiding Temptation, lives as much according to Scripture, as he that is careful and desirous of Riches, tho' the declared Occasions of *Sin*, *Snares* and *Destruction*.

XVIII. If we could submit to the plain Doctrines of Scripture, it would never be asked what People of
Fortune

Fortune are to do with themselves, if they are not to live up to the Splendour and Plenty of their Estates ?

The rich Man in the Gospel was a *Ruler*, a *young Man*, and a *good Man* : If therefore there are any of his Rank who are neither young nor good, it can hardly be thought, they have less to do to inherit eternal Life.

And as for those who, like him, have kept the Commandments of God from their Youth, I dare not tell them, that they are not under a Necessity of offering all their Wealth to God, and of making their Estates, however acquir'd, not the Support of vain Indulgences, but the Relief of their Brethren.

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

And yet he that had done nothing but sleep and dream to the Time of his Death, might as well say, that he had been working out his Salvation with Fear and Trembling, as he that has been living in Luxury, Splendour, and sensual Gratifications.

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

The Distinctions of Civil Life have their Use ; but if any one thinks he may be less devoted to God, less afraid of the Corruptions of Pleasure and Pride, because he is born of a rich Family, he is as much mistaken as he that fancies he has a Privilege to steal, because he was born of a Father that was poor

XX. If the rich or great Man can find out a Course of Pleasures, that support no wrong Turn of Mind, an Indulgence which does not gratify Sensuality, Entertainments which feed no vain Passions : If they can find out such Instances of Splendour and Greatness, as shew they love God with all their Hearts, and as gratify neither *the Lust of the Flesh*, *the Lust of the Eye*, nor *the Pride of Life*, Religion has no Command against such Enjoyments.

But

But if this cannot be done, then the Rich have no more Permission to live in vain Indulgences than the Poor have to steal.

And let it be always remember'd, that if any Distinctions of Life make Men forget that Sin is their only Baseness, and Holiness their only Honour; if any Condition makes them less disposed to imitate the low, humbling Estate of their suffering Master; instead of being any real Advantage, it is their Curse, their Snare and Destruction.

XXI. I know to all this it will still be objected, that a Man is not necessarily vain and proud, because he lives in Shew and Figure, any more than another is necessarily humble, because he lives in a low Estate.

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

A Man in a low Estate may be vain and proud, because he is in such a State by Force; and is restless and uneasy till he can raise himself out of it. If the same is true of him that lives in Figure and Pomp, that he is in this State by Force, and is restless till he can lay it all aside, then we grant he may be humble.

But nothing is weaker than to say, Because a Man may be in a low Estate *per Force*, without Lowliness of Mind, therefore another may *chuse to live* in all the Height of Grandeur and Vanity, without any Height or Vanity of Mind.

A Man may be an Epicure in his Temper, tho' he is forced to live upon Bread and Water. But will you therefore say, another who lives on all sorts of Dainties, and that by Choice, may be no Epicure?

If therefore they that live in Pomp and Shew, live therein out of Choice, and are not willing to live otherwise, we must talk Nonsense if we do not say their Minds are as vain as the Vanity of their State.

XXII. The Necessity of renouncing the World, in whatever State of Life we are, may be yet farther proved from those divine Tempers which Christianity requires.

Christians are to love God with all their Heart, with

all their Soul, with all their Mind, and with all their Strength.

Now it is absolutely impossible we should do this, unless we have renounced the World.

A Man that has his Head and his Heart full of worldly Concerns, can no more love GOD with all his Strength, than a Man, who has his Eyes on the Ground, can be looking towards Heaven with all the Strength of his Sight.

XXIII. If therefore we are to love GOD with all our Heart, if it is absolutely necessary we be first persuaded, that we have no Happiness but in him alone, but what arises from our Enjoyment of the Divine Nature.

But we may be assured, we never believe this Truth, till we renounce all Pretensions to any other Happiness. For to seek the Happiness of Riches, at the same Time we know all Happiness is in GOD, is as impossible as to seek the Happiness of Sickness, when we know no bodily State is happy, but that of Health.

It is therefore absolutely certain, that we are as much obliged to renounce the World with all our Strength, as to love GOD therewith, it being impossible to do one without the other.

XXIV. It is equally certain, that we unavoidably love every Thing in Proportion as it appears to be our Happiness; If it appears to be half our Happiness, it will necessarily have half the Strength of our Love: And if it appears to be all our Happiness, we shall naturally love it with all our Strength.

The Christian Religion therefore, which requires the whole Strength of our Nature to love GOD, lays a just Foundation in requiring us absolutely to renounce the Happiness of the World; seeing it is impossible to have two Happinesses, and but one Love.

And indeed what can be more ridiculous than to fancy, that a Man who is taken up with the Enjoyments of the World, is at the same Time loving GOD with all his Soul and with all his Strength.

Is it not as absurd as to suppose that a Man, who is devoted to, and taken up with the Sports of the Field, is at the same Time contemplating Mathematical Speculations, with the whole Ardour of his Mind?

XXV.

XXV. Another Duty which proves the absolute Necessity of thus renouncing the World, is, The Love of our Neighbour.

Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself: If a Man would know what this implies, let him look impartially into his own Heart, and see what it is that he wishes to himself. Then let him turn all the same Wishes to his Neighbour, and he will feel the just Measure of his Duty.

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

XXVI. This Love is a Temper that suits only such Beings as have *one common undivided Happiness*, wherein they cannot be Rivals to one another. Now this is the State of all Christians, who have as truly *one common Happiness* as they have *one common GOD*. But if we put ourselves out of this State, and seek for Happiness in the Enjoyments of this Life, we are as incapable of this neighbourly Love, as *Wolves* and *Bears* that live upon Prey.

One common undivided Happiness, being the only possible Foundation for this Love, if we seek any other Happiness than this, if we don't renounce all other Pretensions, we cannot keep clear of such Tempers as are utterly inconsistent with the loving our Neighbour as ourselves.

But when we are govern'd by a Happiness which no Man can hinder our attaining, and wherein none can make himself our Rival, it will be no harder to love all Men as ourselves, than to wish them the Enjoyment of the same Light, or the common Air: Which being Goods that may be equally enjoy'd by all, are not the Occasions of Envy.

XXVII. It is plain our Saviour intended this brotherly Love, to be the governing Principle of our Lives. But it cannot be so, unless we are content to make no more of this World, than a Supply of our Necessities, and to look for *one only Happiness* in the Enjoyment of GOD.

I don't appeal to Niggards and Worldlings, to the Proud and Ambitious: Let those who think themselves

moderate in their worldly Desires and Enjoyments, deal faithfully with themselves and see whether their Prosecution of worldly Affairs, permits them to love all Men as themselves.

Perhaps they have not those bitter Envyings and Hatreds to which ambitious Worldlings are subject. But still they have as certainly, in their Degree, and in Proportion to their Love of the World, their Envyings and Hatreds, and Want of sincere Love, as other Men.

XXVIII. For a further Proof of this, we need only look into the World, and see the Spirit that appears among almost all Christians.

We need not go to wicked and loose People. Let us go into any *virtuous* Family, and we shall find it has its particular *Friendships* and *Hatreds*, its *Envyings* and *evil Speakings*, and all founded in the Interests and Regards of the World.

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

For it is not only Cheating and Dishonesty, but the bare Desire of worldly Things, and the placing Happiness in them, that lays the Foundation of all these Unchristian Tempers; that begets particular Friendships and Enmities, and divides Christians into more Parties than there are Families among them.

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

Let this therefore teach us that we must renounce the World, if we would live and love like Christians

XXIX. By renouncing the World, I do not mean, retiring into a Cloister. This would be like laying aside all Use of Cloaths, to avoid the Vanity of Dress.

There

There is a sober and reasonable Use of the . . . which is as lawful as it is to eat and drink.

We may buy and sell; we may labour; we may provide for ourselves and our Families; that is, so far as is needful for Life and Godliness. But farther we may not go.

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

XXX. You think yourself very reasonable and conformable to Christianity, because you are moderate in your Desires. You don't desire a large Estate; you desire only a little Finery, a little State, and to have Things genteel about you.

Imagine now to yourself, that what you say, of moderate Desires, and little Fineries, had been said to our blessed Saviour when he was upon Earth, calling Men to renounce the World and deny themselves.

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

Now the Spirit of Christianity is the same Spirit that was in Christ when he was upon Earth. And if we have Reason to think that such a Pretence would have been severely condemn'd by Christ, we have the same Reason to be sure, it is as severely condemn'd by Christianity.

XXXI. Had our Blessed Saviour a little before he left the World, given Estates to his Apostles, with a Permission for them to enjoy little Fineries, and a moderate State in a genteel manner, he had undone all that he had said of the Contempt of the World, and Heavenly-mindedness. Such a Permission had been a Contradiction to the main Doctrines which he had taught.

Had the Apostles lived in a little State, and in moderate worldly Delights, how could they have said, *the World is crucified to me, and I unto the World?*

And how blind and weak must we be, if we can think that we may live in a Spirit and Temper, which could

possibly be the Spirit and Temper of Christ
is Apostles?

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

You want to leave Fortunes to your Children, that they may have their Share in the *Figure* and *Show* of the World. Now consider, Do you do this on Principles of Religion, as the best Thing you can do, either for yourself or them?

Can you then be said, to have chosen the *one Thing needful* for yourself, or the *one Thing needful* for them, who take such care to put them in a State of Life, that is a *Snare* and a *Temptation*, and the most likely of all others, to fill their Minds with *foolish and hurtful Lusts*?

Is it your Kindness toward them that puts you upon this Labour? Consider therefore what this Kindness is founded upon? Perhaps it is such a Kindness as when *tender Mothers* carry their Daughters to all *Plays* and *Balls*: Such a Kindness as when *indulgent Fathers* support their Sons in all the Expence of their Follies. Such *kind Parents* may more properly be call'd the *Betrayers* and *Murderers* of their Children.

You love your Children, and therefore you would have them rich. It is said of our blessed Saviour, that he loved the *young rich Man* that came unto him, and therefore he bid him *sell all* that he had. What a Contrariety is here? The Love which dwelleth in you, is as contrary to the Love which dwelt in Christ as *Darkness* is to *Light*.

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

XXXIII. But suppose you succeed in your Designs, and leave your Children rich, what must you say to them when you are dying? Will you then tell them that you have the same Opinion of the Value of Riches you ever had; that you feel the Pleasure of remembering how much Thought and Care you have taken to acquire

quire them? Will you tell them that you have provided for their Ease and Softness, their Pleasure and Indulgence and Figure in the World; and that they cannot do better than to eat and drink and take their Fill of such Enjoyments as Riches afford. This would be dying like an *Atheist*.

If you would die like a Christian, must you not endeavour to fill their Minds with your dying Thoughts? Must you not tell them that very soon the World will signify no more to them than it does to you? And that there is a *Vanity*, a *Littleness* in the Things of this Life, which only dying Men feel as they ought?

Will you not tell them, that all your own Failings, the Irregularity of your Life, the Folly of your Tempers, and your Failure of Christian Perfection, has been owing to wrong Opinions of the Value of worldly Things? And that if you had always seen the World in the same Light that you see it now, your Life had been devoted to God, and you would have lived in all those holy Tempers and heavenly Affections in which you now desire to die?

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

From all this therefore it appears, that your Kindness for your Children is so far from being a good Reason why you should so carefully labour to leave them rich, and in the Enjoyment of the State and Shew of the World; that if you die in a Spirit of Piety, if you love them as Christ lov'd his Disciples, your Kindness will oblige you to exhort them to renounce all such Enjoyment of Riches, as is contrary to those holy Tempers and that heavenly Affection which you now find to be the only Good and Happiness of human Nature.



C H A P. III.

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

I. It would be strange to suppose, that Mankind were redeem'd by the Sufferings of the Son of God, to live in Ease and Softness themselves, without any Suffering or Cross at all!

Are we not all to die? Does God then unmake and dash our very Form into Pieces; and can we think that a Life of Pleasure and Self-indulgence can become us under such a Sentence?

II. *If any Man will come after me, saith CHRIST, let him deny himself, take up his Cross daily, and follow me.*

To shew that this belongs to all Christians, St. Luke saith, *He said unto them All: St. Mark hath it thus; and when he had called the People unto him, with his Disciples also, he said unto them.*

Let us now suppose that Christian Churches are full of *sine, gay* People, who spend their Time in all the Pleasures and Indulgences which the Spirit of the World can invent.

Can it be said of such, that they are *denying themselves, and taking up their Cross daily*? May they not with as much regard to Truth be said, to live in *Sackcloth and Ashes*? Or can they who live in all the Scenes of Pleasure be said, to be *working out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling*? May they not as justly be said, to be walking bare-foot to *Jerusalem*?

III. Several Instances of this Self-denial and daily Cross, are to be seen in the following Words.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, an Eye for an Eye, and a Tooth, for a Tooth. But I say unto you, that you resist not Evil; but whosoever will smite thee on the right Cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any Man will sue thee at the Law and take away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloak also: And whosoever shall compell thee to go with him a Mile, go with him twain.

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We are to deny ourselves then in not demanding an *Eye for an Eye, or a Tooth for a Tooth*. We are to take up our daily Cross, by *turning our Cheek* to the Smiter, and suffering such ill Usage as we could prevent by Resistance.

We are to deny ourselves, in not commencing Suits at Law, tho' in our own Defence: And to take up the Cross of one Injury after another, rather than revenge ourselves. We are rather to expose ourselves to the farther loss of our *Cloak*, than have recourse to Law to recover our *Coat*.

The Words that deliver this Doctrine are so plain and express, that they need no Illustration: And it is as plain, that they equally belong to all Christians of all Ages. The Manner of our Saviour's delivering them, puts it out of all question, that these were to be the perpetual Marks of his Followers.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, an Eye for an Eye, &c. But I say unto you that ye resist not Evil.

It was not possible for our Lord to express himself in a more authoritative Manner, or to shew us more plainly, that he was here acting as the great Lawgiver of Christians, and delivering perpetual Laws to all his Disciples, such as should constantly distinguish them from all the World. Nor is it possible for any one to evade the literal and open Meaning of these Doctrines, but by such a Way as must destroy the Sense of any other Part of Scripture.

IV. If it could be shewn that we are not obliged by the plain and express Doctrine of these Passages, it might as well be shewn that the next Doctrine, *But I say unto you, love your Enemies, bless them that curse you*, does not oblige us in the plain and literal Sense of the Words.

For both the Passages are equally supported by the same Authority of our Saviour, express'd in the same Manner, *I say unto you*. These Virtues are likewise necessary to one another: We cannot thus love and do good to our Enemy, unless we are thus patient under Sufferings, and deny ourselves all Instances of Anger and Resentment at them.

V.

V. If these Doctrines seem grievous, they can only seem so to such as have wrong Notions of human Life.

Too many imagine this Life to be something that is substantial in itself, and valuable for its own Goods; and look upon Religion as something that is added to it, to make a worldly Life more easy, regular and happy: And so embrace Religion with no other Spirit, nor to any farther Degree, than as it complies with the Ease and Order of that Way of Life in which they live.

Our Saviour has fully confuted this Opinion, by teaching us, that there is but *one Thing needful*. If then we can take his Word, the Grievousness of Self-denial is struck off at once.

For what tho' Meekness and Patience may make us Sufferers; yet if by such Sufferings we lose only such Things as are *not needful* for us, where is any Ground for Complaint?

VI. But farther, such Sufferings not only do us no real Hurt, but they are Blessings and Matter of solid Joy.

Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of Evil of you falsely for my Sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your Reward in Heaven.

Christ does not comfort us in this, as if it were an hard or melancholy State, which we must bear, because it is made easier by Patience. But he looks at it in quite another View, not as needing Comfort, but affording Matter of Congratulation.

What Christians then are they, who reckon those Things among the Hardships of Religion, which Christ recommends to us as Reasons of *rejoicing*, yea of being *exceeding glad*?

VII. The whole of the Matter is this: If our Sufferings, our Injuries or Hardships be such as we undergo, because we dare not depart from that Meekness, and Patience, and Charity, which Christ hath taught; because we had rather love our Enemies than be revenged on them; rather suffer like Christ, and be full of his Spirit, than avoid Sufferings by a contrary Temper; such Sufferings are our greatest Gains.

Now,

Now, be these Sufferings what they will, if they make us more like Christ, they have done more for us than all the Prosperity in the World can do. And he that defends himself at the Expence of any Temper, that was the Temper of Christ, has done himself an Injury greater than the most powerful of his Enemies can bring upon him.

And all this turns on one Point, that there is but *one Thing needful*, the Salvation of our Souls. It is this that changes the Nature of all human Things, and makes every Thing good or evil, only so far as it promotes or hinders this *one End of Life*. The Salvation of the World is the only Happiness of the World: And he that has secured his Share in that, has secured to himself all the Joy and Gladness that can befall human Nature.

A Christian therefore that is not content with Salvation, that would add a worldly Joy to the great Things of Religion, is more senseless than a Man that would not be content to be saved from a *Shipwreck*, unless he was carried off upon a *Cedar Plank*.

VIII. Before I proceed to other Instances of Self-denial, it may be proper to shew the Reasonableness of it.

GOD is Reason and Wisdom itself. As sure therefore as there is a God, so sure it is that a Religion from God has only reasonable Commands to reasonable Creatures. God can only will that reasonable Creatures should be more reasonable, more perfect and like himself: And consequently can enjoin no Duties or Tempers, but such as have this Tendency; all his Commands are for our Sakes, founded on the Necessities of our Natures, and are only so many Instructions to become more happy than we could be without them.

IX Now let us apply this. If a Person were to walk upon a *Rope* across some great River, and he was bid to deny himself the Pleasure of walking in *Silver Shoes*, or looking about at the Beauty of the Waves, or listening to the Noise of Sailors: If he was commanded to deny himself the advantage of *Fishing* by the Way, would there be any Thing unreasonable in such Self-denial?

Strait is the Gate, saith our Lord, and *narrow is the Way that leadeth unto Life*. Now if Christians are to walk in a narrow Way that leadeth to eternal Life, it must be the Part of a Christian to deny himself all those Things which may stop him in, or lead him out of this narrow Way. And if they think that pleasing their Senses, and worldly Indulgences, are consistent with their keeping in this narrow Way, they think as reasonably as if the Man upon the *Rope* should think that he might safely use *Silver Shoes*, or stop in his Way to catch *Fish*.

X. The plain Case is this: Christians are call'd from a State of Sin and Disorder, to a State of Holiness and Resemblance of the divine Nature. If therefore there are any Things or Ways of Life, that corrupt our Minds, support our Vanity, increase the Disorder of our Souls, or nourish sinful Affections; all these are as necessarily to be avoided, as it is necessary to be holy.

If indeed (to instance in one Point only) there are no Indulgences in *Eating*, that do us harm, then perhaps it might be said, *Fasting* is of no Use: But if there are, if all Indulgences of this sort, inflave the Soul, and give it a sensual Taste, then we are as much obliged to abstain from what does us this Harm, as we are obliged to *pray* for any Thing which can do us Good.

XI. And it is sure no Christian can doubt of this: As none that knows any Thing of the Gospel can doubt whether *Fasting* be a *common Duty* of Christianity, since our Lord has rank'd it with giving *Alms* and *Prayer*. *When thou fastest, anoint thy Head and wash thy Face, that thou appear not unto Men to fast, but to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.*

So that the same Instructions, and the same Reasons are given for *Fasting*, as for *Alms* and *private Prayer*, that *thy Father which seeth in secret, may reward thee openly.*

XII. Eating and Drinking are the common Supports of Life. But then as they are the Supports of a corrupt Life, the Nourishment of a disordered Body that weighs down the Soul; whose Appetites are in a State of Enmity with the Life and Purity of the Soul; it is necessary that we take Care so to support the Life of

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the Body, as not to occasion the Sickness and Death of the Soul.

The Difference between the same Man full and fasting, is often almost the Difference of two Persons; a Man that in the Morning finds himself fit for any Meditation, is after a full Meal changed into another Creature, fit only for idle Amusements or the Yawnings of an Animal.

He has not only created a Dulness in his Soul, but has perverted its Taste: For he can be pleas'd with a *Romance* or *impertinent* History, while he has no Relish for a Book of Devotion.

This shews, that *Fasting* has a nearer relation to all *religious* Tempers than is generally thought; and that full Feeding not only dulls the Mind, but more particularly gives it a Dulness towards the Things of Religion.

XIII. Indeed every Indulgence of the Body in Eating and Drinking, is adding to its Power over the Soul.

A Man that makes every Day a Day of full and cheerful Meals, will by Degrees make the Happiness of every Day depend upon it, and consider every Thing with regard to it.

He will go to *Church* or stay at Home, as it suits with his *Dinner*, and not scruple to tell you, that he generally eats too heartily to go to Afternoon Service.

Now such People are under a worse Disorder than the *Jaundice*, and have their Sight more perverted than he that sees all Things *yellow*.

For what Discernment have they, who have more Taste for the Preparations of the *Kitchen*, than for the Comforts of the House of God: Who chuse rather to make themselves unfit for divine Service, than to baulk the Pleasure of a full Meal?

Can they think they have the Spirit of Christ who are thus enslaved to *Gluttony*? Or can they be said, to have forsaken all to follow him, who will not so much as forsake half a Meal for the Worship of God?

XIV. I know it will be thought too severe to call that *Gluttony*, because it is the Practice of Numbers of People of *Worth* and *Reputation*. But I hope they

will turn their Dislike of the Name into a Dislike of the Thing: For 'tis as certainly *Gluttony* as picking of Pockets is stealing.

The Sin of *Gluttony* is the Sin of over-eating. Now this may be difficult to state exactly in some Cases. But he that owns he eats so much as renders him *indisposed* for the publick Worship of God, has determined against himself, and put his own Case out of all question.

Men may fancy, they only are guilty of *Gluttony*, who eat till they *surfeit* their Bodies. They may think those only guilty of *Drunkenness*, who drink till they have lost their Senses. But there is a much surer Rule to go by, given them by the Spirit of God; *whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.* All therefore in Eating and Drinking that is not to the Glory of God, is offer'd to something that is not the Glory of God; it is offer'd to the Corruption and Sensuality of our Natures. It is the Sin of Intemperance; and is *Indevotion* too, when indulged at a Time that keeps us from the publick Worship of God.

XV. Indeed a constant Course of full Feeding is the Death of the Soul, and every Day that is a Day of such Happiness, is a Day lost to Religion.

When a Man has rejoiced himself with full Eating and Drinking, he is like any other Animal, disposed only to *Play* or *Idleness*. He has no more feeling of Sin than he has of *Hunger*, and can no more perceive himself to be a *miserable fallen Creature*, than he can perceive himself to be a *Beggar*.

For this Course of sensual Enjoyments, is as contrary to a true Sense of Sin, as it is contrary to a State of *Beggary* and *Want*; and a Man in such Happiness, can no more feel the *Weight of Sin*, than he can feel himself in the *Misery of Poverty*.

XVI. I know some object, that Fasting is not an *universal* Duty; but fit for some particular Cases, and particular Constitutions.

To this I answer, if by Fasting you mean an entire Abstinence from Food, for such a Space of Time, in this Sense it is not an universal Duty.

But this is quite a wrong Notion of it. For the Fasting whereof I speak is not any *fix'd Degree* of Abstinence from

from all Food: But, such an Exercise of Abstinence and Self-denial as is proper to every one's particular State.

Now in this Sense Fasting is as constant and universal a Duty as Repentance.

For as Repentance is an *universal* Duty, because the Reason of it is common to all Men; so is Fasting, because Sensuality, and fleshly Lusts, is the *universal* Corruption of all Men.

It is no *fix'd Degree* of Sorrow that is the common Repentance of all Men. It is no *fix'd Form* or *Length* or *Hour* of Prayer, that is the common Devotion of all Men. Yet are these *constant* and *universal* Duties.

In like manner, tho' Fasting be subject to all the same Variations, yet is it a *constant* and *universal* Duty.

XVII. *Justus* is a grave, sober Man. He is very angry at those who neglect Fasting. He thinks they know nothing of Religion.

But presently after, *Justus* will tell you, that he never fasts but on *Good-friday*, and the *30th* of *January*.

If *Justus* had lived before the Murder of King *Charles*, he had had but one Fast in the Year. Yet in all likelihood he would then have stood up for the *Doctrine* of Fasting.

If a Man was to be angry at those who neglect the Service of the Church, as People that know nothing of Religion, and then tell you, that he himself never goes thither but on *Good-friday*, and the *30th* of *January*, you would say, that he knew nothing of the Nature of Church Service.

Now *Justus* shews the same Ignorance of the Nature of *Fasting*.

If Prayer and Repentance and the Service of the Church, were not common Acts of Devotion, and necessary Ways of worshipping God, they would not be necessary on *Good-friday*.

In like manner, unless Fasting was a common and necessary Part of Religion, it would neither be necessary nor acceptable on those particular Days.

For it is not the Day that makes the Duty to be necessary. But the Day happens to be a proper Occasion of exercising a necessary Duty.

XVIII. If *Justus* was to say, that he never *repents* but on those publick Days, he might as easily defend himself as when he says, he only fasts at those Times.

For, is there any Benefit in fasting at those Times? Does it add any Thing to your Piety and Devotion? Does it calm your Mind and put you into a better State for Prayer, than when you take your usual Meals? If it has not something of this Effect, where is the Use of it at any Time? And if it has this Effect, how comes it that you will have but one or two such Days in the Year? Why will you not thus assist your Devotions, thus calm your Mind, thus raise your Heart, 'till the *Day* comes on which King *Charles* was murdered? Is not this like staying 'till then before you repent?

XIX. Farther, when the Disciples of our Lord could not cast the evil Spirit out of a Man that was a *Lunatick*, he not only tells them, it was for want of Faith, but also gives them a very important Instruction in those Words, *Howbeit this kind goeth not out, but by Prayer and Fasting.* Matt. xvii. 21.

Now, does this look as if Fasting were designed only for a Day or two in the Year? Is it rank'd with Prayer, as being equally prevalent with God? And is not this sufficient to teach us, that we must think of Fasting as we think of Prayer; that it is a proper Way of Devotion, a right Method of applying to God? And if that Prayer is most prevailing and enters farthest into Heaven, which is attended with Fasting, it is Proof enough surely, that Fasting is to be a common ordinary Part of our Devotion.

Is it powerful enough, by the Blessing of God, to cast out Devils, and cure Lunaticks? And shall we neglect it, when we pray against the evil Tempers which possess our Hearts? Shall we not then pray to God in the most powerful prevailing Manner that we can?

If we were to Fast without Praying, would not this be a Way of Worship of our own Invention? And if we pray and neglect Fasting, is it not equally chusing a Worship of our own? For he that has taught us the Use and Advantage of Prayer, has also taught us the Use and Advantage of Fasting. And has likewise join'd them together, as having the same Power with God.

XX. We may also observe, that the Reason of Self-denial and Abstinence is perpetual, because we are perpetually united to a Body, that is more or less fit to join with the Soul in Acts of Holiness, according to the State it is in.

It is therefore absolutely necessary that we avoid every Degree of Indulgence, every kind of Irregularity, that may make our Bodies less *active* or less fit for the Purpose of a holy Life.

Christian Temperance is no more that which passes for Temperance in the Sight of Men, than Christian Charity is that which passes for Charity in the World.

A worldly Man may think himself temperate, when he only abstains from such Excesses as may make him fitter to enjoy a healthful *Sensuality*.

But Christian Temperance is of quite another Kind, and for other Ends. It is to keep the Body in a State of Purity and Submission, and to preserve in the Soul a divine and heavenly Taste.

XXI. It is out of all Question, that there are some States of Body fitter for Virtue than others.

This is as certain as that *Gluttony* and *Drunkenness* dispose Men to all sorts of Sins, and give them a distrelish for all sorts of Holiness. For as these Vices have the utmost Contrariety to Religion, so every *Approach* toward them is, in a certain Degree, partaking of them.

A Man that lives so as not to be called either a *Glutton* or a *Drun kard*, may yet be so near them, as to partake of those Tempers which are the Effects of *Gluttony* and *Drunkenness*.

As a Man may be Vain and Uncharitable, yet not so as to be remarkable for his Vanity and Uncharitableness, so he may be under the Guilt and evil Effects of Eating and Drinking, tho' not so as to be esteem'd either a *Glutton* or *Intemperate*.

So that a wise Christian will constantly practise such Abstinence, as may not only secure him from Sensuality in the Sight of the World, but as best suits with a Body which is the holy Habitation of a Soul devoted to God.

XXII. St. Paul saith, *I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the Air. But I keep under my Body, and bring it into Subjection, lest that by any Means, when I have preach'd to others, I myself should be a Castaway.* 1. Cor. ix.

Let it be observ'd, that the Apostle practis'd this Self-denial, not only as a good and advisable Thing, but as of the last Necessity. It was not, as he was an Apostle, and that he might be fitter for the miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghost: But it was, to secure his Salvation, and lest when he had preach'd to others, he should himself be a Castaway.

Let it be consider'd, that this Apostle, who lived in *Infirmities, in Reproaches, in Necessities, in Persecutions, in Distresses* for Christ's Sake, who was also full of *Signs and Wonders, and mighty Deeds*, and who had been caught up into the third Heavens; yet reckons all his Virtues as insecure, and his Salvation in danger, without this constantly continued Course of universal Self-denial. Nay he thought all his Advancements in Piety, without this, to be as vain a Labour as *beating the Air*.

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

An Apostle preaching the Gospel with *Signs and Wonders*, in the midst of Distress and Persecution, thought his own Salvation in danger, without this Subjection of his Body. And shall we think it safe to feed to the Full, and indulge our Bodies in Ease and Plenty?

XXIII. There are no Truths more plainly delivered in Scripture than these two, the *general Corruption* of human Nature, and the *absolute Necessity* of Divine Grace. Now these make the Necessity of a continual Self-denial plain and obvious to the meanest Capacity; and extend it to all those Things and Enjoyments which either strengthen the *Corruption* of our Nature, or grieve the *Holy Spirit of God*, and cause him to depart from us.

Whoever

Whoever reflects on these, will soon be convinced, that all those Enjoyments are to be abstained from, which either support our natural Corruption, or hinder the Inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

He will find also, that this Self-denial must extend itself to every Day of our Lives, unless he can find a Day, which offers nothing suitable to the Corruption of his Nature, or nothing contrary to the good Motions of the Holy Ghost.

XXIV. Most People acknowledge this in general; That we ought to avoid what strengthens our Corruptions and grieves the Spirit of God: But then they think to abstain from gross Sin is sufficient for this.

But let such consider, that a *Dropsy* or a *Gangrene*, is not only increased by Drunkenness, but by every little Indulgence that suits with it.

Now the Corruption of our Nature is an inbred Distemper that possesses us in the Manner of a Dropsy or Gangrene. If we give into notorious Sins, it quite overcomes us, and we are straightway dead in Sin.

But tho' we keep clear of great Offences, yet if we indulge ourselves in little Things that suit with the Corruption of our Nature, we certainly nourish a slow Death, and destroy ourselves by Degrees.

Our Self-denial therefore must be as *universal* as the Means of our Corruption. It is to last as long as our Disorder, and to extend itself to every Thing that might increase it. And this for as plain a Reason as a Man in a Dropsy is not only to abstain from Drunkenness, but from every Indulgence that increases his Disorder.

XXV. Let it be farther consider'd, that the Corruption of our Nature is but faintly represented by comparing it to these Distempers. For one in these Distempers may have only some Part affected; but the Corruption of our Natures is as extensive as our Natures. It is the Corruption of every Faculty and every Power. It is Blindness in our Understandings; it is Self-love and Perverseness in our Wills, Intemperance in our Appetites. It is Anger, Lust, Pride and Revenge in our Passions; it is Falseness, Hypocrisy, Malice and Hatred in our Hearts. Now all this, and far
more

more than this, makes the miserable Corruption of human Nature.

So that it is as necessary that our Lives be a State of *Regimen*, contrary to this Variety of Disorders, as it is necessary for a Man under a Complication of Distempers, to observe a *Course* of Regularity.

For seeing all ill Tempers are increased by Indulgence, and the more we yield to any, the stronger it grows, 'tis plain we must practise as many sorts of Self-denial: as we have ill Tempers to contend with.

XXVI. When we speak of Self-denial, we are apt to confine it to Eating and Drinking; but we ought to consider, that these are the easiest and smallest Instances of it. Pride, Vanity, Self-love, Covetousness, Envy, and other Inclinations of the like nature, call for a more constant and watchful Self-denial, than the Appetites of Hunger and Thirst.

'Till therefore our Self-denial is as universal as our Corruption; 'till we deny ourselves all Degrees of Vanity and Folly, as earnestly as we deny ourselves all Degrees of Drunkenness; till we reject all sorts of Pride and Envy, as we abhor all kinds of Gluttony; till we watch and deny all irregular Tempers, as we avoid all sorts of Sensuality, we can no more be said to practise Self-denial, than he can be said to be Just, who only denies himself the Liberty of Stealing.

And till we do thus universally deny ourselves, our Lives will be a *ridiculous Mixture* of I know not what; *sober* and covetous, *proud* and *devout*, *temperate* and *vain*, *regular* in our Forms of Prayer, and *irregular* in our Passions, *circumspect* in *little Modes* of Behaviour, and *careless* of Tempers the most essential to Piety.

XXVII. A little Attention to that great Principle of *Reason and Religion*, That God is our only Good, will convince us still farther of the Necessity of universal Self-denial.

For what can be a greater Self-denial, or more contradictory to all our natural Sentiments, than to live and govern ourselves by a Happiness that is to be had in God alone? A Happiness which our Senses, our old Guides, neither see, nor feel, nor taste, nor perceive: A Happiness which gives us neither Figure,
nor

nor Dignity, nor Power, nor Glory, among one another?

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

He has not only a thousand imaginary Pleasures, but has found out as many Vexations; all which shew, that he thinks - *Happiness* is every where to be found. For no one is vex'd at any Thing, unless he thinks he is disappointed of some possible Happiness.

A Happiness therefore in God alone, is the greatest Contradiction to all our natural Tempers. Not only as it proposes a Good which our Senses cannot relish, but as it leads us from all those imaginary Enjoyments on which our Senses have fix'd our Hearts.

XXVIII. If then we think of Religion, without Self-denial, we know nothing at all of it. For its whole Nature is; To direct us by a Light and Knowledge and Wisdom from God, which is all contrary to the Darkness, Ignorance and Folly of our Natures.

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

We may let our Senses tell us, what we are to *Eat* and *Drink*, or when we are to Sleep. We may let them teach us, how near we may draw to a *Fire*, how great a *Burden* we may carry, or into how deep a *Water* we may go. In these Things they are our proper Guides.

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

XXIX. While we forget this, all our Judgments of Things are corrupted by the Grossness and Errors of our Senses,

We judge of every thing in the same Manner as the Child judges of his *Play Things*. It is by our *Senses* alone we pass the Judgment, tho' we think we act with the *Reason of Man*.

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

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

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

A *Coach* and *Six* and an *embroider'd Suit*, shall make a great *Statesman* as happy, as ever a *Go-cart* and *Feather* made a Child.

Ask a Child, What he thinks he would do with a great Sum of Money? Why, he would buy twenty *little Horses*, he would have twenty *fine Coats*, see all *fine Sights*, and the like.

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

And whence is this, but from hence, that Men act with the same *Vanity* of Mind, are under the same *poor Guidance* of their Senses, are as ignorant of their *true Happiness*, as great Strangers to their own Nature, and as far from a true Sense of their *Relation* to GOD, as when they first set out in Life.

And is not this a plain Reason for Self-denial? For to indulge ourselves in our *natural Tempers*, is to grow old in the Follies of *Childhood*.

XXX. Let us take another View of the Disorder of our Nature, that we may see a still greater Necessity of not walking according to it.

When we see People *drunk*, or in a violent Passion, we

we own they are so long in a State of Delusion, thinking, saying, and doing irregular Things, by the mere Force of their Blood and Spirits. Here we all see the Power of our Bodies over our Reason; and never suppose a Man capable of judging or acting wisely, so long as he is under the Violence of *Passion*, or heated by *Drink*.

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

Sometimes the Disorder is more *violent* than at others. But it never ceases. Men are always in some *Passion* or other; and this, even when it is not to that Degree, as to be visible and to give Offence to others, yet occasions the same Weakness of Mind, the same disorder'd Imagination, and the same wrong Apprehension of the Nature of Things

A *silent Envy*, a *secret Vanity*, which no Body sees, raises Thoughts in our Mind, and disorders our Judgments in the same manner as more *violent* Passions.

You may increase the *Vanity* or *Envy*, till it end in Distraction, as it sometimes happens. But then you may be sure, it disorders our Understanding in some Degree, long before it came to Madness. All Men therefore, while in a natural State, resemble those who are drunk, or in a violent *Passion*; having some *Passion* or other that affects their Spirits and disorders their Judgment, in the same manner, tho' not in the same Degree.

XXXI. Another Circumstance of Drunkenness is this, that it gives us a Taste peculiar to it, so as to leave a Dulness and Indisposition in the Mind towards any thing else. An habitual Drunkard has no Pleasure like that confused Heat of Thoughts that arises from inflamed Blood. The repeating this so often has given him a Turn of Mind that relishes nothing but what relates to Intemperance.

Now this is naturally the State of all People, in some respect or other. There is something has got hold of them, and given them a Taste for it, in the same manner that Drinking has formed the Taste of a Drunkard. All People are not intemperate; but all are under some

Habit

Habit that affects the Mind in the same Manner as Intemperance.

Some People have indulg'd themselves so long in *Dressing*, others in *Play*, others in *Sports* of the Field, others only in little *gossiping Stories*, that they are as much Slaves to these, as the intemperate Man to Liquor.

Now we readily own, that a Man who has enslav'd himself to Drinking, has thereby render'd himself incapable of being a *reasonable Judge* of other Happinesses; but then we do not enough consider, that we are hurt in the same Manner by any Thing else that has taken hold of us, and given us a Temper and Turn of Mind peculiar to it.

It is to as little Purpose to talk of the Happiness of Religion, to one that is fond of *Dress*, or *Play* or *Sports*, as to a Drunkard; for the Pleasures of these particular kinds, make him as deaf to all other Proposals of Happiness, and as incapable of judging of them.

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

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

Hence also appears the absolute Necessity of denying all our natural Tempers and Inclinations, and giving ourselves up without Reserve to the Light and Wisdom of God; since by our natural Corruption and Slavery to the Body, we are always under the Power of its blind Motions, and since all our Inclinations and Judgments, are only the Judgments of heated Blood, drunken Spirits and disorder'd Passions.

XXXII. Every one sees People in the World, whom he takes to be incapable of *sober* Judgments and *wise* Reflections, because he sees they are full of themselves, blinded

blinded with Prejudices, violent in their Passions, wild and extravagant in their Imaginations.

Now when we see these, we should reflect that we see ourselves; for we as certainly see a *true Representation* of ourselves, when we look at such People, as we see a true Picture of our State, when we see a Man in the Agonies of Death.

You are not *dying* as this Man is; but still he shews you your own *true Picture*. He shews you that your Life is in the midst of Death, that you have in you the Seeds of Sickness and Mortality, and that you are only at a *little uncertain Distance* from those who are lying upon their last Beds.

In like manner, you are not, it may be, in the same Height of Passion that another Man is. You are at *some uncertain Distance* from his State. But if you fancy you are not corrupted with Self-love, not weaken'd by Prejudices, not vain in your Imaginations, not disordered in your Tempers, because you are not in that *Extremity* of Disorder wherein some other People are; you think as absurdly, as if you imagined yourself to be immortal, because you are not in the *Agonies of Death*.

When therefore you see the Violence of other Mens Passions, the Folly of their Tempers, and Vanity of their Minds, remember that you see so many plain Reasons for denying yourself, and resisting your own Nature, which has in it the Seeds of all the same evil Tempers.

XXXII. From all this we may learn, (as was observ'd above) that Abstinence as to Eating and Drinking, is but a small Part of Christian Self-denial: It being full as dangerous to indulge any evil Temper, as to live in Gluttony and Intemperance.

You think it shameful to be an *Epicure*, or to be fond of *Liquor*. You are very right; but then proceed a Step further, and think it as shameful to be fond of *Dress*, or delighted with *yourself*, or to be fond of *Dainties*; and that it is as great a Sin, to please any corrupt *Temper* of your Heart, as to please your *Palate*. Remember, that Blood heated with any *Passion*, is like Blood heated with *Liquor*, and that the *Grossness*

of Gluttony is no greater a Contrariety to Religion, than the Politeness of Pride or Vanity.

I have been the longer on this Subject, trying to represent the Weakness and Corruption of our Nature, because so far only as we see this, can we see the Necessity of denying ourselves. This would be needless, if we were wise and good; but if we see that our whole Nature is in disorder, that our Light is Darkness, our Wisdom Foolishness, our Judgments as gross and blind as our Appetites; that our Senses govern us as they govern Children; that our Hearts are taken up with *Georgians* and Trifles; that the State of our Souls is a State of Error and Delusion, like that of Drunkenness and Passion.

If we see ourselves in this true Light, we shall see the great Reason of Christian Self-denial, of renouncing our whole Selves, that we may see all Things in God; that our Hearts may be moved by a Motion from him, and our Wills and Inclinations wholly directed by the Light and Wisdom of his Spirit.



C H A P. IV.

THE Necessity of Divine Grace, another General Ground of Self-denial.

I. I come now to another great Doctrine of our Religion, namely, the *absolute Necessity of Divine Grace*; which is another constant Reason for universal *Self-denial*.

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

Our natural Life is preserv'd by some Union with God, who is the Fountain of Life to all the Creation; to which Union we are altogether Strangers. We find that we are alive, as we find that we think; but how or by what Influence from God our Life is supported, is a Secret into which we cannot enter. It is the same Thing

Thing with relation to our spiritual Life, or Life of Grace; it arises from some *invisible Union* with God, or divine Influence, which in this State we cannot comprehend. Our Blessed Saviour saith: *The Wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the Sound thereof, but can'st not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

(a) This shews us how ignorant we are of the *Manner* of the Operations of the Holy Spirit. We may feel its Effects, as we may perceive the Effects of the Wind, but are as much Strangers to the *Manner* of its coming upon us, as we are Strangers to that *exact Point*, from whence the Wind begins to blow, or where it will cease.

II. The Spirit of God is like the Nature of God, too high for our Conceptions, whilst we are in these dark Houses of Clay. But our blessed Saviour has in some Degree help'd our Conceptions in this Matter, by the Manner of his giving the Holy Spirit to the Disciples; *and he breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.* By this we are taught to conceive of the Communications of the Holy Spirit, with some Likeness to Breath, or Wind; that its Influences come upon us in some *Manner*, like to a gentle Breathing of the Air. Representations of this kind are only made in Compliance with the Weakness of our Apprehensions; which, not being able to conceive Things as they are in their own Nature, must be instructed, by comparing them to such Things as our Senses are acquainted with. Thus the *Wisdom* and *Knowledge*, that is revealed from God, is compar'd to *Light*; not because Light is a true Representation of the Wisdom of God; but because it serves best to represent it to our low Capacities. In like manner, the *Influences* of the Holy Spirit, are set forth by *breathing* upon us; not because *Breath*, or *Air*, or *Wind*, are true Representations of the Gifts of the Spirit, but because they are the properest Representations that as yet fall within our Knowledge.

III. But that which is most necessary for us to know, and of which we are sufficiently inform'd

in Scripture, is the *absolute Necessity* of this divine Assistance.

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

IV. And seeing we are none of Christ's, if the Spirit of Christ be not in us; seeing we are only so far Christians, as we are renew'd by the Holy Ghost; nothing can be more necessary than that we consider all our Tempers, Pleasures, Cares, Designs and Ways of Life, whether they be such as *suit* with the Wisdom and heavenly Guidance of the Holy Spirit. This Doctrine shews us to ourselves in a *new Point of View*, and may serve to teach us several Truths, which we should otherwise not so readily apprehend.

When we are left to consider our Duty with relation to the express Commandments of God, there are many Ways of Life, which we think ourselves at liberty to follow, because they seem to be no plain Breach
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(a) Rom. viii. 11.

of any express Commandment. But we are to look to a farther Rule, and to consider our Pleasures and Cares, our Designs and Endeavours, not only whether they are contrary to the Letter of the Law, but whether they are according to the Spirit of God; for if they are contrary to the Spirit of God, they are as truly to be avoided, as if they were contrary to some express Commandment. For we are assur'd by Scripture, that they only are the Sons of God, *who are led by the Spirit of God*; and none can be said to be led by the Spirit of God, but they whose Lives are according to it, whose Actions, Cares, and Pleasures, Hopes and Fears, are such as may be said to be guided by the Motions of the Holy Ghost.

V. We are therefore to consider ourselves as *inspir'd Persons*, that have no Knowledge or Wisdom, but what comes from God; and this Wisdom will no longer dwell with us, than we act and conduct ourselves conformably thereto. So that we must not vainly deceive ourselves in saying, where is the Harm of such *Indulgences*, or such *Vanities* and idle *Amusements*? But must consider, whether they are such as are conformable to a Life that is to be directed by the Holy Ghost. In this Manner must we examine all our Ways of Life, as well our Cares as our Pleasures. For unreasonable Cares, and unreasonable Pleasures, are equally contrary to the Wisdom of the Holy Spirit, and equally separate us from him. People often think their Designs and Diversions innocent, because they are not *sinful* in their Nature. But they should also consider, whether they are not *vain* and *foolish*, and *unsuitable* to the Condition of a Christian. For a Life of *Folly* and *Vanity*, and *trifling Designs*, is no more living by the *Spirit of God*, than a Life of *gross Sins* is keeping the *Commandments*. So that the safest Rule to judge of our Actions by, is to consider them with relation to that Spirit, by which we are to be guided. Is this Design or this Diversion according to the Wisdom of the Spirit of God? Am I in these Things improving the secret Inspiration of the Holy Ghost? Am I here governed by a Wisdom from above? Are these Ways such as I can truly say, that I am led into them by the Spirit

Spirit of God? Do I allow myself in them, because they serve to set forth the Glory of God? Are they good Proofs that the Spirit of God dwelleth in me; and that by thus sowing to the Spirit, I shall of the Spirit reap everlasting Life? This is the Rule by which Christians are to regulate their Thoughts, Words, and Actions; for we are called by God to act by the Motions of his Holy Spirit, and to make no other Use of ourselves, or the World we are in, than such as is conformable to that Dignity of Life and State of Glory to which we are called. The Spirit of our Religion is to be the Spirit of our Lives, the constant Principle of all our Tempers and Inclinations, which is to render us reasonable, and wise and holy in all our Progress thro' the World.

VI. The *Renewal* of our Hearts by the Spirit of God fills our Minds with great and sublime Truths, and gives us Desires and Inclinations, Hopes and Fears, Cares and Pleasures suitable to them.

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

VII. 'Tis acknowledg'd by all, that a Life of *Intemperance* and *Debauchery*, makes us dead and senseless of Religion: But then it is not enough considered that the *Vanity* of the Mind, an Understanding busied in *Trifles*, an *impertinent Course of Life*, will as certainly produce the *same Effect*. If our Understanding is full of foolish Imaginations, if we are devoted to Trifles, Religion can gain no Entrance. A Man may be so earnest in *picking Straws*, as to have no Leisure to think of his Salvation; nor any more Inclination to it, than one that is constantly in *Drink*.

Thus poor *Amusements*, vain *Arts*, useless *Sciences*, impertinent *Learning*, false *Satisfaction*, a wrong Turn of Mind, a State of *Idleness*, or any the vainest *Trifles* of

of Life, may keep Men at as great a Distance from true Religion, as the Debaucheries of Intemperance.

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

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

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

IX. LYCIA might be pious; but that she is too *easy, gay, and chearful*, to admit of Care of any kind: She can no more *repent*, than she can be *out of Temper*, and must be the same *sparkling, chearful Creature* in the *Church*, as in the *Play-house*. She might be capable of understanding the Misery of human Nature, and the Necessity of the Comforts of Religion; but that she is so happy every time she is *dress'd*.

MATRONA is old, and has been these *fifty Years* eating and drinking, sleeping and waking, dressing and undressing, *paying and receiving Visits*. She has no Prophaneness; and, if she has no Piety, it is owing to this, that she never had a *spare Half-hour* to think about it. She envies her Daughters, because they will *dress and visit* when she is dead.

PUBLIUS goes to *Church* sometimes, and reads the Scripture; but he knows not what he reads or prays,
his

his Head is so full of Politicks. He is so angry, at Kings and Ministers of State, that he has no Time or Disposition to call himself to Account. He has the History of all *Parliaments, Elections, Prosecutions* and *Impeachments*, and dies with little or no Religion, thro' a constant Fear of *Popery*.

SICCUS has been all his Life-long *building and pulling-down*, making *Canals and Ditches*, raising *Walls and Fences*. People call him a good Man, because he employs the Poor: *Siccus* might have been a *religious Man*, but that he thought *building* was the chief Happiness of a rational Creature. He is all the Week amongst *Dirt and Mortar*, and stays at home on *Sundays* to view his Contrivances. He will die more contentedly, if his Death does not happen, whilst some *Wall* is in building.

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

XI. We see even in worldly Matters, that if we propose any Thing to a Man, when he is in the Pursuit of something else, he hardly hears or understands us; we must stay for a Season of more Leisure and Indifference, till his Thoughts and Passions are at rest.

Now this holds much stronger in Matters of Religion. Its Doctrines are neither heard nor understood, because it always finds us in the Pursuit of *something else*. It matters not what this *something else* is; the Mind is equally employed wrong, and so not in a Condition to like, or at leisure to listen to any other Happiness. If you were to propose the same Truths to a Man in another State, when Weariness or Disappointment has made him give up all Designs, or when Sickness or the Approach of Death shows him that he must act no longer in them, they would have quite another Effect upon him; then the great Things of Religion appear great indeed: He

He feels their whole Weight, and is amaz'd he did not see them always in the same Manner. Now it is the great End and Design of *Self-denial* to put a Stop to the Follies of Life, that our Souls may quietly consider, and fully comprehend the Truths which come from God; that our Hearts, being at liberty from a Croud of foolish Thoughts, may be ready to obey and co operate with the *Inspirations* of that Spirit, which is to lead and quicken us in all Holiness; that *Death* and *Judgment*, *Heaven* and *Hell*, may make as deep Impressions upon our Minds in the Middle of our Lives, as at our last Hour; that we may be as wise and prudent as *sick* and *dying* Men, and live with such Apprehensions as most People die with; that we may see the Vanity of the World, the Misery of Sin, the Greatness of Eternity, and the Want of God, as they see it who stand upon the Brink of another World.

XII. This is the great and happy Work of *Self-denial*, to awaken us into a true Knowledge of ourselves, and shew us who, and where, and what we are. Till then our Life is but a *Sleep*, a *Dream*, a mere Succession of Shadows; and we act with as little Reason as a Child that is pleas'd with blowing about a *Feather*. We must therefore not only deny our wicked Inclinations, but also all our Follies, Impertinences, and vain Satisfactions: For, as plain and known Sins harden and corrupt, so Impertinences and vain Satisfactions delude and blind our Hearts, and render them insensible of our real Misery, or true Happiness.

XIII. We are true Members of the Kingdom of God; when the Kingdom of God is within us; when the Spirit of Religion is the Spirit of our Lives; when seated in our Hearts, it diffuses itself into all our Motions; when we are wise by its Wisdom, sober by its Sobriety, and humble by its Humility; when it is the Principle of all our Thoughts and Desires, the Spring of all our Hopes and Fears; when we like and dislike, seek and avoid, mourn and rejoice, as becomes those who are born again of God. And this is the Work of the Holy Spirit in our Hearts, to give us a *new Understanding*, a *new Judgment*, *Temper*, *Taste*, and *Relish*, new Desires, and new Hopes and Fears. But
 so

so far as we nourish any foolish Passion, indulge any Vanity of Mind or Corruption of Heart ; so far we *resist the Graces* of God's Holy Spirit, and render ourselves *indispos'd* to relish and improve his secret *Inspirations*.

XIV. Christians are therefore not only to consider themselves, as Men that are to act by a Principle of *Reason*, but as spiritual Beings who have a higher Principle of Life within them, and are to live by the *Wisdom* and *Instructions* of the Spirit of God.

As reasonable Men would do every Thing that tended to strengthen or improve their Reason, so Christians ought to practise every Thing that can strengthen or preserve their Union with the Spirit of God. For as a Man without Reason has but the *Figure* of a Man ; so a Christian without the Spirit of God, has but the *Form* of a Christian. Here therefore must we fix all our Care, and Concern, that we may remove all Hindrances of divine Grace ; that we may be truly spiritual in all our Ways and Designs, and indulge no *Tempers* that may lessen our Union with the Spirit of God.

XV. Some Persons will perhaps refrain from *Grief*, when they find that it hurts their *Eyes* ; they will avoid *Passion* and *Anger* if it ends in Pains of the Head ; but they would do well to consider that these *Tempers* are to be abstain'd from, upon much greater Accounts. Passion may disorder our Bodies, waste our Spirits, and leave Pains in our *Heads* ; but it leaves greater Marks of Injury in our better Parts, as it throws us into a State of Madness, and *banishes* the Holy Spirit of Peace, and Gentleness, and *prepares* us for the Suggestions of the Spirit of Darkness. *Grief* may hurt our *Eyes*, but it much more hurts our *Souls*, as it sinks them into a State of Gloom and Darkness, which *expels* and *quenches* the Spirit of God ; for Light may as well unite with Darkness, as the Spirit of God dwell with the gloomy Dulness and Horror of stupid Grief. What I have observed of these two Passions, ought to be concluded of every other *Passion* and *Temper* ; we are to consider it as it *suits* with, or *resists* that

new

new Spirit, by whose holy Motions we are to be preserv'd in a State of Holiness.

XVI. Now seeing this *Newness* of Spirit is the whole of Religion; we must fear and avoid all *Irregularity* of Spirit, every *unreasonable Temper*; because it affects us in the Seat of Life, because it hurts us in our principal Part, and makes us *less capable* of the Graces, and *less obedient* to the Motions of GOD's Holy Spirit. We must labour after a State of Peace, Satisfaction, and Thankfulness, free from the Folly of vain Hopes, idle Fears, and false Anxieties, that our Souls may be disposed to rejoice in the Comforts, and advance in the Graces of the Holy Ghost.

XVII. And with what *Care* and *Exactness* we are at all Times to conduct ourselves, is fully set forth in the following Words: *Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouth, but that which is Good to the Use of edifying, that it may minister Grace unto the Hearers; and grieve not the Holy Spirit of GOD, whereby you are sealed unto the Day of Redemption.* (a) That we may not here mistake what is meant by *corrupt Communication*, the Apostle adds; *but that which is good to the Use of edifying, that it may minister Grace unto the Hearers.* So that it is a *Conversation* that *does not edify* and profit the Hearers, that the Apostle condemns as *corrupt*. And let it be observ'd that the Apostle does not prohibit this kind of Conversation because it is *useless*, and impertinent; but for a Reason of the utmost Consequence, that we may *not grieve the Holy Spirit of GOD*. This shews us that we Christians are to govern ourselves by no less a Rule, than a *Conformity* to the Spirit of GOD; that we are not only to deny ourselves vain and foolish Actions, but also idle and unedifying Discourse, and conduct ourselves in all our Behaviour, with such a Spirit of Wisdom and Purity as may make the Holy Ghost *delight* to dwell in us. Such a Wisdom as is not occasionally exercis'd in this or that Place, or at set Times; but is always in Being, and constantly disposing us to Thoughts, Words and Actions suitable to it.

XVIII. A

(a) Ephes. iv. 29.

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

A Man may frequent *Meetings for Mirth*; but yet, if when he is out of them, he gives himself unto Peevishness, Chagrin and Dulness, I presume no one will say such a Man is of a *cheerful Spirit*. It is easy to make the Application: If we are only Attendants at Places of Religion; if when we are out of those Places, we are of another Spirit, I don't say proud or covetous, but vain and foolish; if our Actions are silly, and our Conversation trifling and impertinent, our Tempers vain and worldly, we are no more of a *religious Spirit*, than a dull peevish Man is of a *cheerful Spirit*, because he is regular at some set Meetings for *Mirth*.

XIX. Religion is not ours till we live by it; till it is the Religion of our Thoughts, Words and Actions; till it goes with us into every Place; sits uppermost on every Occasion; and forms and governs our Hopes and Fears, our Cares and Pleasures. He is the religious Man who watches and guards his Spirit, and endeavours to be always in the Temper of Religion; who worships God in every Place; who is as fearful of foolish Thoughts, irregular Tempers, and vain Imaginations at one Time as at another; who is as wise and heavenly at *Home*, or in the Field, as in the *House of God*. For when once Religion has got Possession of a Man's Heart, and is become as it ought to be, his ruling Temper; it is as agreeable to such a one in all Places, and at all Times, to speak and act according to its Directions, as 'tis agreeable to the *ambitious Man*, to act according to the Motions of Ambition. We must therefore take it for granted, that if we are not religious in our Conversation, or common Temper, we are not religious in our Hearts; we may have a *Formality of Religion* at certain *Times* and *Places*, but we are not of a *religious Spirit*.

XX. We see every Body speaking and conversing according to their *Spirit* and Temper; the covetous, the

the Ambitious, the Vain and Self-conceited, have each of them their proper Language suitable to their Spirit and Temper; they are the *same* Persons in all Places, and always talk like themselves. If therefore we could meet with Persons of a truly religious Spirit, we should find them like Men of other Tempers, the same Persons in *all* Places, and always talking and acting like themselves. We should find them living by one Temper, and conversing with Men with the same Spirit that they converse with God; not one Thing in one Place, and another in another; not formal and grave at a *Funeral*, and mad and frantic at a *Feast*; not listening to Wisdom at *Church*, and delighting in Folly at *Home*; not angry with one foolish Thing, and as much pleas'd at another; but steady and uniform in the same wise and religious Temper.

XXI. Farther, as we are not of a *religious Spirit*, till it is the Spirit of our Life, and orders all our Conversation; so it is carefully to be observ'd, that if our Conversation is vain and foolish, it keeps us in a State incapable of Religion, by *grieving the Holy Spirit*. And as we can do nothing without the Spirit of God, as He is our *Breath*, our *Life*, our *Light*, and our *Strength*; so, if we live in such a Way as *grieves* and *removes* this Holy Spirit from us, we are as Branches that are broke off from the Tree, and must perish in the Deadness and Corruption of our Nature. Let this therefore teach us to judge rightly of the Sin and Danger of *vain, unedifying* and *corrupt* Communication; it is not the Sin of *Idleness* or *Negligence* only; it is not a *pardonable Infirmity*; it is not a *little Mistake* in Spiritual Wisdom; but it is a Sin that stands between us and the *Tree of Life*; that opposes our whole Happiness, as it *grieves* and *separates* the Holy Spirit from us. Let this also teach some People the Reason why they are so *dead* and *senseless* of Religion: They are not guilty of gross Sins; they have an Aversion to *Cheating* and *Falseness*; but at the same Time have no more Feeling or Sense of Religion than mere *Reprobates*. Now the Reason of it is this; they live in such an *Impertinence* of Conversation; their Communication is to constantly upon *illy* and *vain* Subjects; and they are so

fond of those who have the Talent of conversing in the same Manner, that they render themselves *unfit* for the Residence of the Holy Spirit. We don't seem to apprehend, either how much *Good* or how much *Evil* there is in Conversation; I believe it may be affirm'd that the greatest Instructions, and the greatest Corruptions proceed from it. For Mens common Conversation and ordinary Life teach much more effectually than any Thing they say or do at set Times or Occasions.

When a Clergyman preaches, he is for the most Part considered as acting according to his Profession, and doing that which all Clergymen do, whether *Good* or *Bad*. But if he is the same wise and virtuous Man in his Communication, that he is in the *Pulpit*; if his Speech be always *season'd with Salt*, that it may *minister Grace unto the Hearers*; if the *common* and *ordinary* Actions of his Life be visibly govern'd by a Spirit of Piety; such a one will be heard with Reverence on the *Sunday* for what he says and does all the Week. And on the contrary, if a *Clergyman*, when he comes out of the *Pulpit*, is but like other Men; as *irregular* in his Tempers; as *trifling* in his Conversation; as *eager* in his Diversions; and as *vain* in his Designs; he will mightily lessen his Power over the Hearts of his Hearers.

A Father now and then gives his Son virtuous Advice, and the Son perhaps would be much the better for it; but that he never hears him talk virtuously, but when he is giving him Advice; this makes him think, that he is then only acting the part of a *Father*; as when he is buying him *Cloaths*, or putting him out to an *Employment*. Whereas if he saw his Father's *ordinary Life* and Conversation to be under the Rules of Religion; and his every Day Temper, a Temper of Piety; 'tis very likely that he would be won into an Imitation of it.

XXIII. It is our Communication, our *ordinary Temper* and *common Life*, that affects other People, that either hardens them in Sin, or awakens them to a Sense of Piety. Let therefore all *Clergymen*, and *Masters* and *Mistresses* of Families look carefully to themselves; let them consider, that if their *ordinary Life*, their Communication

be

be vain, impertinent, and unedifying, they are not only in a corrupt State of Heart, but are guilty of corrupting and perverting the Hearts of those that belong to them. Let them not think that they have sufficiently discharg'd their Duty, by seeing that those who relate to them, have their proper Instructions; for it is next to impossible for such Instructions to have their proper Effect against the Example of those we converse with. If a *Clergyman plays, and drinks, and sports* with his Flock in the Week Days; let him not wonder if he preaches them asleep on *Sundays*. If a *Father is intemperate; if he swears, and converses foolishly* with his Friends; let him not wonder that his Children cannot be made virtuous. It is therefore the necessary Duty of all Christians, in all States of Life; to look carefully to their *ordinary Behaviour*, that it be not the Means of poisoning and corrupting the Hearts of those they converse with. They must consider, that all the Follies and Impertinences of their ordinary Life and Conversation have the Guilt of destroying Souls; and that the Blood of those whom their Follies have destroy'd, will be requir'd at their Hands.

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

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

XXVI. A GOOD-NATUR'D, *drinking, sleeping, playing, swearing Master*, is a Curse to those who tend upon him; they are led into all Irregularities, by following his Steps, and are sent into the World harden'd in Follies, and insensible of Religion, by having liv'd with

with such a *Master*. This ought carefully to be consider'd by all Christians, as a mighty Encouragement to an exact Strictness of Behaviour; that as a *holy* Conversation intitles us to a Reward for other Peoples Virtues; so an *evil* Communication makes us liable to a Punishment for other Mens Sins. For we can neither live well nor ill to ourselves alone; but must of necessity do either Good or Harm to others by our manner of Conversation. This is one great Reason why a vain corrupt Communication does so *grieve* the Holy Spirit; because it is so infecting an Evil, and does so corrupt the Manners of those we converse with.



C H A P. V.

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

I. I HAVE shewn that the *Necessity of Divine Grace* is a mighty Argument for an universal Exactness of Life and Conversation. I come now to speak farther to that remarkable Branch of it: *Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouth, but that which is good to the Use of edifying, that it may minister Grace to the Hearers, and grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the Day of Redemption.* Now if we are to let no corrupt Communication proceed out of our Mouth, that we may not grieve *the holy Spirit of God*; then it follows that we are to deny ourselves the Entertainment of all *corrupt, impertinent, and unedifying Books*. For if vain and idle Words are not to proceed out of our Mouths, we must be under the same Necessity of not letting them come into our Hearts.

II. If we would know what Books are to be avoided as corrupt and grieving the Holy Spirit, we must look back to the Rule of our Communication; for as that Communication is there said to be *corrupt* that does not *edify and minister Grace* to the Hearers; so must we
look

look upon all those Books as corrupt, which do not *edify* and *minister Grace* to the Readers. Now this Book-entertainment is as certainly forbidden by the Apostle, as Cheating is forbidden by the *eighth* Commandment : For if I am not to say foolish and impertinent Things myself, because such a Communication *grieves* the Holy Spirit of God ; I am as certainly forbid the Reading the corrupt and impertinent Sayings of other People.

The Books which mostly corrupt our Hearts, and fill us with a Spirit of Folly, are such as almost all the World allow themselves to read ; I mean Books of *Wit*, and *Humour*, *Romances*, *Plays*, and other Productions of the *Poets*. Thus a *grave Orthodox* old Gentleman, if he hears that his *Neice* is very good, and delights in reading, will fill her Closet with Volumes of *Plays*, and *Poems* on *several Occasions*, on purpose to encourage her to spend her Time well. There is not perhaps a more surprizing Infatuation in the Conduct of Christians, than this.

III. There is a proper Time for every Thing that is lawful to be done : Now, can you tell when it is proper for a Christian to meditate upon these Books ?

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

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

When we are *sick* it is time to fly to the *Physician* ; when we are *wearry*, it is a proper Time to *rest* ; now there is the same Fitness in having Recourse to God and Religion, when we are under any Dejection of Mind. For it is not more the sole Property of Light to dispel Darkness, than it is the sole Property of Religion

igion to relieve all Uneasiness. '*Is any one afflicted,*' says the Apostle, *let him pray.* Now this we are to look upon, not only as a wise Advice of something that is very good to be done; but as a strict Command that leaves no Choice of doing any Thing in the stead of it.

It is as absolute a Command as if he had said, *Hath any one sinned, let him repent.* For an Application to GOD is as much the one Thing to be done in the Hour of Trouble, as Repentance is the one Thing to be done in Time of Sin.

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

If you must amuse yourself with a Volume of *Plays*, because you are laid up with a *broken Leg*, or have *lost a Friend*, you are as far from Wisdom as a Child that is to be made quiet with a *Rattle*, and as far from Religion as those who worship *Idols*; nay, to seek to such Things for Relief and Refreshment, is like applying to the Devil in *Distress*. A Man that drinks *Drams* every Time he is dull or uneasy, is a *wise, prudent, and sober* Man, if compar'd to the Christian that in Seasons of Dejection has Recourse to *wanton Wit*, and *prophane Ran*:. He destroys the Purity of his Mind much more effectually, than the other destroys the Health of his Body.

Do you think that in *great Distresses*, it is proper to seek Comfort in GOD; but that in *little Troubles*, any Thing that can divert is as well? Nay, surely if GOD is our sufficient Comfort in great Distresses, he must be our best Relief in those that are smaller. Unless it can be said, that the Truths of Religion are able to

make

make us bear Martyrdom with Content, but not great enough to make us easy in *little* Trials.

V. Besides, to seek for Relief in foolish Books, is not only applying to a false Remedy, but is also destroying the chief Power of Religion. For as Religion has no Power over us but as it is our Happiness; so far as we neglect, or refuse to make use of its Comforts, so far we destroy its Power over us. For it can no otherwise be the ordinary Care of our Lives, than by being our ordinary Happiness and Consolation in all the Changes of Life. A Christian therefore is to make his Christianity his Comfort, not only in Times of *great Trial* and Sufferings, but in all the *lesser Vexations* of Life, that by this Means every little Occasion of Grief or Disquiet may be an Occasion of his being more affected with Religion, and more sensible of its true Comforts.

VI. On the contrary, if *Men* will make themselves happy as Children are made happy, not by considering the Nature of Things, but by a *Change of Amusements*, they must also expect to have the Vexations and Torments of Children, and be, like them, laughing and crying at they know not what, all the Days of their Life: For Children are only easily vexed because they are easily pleas'd; and it is certain that they who can be pleas'd with Things of no Value must in the same Degree be liable to be displeas'd at them. And as this is the true State of Childhood; so whosoever is in this State, whatever his *Age* may be, his *Office*, or his *Dignity* in Life, is yet as truly in the State and Folly of Childhood, as he that is but four Years old. Take an Instance or two: A Child whose Heart is half broken at some Misfortune, may perhaps be made easy with a Picture of a *Huntsman* and a *Pack of Hounds*; but if you would comfort the Father that grieves for his eldest Son, the *Hounds* must all be *alive*; they must *cry*, and *run*, and follow a *Hare*; and this will make the Father as easy as the Picture did the Child.

A Mother comforts her little Girl with a *Pack of Cards* that are finely *painted*: By and by she wants to be comforted herself; some great Calamity has happen'd to her. Now you must not think to comfort her with

painted.

painted Cards, or building Houses with them ; her Grief is too great, and she has been too long a *Mother* to be pleas'd with such Things. It is only *serious Ombre* that can dry her Eyes, and remove Sorrow from her Heart.

VII. I might easily multiply Instances of this kind ; But these are sufficient to shew us, that Persons of *Age* and *Authority* often differ only from Children, as one Child may differ from another. This is the true Reason why human Life is so full of Complaint ; why it is such a *Mixture* of ridiculous Pleasures, and vain Disquiets, namely, because we live in an entire Ignorance of the Nature of Things, never considering why we are pleas'd with this, or displeas'd with that, nor any more appeal to Religion to direct our Judgments, than Children appeal to Reason to form their Tempers. For if we will only play, or lull ourselves into Repose, as Children are rock'd to sleep, it is not to be wonder'd at, if like them we cry as soon as we are awake : And the reason why People, *seemingly* religious, are subject to the same *Dulness* and *Peculiarities*, to the same *Vexations* and Variety of Grievs that other People are, is this, because they make no more Use of their Religion on those Occasions, than other People : They don't so much as intend to keep themselves *easy, thankful* and *cheerful*, by making Religion the *Measure* and *Standard* of all their Thoughts and Judgments, in all the common Chances of Life, any more than those do, who have no Thoughts about Religion.

VIII. Suppose a Person had *lame Feet*, and *bad Eyes*, and that he had an *Oil*, that was an infallible Cure for them both, when applied to both ; if you saw him only using it for his *Eyes*, you would not wonder that it had not cur'd his *Feet* ; you would know that his anointing his *Eyes* could only cure his *Eyes* ; and that there was no Ground to expect that his *Feet* should be any better, till he anointed his *Feet* : And all this for this plain Reason, because Things, however Good in themselves, can have no farther Effect than as they are applied. Now it is just thus in Religion. If a Man places it only in *publick Worship*, he attends publick Worship ; it operates so far. But why must you wonder, that he is not of a *wise, virtuous, and religious*.

religious Temper, in all the Actions of his ordinary Life? Is not this wondering why the *Oil* has not cured a Man's *Feet* when he has never applied it to them, but only to his *Eyes*?

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

It is our ordinary Life, which we think is thus left to ourselves, that makes Religion so insignificant in the World: It lies by like a *Remedy* that is *unapplied*; it has no Effect because it is used only as a *formal Thing* that has its Devotions and Duties at *set Times* and Occasions: Whereas it should be used and considered as the *Rule* and *Reason* of all our Judgments and Actions; as the *Measure* of all our Cares and Pleasures; as the *Life* of our Life, the Spirit of our Spirit, and the very Form and Essence of all our Tempers. It is to be in us, like a *new Reason* and Judgment of our Minds; that is to reason and judge of every Thing we do, and to preside over and govern all the Motions of our Hearts. *Is any one merry, saith the Apostle, let him sing Psalms: Is any afflicted, let him pray.* This is Religion in the Apostle's Account; it is not only an Attendance at the publick Worship, but it is the *ruling Habit*

Habit of our Minds; something that devotes us wholly to God, that allows of no Mirth in our common Life, but a Mirth proper for the Brethren of Christ, a Mirth that can express itself in Praise and Thanksgiving, that allows of no other Cure for Grief or Vexation than what is to be had from Recourse to God. And indeed what can be more absurd, than for a Christian ever to act in any other Consideration than as a Christian? He is senseless to a Degree of Madness when he indulges a Thought, or a Motion of his Heart; when he either takes a Pleasure, or relieves a Grief; where he cannot say I do this as a Christian, as suitable to that State in which Christianity has placed me.

X. We reckon a Man sufficiently *mad* that fancies himself a *King*, and governing his Subjects, at the same Time that he is tied to a Bed of *Straw*: Now a *Christian* repeats every Day, *I believe the Forgiveness of Sin, the Resurrection of the Body, and the Life Everlasting*; he thanks God for the *Redemption of Jesus Christ, for the Means of Grace, and for the Hope of Glory*. Yet at the same time, in this State of *Greatness*, he fancies himself in a *thousand Wants and Miseries*: He cries and labours, and toils for a *Happiness*, that has no Existence but in his *own Imagination*; he fancies himself a *Being* that is to be made happy with Sauces and Ragous, with *painted Cloaths and shining Diamonds*. He is griev'd and fretted like a Child at the Loss of a *Feather*; and must be diverted, as they are, with *Shews and Plays*, and imaginary Scenes of Rant and Nonsense. Now is not such a one *mad*? Does he not know as little of his *State*, as the Man in *Straw* who fancies himself a *King*? But for a *Christian*, in Times of Dulness or Vexation, to seek Relief in foolish Amusements, in the loose, wild Discourses of *Plays*, when he should *acquaint himself with God, and be at Peace*, is a Degree of Madness that exceeds all others; it is acting as contrary to the Nature of Things, as if a Man that had lost the Use of his *Limbs*, should chuse to comfort his Lameness with *painted Shoes*, when he might have the Use of his Feet restor'd. For the Consolations of Religion relieve Uneasiness and Trouble, as a *lame Man* is relieved when his *Limbs* are restor'd; they conquer

quer Grief, not by cheating and deluding the Weakness of our Minds, but as the Resurrection conquers Death, by restoring us to a new and glorious Life.

XI. From these Reflections I hope it sufficiently appears, that the reading vain and impertinent Books is no Matter of Indifferency; but that it is justly to be reckon'd amongst our *greatest Corruptions*; that it is as unlawful as *Malice* and *evil Speaking*; and is no more to be allow'd in any Part of our Life.

Reading, when it is an Exercise of the Mind upon wise and pious Subjects, is, next to *Prayer*, the best Improvement of our Hearts; it enlightens our Minds, collects our Thoughts, calms and allays our Passions, and begets in us wise and pious Resolutions; it is a Labour that does so much Good to our Minds, that it ought never to be employ'd amiss; it enters so far into our Souls that it cannot have a little Effect upon us. Reading and Meditation is that to our Souls, which Food and Nourishment is to our Bodies; so that we cannot do ourselves either a *little Good*, or *little Harm*, by the Books that we read.

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

If you think it dull and tedious to be in wise, prudent and sober *Company*, it is because you are neither *prudent* nor *sober* yourself. So if it is dull and tiresome to you to be often upon Subjects of Piety and Religion;

it is as sure a Proof that you are neither *pious* nor *religious*. For unless you can suppose that a wise and sober Man may be most delighted with the *Noise* and *Revolings* of Drunkenness; you cannot suppose that it is possible for you to be truly religious; and yet most pleas'd with corrupt and unedifying Books.

XIII. You perhaps will say that you have so much spare Time for reading, that you think you need not employ it all in reading good Books. It may be so; you may have also more Time than you need devote to Offices of *Charity*; but will you thence conclude, that you may then do Things *contrary* to Charity, and indulge yourself in *Spight* and *Mischief*?

If you have every Day more Time than you can employ in Reading, Meditaton and Prayer; if this Time hangs upon your Hands, and cannot be turn'd to any Advantage; let me desire you to go to *sleep* or *pick Straws*; for it is much better to do this, than to have Recourse to corrupt and impertinent Books. Time lost in *Sleep*, or in *picking Straws*, is better lost than in such Exercises of the Mind. Consider farther, that *idle* and *spare Time* calls for the greatest Care and Watchfulness; so that to have Recourse then to evil and impertinent Books, is like inviting the Devil because you are alone. If you could read ill Books when you were in haste, or in a Hurry of other Matters, it would do you much less Harm than to read them because your Time hangs upon your Hands. That very Season which you take to be an Excuse for such *reading*, is the strongest Argument against it, because evil Thoughts and vain Subjects have twice the Effect, and make double Impressions when they are admitted at Times of Leisure and Idleness.

XIV. Consider again to what a miserable State you are reduced, when you are forced to have Recourse to foolish Books to get rid of your Time. Your Fortune perhaps has remov'd you from the Necessity of labouring for your *Bread*; you have been politely educated in Softness; you have no Trade or Employment to take up your Time; and so are left to be devoured by corrupt Passions and Pleasures. Whilst poor People are at hard Labour; whilst your Servants are drud-
ging.

ging in the meanest Offices of Life; you, oppress'd with *Idleness* and *Indulgence*, are relieving yourself with *foolish* and *impertinent* Books; feeding and delighting a disordered Mind with *Romantic* Nonsense, and Poetic Follies. If this be the Effect of Riches and Fortune, only to expose People to the Power of disordered Passions, and give them Time to corrupt their Hearts with Madness and Folly, well might our Lord say, *Woe unto you that are rich?*

When you see a *poor Creature* drudging in the meanest Offices of Life, and glad of the dirtiest Work to get his *Bread*, you are apt to look upon him as a *miserable Wretch*; it raises a Mixture of Pity and Contempt in you; But remember, that every Time you see such a Person, you see a more reasonable Creature than yourself, and one that is much more *nobly employed* than you are. He is acting *conformably* to the State of human Life, and bearing a hard Part with Patience; he is doing a Work which, mean as it is, will be look'd upon as done unto the Lord; whilst you are idling in *Softness* and *Pleasures*, are unable to bear your Time, unless it be stolen away from you by Folly and Impertinence. Fancy that you saw a *patient Christian*, old, broken and crooked, with carrying Burthens all his Life; fancy that you saw another Christian lolling in *State* and *Softness*, and making every Day a Day of *Vanity* and *foolish Reading*; which of them do you think is most likely to die in the Hands of good *Angels*, and be carried into *Abraham's Bosom*?

XV. But, after all, what a vain Imagination it is to think that you have any such Thing as *spare Time*? Is there any Time for which you are not accountable to GOD? Is there any Time which GOD has so left to your own Disposal that you may sacrifice it to the Indulgence of vain Tempers, and the Corruption of your Heart? You can no more shew this than you can shew, that all your Time is your own. To talk therefore of *spare Time*, is to talk of something that never did nor ever will belong to any Christian. You may have a *spare Time* from this or that Labour, or Necessity, you may abate or change any *particular Exercise*, you may leave off this or that Way, you may take this or that Refreshment; you have all these *spare Times* from particular

ficular Actions, but you have no *spare Time* that releases you from the Laws of Christianity, or that leaves you at liberty not to act by the Principles of Religion and Piety.

You have *spare Time* to refresh yourself: But this is to be governed by the same Wisdom, as the Time that is spent in Cares and Labours. For your Recreations and Pleasures are only lawful so far as they are directed by the same Wisdom with your Cares and Labours. If therefore the Providence of God has placed you above the Necessity of labouring for your Livelihood, you must not think that you have so much *spare Time* to spend, as you please, but that you are certainly called to some *other Labour*. Great part of the World is doom'd to Toil and Slavery; they have it not in their Power to chuse any other Way of Life, and their Labour is therefore an acceptable Service to God, because it is such as their State requires. Happy you therefore, if you knew your Happiness, who have it in your Power to be always doing the *best Things*; who, free from Labour and Hardships, are at liberty to chuse the *best Ways* of Life, to study all the Arts of *Self improvement*, to practise all the Ways of doing Good, and to spend your Time in all the noblest Instances of Piety, Humility, Charity and Devotion! Bless God then, not because you have *spare Time*, for that you have none, but that you have Time to employ in the best Ways that you can find; that whilst others are oppress'd with Burthens, and worn out with Slavery, you have Time to think upon the greatest and best of Things; to enlighten your Mind, to correct the Disorder of your Heart, to study the Laws of God, to contemplate the Wonders of his Providence, to convince yourself of the Vanity of the World, and to delight your Soul with the great and glorious Things which God has prepar'd for those that love him. This is the Happiness of being free from Labour and Want; not to have *spare Time* to squander away in *Vanity* and *Impertinence*, but to have *spare Time* to spend in the Study of Wisdom, in the Exercise of Devotion, in the Practice of Piety, in all the Ways and Means of doing
 Good

Good, and exalting our Souls to a State of *Christian Perfection*.

XVI. It is a Doctrine of Scripture, and highly agreeable to Reason, *That unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.* Consider therefore that a Life of Leisure and Freedom from Want and Hardships is as much as can well be given you in this World, as it is giving you an Opportunity of living wholly to God, and making all the Parts of your Life useful to the best Purposes. As sure therefore as it is a State, that has so many Advantages that furnishes you with so many Means of being eminent in Piety, so sure it is, that it is a State from which GOD expects Fruits that are worthy of it. Had it been your Lot to labour in a *Mine*, or serve under some cruel Master, you must have served as unto GOD; and in so doing you had finish'd the Work which GOD had given you. But as you are free from all this, you must look upon yourself as GOD's *Servant*, as called to chuse that Way of labouring and spending your Time, which may most promote that which GOD desires to be promoted. GOD has given you Liberty to chuse, but it is only that you may have the Blessedness of chusing the *best Ways* of spending your Time. Tho' therefore you are at liberty from servile and mean Labour, yet you are under a Necessity of labouring in all good Works, and making all your Time, and Fortune, and Abilities serviceable to the best Ends of Life. You have no more Time that is your own, than he has that is to live by constant Labour; the only Difference betwixt you and him is this, that he is to be diligent in a poor, slavish Labour, that oppresses the Body, and dejects the Mind; but you in a *Service that is perfect Freedom*, that renders your Body a *fit Temple* for the Holy Ghost, and fills your Soul with such Light, and Peace, and Joy, as is not to be found in any other Way of Life.

XVII. Do you think that a *poor Slave* would displease GOD by refusing to act in that painful Drudgery that is fallen to his Share? And do you think that GOD will not be more displeas'd with you, if you refuse to act your *full Part* in the best of Labours, or neglect that happy Business of doing Good, which

your State of Life has called you to? Is it expected that *poor People* should make a right Use of their Condition, and turn all their Labour into a Service unto GOD? And do you think you are not obliged to make a proper Improvement of your Condition, and turn all your *Rest*, and *Ease*, and *Freedom* from Labour, into Service unto GOD? Tell me therefore no more that you indulge yourself in idle Amusements, in vain, corrupt, and unedifying Books, because you have *spare Time*? For it is absolutely false to say that you have any such Thing; it is saying, that because GOD has given you *spare Time* from servile Labour, Time for all the Instances of a holy and heavenly Life; therefore you presume to throw it away in Idleness and Impertinence.



C H A P. VI.

C*hristians are called to a constant State of Prayer and Devotion.*

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

Whenever therefore we are in the Spirit of Prayer; when our Hearts are lifted up to GOD, breathing out holy Petitions to the Throne of Grace, we have this Encouragement to be *constant* and *servent* in it, that we are then joining with an Intercession at the Right Hand of GOD, and doing that for ourselves on Earth which our blessed Saviour is perpetually doing for us in Heaven. This Reason of Prayer is perhaps not much considered; yet it certainly contains a most powerful Motive to it. For who that considers his Redemption as now carrying on by an *Intercession* in Heaven, can think himself so rightly employ'd as when the Constancy of

of his own Prayers bears some Resemblance to that never ceasing Intercession which is made above? This shews us also, that we are most of all to desire those Prayers which are offered up at the *Altar*, where the Body and Blood of Christ are joined with them. For as our Prayers are only acceptable to God thro' the Merits of Jesus Christ; so we may be sure it is the most prevailing Prayer, when we thus pray in the Name of *Christ*, and plead his Merits in the *highest Manner* we can.

II. Devotion may be considered either as an Exercise of publick or private Prayers at set Times and Occasions; or as a Temper of the Mind, a State and Disposition of the Heart, which is rightly affected with such Exercises. Now external Acts of Devotion, are like other external Actions, very liable to Falseness, and are only so far good as they proceed from a right Disposition of Heart. Zealous Professions of *Friendship* are but Hypocrisy, unless there be an equal Zeal in the Heart; and so solema Prayers are but repeated Hypocrisies, unless the Heart be *conformable* to them. Since therefore it is the Heart only that is devout, I shall consider Devotion chiefly in this respect, as it is a *State* and *Temper* of Heart; for it is in this Sense only that *Christians* are called to a *constant State* of Devotion. They are not to be always upon their Knees in Acts of Prayer; but they are to be always in the State and Temper of Devotion:

III. Friendship does not require us to be always waiting upon our Friends in external Services; these Offices have their Times of Intermision; it is only the Service of the Heart that is never to intermit. This is not to begin and end, as external Services do; but to persevere like the Motion of our Heart, or the Beating of our Pulse. It is just so in Devotion; *Prayers* have their *Hours*, their Beginning and Ending, but that Turn of Mind, that Disposition of the Heart towards God, which is the Life and Spirit of Prayer, is to be as constant and lasting as our own Life and Spirit.

The repeating of a *Creed* at certain Times is an Act of Faith; but that Faith, which *overcometh* the *World*, stays neither for Times nor Seasons, but is a living

Principle.

Principle of the Soul, that is always believing, trusting, and depending upon God. In the same Manner verbal Prayers are Acts of Devotion; but that Prayer which openeth the Gates of Heaven, stops not at *Forms* and *Manuals* of Devotion; but is a Language of the Soul, which worships, adores, and delights in God, at all Times and Seasons.

The Reason of Prayer, like all other Duties of Piety, is founded in the Nature of God, and the Nature of Man. It is founded in the Nature of God, as he is the sole Fountain and Cause of all Happiness; it is founded in the Nature of Man, as he is weak and helpless, and full of Wants. So that Prayer is an *earnest Application, or Ascent of the Heart to God, as to the sole Cause of all Happiness*. He therefore that most truly feels the Misery, Corruption and Weakness of his own Nature; who is most fully convinced that a Relief from all these Disorders, and a true Happiness, is to be found in God alone; he who is most fully convinced of these two Truths, is most fully possess'd of the Spirit of Prayer.

IV. Hence we may perceive why People of *Learning*, and great *Application to Books*, who seem to have retired from the Corruptions of the World, are yet often not devout. The Reason is, because Devotion imparts a full Sense of the Vanity and Littleness of *every Thing* but God; whereas it is often the *same Vanity* that wears out Scholars in their *Studies*, and other People at *Court*, in the *Camp*, or at *Sea*. They do not want to be *Merchants*, or *Colonels*, or *Secretaries of State*; but they want to be Critics, Grammarians and Historians. They, it may be, disregard Riches and Equipage; despise the Sports and Diversions of the *present Age*; but then it is to contemplate the *Riches and Equipage*, the Sports and Diversions of the ancient *Romans*.

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

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The *Bulk* of Mankind are so dull and tasteless, and illiterate, as to set their Hearts upon *current Coin*. But great Learning has raised some Men above this vulgar Grossness of Taste. Their Heart does not beat but at the Sight of a *Medal*, or an ancient Coin. And they are only afraid of dying before they have out-done the World for their Collections of *Shells, Skins, Stones, Flies, and Insects*.

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

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

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

given his Heart to God, he will have done asking, how often he shall pray.

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

If a Man was to confess that his *Eyes* were bad, his Hands weak, his Feet feeble, and his Body helpless; he would not be angry with those that supposed he was not in perfect Strength. Yet *Julius* confesses himself to be in great Weakness, Corruption, Disorder, and Infirmary; and yet is angry at any one that does but suppose him defective in any Virtue. Is it not the same Thing as if he had said "you must not imagine that "I am in earnest in my Devotions"?

VII. To live in true Devotion, we must daily consider the End and Hope of our Calling, that all worldly Passions and Desires may be swallowed up in one great Desire of future Glory? This Devotion to God is signified in Scripture, by living *by Faith and not by Sight*, when the invisible Things of the other Life, are the Reason, the Motive and the Measure of all our Desires and Tempers. And those who thus tend to God in all their Motions and Desires, are devout every where. This makes their common Actions Acts of Religion, and turns every Place into a *Chapel*. And it is to this Devotion we are all called, not only by particular Precepts, but by the whole Nature and Honour of our Religion.

VIII. Now, as all States and Tempers of the Mind must be supported by Actions and Exercises suitable to them; so Devotion, which is an earnest Application of the Soul to God, as its only Happiness, must be supported and kept alive by Actions and Exercises suitable to it. The Devotion of the Heart disposes us to observe set Times of Prayer; and, on the other Hand, set Times of Prayer increase and enliven the

the Devotion of the Heart. It is thus in all other Cases: Habits of the Mind dispose us to Actions suitable to them; and these Actions likewise strengthen and improve the Habits from whence they proceed.

It is the habitual Taste for *Musick* that carries People to *Concerts*; and again, it is *Concerts* that increase the habitual Love of *Musick*: So it is the right Disposition of the Heart towards G O D that leads People to outwards Acts of Prayer; and, on the other Side, outward Acts of Prayer preserve and strengthen the right Disposition of the Heart towards G O D. As therefore we are to judge of the Significancy of our Prayers, by looking to the State and Temper of our Heart; so are we also to judge of the State of our Heart by the *Frequency, Constancy, and Importunity* of our Prayers. For as we are sure that our Prayers are insignificant, unless they proceed from a right Heart; so unless our Prayers be *frequent, constant, and full of Importunity*, we may be sure our Heart is not right towards G O D.

IX. Our blessed Saviour has indeed condemned one sort of long Prayer. *But, when ye pray, use not vain Repetitions, as the Heathens do; for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking* (a). But it is not *Length, or a Continuance* of Prayer that is here forbid; but *vain Repetitions*. Nor are the *Heathens* here condemned for being *importunate, and persevering* in Prayer; but for a *wrong Judgment*, in that they thought they were heard, because they *spoke much*; that is, often repeated the same Words. So that all that Christians are here forbid, is this, to think that the *Efficacy* of Prayer consists in vain and long Repetitions; yet some imagine, that a *Continuance* of Prayer is here reprov'd, and thence conclude, that Shortness is a necessary Qualification of Prayer.

But how willing must People be to be deceived, before they can reason in this Manner? For the Words have plainly no relation to *Length* or *Shortness* of Prayer. They no more condemn the one than the other. They only condemn an Opinion of the *Heathens*, that the Excellency of Prayer consisted in a Multitude of Repetitions. Now, to think that short Prayer is better, because it is *short*, is the same Error as to hold with the *Heathens*,

(a) Matth. vi. 7.

Heathens, that it is better because it is often repeated. It is the same Mistake in the Nature of Devotion.

X. But supposing the Meaning of these Words was obscure (which it is not) yet surely it is plain enough, that our Saviour has elsewhere expressly recommended a *Continuance* and *Importunity* in Prayer. And how perversely do they read the Gospel, who can find his Authority against such kind of Devotion! For can he who was so often retiring to *Deserts*, to *Mountains*, to *solitary* Places to pray, who spent *whole Nights* in Prayer; can he be supposed to have left a Reproof of those who should follow his Example? But besides his Example, his Doctrine is on no Point more plain and certain. *He spake a Parable unto them to this End, that Men ought always to pray, and not to faint. Saying, there was in a City a Judge, which feared not GOD nor regarded Man, And there was a Widow in that City, and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of my Adversary. And he would not for a while: But afterwards he said within himself, tho' I fear not GOD, nor regard Man, yet because this Widow troubleth me, I will avenge her. And shall not GOD avenge his own Elect, which cry Day and Night unto him? St Luke tells us, that this Parable was to teach Men to pray always, and not to faint; and it is plain to any one that reads it, that it has no other Intent but to recommend *Continuance* and *Importunity* in Prayer. The Widow is relieved; not because she asked Relief, but because she *continued* asking it: And GOD is said to avenge his Elect; not because they cry to him now and then, but because they *cry Day and Night*. Our blessed Saviour teacheth the same Doctrine in another Parable, of a Person going to his Friend to borrow *three Loaves* at Midnight, which he concludes thus: *I say unto you, tho' he would not rise and give him, because he is his Friend; yet because of his Importunity, he will rise and give him as many as he needeth*. Here again the sole Scope of the Passage is to shew the Efficacy of *Continuance* and *Importunity* in Prayer.*

XI. CLITO says he desires no more Time for rising, dressing, and saying his Prayers, than a Quarter of an Hour. He tells this to his Friends; not to shew his want of Religion, but that he may be thought to understand

stand Devotion. You tell him that our Saviour's Parables teach *Continuance* and *Importunity* in Prayer; that the Apostles exhort to pray *without ceasing*, to pray *always*; and that devout Persons are recorded in Scripture as praying *Night and Day*. Still *Clito* is for short Prayers. He at last finds a Text of Scripture, and appeals to the Example of the *Angels*; they only said, *Glory be to God on high, and on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men*. *Clito* takes this to be an Argument for short Prayer, because the Angels had done so soon. But *Clito* must be told, that this is no Prayer at all; it is only a joyful Proclamation to Men. And surely the Manner of *Angels* speaking to Men, can be no Rule or Measure of Mens speaking to God. The Angels had no more to tell the World than this Message of Joy; but does it therefore follow, that Sinners are to be as short in their Addresses to God? The Scripture tells us sometimes of *Voices* from Heaven; but it would be strange to make the Things that were then spoken, the Measure of our Prayers when we call upon God. If *Clito* must have an Example from Heaven, he might have found one much more proper than this, where it is said, *That they rest not Day and Night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come* (a).

XII. Our blessed Saviour saith, *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy Closet, and when thou hast shut thy Door, pray unto thy Father, &c.* (b) Now here is indeed no mention of the Time that Prayer is to be continued; but yet this Preparation for Prayer, of *entering* into our Closet and *shutting* the Door, seems to teach us that it is a Work of some Time; that we are not hastily to open our Door, but to allow ourselves Time to continue and be importunate in our Prayers.

How long and how often all People ought to pray, is not to be stated by any one particular Measure. But this we may take as a general Rule, that every Christian is to pray so often and so long, as to shew that he prays *without ceasing*; that he prays *always*; and that he cries to God *Night and Day*: For these are essential Qualifications of Prayer, and expressly required in Scripture.

XIII. There are *two Seasons* of our Hearts which we should

(a) Rev. iv. 8. (b) Matth. vi. 6

should carefully observe; I mean the *Time* when we are *most affected* with our Devotions, and the *Time* when we are *most indisposed* to pray. For both these might equally serve to instruct us in the Knowledge of ourselves, and how to govern the Motions of our Hearts.

Reflect with yourself, how it was with you; what Circumstances you was in; what had *happen'd* to you; what you had been *doing*; when you found yourself *so affected* with your Devotions. Now, if you find out what State you was then in, when you was *disposed* to pray so fervently, then you have found out a Way of raising your Devotion at another Time. If you was then to put down in *writing* some short Remembrance of the *chief Things* that rais'd your Heart, so that you might have a View of them as often as your Mind wanted such Assistance, you would find a Benefit that would reward your Labour. On the contrary, whenever you have found yourself *very much indispos'd* for Prayer, reflect with yourself, what State you was then in; what had *happened* unto you; what *Thoughts* you had in your Head; what *Passions* were then awakened; what you had been *doing*, or were *intending* to do: For when you have found out the State you was then in, you have found out the Hindrances of your Devotion; and know what Things to avoid, if you desire not to quench the Spirit.

XIV. If you was here again to make short Remembrances in *writing*, of the chief Things which render'd you indisposed for Prayer, and frequently to read and reflect upon them, you would have a faithful Information of what you are most to avoid. If you find that *impertinent Visits*, *foolish Conversation*, or a Day idly spent in *civil Compliances* with other People, have rendered your Mind *dull* and *indisposed*, and less *affected* with Devotion, then you will have found that impertinent Visits, and ceremonious Compliances in spending our Time, are not *little indifferent Things*; but are to be daily watch'd and guarded against by all those who desire to be daily alive unto G O D.

XV. They who are for short Prayers, because G O D does not need much Intreaty, ought also to shew, that
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Man does not need much Prayer; does not *need* that Strength, and Light, and Help, which arises from *much Praying*. For unless this be the State of our Hearts, we shall want much Prayer to *move* and *awake* ourselves; how little soever we suppose necessary to *excite* the Goodness of God. If therefore Men would consider Prayer, not only as it is an *Invocation* of God, but also as it is an *Exercise of holy Thoughts*; as it is an Endeavour to *feel* and be affected with the great Truths of Religion, they would soon see, that tho' God is so good as not to *need* much calling upon; yet that Man is so weak as to need much Assistance, and to be under a constant Necessity of that Help, and Light, and Improvement which arises from praying much. When therefore we would know how much we ought to pray, we must consider how much our Hearts want to be altered, and remember that the great Work of Prayer is, to work upon ourselves; it is not to *move* and affect God, but it is to move and affect our own Hearts, and fill them with such Tempers as God delights to reward.

XVI. Now Prayer never so corrects and amends the Heart as when we extend it to all the *Particulars* of our State, enumerating all our Wants, Infirmities, and Disorders; not because God needs to be informed of them, but because by this Means we inform ourselves, and make our Hearts in the best Manner acquainted with our true Condition. When our Prayers thus descend to all the Circumstances of our Condition, they become a faithful Glas to us; and so often as we pray, so often we see ourselves in a true Light.

Don't be content therefore with confessing yourself to be a *Sinner*, or with praying against Sin in *general*: for this will but a little affect your Mind; it will only shew you to yourself in such a State as all Mankind are in: But if you find yourself out; if you confess and lay open the Guilt of your own *particular Sins*; if you pray constantly against such particular Sins as you find yourself most subject to, the *frequent Sight* of your own Sins, and your *constant deploring* of their Guilt, will give your Prayers Entrance into your Hearts, and put you upon Measures how to amend.

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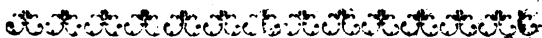
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If you confess yourself only to be a *Sinner*, you confess yourself to be a *Man*; but when you describe and confess your *own particular Guilt*, then you find Cause for your own *particular Sorrow*; then you give your Prayers all the Power they can have to affect and wound your Heart. In like manner, when you pray for GOD'S Grace, don't be satisfied with a general Petition, but make your Prayers suitable to your Defects; and continue to ask for such Gifts and Graces of the Holy Spirit as you find yourself most defective in: For this will give Life to your Petitions, and make your Heart go along with them.

XVII. LASTLY, this Particularity in our Prayers is the greatest Trial of the *Truth* of our Hearts. A Man perhaps thinks he prays for Humility, because he has the Word *Humility* in his Prayers; but if he was to branch out Humility into all its *particular Parts*, he would perhaps find himself not disposed to pray for them. If he was to represent to himself the several Particulars which make a Man *poor in Spirit*, he would find his Heart not desirous of them. So that the only Way to know our Hearts, and whether we really pray for any Virtue, is to have all its Parts in our Prayers, and to ask for it in all its Instances. If the *proud Man* was to pray daily for Humility in all its kinds, and to beg of God to remove him from all Occasions of *such Pride*, as is common to his *particular State*, and to disappoint him in all his Attempts that were contrary to Humility, he would find that such Prayers would either conquer his Pride, or his Pride would put an End to his Prayers. For it would be impossible to live long in any Instances of Pride, if his daily and frequent Prayers were Petitions against those particular Instances.

XVIII: Let me now only add this one Word more, that he who has learned to pray, has learned the greatest Secret of a holy and happy Life. Which Way soever else we let loose our Hearts, they will return unto us again *empty and weary*. Time will convince the *vainest and blindest Minds*, that Happiness is no more to be found in the Things of this World, than it is to be dug out of the Earth. But when the Motions of our Hearts are Motions of Piety, tending to God in constant

stant Acts of Devotion, then have we found Rest unto our Souls; then is it that we have conquered the Misery of our Nature; and neither love nor desire in vain: Then is it that we have found out a Good that is equal to all our Wants; that is, a constant Source of Comfort and Refreshment, that will fill us with Peace and joyful Expectations here, and eternal Happiness hereafter. For he that lives in the Spirit of Devotion, whose Heart is always full of God, lives at the *Top* of human Happiness, and is the farthest from all the Vanities and Vexations which disturb and weary the Minds of Men devoted to the World.



C H A P. VII.

ALL *Christians are required to imitate the Life and Example of* JESUS CHRIST.

I. Our Religion teaches us, that as we have borne the *Image of the Earthly*, so we shall bear the *Image of the Heavenly*; that after our Death we shall rise to a State of Life and Happiness, like to that Life and Happiness which our blessed Saviour enjoys at the Right Hand of God. Since therefore we are to be Fellow-heirs with Christ, and Partakers of the same Happiness, it is not to be wonder'd at, that we are required to be like Christ in this Life, to imitate his Example, that we may enter into that State of Happiness which he enjoys in the Kingdom of Heaven.

II. Not that we are called to the same outward Manner of Life, or the same sort of Actions with his; but to the same Spirit and Temper, which was the Spirit and Temper of our blessed Saviour's Life and Actions. We are to be like him in Heart, to act by the *same Rule*, to look towards the *same End*, and to govern our Lives by the *same Spirit*. This is an Imitation of Jesus Christ which is as necessary to Salvation as it is to believe in his Name. This is the sole End of all the Doctrines of Christ, to make us like himself, to fill us with his *Spirit and Temper*, and

make us live according to the Rule and Manner of his Life. As no Doctrines are true, but such as are according to the Doctrines of Christ, so no Life is right, but such as is according to the Life of Christ. For he lived as infallibly as he taught; and it is as wrong to vary from his Example, as from his Doctrines. To live as he lived, is as certainly the one sole Way of living as we ought, as to believe as he taught is the one sole Way of believing as we ought. There is no other Way besides this; nothing can possibly bring us to God in Heaven, unless we are now one with Christ, and walk as he also walked. For we may as well expect to go to a Heaven where Christ is not, as to go to that where he is, without his Spirit and Temper. If Christians would but suffer themselves to reflect upon this, their own Minds would soon convince them of it. For who can find the least Shadow of a Reason, why he should not imitate the Life of Christ? or why Christians should think of any other Rule of Life? It would be as easy to shew that Christ acted aright, as that we need not act after his Example.

III. If it should be said, that Jesus was the *Saviour* of the World, that he was born to redeem Mankind, and was the *Son of God*. It may be answered, that this does not make the Life of Christ to be less the *Rule* and *Model* of all Christians. For, as I observed before, it is the Spirit and *Temper* of Christ that all Christians are to imitate; they are to do their *proper Work* in that Spirit and Temper, in which Christ did the Work on which he was sent. So that altho' Christians are not Redeemers of the World, as he was; tho' they have not that great Work to finish which he had; yet they have *their Work* to do in the Manner that he had *his*; they have their Part to act, which tho' it be a different Part, must not be performed with a different Spirit; but with such Obedience to God, such Regard to his Glory, and all such holy Dispositions, as our blessed Saviour manifested in every Part of his Life. A *Servant* is in a different State from his Master; yet we may justly exhort him to follow the Example of a pious Master; not because he can perform the *same Instances* of Piety, but because he may shew the *same Spirit*

Spirit in the Actions proper to his State. This may shew us, that the different State of our Lord and Master leaves him still the *exact Rule* of his Servants; who, tho' they cannot come up to the Greatness of his Actions, may yet act according to his Spirit; and then are they true Followers of Christ, when they are following his Spirit and Temper, acting according to his Ends and Designs, and doing that in their several States which Christ did in his.

IV. The blessed Jesus came into the World to save the World. Now we must enter into this same Design, and make *Salvation* the Business of our Lives. And tho' we cannot contribute towards it like him, yet we must contribute all that we can, and make the Salvation of ourselves and others the one only Care of our Lives.

The *poor Widow's Mites* were but a small Matter in themselves, yet as they were the utmost she could give, our blessed Saviour set them above the larger Contributions of the Rich. This may encourage People in every State of Life to be contented with their *Capacity* of doing good, provided that they do but act up to it. Let no one think that he is too low, too mean and private to follow his Lord and Master in the Salvation of Souls. Let him but add his Mite, and if it be all that he hath, he shall be thought to have done much; not that all are to be Preachers and Teachers of Religion, no more than all are to be *Apostles*, or *all Prophets*, or *all Workers of Miracles*. Christians are like Members of one and the same Body; they are as different from one another, as Hands and Eyes, and have as different Offices to perform; yet may their different Parts serve and promote the same common End. As *the Eye cannot say to the Hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the Head to the Feet, I have no need of you;* (a) so neither can the learned Teacher say he hath no need of the private, unlearned Person. For the Work of Salvation is carried on by all Hands, as well by him that is taught, as by him that teacheth. An *unlearned* Person, by being desirous of Instruction, and careful to comply with it, may promote Salvation as truly, in a

(a) 1 Cor. xii. 2.

Degree, as he that is able and willing to instruct. This teachable Disposition may as effectually influence others as another Man's Ability and Care of Teaching. Therefore, tho', as the Apostle saith, all have *not the Gift of Healing*, tho' all do not *speak with Tongues*, yet all have *some Part* that they may act in the Salvation of Mankind, and may follow their Lord and Master in the great Work, for which he came down from Heaven: We must not then think, that it is the Business of *Clergymen* only to carry on the Work of Salvation; but must remember, that we are engaged in the same Business, tho' not in the same Manner.

V. Had the *poor Widow* thought herself excused from taking Care of the Treasury; had she thought that it belonged only to the *Rich* to contribute to it, she had lost that great Commendation which our Saviour bestowed upon her. Now, it may be that some Widows may be so very poor as not to have so much as a *Mite* to give to the Treasury, who must therefore content themselves with the Charity of their Hearts; but this can never happen in the Business of Salvation. Here no one can be so poor, and destitute, as not to have a *Mite* to contribute towards it. For no Circumstances of Life can hinder us from being *Examples of Piety*, and making our Lives a *Lesson of Instruction* to all that are about us. And he that lives an exemplary Life, tho' his State be ever so *poor and mean*, is largely contributing to the Salvation of others, and proving himself the *best Follower* of his Lord and Master.

VI. This therefore is the first great Instance in which we are to follow the Example and Spirit of our blessed Saviour. He came to save the World; we must therefore all consider ourselves as called to carry on this *great Work*. For how can we think ourselves to be his *Followers*, if we do not follow him in that for which alone he came into the World? How can we be like the Saviour of the World, unless the *Salvation of the World* be our constant Care? We cannot save the World as he saved it, but yet we can contribute our *Mite* towards it. *How know'st thou, O Wife, whether thou shalt save thine Husband? Or how knowest thou, O Man, whether thou shalt save thy Wife?*

Wife? (a) This shews plainly, that *all Persons* may have a great Share in the Salvation of those that are near them, and that they are to consider themselves as expressly called to this great Work. For the Apostle uses it as the same Argument both to Husband and Wife; which supposes that it is a Business in which one is as much concerned as the other. The *Woman* we know is not allowed to speak in the *Church*, yet is she entrusted with *some Share* in the Salvation of the World; she is supposed equally capable of saving the Husband, as the Husband of saving the Wife. Now what is here said of Husband and Wife, we must extend to *every State* and Relation of this Life; *Brothers* and *Sisters*, *Friends*, and *Neighbours*, must all consider themselves as called to the Salvation of one another. How knowest thou, O *Sister*, whether thou shalt save thy *Brother*? How knowest thou, O *Man*, whether thou shalt save thy *Neighbour*? is a Way of Thinking that ought never to be out of our Minds. For this would make *Brothers* and *Sisters* bear with one another, if they consider, that they are to do that for one another which Christ hath done for the whole World. This Reflection would turn our Anger toward bad Relations into Care and Tenderneſs for their Souls; we should not be glad to get away from them, but give them more of our Company, and be more exact in our Behaviour toward them; always supposing it possible, that our *good Conversation* may some Time or other affect them, and that God may make Use of us as a Means of their Salvation.

VII. EUTROPIUS is very good and pious himself; but then his Fault is, that he seeks only the Conversation of pious and good People. He is careful and exact in his Behaviour towards his virtuous Friends; always studying to oblige them; but gets away from, and avoids those that are of another Temper. Now *Eutropius* should recollect, that this is acting like a *Physician* that would take care of the *Healthy*, and disregard those that are *sick*. He should remember, that his irreligious Friends and Relations are the very Persons that are fallen to his Care; and that he is as directly

(a) 1. Cor. vii. 16.

rectly called to take care of their Salvation, as the Husband to take care of the unbelieving Wife. *Eutropius* therefore, if he would imitate his Lord and Master, must apply to the *lost Sheep of the House of Israel*, and endeavour by all the innocent Arts of pleasing his Friends, to gain them to Repentance. We must not excuse ourselves from this Care, by saying that our Relations are obstinate, hardened, and careless of all our Behaviour towards them; but must support ourselves with the Apostle's Argument, How knowest thou, O Man, whether thou may'st not at last save thy Relation?

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

Thou, it may be, art not a *Prophet*; GOD has not honoured thee with this Post in his Service; yet needest thou not fall short of this Happiness: For our Saviour hath

(a) Rom. xiv. 15.

hath said, That *he that receiveth a Prophet, in the Name of a Prophet, shall receive a Prophet's Reward.* Now this shews us, that tho' all Men have not the same Part to act in the common Salvation, yet none will be Losers by that State they are in, if they be but true to the particular Duties of it. If they do all the Good they can in their *particular State*, they will be looked upon with such Acceptance as the *poor Widow* that gave all that she had.

IX. Hence we may learn the Greatness of their Folly, who, neglecting the exact Performance of such Duties as fall within their Power, are pleasing themselves with the great Things they would do, were they but in another State.

CLEMENS has his Head full of Imaginary Piety. He is often proposing to himself what he would do if he had a great Estate. He would out do all charitable Men that are gone before him: He would retire from the World; he would have no Equipage; he would allow himself only Necessaries, that Widows and Orphans, the Sick and Distressed, might find Relief out of his Estate. He tells you, that all other Ways of spending an Estate is Folly and Madness.

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

FERVIDUS is exact in the Duties of Religion; but then the Greatness of his Zeal to be doing Things that he cannot, makes him overlook those little Ways of doing good which are every Day in his Power. *Fer-*
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vidus is only sorry that he is not in holy Orders, and that his Life is not spent in a Business the most desirable of all Things in the World. He is often thinking what Reformation he would make in the World, if he was a *Priest* or a *Bishop*; he would have devoted himself wholly to God and Religion, and have had no other Care but how to save Souls. But do not believe yourself, *Fervidus*; for if you desired in earnest to be a *Clergyman*, that you might devote yourself entirely to the Salvation of others, why then are you not doing all that you can in the State that you are now in? Would you take extraordinary Care of a *Parish*, or a *Diocese*, why then are you not as extraordinary in the Care of a Family? If you think the Care of other Peoples Salvation to be the happiest Business in the World, why do you neglect the Care of those that are fallen into your Hands? Why do you shew no Concern for the Souls of your Servants? If they do their Business for which you hired them, you never trouble your Head about their Christianity. Nay, *Fervidus*, you are so far from labouring to make those that are about you truly devout and holy, that you almost put it out of their Power to be so. You hire a *Coachman* to carry you to Church, and to sit in the Street with your *Horses*, whilst you are attending upon divine Service. You never ask him how he supplies the Loss of divine Service, or what Means he takes to preserve himself in a State of Piety. You imagine that if you was a *Clergyman*, you would be ready to lay down your Life for your Flock; yet you cannot lay aside a *little State* to promote the Salvation of your Servants. It is not desired of you, *Fervidus*, to die a *Martyr* for your Brethren; you are only required to go to Church on Foot, to spare some *State* and *Attendance*, to bear some times with a little *Rain* and *Dirt*, rather than keep those Souls which are as dear to God and Christ as yours is, from their *full Share* in the common Worship of Christians. Do but deny yourself such small Matters as these; let us but see that you can take the least Trouble to make all your Servants and Dependents true Servants of God, and then you shall be allowed

lowed to imagine what Good you would have done had you been devoted to the Altar.

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

XII. There is no Fickleness of our Hearts that leads us into greater Errors, than imagining, that we shall some Time or other be better than we are, or need be now: For *Perfection* has no Dependance upon *external*

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

XIII. When our blessed Saviour was upon the Cross, he thus prayed for his Enemies, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* (a) Now all Christians readily acknowledge that this Temper of Christ is to be the *exact Rule* of our Temper on the like Occasion; that we are not to fall short of it, but must be perfectly like Christ in this Charity towards our Murderers. But then perhaps they do not enough consider, that for the very same Reason, every other Temper of Christ, is as much the *exact Rule* of all Christians, as his Temper towards his Murderers. For are we to be thus disposed towards our Persecutors and Murderers, because Christ was so disposed towards his? And is it not as good an Argument, that we are to be so and so disposed towards the World, and all worldly Enjoyments, because Christ was so disposed towards them? He was as right in one Case as the other, and no more erred in his Temper towards *worldly Things*, than in his Temper towards his *Enemies*. Should we not fail to be good Christians, if we fell short of that forgiving Spirit,

(a) Luke xxiii. 34.

Spirit, which the blessed Jesus shew'd upon the Cross?
 And shall we not equally fail to be good Christians, if we fall short of that humble and meek Spirit which he shewed in all his Life?

XIV. The short of the Matter is this, the Spirit and Temper of Christ is the *strict Measure* of the Spirit and Temper of all Christians. It is not in this or that particular Temper of Christ, that we are to follow his Example; but we are to aspire after his whole Spirit, to be in all Things as he was, and think it as dangerous to depart from his Spirit and Temper in one Instance as in another. For besides that there is the same Authority in all that our Saviour did, which obliges us to conform to his whole Example, Can any one tell why we should have more Value for this World than our Saviour had? What is there in our *State and Circumstances*, that can make it proper for us to have more Affection for the Things of this Life, than our Saviour had. Is the World any more our *Happiness*, than it was his Happiness? Are Riches, and Honours, and Pleasures, any more our *proper Good*, than they were his? Are we any more born for this Life, than our Saviour was? Are we in less Danger of being *corrupted* by its Enjoyments than he was? Are we more at Leisure to take up *our Rest*, and spend our Time in worldly Satisfaction than he was? Have we a Work upon our Hands that we can *more easily finish*, than he could finish his? That requires of us less *Mortification and Self-denial*, less *Devotion and Watching*, than our Saviour's required of him? Now as nothing of this can be said; as this World is as little our Happiness, and more our Danger than it was his; as we have a Work to finish that requires *all our Strength*, that is as *contrary* to the World as our Saviour's was, it is plain there was no Reason for his Disregard of the World, but what is the same Reason for us to disregard it in the same Manner.

XV. Take another Instance of our blessed Saviour's Spirit, *I came down from Heaven* (says he) *not to do mine own Will, but the Will of him that sent me* (a).

And again, *My Meat and Drink is to do the Will of him that sent me*. Now, can any Christian shew, why

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He may think otherwise of himself, than our Saviour here thought? Or that he need be *less devoted* to the Glory of God than he was? What is there in our Nature and Condition to make any Difference of this kind? Or can any thing else be the Happiness of our Nature, but that which was the Happiness of his? Was he a *Loser*? Did he leave the true Happiness of human Life, by devoting himself to the Will of God? Or can this be our Case, tho' it was not his? Can we be *Losers* by looking to God alone, and devoting ourselves to his Glory? Was it not the Greatness and Happiness of our Saviour that he lived to God alone? And is there any other Greatness or Happiness for us? We may as well seek out for another God, as for another Happiness, or another Way to it, than that in which Christ is gone before us. He did not mistake the Nature of Man, or the Nature of the World; he did not overlook any *real Felicity*, or pass by any *solid Good*; he only made the best Use of human Life; and his Spirit and Temper is as *necessary* for our Condition as it was for his. For this World, and all the Things of the World, signify as little to us as they did to him. We are no more in our *true State*, till we are got out of this World, than he was; and we have no Way to arrive at true Felicity and Greatness, but by so *devoting* ourselves to God as our blessed Saviour did. We must therefore make it the Business, and Aim of our Lives, to be like Christ; and this not in a *loose* or *general* Way, but with *great Nicety* and *Exactness*, always looking to his Spirit, to his Ends and Designs, to his Tempers, to his Ways and Conversation in the World, as the exact *Model* and *Rule* of ours.

XVI. Again, *Learn of me*, (saith our blessed Saviour) *for I am meek and lowly in Heart.*

It ought to be observed, that there must be something *very extraordinary* in these Dispositions, from the Manner in which we are taught them. It is only in this Place, that our Saviour says expressly, *Learn of me*; and when he says, *Learn of me*, he does not say, for I am just and equitable, or kind, or holy, but *I am meek and lowly in Heart*; as if he would teach us, that these are the Tempers which most of all *distinguish* his Spirit, and which he most of all requires his Followers to learn of him.

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

XVII. We see the Height of our Calling; that we are called to follow the Example of our Lord and Master, and to go thro' this World with his Spirit and Temper. Now nothing is so likely a Means to fill us with his Spirit and Temper, as to be frequent in reading the *Gospels*, which contain the History of his Life and Conversation in the World. We are apt to think, that we have sufficiently read a Book, when we have so read it, as to know what it contains. This reading may be sufficient as to many Books; but as to the *Gospels*, we are not to think that we have read them enough, because we have often read and heard what they

they contain: But we must read them as we do our *Prayers*, not to know what they contain, but to fill our Hearts with the Spirit of them. There is as much Difference betwixt reading and reading, as there is betwixt praying and praying: And as no one prays well, but he that is daily and constant in Prayer; so no one can read the Scriptures to sufficient Advantage, but he that is daily and constant in the Reading of them. By thus conversing with our blessed Lord; looking into his Actions and Manner of Life; hearing his divine Sayings; his heavenly Instructions; his Accounts of the Terrors of the Damned; his Descriptions of the Glory of the Righteous, we should find our Hearts formed and disposed to hunger and thirst after Righteousness. Happy they who saw the Son of GOD upon Earth converting Sinners, and calling fallen Spirits to return to GOD! And next happy are we, who have his Discourses, Doctrines, Actions, and Miracles, which then converted Jews and Heathens into Saints and Martyrs, still preserv'd to fill us with the same heavenly Light, and bring us to the same State of Glory!



C H A P. VIII.

An Exhortation to Christian Perfection.

1. **W**Hoever hath read the foregoing Chapters with Attention, is, I hope, sufficiently instructed in the Knowledge of *Christian Perfection*. He hath seen that it requireth us to devote ourselves wholly unto GOD; to make the Ends and Designs of Religion, the Ends and Designs of all our Actions; that it calleth us to be born again of GOD; to live by the Light of his Holy Spirit; to renounce the World, and all worldly Tempers; to practise a constant universal Self-denial; to make daily War with the Corruption and Disorder of our Nature; to shew the Power of Divine Grace, by a Purity and Holiness of Conversation; to avoid all Pleasures and Cares which grieves the Holy Spirit, and separate him from

from us ; to live in a *daily, constant State* of Prayer and Devotion ; and, as the Crown of all, to imitate the *Life and Spirit* of the holy Jesus.

II. It now only remains that I exhort the Reader to labour after this Perfection. Was I to exhort any one to the Study of *Poetry* or *Eloquence*, to labour to be *rich* and *great*, or to spend his Time in *Mathematics*, or other Learning, I could only produce such Reasons as are fit to delude the Vanity of Men, who are ready to be taken with any Appearance of Excellence. For if the same Person was to ask me, what it signifies to be a *Poet* or *eloquent*, what Advantage it would be to him, to be a great *Mathematician*, or a great *Statesman*, I must be forced to answer, that these Things would signify just as much to him, as they now signify to those Poets, Orators, Mathematicians, and Statesmen, whose Bodies have been a long while lost among common Dust. For if a Man will be so thoughtful and inquisitive as to put the Question to every human Enjoyment, and ask what real Good it would bring along with it, he would soon find, that every Success in the Things of this Life, leaves us just in the same State of Want and Emptiness in which it found us. If a Man asks why he should labour to be the first *Mathematician*, *Orator*, or *Statesman*, the Answer is easily given, because of the *Fame* and *Honour* of such a Distinction ; but if he was to ask again, why he should thirst after Fame and Honour, or what Good they would do him, he must stay long enough for an Answer. For when we are at the *Top* of all human Attainments, we are still at the *Bottom* of all human Misery, and have made no farther Advancement towards true Happiness, than those whom we see in the want of all these Excellencies. Whether a Man die before he has writ *Poems*, compiled *Histories*, or raised an *Estate*, signifies no more, than whether he died an Hundred or a Thousand Years ago.

III. On the contrary, when any one is exhorted to labour after Christian Perfection, if he then asks what Good it will do him, the Answer is ready, that it would do him a Good which Eternity only can measure ; that it will deliver him from a State of Vanity and Misery ; that it will raise him from the poor Enjoyments of an animal.

animal Life; that it will give him a glorious Body, carry him, in Spite of Death and the Grave, to live with God, be glorious among Angels and heavenly Beings, and be full of an infinite Happiness to all Eternity. If therefore we could but make Men so reasonable, as to make the shortest Enquiry into the Nature of Things, we should have no Occasion to exhort them to strive after Christian Perfection. *Two Questions* we see put an End to all the vain Projects and Designs of human Life; they are all so empty and useless to our Happiness, that they cannot stand the Trial of a *second Question*. And, on the other hand, 'tis but asking, whether Christian Perfection tends to make us have no other Care. One single Thought upon the eternal Happiness it leads to is sufficient to make People *Saints*.

IV. This shews us how inexcusable all Christians are, who are devoted to the Things of this Life. It is not because they want *fine Parts*, or are unable to make *deep Reflections*; but it is because they reject the first Principles of *common Sense*; they won't so much as ask what those Things are which they are labouring after. Did they but use thus much Reason, we need not desire them to be wiser, in order to seek only eternal Happiness. As a Shadow at the first Trial of the Hand appears to have no Substance; so all human Enjoyments sink away into nothing at the first Approach of a *serious Thought*. We must not therefore complain of the Weakness and Ignorance of our Nature, or the deceitful Appearances of worldly Enjoyments, because the lowest Degree of Reason, if listen'd to, is sufficient to discover the Cheat. If you will, you may *blindly* do what the rest of the World are doing; you may follow the *Cry*, and run yourself out of *Breath* for you know not what: But if you will but shew so much Sense, as to ask why you should take such a Chace, you will need no deeper a Reflection than this to make you leave the Broad Way; and let the Wise and Learned, the Rich and Great, be mad by themselves. Thus much common Sense will turn your Eyes towards God, will separate you from all the Appearances of worldly Felicity, and fill you with one only Ambition after eternal Happiness.

V. Suppose that *strict Sobriety* was the sole End of Man,

Man, the necessary Condition of Happiness, **What** would you think of those People, who, knowing and believing this to be true, should yet spend their Time in getting Quantities of all Sorts of the *strongest Liquors*? What would you think if you saw them constantly enlarging their *Cellars*, filling every Room with *Drams*, and contending who should have the largest Quantities of the strongest Liquors? Now this is the Folly and Madness of the Lives of Christians; they are as wise and reasonable, as they are who are always providing strong Liquors, in order to be *strictly sober*. For all the Enjoyments of human Life, which Christians so aspire after, whether of *Riches, Greatness, Honours, or Pleasures*, are as much the Dangers and Temptations of a Christian, as strong and pleasant Liquors are the Temptations of a Man that is to drink only Water. Now if you was to ask such a Man, why he is continually increasing his Stock of Liquors, when he is to abstain from them all, and only to drink Water, he can give you as good a Reason, as those Christians, who spare no Pains to acquire Riches, Greatness, and Pleasures, at the same Time that their Salvation depends upon their renouncing them all, upon their Heavenly-mindedness, Humility, and constant Self-denial.

VI. But it may be you are not devoted to these Things; you have a greater Soul than to be taken with *Riches, Equipage, or the Pageantry of State*; you are deeply engaged in *Learning and Sciences*.

You are, it may be, squaring the *Circle*, or settling the Distances of the *Stars*, or busy in the Study of *exotick Plants*.

You, it may be, are comparing the ancient Languages, have made deep Discoveries in the Change of *Letters*, and perhaps know how to write an *Inscription* in as obscure Characters as if you had lived above Two Thousand Years ago: Or, perhaps you are meditating upon the *Heathen Theology*, collecting the History of their *Gods and Goddesses*; or, you are scanning some ancient *Greek or Roman Poet*, and making an exact Collection of their *scattered Remains, Scraps of Sentences, and broken Words*.

You are not exposing your Life in the Field like a mad
Alexander

Alexander or Cæsar; but you are fighting over all their Battles in your Study; you are collecting the Names of their *Generals*, the Number of their Troops, the Manner of their Arms, and can give the World a more exact Account of the Times, Places, and Circumstances of their Battles, than has yet been seen.

VII. You will perhaps ask, Whether this be not a very commendable Enquiry? An excellent Use of our Time and Parts? Whether People may not be very reasonably exhorted to these kind of Studies? It may be answered, that all Enquires (however learned they may be reckoned) which do not improve the Mind in some useful Knowledge, that do not make us wise in *religious Wisdom*, are to be reckoned amongst our greatest Vanities and Follies. All Speculations that will not stand this Trial, are to be looked upon as the Wanderings and Impertinencies of a *disordered Understanding*.

It is strange want of Thought to imagine, that an Enquiry is ever the better; because it is taken up in *Greek and Latin*. Why is it not as wise and reasonable for a *Scholar* to dwell in the *Kitchen* and converse with *Cooks*, as to go into his Study, to meditate upon the *Roman Art of Cookery*, and learn their Variety of *Sauces*?

A grave *Doctor* in Divinity would perhaps think his Time very ill employed, that he was acting below his Character, if he was to be an *Amanuensis* to some *modern Poet*. Why then does he think it suitable with the Weight of his Calling, to have been a *Drudge* to some *ancient Poet*, counting his Syllables for several Years, only to help the World to read what some *irreligious, wanton, or epicurean Poet* has wrote?

It is certainly a much more reasonable Employment to be making *Cloaths*, than to spend one's Time in reading or writing Volumes upon the *Grecian or Roman Garments*.

VIII. If you can shew me a Learning that makes Man truly sensible of his Duty, that fills the Mind with *true Light*, that reforms the *Heart*, that disposes it right towards God, that makes us more *reasonable* in all our Actions; that inspires us with *Fortitude, Humility, Devotion*, and Contempt of the *World*; that gives us right Notions of the *Greatness of Religion*, the *Sanctity of Morality*,

Morality, the *Littleness* of every Thing but **GOD**, the *Vanity* of our Passions, and the *Misery* and Corruption of our Nature, I will own myself an Advocate for such Learning. But to think that Time is well employed, because it is spent in such Speculations, as the *Vulgar* cannot reach, or because they are fetch'd from *Antiquity*, or found in *Greek* or *Latin*, is a Folly that may be called as great as any in human Life.

They who think that these Enquiries are consistent with a Heart *entirely devoted* to **GOD**, have not enough considered human Nature; they would do well to consult our Saviour's Rebuke of *Martha*. She did not seem to have wandered far from her proper Business; she was not busy in the History of *House-wifery*, or enquiring into the *Original of the Distaff*; she was only taken up with present Affairs, and *cumber'd about much serving*: But our blessed Saviour said unto her, *Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many Things. But one Thing is needful.*

Now if *Scholars* and *Divines* can shew, that they only apply to such Studies as are serviceable to the *one Thing needful*; if they are busy in a Philosophy and Learning that has a necessary Connection with the Devotion of the Heart to **GOD**, such Learning becomes the Followers of Christ: But, if they trifle in *Greek* and *Latin*, and only assist other People to follow them in the same Impertinence, such Learning may be reckoned amongst the Corruptions of the Age. For all the Arguments against *Pride*, *Covetousness*, and *Vanity*, are as good Arguments against *such Learning*; it being the same Irreligion to be devoted to any *false Learning*, as to be devoted to any other *false Good*.

A Satisfaction in any vain Ornaments of the Body, whether of *Cloaths* or *Paint*, is no greater a Mistake, than a Satisfaction in the *vain Accomplishments* of the Mind.

IX. A Man that is eager and laborious in the Search and Study of that which does him *no Good*, is the same poor, little Soul, as the *Miser* who is happy in his *Bags* that are laid by in Dust. A ridiculous Application of our *Money*, *Time*, and *Understanding*, is the same Fault, whether it be found amongst the *Finery* of *Fops*.

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Hoards of *Misers*, or the Trinkets of *Virtuoso's*. It is the same false Turn of Mind, the same Mistake of the Use of Things, the same Ignorance of the State of Man, and the same Offence against Religion.

When we see a Man brooding over *Bags* of Wealth, and labouring to die *rich*, we do not only accuse him of a poor Littleness of Mind; but we charge him with great Guilt; we do not allow such a one to be in a State of Religion. Let us therefore suppose that this covetous Man was on a sudden changed into another Temper; that he was grown *polite* and *curious*; that he was fond and eager after the most useless Things, if they were but *ancient* and *scarce*: Let us suppose that he is now as greedy of *original Paintings*, as he was before of *Money*; that he will give more for a *Dog's Head*, or a *Snuff* of a Candle done by a good *Hand*, than he ever gave in Charity all his Life; is he a wiser Man, or a better Christian than he was before? Has he more overcome the World, or is he more devoted to **G O D**, than when his Soul was lock'd up with his Money? Alas! his Heart is in the same false Satisfaction; he is in the same State of Ignorance, is as far from the true Good, as much separated from God, as he whose Soul is cleaving to the Dust; he lives in the same Vanity, and must die in the same Misery, as he that lives and dies in *Foppery* or Covetousness.

X. Here therefore I place my Argument for *Christian Perfection*. I exhort thee to labour after it, because there is nothing else for thee to labour after; there is nothing else that the Reason of Man can exhort thee to. The whole World has nothing to offer thee in its Stead; chuse what other Way thou wilt, thou hast chosen nothing but Vanity and Misery; for all the different Ways of the World are only different Ways of deluding thyself: this only excels that as one Vanity can excel another. If thou wilt make thyself more happy than those who pursue their own Destruction, if thou wilt shew thyself wiser than *Fops*, more reasonable than *sordid Misers*, thou must pursue that Happiness, and study that Wisdom which leads to **G O D**; for every other Pursuit, every other Way of Life, however *polite* or *plausible* in the Opinions of the World, has a Folly and Supidity in it that

That is equal to the Folly and Stupidity of *Fops* and *Misers*.

For a while shut thine Eyes, and think of the *filliest* Creature in human Life; imagine to thyself, something that thou thinkest the most *poor* and *vain* in the Way of the World. Now thou art thyself that *poor* and *vain* Creature, unless thou art devoted to *God*, and labouring after Christian Perfection; unless this be thy Difference from the World, thou can'st not think of any Creature more silly than thyself. For it is not any *Post*, or Condition, or Figure in Life, that makes one Man wiser or better than another; if thou art a proud *Scholar*, a worldly *Priest*, an indèvout *Philosopher*, a crafty *Politician*, an ambitious *Statesman*, thy Imagination cannot invent a Way of Life that has more of *Vanity* or *Folly* than thine own.

XI. Every one has Wisdom enough to see what Variety of Fools and Madmen there are in the World.

Now perhaps we cannot do better, than to find out the true Reason of the Folly and Madness of any sort of Life. Ask thyself therefore wherein consists the Folly of any sort of Life, which is most condemned in thy Judgment.

Is a drunken *Fox-hunter* leading a foolish Life? Wherein consists the Folly of it? Is it because he is not getting Money upon the *Exchange*? Or because he is not wrangling at the *Bar*? Or not waiting at *Court*? No; the Folly of it consists in this, that he is not living like a *reasonable Creature*; that he is not acting like a Being that has a Salvation to work out with *Fear and Trembling*; that he is throwing away his Time amongst *Dogs*, and Noise, and Intemperance, which he should devote to Watching and Prayer, and the Improvement of his Soul in all holy Tempers. Now, if this is the Folly (as it most certainly is) of an intemperate *Fox-hunter*, it shews us an equal Folly in every other Way of Life, where the same great Ends of Living are neglected. Tho' we are shining at the *Bar*, making a Figure at *Court*, great at the *Exchange*, or famous in the *Schools* of *Philosophy*, we are yet the same despicable Creatures as the intemperate *Fox-hunter*, if these Things keep us as far from Holiness and heavenly Affections. There is

Nothing greater in any Way of Life than *Fox-hunting*; it is all the same Folly, unless Religion be the Beginning and Ending, the Rule and Measure of it all. For it is as noble a *Wisdom*, and shews as great a *Soul*, to die less holy and heavenly for the Sake of *Hunting* and *Noise*, as for the Sake of any thing that the World can give us.

XII. If we will judge Things by our Fancies, we may think some Ways of Life mighty wise, and others mighty foolish; we may think it glorious to be pursuing Methods of *Fame* and *Wealth*, and foolish to be killing *Foxes*. But if we will let Reason and Religion shew us the Folly and Wisdom of Things, we shall easily see that all Ways of Life are equally little and foolish, but those that perfect and exalt our Souls in Holiness:

No one therefore can complain of want of Understanding in the Conduct of his Life, for a small Share of Sense is sufficient to condemn some Degrees of Vanity which we see in the World; every one is able and ready to do it. And if we are but able to condemn the vainest sort of Life upon true Reasons, the same Reasons will serve to shew, that all sorts of Life are equally vain, but the one Life of Religion. Thou hast therefore, as I observed before, no Choice of any thing to labour after instead of Christian Perfection. If thou can't be content to be the poorest, vainest, miserablest Creature on Earth, thou may'st neglect Christian Perfection: But if thou see'st any thing in human Life that thou abhorrest and despisest; if there be any Person that lives so, as thou shouldest fear to live, thou must turn thy Heart to God, thou must labour after *Christian Perfection*; for there is nothing in Nature but this, that can set thee above the vainest, poorest, and most miserable of human Creatures. Thou art every thing that thou can't abhor and despise, every thing that thou can't fear; thou art full of every Folly that thy Mind can imagine, unless thou art all devoted to God.

XIII. Another Motive to induce you to aspire after *Christian Perfection*, may be taken from the double Advantage of it in this Life, and that which is to come.

The Apostle thus exhorts the *Corinthians*, *Wherefore, my beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast, immovable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord; for as much as ye know*

know that our Labour will not be in vain in the Lord (a).

This is an Exhortation founded upon solid Reason: For what can be so wise and reasonable, as to be always abounding in *that Work* which will never be *in vain*? Whilst we are pleased with ourselves, or pleased with the World, we are pleased with Vanity; and our most prosperous Labours of this kind are but *Vanity of Vanities*: But whilst we are labouring after Christian Perfection, we are labouring for Eternity, and building to ourselves higher Stations in the Joys of Heaven. *As one Star differeth from another Star in Glory, so also is the Resurrection of the Dead.* We shall surely rise to different Degrees of Glory, of Joy and Happiness in GOD, according to our different Advancements in Purity, Holiness, and good Works.

No Degrees of Mortification and Self-denial, no private Prayers, no secret Mournings, no Instances of Charity, no Labour of Love, will ever be forgotten, but all treasured up to our everlasting Comfort and Refreshment. For tho' the Rewards of the other Life are free Gifts of GOD; yet since he has assured us, that every Man shall be rewarded according to his Works, it is certain that our Rewards will be as different as our Works have been.

XIV. Now stand still here a while, and ask yourself, whether you really believe this to be true, that the more perfect we are here, the more happy we shall be hereafter? If you do not believe this to be strictly true, you know nothing of GOD and Religion. And if you do believe it to be true, is it possible to be *awake* and not aspiring after Christian Perfection? What can you think of, what can the World shew you, that can make you any Amends for the Loss of *any Degree* of Virtue? Can any Way of Life make it reasonable for you to die *less perfect* than you might have done? But if you would now devote yourself to GOD, perhaps you must part with some Friends; you must displease some Relations, you must lay aside some Designs, you must refrain from some Pleasures, you must alter your Life; nay, perhaps you must do more than this, you must expose yourself to the Hatred of

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your

(a) 1 Cor. xv. 58.

your Friends, to the Jest and Ridicule of *Wits*, and to the Scorn and Derision of worldly Men. But had you not better do and suffer all this, than die *less perfect*, less prepared for eternal Glory? And indeed the suffering all this is suffering nothing. For why should it signify any thing to you, what *Fools* and *Madmen* think of you? And surely it can be no wrong or rash Judgment to think those both Fools and mad, who condemn what God approves, and like that which God condemns: But if you think this too much to be done, to obtain eternal Glory, think, on the other hand, what can be gained instead of it.

Fancy yourself living in all the Ease and Pleasure that the World can give you, esteemed by your Friends, undisturbed by your Enemies, and gratifying all your *natural Tempers*. If you could stand still in such a State, you might say that you had got *something*; but alas! every Day that is added to such a Life, is the same thing as a Day taken from it, and shews you that so much Happiness is gone from you. For be as happy as you will, you must see it all sinking away from you; you must feel yourself *decline*; you must see that your Time *shortens apace*; you must hear of *sudden Deaths*; you must fear *Sickness*; you must both dread and desire *old Age*; you must fall into the Hands of Death; you must either die in the painful, bitter Sorrows of a deep Repentance, or in sad, gloomy Despair, wishing for *Mountains to fall upon you, and Seas to cover you*. And is this a Happiness to be chosen? Is this all that you can gain by neglecting God, by following your own Desires, and not labouring after Christian Perfection? Is it worth your while to separate yourself from God, to loose your Share in the Realms of Light, to be thus *happy*, or, I may better say, to be thus miserable even in this Life? You may be so blind and foolish, as not to think of these Things; but it is impossible to think of them, without labouring after *Christian Perfection*.

XVI. It may be, you are too young, too happy, or too busy to be affected with these Reflections; but let me tell you, that *all* will be over before you are aware; your *Day* will be spent, and leave you to such a *Night*, as that which surprized the *foolish Virgins*. And at Mid-
night

night there was a Cry made, behold the Bridegrooms come, & go ye out to meet him (a).

The last Hour will soon be with you, when you will have nothing to look for, but your *Reward* in another Life; when you will stand with nothing but *Eternity* before you, and must begin to be something that will be your State for ever. I can no more reach Heavens with my Hands, than I can describe the Sentiments that you will then have; you will then feel Motions of Heart that you never felt before; all your Thoughts and Reflections will pierce your Soul in a manner, that you never before experienced; and you will feel the Immortality of your Nature, by the Depth and piercing Vigour of your Thoughts. You will then know what it is to die; you will then know that you never knew it before, that you never thought worthily of it; but that dying Thoughts are as *new* and *amazing*, as that State which follows them.

Let me therefore exhort you to come prepared to this Time of Trial; to look out for Comfort, whilst the Day is before you; to treasure up such a *Fund* of good and pious Works, as may make you able to bear that State, which cannot be borne without them. Could I any way make you apprehend, how dying Men feel the want of a pious Life; how they lament Time lost, Health and Strength squander'd away in Folly; how they look at Eternity, and what they think of the Rewards of another Life, you would soon find yourself one of those, who desire to live in the highest State of Piety and Perfection, that by this Means you may grow old in Peace, and die in full Hope of eternal Glory.

XVII. Consider again, that besides the Rewards of the other Life, the devoting yourself wholly to God has a great Reward even in this Life, as it makes Religion doubly pleasant to you. Whilst you are divided betwixt God and the World, you have neither the Pleasures of Religion, nor the Pleasures of the World; but are always in the Uneasiness of a divided State of Heart. You have only so much Religion as serves to disquiet you; to check your Enjoyments; to shew you a *Hand writing upon the Wall*; to interrupt your Pleasures; to reproach you with your Follies; and to appear as a

Death's Head at all your Feasts; but not Religion enough to give you a Taste and Feeling of its proper Pleasures and Satisfaction. You dare not wholly neglect Religion; but then, you take no more of it than is just sufficient to keep you from being a Terror to yourself; and you are as loth to be *very good*, as you are fearful to be *very bad*. So that you are just as happy as the *Slave*, that dares not run away from his Master, and yet always serves him against his Will. Instead of having a Religion that is your Comfort in all Troubles, your Religion is itself a *Trouble*, under which you want to be comforted; and those Days and Times hang heaviest on your Hands, which leave you only to the Offices and Duties of Religion. *Sunday* would be very dull and tiresome, but that it is but one Day in *seven*, and is made a Day of *dressing* and *visiting*, as well as of divine Service. You don't care to keep away from the Publick Worship, but are always glad when it is over. This is the State of *half Piety*; thus they live who add Religion to a worldly Life; all their Religion is mere *Yoke* and *Burden*, and is only made tolerable by having but little of their Time.

XVIII. *Urbanus* goes to Church, but he hardly knows whether he goes out of a Sense of Duty, or to meet his Friends. He wonders at those People who are *prophane*, and what Pleasure they can find in Irreligion; but then, he is in as great a Wonder at those who would make every Day a Day of divine Worship. He feels no more of the Pleasures of Piety, than of the Pleasures of Prophaneness. As Religion has every thing from him but his *Heart*, so he has every thing from Religion but its *Comforts*. *Urbanus* likes Religion, because it seems an *easy* Way of pleasing God; a *decent* Thing, that takes up but little of our Time, and is a proper *Mixture* in Life: But if he was reduced to take *Comfort* in it, he would be as much at a Loss, as those who have lived without God in the World. When *Urbanus* thinks of Joy, and Pleasure, and Happiness, he does not think at all of Religion. He has gone thro' a hundred Misfortunes, fallen into Variety of *Hardships*; but never thought of making Religion his *Comfort* in any of them. He makes himself quiet and
happy

happy in another Manner. He is content with his Christianity, not because he is *pious*, but because he is not *prophane*. He continues in the same Course of Religion, not because of any real Good he ever found in it, but because it does him no Hurt.

To such poor Purposes as these do Numbers of People profess Christianity. Let me therefore exhort you to a *solid Piety*, to devote yourself wholly unto GOD; that entering deep into Religion, you may enter deep into its Comforts; that serving GOD with all your Heart, you may have the Peace and Pleasure of a Heart that is at Unity with itself. When your Conscience once bears you witness, that you are *steadfast, immoveable, and always abounding in the Work of the Lord*, you will find that your Reward is already begun, and that you could not be less devout, less holy, less charitable, or less humble, without lessening the most substantial Pleasure that ever you felt in your Life. So that to be content with any lower Attainments in Piety, is to rob ourselves of a present Happiness, which nothing else can give us.

XIX. You would perhaps devote yourself to Perfection but for this or that *little Difficulty* that lies in your Way; you are not in so convenient a State for the full Practice of Piety as you could wish: But consider that this is Nonsense, because Perfection consists in conquering Difficulties. You could not be perfect as the present State of Trial requires, had you not those Difficulties and Inconveniences to struggle with. These Things therefore which you would have removed, are laid in your Way, that you may make them so many Steps to Glory.

As you could not exercise your Charity, unless you met with Objects; so neither could you shew, that you had overcome the World, unless you had many worldly Engagements to overcome. If all your *Friends and Acquaintance* were devout, humble, heavenly-minded, and wholly intent upon the one End of Life, it would be less Perfection in you to be like them: But if you are *humble* amongst those that delight in Pride, *heavenly-minded* amongst the worldly, *sober* amongst the intemperate, *devout* amongst the irreligious, and labouring after *Perfection* amongst those that despise and ridicule

your Labours, then are you truly devoted unto God. Consider therefore, that you can have no Difficulty, but such as the World lays in your Way; and that Perfection is never to be had, but by parting with the World. It consists in nothing else. To stay therefore to be perfect till it suits with your Condition in the World, is like staying to be charitable till there were no Objects of Charity. It is as if a Man should intend to be courageous some Time or other, when there is nothing left to try his Courage.

XX. Again, you perhaps turn your Eyes upon the World; you see all Orders of People full of other Cares and Pleasures; you see the Generality of *Clergy* and *Laitie*, Learned and Unlearned, your Acquaintance, mostly living according to the spirit that reigneth in the World; you are therefore content with such a *Piety* as you think contents great *scholars* and *famous Men*; and it may be you cannot see that God will reject such Numbers of Christians. You are all this while amusing yourself with nothing; it is only amusing yourself in vain Imaginations; it is making to yourself a *Rule* which is no Rule, and cheating yourself into a false Satisfaction. As you are not censoriously to discern other People; so neither are you to think your own Salvation secure, because you are like the generality of the World.

The *foolish Virgins* that had provided no Oil in their Lamps, and so were shut out of the Marriage Feast, were only thus far *foolish*, that they trusted to the Assistance of those that were *wise*: But you are more foolish than they; for you trust to be saved by the Folly of others; you imagine yourself safe in the *Negligence*, *Vanity*, and *Irregularity* of the World; you take Confidence in the *Broad Way*, because it is *broad*; you are content with yourself, because you seem to be along with *the many*, tho' God himself has told you, that *narrow* is the Way that leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it.

XXI. One Word more and I have done. Think with yourself, what a Happiness it is, that you have it in your Power to secure a Share in the Glories of Heaven, and make yourself one of those blessed Beings that are to live with God for ever. Reflect upon the Glories

ries of bright Angels, that shine about the Throne of Heaven. Think upon that Fulness of Joy, which is the State of Christ at the Right Hand of God; and remember that it is this same State of Glory and Joy that lies open for you. You are less, it may be, in worldly Distinctions than many others; but as your Relation to God, you have no Superior upon Earth. Let your Condition be what it will, let your Life be ever so mean, you may make the End of it the Beginning of eternal Glory. Be often therefore in these Reflections, that they may fill you with a wise Ambition of all that Glory which God in Christ hath called you to. For it is impossible to understand and feel any thing of this, without feeling your Heart affected with strong Desires after it. There are many Things in human Life which it would be in vain for you to aspire after; but the Happiness of the next, the Sum of all Happiness, is secure and safe to you against all Accidents. Here no Chances or Misfortunes can prevent your Success; neither can the Treachery of Friends, nor the Malice of Enemies disappoint you; it is only your own false Heart that can rob you of this Happiness. Be but your own true Friend, and then you have nothing to fear from your Enemies. Do but you sincerely labour in the Lord, and then neither Heighth nor Depth, neither Life nor Death, neither Men or Devils, can make your Labour in vain.

F I N I S.



